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THE POLITICS OF POWER, PLEASURE, AND PRAYER IN THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST¹

Abstract: Since the first annual Eurovision Song Contest in 1956, politics and popularity have intersected to influence the ways in which Eurovision songs have reflected the complex forms of European nationalism. With the Eurovision victory of Marija Šerifović's "Molitva" at the 52nd Eurovision in Helsinki, the politics of regionalism and nationalism fully enveloped Southeastern Europe, creating the impression that old and new European alignments, from Habsburg nostalgia to an emerging Balkan brotherhood, overwhelmed the criteria that would otherwise mean that the *grand prix* would go to the best song. Taking Marija Šerifović's "Molitva" 2007 as a point of departure, this article examines the extremely complex set of networks that intersect at the Eurovision Song Contest and the national rituals and competitions that transform the power and pleasure driving European popular song in the twenty-first century.

Key Words: Eurovision Song Contest, Marija Šerifović, politics, regionalism, nationalism, broadcasting networks, European minorities, *sevdalinka*, African American music, Serbia, Ukraine

I also had the overwhelming feeling that the Serbian entry, a turgid ballad called "Molitva," or "Prayer," didn't stand a chance. So imagine my surprise when Serbia not only won, but crushed the opposition ...²

Within minutes of the recognition that Marija Šerifović's "Molitva" was unstoppable as the victorious song, with the national votes from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia reported to the 52nd Eurovision Song Contest on 12 May 2007, responses were flooding the media networks, from Internet to text-messaging:

Outrage, resentment, rationalization.

¹ Many thanks to Katarina Tomašević for inviting me to contribute my thoughts on the Eurovision Song Contest to *Musicology*, even before Marija Šerifović's victory for Serbia on 12 May 2007. She, her colleague, Jelena Jovanović, and my University of Chicago colleague, Nada Petković plied me with responses from the Serbian press gathered during the weeks immediately following the Helsinki Grand Prix, and I am indebted to them for the information and national excitement contained therein. As always, special thanks are due to all who share my passion for the Eurovision Song Contest: Jeffers Engelhardt, Annemette Kirkegaard, Ioannis Polychronakis, Tina K. Ramnarine, Alex Rehding, Martin Stokes, and, above all, Andrea F. Bohlman. Research for this project was generously supported by the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung.

² Duncan J. Watts, *The New York Times*, 22 May 2007: A23.

The odds-on favorite, Verka Serduchka's "Dancing Lasha Tumbai" for Ukraine, had fallen from contention for the *grand prix*, and its multiple networks of fans, hoping 2007 would be another year for camp, knew the day would not be theirs. During the voting, it had also become clear that none of the dark horses, Germany's Roger Cicero ("Frauen regier'n die Welt") and the UK's true long-shot, Scooch's "Flying the Flag (for You)," could move appreciably upward from the bottom quartile. For the dean of Eurovision network announcers, the BBC's Terry Wogan, the worst nightmare of the Eurovision Song Contest at the beginning of its second half-century had been realized: The nations of Eastern Europe in general and of Southeastern Europe in particular had seized the mantle of representing Europe.³

The politics of fragmentation had supplanted those of hegemony. The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) had outdone itself, but only after its constituent national broadcasting networks had undone the politics of a Europe with a cultural trajectory toward unity and union. The centripetal pull of the Eurovision's ideology of drawing East and West, North and South, together toward a common aesthetic ideal had given way to the centrifugal force generated along the peripheries of expanding participation, above all in the East, with its growing contingency of participants from the former Soviet Union, Georgia for the first time in 2007, Armenia in 2006. As Marija Šerifović's victory began to sink in, Serbia, too, entered the rhetoric of firsts: The first time since the removal of the language restriction in 1999 that a song without a word of English had won; the first time a country from the former Yugoslavia had one; the first time a country had won during its "debut" year; the first time Serbia had won.⁴ Even the Eurovision Song Contest's own official website (<http://www.esctoday.com/news/read/8685>) catapulted Serbia from the past to the future, finding every possible way to reinvent it as a new nation heralding a new era of European song.

The New Europe had musically supplanted the Old Europe.

³ For an analysis of an assessment of the growing presence of Southeastern Europe in the Eurovision Song Contest, from ca. the turn of the twenty-first century, see Philip V. Bohlman, "Popular Music on the Stage of a United Europe – Southeastern Europe in the 'Eurovision Song Contest'," in Bruno B. Reuer, ed., *Vereintes Europa – Vereinte Musik? Vielfalt und soziale Dimensionen in Mittel- und Südosteuropa/United Europe – United Music? Diversity and Social Dimensions in Central and Southeastern Europe* (Berlin: Weidler Verlag), pp. 35–73.

⁴ Peter Urban, the announcer for Germany's ARD national broadcast, introduced the performance by claiming that "you've never seen back-up dancers like this before," though it was entirely unclear to what he was referring, perhaps an all-female camp performance in his opinion.

* * *

Or had it? Is the pronouncement of a new era, a revolution, within one of Europe's most established and complex musical institutions a bit premature? And what does it really mean to be "new" in an aesthetic and political network that so repeatedly insists upon reviving and remembering the "old?"



Figure 1. Cover of *Evropa* (17 May 2007), with images of the aftermath of the Serbian Eurovision victory

In this essay I take the ethnographic present as my point of departure for examining the politics of pleasure and power in the Eurovision Song Contest. From the perspectives of the ethnographic present – I write the bulk of the essay immediately following the 52nd Eurovision Song Contest, that is, during May and early June 2007 – the borders between “new” and “old” are at best difficult to parse. Serbia’s winning entry does little to clarify the “old” and the “new.” After all, most of Serbia’s Eurovision detractors (see, e.g., the *New York Times* editorial from which the open-

ing epigraph comes) claim that it won because its neighbors, in a gesture of friendship, awarded it the largest bloc of votes (in fact, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Slovenia did all award twelve points to Serbia). Could the memory of an “old” Serbia disappear so quickly because of the politics and pleasure of song? Or is there more that flows into the making of the “song of Europe?” Are the networks of aesthetics and politics that shape the meaning of Europe today, as they were in the past, implicated in a different set of processes that gather the fragments of the past to shape a transient wholeness in the present?

The Power of Prayer – “Molitva” as Virtual Europe

МОЛИТВА

Ni oka da sklopim, postelja prazna tera san, a život se topi I nestaje brzo, k'o dlanom o dlan.	I'm wide awake, An empty bed drives my dreams away, Life melts like ice Disappears in the twinkling of an eye.
K'o razum da gubim, jer stvarnost i ne primećujem, još uvek te ljubim, još uvek ti slepo verujem.	I'm losing my mind, Pushing reality out of sight, Our lips are touching softly, You're the one I believe blindly.
K'o luda, ne znam kuda, ljubavi se nove bojim, a dane, žive rane, više ne brojim.	I walk around like crazy, Falling in love frightens me, Days are like wounds, Countless and hard to get through.
Molitva, kao žar na mojim usnama je, molitva, mesto reči samo ime tvoje.	Prayer, it burns my sore lips like a fire, Prayer, thy name is something I admire,
(I) Nebo zna, kao ja, koliko puta sam ponovila, to nebo zna, baš kao ja, da je ime tvoje moja jedina molitva.	Heaven knows just as well as I do, So many times I have cried over you, Heaven knows just as well as I do, I pray and live only for you, prayer.
Al' Bogu ne mogu lagati sve dok se molim, a lažem ako kažem da te ne volim.	I can't lie to God as I kneel down and pray. You're the love of my life That's the only thing I can say.

Figure 2. “Molitva” / “Prayer” – Lyrics

Occupying the shifting terrain between the old and the new, Marija Šerifović's "Molitva" hardly seems a candidate for the shock and jubilation that greeted the singer and her song on 12 May 2007. Born in 1984, Šerifović was quickly drawn into the traditional musics of Southeastern Europe and to global popular music. Her mother, Verica Šerifović, was and is a well-known singer, and Marija apprenticed with her mother at a young age. Still in her teens, she entered the Budva Festival, and in 2004, she won the competition at Budva with the song, "Gorka Čokolada" ("Bitter Chocolate"), which quickly won widespread success on European pop charts. Marija Šerifović was able to undertake the journey to the Eurovision in relatively effortless fashion. At the Serbian national competition, the Beovizija, on 8 March 2007, her English-language performance of "Molitva" was the overwhelming favorite, garnering the combined support of the televoting and the professional jury. Few doubted the potential of the song to attract international attention, and promotional tours punctuated the two-month period between the Beovizija and the Eurovision, not only throughout Southeastern Europe, but also beyond to Switzerland and Central Europe. In addition to the English-language version from the Serbian national competition, covers of "Molitva" in Finnish and Russian – and Serbian – were recorded, and promotional videos circulated on the Internet. The path to the Grand Prix is rarely paved so smoothly by so many different media and cultural networks.

From a political and aesthetic sense Marija Šerifović and "Molitva" were more ordinary than extraordinary, especially within the context of Eurovision tolerance for the extraordinary and distaste for the ordinary. "Molitva" itself navigated an aesthetic of hybridity, borrowing sounds and images from Balkan *sevdalinka* and the more international ballad and *chanson* styles of an earlier era of the Eurovision.⁵ The text of "Molitva," too, tends toward the ordinary, and its trope of a young lover's passion-cum-worship is remarkable only because of its almost quotidian simplicity. The evocation, indeed the naming, of God does not have extensive currency in the Eurovision Song Contest, but in "Molitva" that reverence is remarkable primarily because of its simplicity. Secular and sacred love intersect, each intensifying the other.

Formally, "Molitva" conformed to all the standard conventions of successful Eurovision songs. The AABA popular-song form that underlies almost every genre and style of the Eurovision song repertoires works neither particularly well nor particularly poorly in "Molitva." The

⁵ The *chanson* style itself employs hybridity in the promotional video prepared for the months leading to the Grand Prix. In that video the theatrical backdrop combines French *pantomime* with Italian *commedia dell'arte*.

middle eight – the B section, or the third “verse” of the lyrics in Figure 2 – is notable only because it is uneventful. Its particular effectiveness lies in its use of repetition, first the introduction of the song’s title and subject, *molitva*, and then its recurrence. In this way, the text circumvents the usual problem of Eurovision songs not in the dominant languages of French and English, or to lesser degrees Spanish and German.⁶ Even the first-time listener watching the Grand Prix in Helsinki, therefore, is assured of what “Molitva” is about: prayer, in its passionate simplicity. The blues arabesque that provides the subdued exclamation of an intense coda on *molitva* could not drive that subject home more vividly.

Ordinariness also characterized the performance choices made for the Grand Prix in Helsinki. Women soloists and girl bands have entirely dominated the Eurovision for the past two decades, making Serbia’s choice to place six women on the stage not the least bit risky.⁷ The choice to dress the ensemble in black suits and white shirts – Marija quite tussled, with white-tennis-shoe accent, and the troupe formally as if out for the evening – juxtaposed plainness with camp, while introducing a subtle, at least in Eurovision standards, sexual ambiguity. The troupe almost did not dance at all, somewhat defying Eurovision conventions, in which dancing enhances the overall spectacle.⁸ In so doing, the ensemble avoided throwing themselves in sharp contrast with the singer, Marija Šerifović, whose ordinariness on stage was undeniable to any Eurovision viewer.

The politics and power of “Molitva” lay in its musical evocation of an everyday aesthetics to which Europe and Europeans, broadly conceived and gathered for the mediated spectacle of the Grand Prix in Finland, could relate, individually and collectively. In this sense, the song was more about Europe than it was about Serbia, but it was decidedly about both. If it did not heal the historical rift between Serbia and

⁶ Over the course of Eurovision history, the rules determining language use have changed with some frequency, alternating between tolerance of the languages of individual nations and insistence that songs be in one of the “major” European languages, especially French and English. With the expansion of the European Union and the Eurovision Song Contest into Eastern Europe entries may now use any language, even artificial and hybrid languages. Many songs circulate in advance of the Grand Prix on CDs with polyglot covers, thus ameliorating the need to “know what the song is about.” Such flexibility notwithstanding, “Molitva” was distinctive in Helsinki because of the choice to use the Serbian language.

⁷ Eurovision rules restrict the number of on-stage performers – singers, dancers, and back-up chorus – to six. How they are deployed is left to the individual entries.

⁸ In particularly close competitions, such as the 2004 Eurovision in Istanbul, particularly athletic dancing may actually tip the balance. At least since 2000, national entries have invested heavily in the use of dancers who add considerably to the overall spectacle of an act.

Europe, which had widened rather than narrowed during the post-communist era of the New Europe, “Molitva” reimagined the presence of a New Serbia in a New Europe, conflating the power and pleasure of utopia.

The Politics of Utopia and the Voices of European Difference

The ethnographic moments of this essay unfold as a series of liminal moments, enacted as a series of rites of passage, whose actors and ritual specialists perform the politics of a virtual Europe. With the passage of the 52nd Eurovision Song Contest to the early stages of planning for the 53rd Eurovision Song Contest, the power of song to symbolize various pasts come into play. The symbolic meaning of Lordi’s “Hard Rock Hallelujah” seemingly opened an historicist detour to the past for Helsinki, a retro-aesthetics of global style stripped of politics, but Marija Šerifović’s “Molitva” rerouted to the past to the present, if not a future of new beginnings, of firsts, indeed of the desire for a new utopia.⁹ The detours and alternative routes are truly different only on their stylistic surfaces, shaped contrastively by heavy metal and *sevdalinka*-inflected *chanson*. The true utopian, hence political, familiarity of the two victorious songs lies in their reference to religion, even their appeal to a sacred power that supersedes national politics. It is this turn toward the sacred, the appropriation of power through the rhetoric of religion, that transforms the rites of passage occupying the ethnographic present into the representational power of a virtual Europe, a Europe, that is, that ritually passes from present to future. The politics of power and pleasure at the Eurovision dovetail, all the more so because what’s at stake is very, very serious: regional and European power, national and transnational profits.

The sheer weight of politics surrounding the Eurovision Song Contest, with the top-down pressure it exerts on the performers and the publics, has seemingly left little room for the bottom-up trajectory we associate with the Europeans who would eventually come to occupy that utopian Europe, the Old Europeans clinging to tradition, the New Europeans represented by emerging minorities and musical identities. Participation in the Eurovision has, from the first competition in 1956, centered around national concerns, which, in turn, might or might not benefit from the concerted voices of minority musicians and identities.¹⁰ Euro-

⁹ I borrow and adapt this use of utopian vision from Frederic Jameson, who himself applies it to a series of multiple perspectives on the future in a literary history stretching from Thomas More to science fiction. See Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005).

¹⁰ There is no paucity of histories of the Eurovision Song Contest, not least because each year witnesses an historicist recapitulation of the past and a celebration of the

vision song styles often turn outward, appropriating the popular rather than the folk, searching for a cosmopolitan hybridity rather than a conscious authenticity. The formulae employed to shape a successful Eurovision winner are no secret, and it is hardly surprising that there have been those, Johnny Logan of Ireland or Ralph Siegel of Germany, who have plumbed them brilliantly.¹¹

The power of national and nationalist politics notwithstanding, the voices of European difference have not been entirely muted. As the politics of the Eurovision took a turn toward Eastern Europe at the turn of the present century, a turn toward voices of European difference, too, began to emerge. The ritual realignments that have characterized recent Eurovision entries make it necessary to consider that turn from a number of perspectives, which lead me to consider minority voices in different ways, but also to suggest new possibilities for the places in which we hear emerging minorities in global popular-music practices. Whereas we might automatically think of the voices of European difference in traditional terms – individuals, ethnic or racial groups, sectarian or denominational religious practices – that emerge when some measure of majority power accrues to them, I want to suggest that there are also processes of emergence that are not traditional in these ways. It is critical to reconnoiter directions of change that differ from the top-down and bottom-up paths of emergence – the vertical structures – and to consider more horizontal movement, the formation of networks between and among minorities, the proliferation of global styles, the envoicement of the sacred, and the musics and identities that afford the voices of European difference with new potential to emerge. It is in this Hegelian concern for difference, as Frederic Jameson reminds us, that the politics of the utopian reside.¹²

statistics about the songs and the lives of the singers and songwriters. The best of such life-and-work historiographies are Paul Gambaccini et al., *The Complete Eurovision Song Contest Companion*, with a Foreword by Terry Wogan (London: Pavilion, 1998), Jan Feddersen, *Ein Lied kann eine Brücke sein: Die deutsche und internationale Geschichte der Grand Prix Eurovision* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2002), John Kennedy O'Connor, *The Eurovision Song Contest, 50 Years: The Official History* (London: Carlton Books, 2005), and Ivan Raykoff and Robert Dearn Tobin, eds., *A Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

¹¹ Johnny Logan, Ireland's "Mr. Eurovision," sang the winning entry in 1980 and 1987. Ralph Siegel has written or composed seventeen Eurovision entries, most for Germany, but three for Luxembourg. Elena Papparizou, the Eurovision Kyiv winner in 2005, was competing for Greece for the second time.

¹² "Utopian form is itself a representational mediation on radical difference, radical otherness, and on the systemic nature of the social totality, to the point where one cannot imagine any fundamental change in our social existence which has not first

The Eurovision Song Contest
– *Majority and Minority Politics*

The Eurovision Song Contest has never been about minorities and minority identities, in general or specific. Even with the expansion over the past decade and a half to include more voices of European difference, it remains preliminary to offer a revisionist interpretation of the nationalist and commercial interests that control the ESC, particularly in the final phases that lead to the Grand Prix each spring. There are sufficient rules and policies at the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which has organized and run the contest since its inception in 1956, to bolster the argument that minority voices and identities are discouraged, even erased and effaced, and that regional and national issues are rejected in favor of European commerce and cooperation. Even at the historical moments when it would be obvious to draw attention to cultural diversity and political transformation, not least during the transition of socialist states in Eastern Europe after 1989, it is more striking how few, rather than how many, national entries have responded to the pressing issues of the day. The final entries that openly mix the politics of diversity with the power of popular music, when examined over fifty years, have almost always scored very poorly in the Grand Prix.¹³

The majority politics of the Grand Prix notwithstanding, the participation and representation of voices of European difference chart their way along other routes into the larger competitive framework of the Eurovision. First of all, it is important to recognize that musical identities of difference *do* appear in the competitions at the local, regional, and national competitions. At those levels, the entries focus national attention on emerging minorities and the politics of diversity. The influence of these minority issues differs from region to region, just as it affects the choice of national winners in ways that are more distinctive than not. Historically, Scandinavian countries have frequently allowed such issues to emerge within their regional and national competitions. Since the mid-1990s, the same can be said for the growing number of competitions in Eastern Europe and Southeastern Europe.

thrown off Utopian visions like so many sparks from a comet.” Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, op. cit., p. xii.

¹³ Entries with minority themes most often place in the bottom quartile, picking up votes only from neighboring countries and standing perilously close to disqualification for the subsequent year. Mattis Hætta’s and Sverre Kjelsberg’s “Saamidd Ædnan,” with its call for protecting Saami rights against the building of hydroelectric dams, ended the Grand Prix in place sixteen from nineteen in 1980. The other political entry in the same year, Ajda Pekkan’s “Pet’r Oil” for Turkey, finished one place higher.

A second point requires clarification in this regard. If one regards the Eurovision Song Contest as a year-long set of interlinked competitions and public rites of passage, that is, of successive ethnographic moments of historical ritual, it also becomes necessary to interpret the Grand Prix as only one of these rituals, albeit the most internationally visible and the focus of virtually all literature, journalistic and scholarly, on the Eurovision. It is critical, however, to recognize that there are many other reasons for entering the Eurovision, both before and at the stage of the national and European competitions. As voices of European difference begin to emerge, I wish further to suggest, losing – or failing to win – may be even more significant than winning. At the local and regional levels, where cultural diversity has specific meaning and relevance, commercial success often takes a back seat. A similar goal of gaining recognition, I wish further to suggest, has strongly motivated the widespread participation of Eastern European nations since the mid-1990s.¹⁴

The spectacle of the Grand Prix, mediated for international broadcast by the European Broadcasting Union as a countdown of winning national entries, does, nonetheless, retain a traditional space for presenting voices of European difference, particularly minorities and national diversity, namely in the so-called “postcards” that separate each entry. Borrowed initially from the San Remo Festival in Italy, upon which the ESC was based, the postcards are *entr’acte* vignettes that explicitly use music and folklore to represent the host nation’s cultural diversity. Postcards may present folk music and urban popular music in relatively apolitical contexts, but increasingly they seize the moment to make politics and musical identity explicit. This could not have been more the case in 2005, when the Ukrainian Broadcasting Network repeatedly juxtaposed musical images of rural peasant culture with scenes from the Orange Revolution.

The voices of European difference find their way into the Eurovision Song Contest at different levels and through distinctive competitive rituals. Paradoxically, an international contest that is not about minorities becomes a framework that admits them to the regional, national, and international stage. The Eurovision itself mixes the politics of European difference in complex ways, sometimes muting them, at other times affording them particular resonance. The spectator of the virtual Europe of the Eurovision Song Contest encounters emerging musical identities, therefore, on stages both familiar and unfamiliar.

¹⁴ See Bohlman, “Popular Music on the Stage of a United Europe,” *op. cit.*

The Kyiv Eurovision of 2005
– *Political Awakening and the Envoicement of Difference*

Since the turn of the present century, the politics of European difference have consistently moved toward center stage at the Eurovision Song Contest. The clearest evidence of this tendency lies in the fact that, between 2001 and the 50th Anniversary Competition of 2005 in Ukraine, each of the victorious entries has come from “the East,” that is, from nations east of the core of Western European competitors prior to 2000. Finland’s victory in 2006 rerouted the eastward shift, but only slightly, and with Serbia’s victory in 2007, the Eurovision returns to even newer territory of the European East. At first glance, one might attribute this palpable shift to emerging minorities – and I myself have done this in my earlier studies of music and nationalism¹⁵ – but the closer we examine the shift, the more it seems to bear witness to paradox. By paradox, I refer to the fact that the meaning of minority in each instance was a mixture of national and international issues, which I might summarize as follows:

- 1) 2001 – Estonia: Tanel Padar & Dave Benton with 2XL, “Everybody”
 Identity issues: Afro-Caribbean / African American / Baltic EU membership
- 2) 2002 – Latvia: Marie N, “I Wanna”
 Identity issues: Russian minority in Latvia / Flamenco / Gender and sexuality
- 3) 2003 – Turkey: Sertab Erener, “Everyway That I Can”
 Identity issues: Turkey and EU membership / Islam and Iraq War
- 4) 2004 – Ukraine: Ruslana, “Wild Dances”
 Identity issues: Ethnic minorities (Huzul) in Ukraine / East-West EU politics
- 5) 2005 – Greece: Elena Papatrizou, “My Number One”
 Identity issues: Balkan, Southeastern Europe / Greece-Turkey relations
- 6) 2007 – Serbia: Marija Šerifović, “Molitva”
 Identity issues: Balkan, Southeastern Europe / Ottoman ecumene / sexuality

¹⁵ See especially the first chapter and the epilogue in Philip V. Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History*, 1st ed. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2004), pp. 1–13 and 332–43.

At the 2005 Eurovision in Kyiv, the complex mixture of minority issues and identity politics reached a certain saturation point, which lends itself to contrast with Serbia's victorious ordinariness at the 2007 Eurovision in Helsinki. The Eurovision path to Kyiv was determined by the victory of the Ukrainian singer, Ruslana, at the 2004 Istanbul competition. On one hand, Ruslana was a very strategic choice for Ukraine in 2004, only the second year in which Ukraine had competed. Ruslana had already emerged as a star in Ukraine, and her popularity was further due to her highly choreographed performances, which were bound to give her one more critical edge at the Eurovision.

Ukrainians also recognized that Ruslana mixed the traditions of ethnic minorities into her performances, particularly those from western Ukraine, the borderlands of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and hence the historical center of Ukrainian multiculturalism. Ruslana's "Diki tanzi" ("Wild Dances") exploited her image as a popular singer willing to account for ethnic diversity and identity, for it combined specific references to the Huzul minority of the Carpathian Mountains with traditions of Eurovision choreography, as well as well-known images from global music videos, most directly those derived from *Xena, the Warrior Princess*.¹⁶ On the other hand, Ruslana's role as Eurovision victor provided a platform for voicing a full range of national and international political issues, not least because Ruslana herself, even as "Diki tanzi" went double platinum, seized the opportunity afforded by that platform. As Ukraine slid closer to what would become known as the Orange Revolution, Ruslana emphasized the connections between political and minority issues in her larger repertory and the future of a multicultural Ukraine. There was a revival of minority music traditions in Ukrainian music festivals, which themselves came to be vehicles for politicizing the Orange Revolution as a moment for articulating diversity.¹⁷

In the year between contests in 2004 and 2005, the Eurovision underwent a process of politicization, with varied consequences. Entries from throughout Eastern Europe, especially, attempted to emulate Ruslana's "Diki tanzi," seeking, as is often the case in Eurovision entries, to tap into the winning formula. Dance and drum ensembles resembled those of Ruslana.¹⁸ Many Eastern European entries in 2005 – Croatia,

¹⁶ *Xena, the Warrior Princess* had itself appropriated music from the recordings of the Bulgarian State Women's Chorus.

¹⁷ Ruslana has become an active ethnographer and collector of minority folk musics, both in Ukraine and elsewhere in Europe, for example, in northern Serbia.

¹⁸ This influence has not entirely disappeared from the most recent competition in Helsinki, as Elitsa Todorova and Stoyan Yankoulov's Bulgarian entry, "Water," clearly bears witness.

Hungary, Moldavia, Poland, Serbia and Montenegro, and Ukraine among them – chose to perform in their own national languages, a decision that virtually precluded the possibility of winning at the time. Political themes, too, were more evident than they had been in twenty-five years. It follows that the 2005 Eurovision was the most “ethnic” and most overtly tapped the politics of difference in the history of the contest.

From the top-down perspective, these decisions had as many negative as positive consequences. Some of the decisions made winning the Eurovision much more difficult, and by extension those making the decisions risked marginalizing issues of politics and diversity. Such marginalization could not have been at greater risk than in the case of Ukraine’s 2005 entry, Greenjolly’s “Razom naz bahato, nas nye podoloty” (“Together We Are Many, We Cannot Be Defeated”).



Figure 3. Greenjolly performing at the 2005 Kyiv Eurovision Song Contest
(Photograph by Andrea F. Bohlman)

From an aesthetic and stylistic viewpoint, Greenjolly broke all the Eurovision rules for a winning song. Hip-hop, quite rare in Eurovision entries, always did poorly, at least when it dominated a song’s style. The mix of national (Orange Revolution) and international (Che T-shirts, Af-

rican American street choreography) politics would also prove dangerous. Even the use of an all-male band was risky.¹⁹ Such disastrous decision-making notwithstanding, the sense in Ukraine was that Greenjolly would win because it was so compelling and so directly addressed an historic moment with music.²⁰ When it failed to rise above the bottom quartile, the Ukrainians, from Viktor Yushchenko, who was visibly present at the mainstage performance of the Grand Prix, to the tens of thousands at Independence Square, watching the Eurovision at the site of the Orange Revolution, were so stunned that they retreated from the stages in silence. The saturation point, at least in 2005, had been reached.

***On the Eurovision Song – Style, Agency,
and the Envoicement of European Difference***

As I use this essay to move between and among ethnographic moments along several historical routes, I turn now to song and its agency in the history of the nation and nationalism, in Europe but also beyond. Critical to the points I wish to make is the recognition that song is far more than a text that represents historical narratives. I should also argue that song is far more than a *genre* of nationalism, far more than a *symbol* system to which ciphers of the nation accrue. Song in the history of the European nation is neither simply an object nor a subject given meaning through collective performance. Song mobilizes nationalism in exceptionally complex forms, enacting the performance of the nation in the ordinary and the extraordinary moments of history. It is in song that the nation is at once familiar and uncanny, that the *Heimat* is realized as the *unheimlich*. Through performance, song gives agency to the makers of the nation and the actors constituting the *dramatis personae* of nationalism. It is in this field of symbolic agency that I believe the Eurovision song acquires its meaning for the utopian politics of a contemporary and future Europe.

Song is a site of action, indeed, of historical action. Through its performance, song transforms symbols into action. It translates local narrative into national history not only by reconfiguring time – the historical moment – in which the nation becomes audibly meaningful on common cultural landscapes. The performative power of song is not simply abstract, but rather its historical agency requires new and specific dis-

¹⁹ Women singers, solo or in ensembles, such as girl bands, are victorious far more often than male performers or mixed-gender ensembles.

²⁰ My daughter, musicologist Andrea F. Bohlman, and I conducted intensive fieldwork in Kyiv during the 2005 Eurovision.

courses, names for song itself, such as Herder's concept of *Nachgesang* at the end of the eighteenth century or the cluster of meanings embedded in *Gesang/gezang* in cultural Zionism at the end of the nineteenth.²¹ There are critical historical moments, then, in which national and nationalist song is not merely background noise or accompaniment to history. The larger history of national and nationalist song within which the history of Eurovision song unfolds as a critical new chapter is decidedly not about individual works of musical nationalism. Rather than make the case for a universal history of musical nationalism or of music in nationalism, the politics of the Eurovision song are inseparable from an historical concern with fragments, even with the bits and pieces of music that sometimes cohere as musical works but more often conjoin briefly – and powerfully – to articulate the historical potency of the moment.

I turn in two different theoretical directions for the concepts of song fragment upon which I draw for a consideration of national song. The first theoretical direction toward which I have turned has been most convincingly articulated by Partha Chatterjee in his work on Bengali nationalism.²² Song, to extend Chatterjee for the purposes of this essay, not only belongs to the “inner domain” of the nation, but it accounts for differences in the spiritual and ideological practices that constitute that inner domain from within. Song is not one kind of fragment, rather many. More to the point, different functions accrue to song over time, thus, within the multilayered history of a nation as it resists externally imposed forms of nationalism, for example, those from the colonial history of Bengal and India that Chatterjee examines.

Theoretical approaches from historical musicology and ethnomusicology necessarily converge in a consideration of fragments and the nation.²³ National and nationalist song form as the products of fragmentation and therefore enact processes of combining and recombining fragments to create wholes that, unlike musical works themselves, are fragile and malleable. In the historiography of music and nationalism, attention to the functions of fragments begins in the eighteenth century but con-

²¹ Cf. Singer, Rüdiger Singer, “*Nachgesang*”: *Ein Konzept Herders, entwickelt an Osian, der Popular Ballad und der frühen Kunstballade* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), and Philip V. Bohlman, “Before Hebrew Song,” in Michael Berkowitz, ed., *Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of the Jews in 1900 and Beyond* (Leiden: E. J. Brill), pp. 25–59.

²² Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, 1986), and *ibid.*, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

²³ See, e.g., Mary-Ann Constantine and Gerald Porter, *Fragments and Meaning in Traditional Song: From the Blues to the Baltic* (London: The British Academy, 2003).

goals theoretically in the second half of the century in the early writings of Johann Gottfried Herder, notably in his early aesthetic writings from the 1760s and 1770s, which themselves at times deliberately assumed the form of fragments.²⁴ Herder's engagement with the fabricated Ossian songs, called by their collector/author James Macpherson, "Fragments of Ancient Poetry" (1760), was published as "Extracts from Correspondence about Ossian and the Songs of Ancient People" and became a seminal essay in the historiography of musical nationalism.²⁵ Critical for its historical function, the fragment of song embodies both the whole and the part, and it is hardly surprising that this dialectic of "das Ganze" and "das Einzelne" was foundational for the role song played in nineteenth-century nationalist thought.²⁶ The song fragment already contains identity, and it can transfer identity as it conjoins other fragments to forge national song.

The process of transferring identity from the political to the poetic is clearly evident in the song fragments constituting that most national of song genres, the epic. The structure of the epic arises from the coherence of small parts: Repetitious rhythmic patterns that yield meters; line-by-line, or stichic, patterns; narratives about individual characters and local myths, which freely enter and exit the larger epic. As a musically performative genre, the epic expands and contracts as it plies the borders between myth and history.

During the age of European nationalism, crossing, rather than simply plying, that border became especially important, particularly for the nascent nation attempting to free itself from the yoke of empire. In Finland, seeking to distinguish a national identity from those of Sweden and Russia, the fragments of a national epic were readily available, particularly in the Saami runes sung by indigenous peoples along the borders with Sweden in the west and in Karelia, which overlapped with Russia in the east. Finnish nationalists, notably Elias Lönnrot, set about collecting runic Saami fragments in order to mold a single epic from them. In a period of little more than a decade in the mid-nineteenth century, the Finnish *Kalevala* emerged and assumed a single narrative unity, the epic text for the entire Finnish nation. Fragments of epic thus

²⁴ See, e.g., Johann Gottfried Herder, *Kritische Wälder, oder Betrachtungen über die Wissenschaft und Kunst des Schönen*, vols. 1–3. (Riga: Johann Hartknoch, 1769), *ibid.*, *Von deutscher Art und Kunst: Einige fliegende Blätter* (Hamburg: Bode, 1773), and *ibid.*, "Stimmen der Völker in Liedern" and *Volkslieder*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Weygandische Buchhandlung, 1778/1779).

²⁵ In Herder, *Von deutscher Art und Kunst*, *op. cit.*

²⁶ The distinction stretches across the works of Schlegel; Carl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel, *Kritische Schriften*, ed. by Wolfdietrich Rasch (Munich, 1956).

connected to all other *Kalevala* fragments to retell and to resing myth as national history.²⁷

The Revolutionary Mix
– *Eurovision and Ukraine 2005*

The collision of the Orange Revolution and the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest in Kyiv similarly leads to an historical moment in which fragments cohere as wholes. This is a site of performance, literally, that is, a site made by performance. The performance site might have been on the streets of Kyiv, where the Orange Revolution unfolded, or it might have been on the mainstage of the Eurovision Song Contest, where European unity confronted the nationalist aspirations of its constituent nations, each struggling to reconcile its own fragments. It is here that musical process emerges in counterpoint with historical process, at the juncture of the historical present and the ethnographic present of East European nationalism.

The year of Ukrainian history that began with Ruslana's "Diki tanzi" at the 2004 Eurovision in Istanbul closed with another song of Ukraine, "Razom nas bahato, nas ne podolaty!" ("Together We Are Many, We Cannot Be Defeated"), sung by the hip-hop group, Greenjolly, Ukraine's entry in the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest. "Razom nas bahato" was an atypical Eurovision entry, and musically it had no chance of winning. Hip-hop, in a word, always scored very poorly. It was, nonetheless, typical of the processes that gave power and meaning to a song of Ukraine. As a song, as a performance, "Razom nas bahato" had employed the techniques of hip-hop to gather and sample the language from the street protests in Kyiv. Musically, Greenjolly's members had mixed the sampled fragments of revolutionary discourse, transforming the formulae of global pop to national song. The title and chorus openly and deliberately sampled the Chilean folk song that had become the anthem of Salvadore Allende's Unidad Popular, "El pueblo unido, jamás será vencido!" (cf. Frederic Rzewski's 1975 piano variations, "The People United Will Never Be Defeated!"). As such, "Razom nas bahato" was mobilized to do powerful historical work.

²⁷ For a standard translation into English see Elias Lönnrot, *The Kalevala: An Epic Poem after Oral Tradition*, trans. by Keith Bosley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Greenjolly – Ukrainian Entry in the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest (Kyiv, Ukraine)

We won't stand this – no! Revolution is on!
 'Cuz lies be the weapon of mass destruction!
 All together we're one! All together we're strong!
 God be my witness we've waited too long!

Fal'sifikaciyam – ni! mahinaciyam – ni!
 Ponyatiyam – ni! Ni brehni!
 Virimo – Tak! Mozhemo – Tak!
 Znayu peremozhemo – Tak! Tak!

Chorus

Razom nas bahato – nas ne podolaty!

What you wanna say to your daughters and sons?
 You know the battle is not over till the battle is won!
 Truth be the weapon! We ain't scared of the guns!
 We stay undefeated, 'cuz together we're one!

My – vzhe razom! My – nazavzhdy!
 My Ukrainy don'ki i syny!
 Zaraz yak nikoly godi chekaty!

Chorus

Razom nas bahato – nas ne podolaty!

Figure 4. “Razom Nas Bahato, Nas Ne Podolaty!” / “Together We Are Many, We Cannot Be Defeated”

Considering the historical formations of national and nationalist song from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first, I have myself sampled a diverse set of fragments and remixed them rhetorically as acts of nationalist performance. Some of the fragments might have seemed obvious candidates for a nationalist musical vocabulary. Others might were perhaps less convincing. Still others, say, hip-hop, might have seemed like a stretch as I claimed them to be sampled fragments of Ukrainian-ness at the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest.

What unified them, however, was the potential of historical process that musical performance sets in motion. National song changes as it articulates an act of history in the eighteenth, nineteenth, or twenty-first

century. The song of Ukraine changes as it samples folk songs or the drumbeat from the Orange Revolution. National song changes not because its many mixes sound different, but rather because they sound the differences that mark a moment of revolution or the sweep of the historical *longue durée*. Significantly, the musicians who mobilized the nation with the songs of the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest, Ruslana and Greenjolly, have intensified the agency of their own engagement with song fragments, Ruslana in her ethnomusicological fieldwork along the borders of Eastern Europe and Greenjolly in the performances of revolutionary song they take to rallies and demonstrations throughout the continent. If song has the power to narrate history – to “confront history” in the words of George Mosse – it becomes far more than a record or a representation of history.²⁸ National song participates in the making of history, mobilizing historical agents and actors through performance, and gathering its diverse parts to realize the full panorama of past, present, and utopian future.

Nul points – The Meaning of Empty Fragments

The coherence of fragments to afford national and European identity depends on a vast array of networks, material and metaphorical. The networks from which the Eurovision Song Contest forms, national broadcasting networks and recording studios, on one hand, and the European Broadcasting Union and transnational recording conglomerates, on the other, may both invent and imprison the singers. In the passage from one network to the next, from local performer to national ambassador, the system of networks demand compromises of the individual, artistically and ideologically. Individual choices about repertory must be weighed against the range of possibilities available in a national tradition. The styles of performance must be mixed and remixed, allowing singers to experiment with a potential winning formula, while not abandoning the possibility of the freshness of a new voice or blocking the entry of a new politics. Musicians may choose to negotiate local, national, and regional networks in different ways, some exploiting opportunities rather than being exploited by them.²⁹ Similarly, musicians have some freedom in determining the extent to which their association with Eurovision networks is brief or extended, whether it generates the mo-

²⁸ Mosse, George L. 2000. *Confronting History: A Memoir*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

²⁹ Marija Šerifović and her promoters, as the second section of this essay briefly notes, was particularly skillful in utilizing networks in Serbia and elsewhere in Southeastern Europe at a very young age.

ment of fleeting fame or engenders a career of desperate clinging to youthful success.

Such choices notwithstanding, there is one choice that does not remain open for the potential Eurovision singer, and that is avoiding the networks altogether. Making a choice to use network channels to enter Eurovision competitiveness, however, would rarely occur to aspiring musicians, or even to seasoned stars. The far more difficult choice, which is to say realistic choice, is that of extricating oneself from the network, choosing, that is, to distance oneself the European world of popular song and to go it on one's own. The very difficulty of making such choices is most evident when one goes in search of those musicians who seemingly have lost the most through their Eurovision endeavors, whose rewards, that is, are heralded by what would be the total breakdown of the networks of regional friends and musical compatriots. I refer, of course, to the most notorious of all Eurovision awards: nul points.

The first thing to notice when searches for the singers whose ignominy should have been sealed by even a single consoling vote from the national committees is that these singers have not fallen off the maps of their home countries.³⁰ There are many reasons for embracing the denial of success as a form of success. Being snubbed by the national committees and voters may affirm a cultural inferiority complex. It may serve as evidence of regional and political tensions, as well as their persistence in the public sphere of European spectacle where they might otherwise seem out of place. For the “Big Four” – France, Germany, Great Britain, and Spain – the repeatedly poor showings of the past decade serve many as a confirmation of their national disdain for the Eurovision Song Contest itself. Failure, nonetheless, always has national implications.

There may be few better witnesses to the difficulty of extricating oneself from a network of self-justifying failure than Norway. The path of Norway's entry to the Eurovision is paved almost entirely by the nation's media network, as are eventually the paths that lead away from the Eurovision and unfold as circuitous detours toward future participation in the highly mediated public sphere of Scandinavian popular music. The Norwegian state broadcasting network NRK organizes the national com-

³⁰ Travel and comic writer, Tim Moore, was able locate and to conduct intensive interviews with the fourteen nulpointers from 1978 to 1993 with relatively little effort. His post-Eurovision biographies of the fourteen brilliantly reveal that success was never encumbered by bad Eurovision showings. Quite the contrary, in several cases, nul points marked the turning point toward a career of accumulating successes, some of them enhanced by further participation in Eurovision networks. See Tim Moore, *Nul Points* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006).

petition, the Melodi Grand Prix, at every level. So extensive is the national imprint on song production and performance style that the Melodi Grand Prix historically has more meaning for many Norwegians than the Eurovision Song Contest. It is not entirely ironic, therefore, that no nation's entries have been rewarded with nul points more often than those from Norway. Motivating Norway's musical nationalism is its rejection of Scandinavian regionalism, in other words, particularly its antagonism toward Sweden.³¹ Sweden's long political domination of Scandinavia and its somewhat shorter musical domination following ABBA's victory with "Waterloo" in 1974 provide an impediment for Norway that in many ways replicates Norway's historical struggle for political independence from Sweden, gained only in 1905. Political and musical networks, however, form unexpected counterpoint in Norway's search for a distinctive national voice. In no year was this clearer than 1981. In no career was this clearer than that of Finn Kalvik, who received nul points singing for Norway in 1981.

Norway's decision to send Finn Kalvik with his song "Aldri i livet" ("Never in My Life") to the 1981 competition in Dublin formed at the juncture of several media and aesthetic networks. On its surface, Kalvik's folksong-like performance, performing quietly with a guitar to emblemize roots in the 1960s folk revival, would appear to be a disastrous stylistic decision in an era of explosive on-stage glitz.³² Underneath, however, "Aldri i livet" reached the Eurovision only after a long collaboration between Finn Kalvik and Benny Andersson of ABBA, who produced the song for the evening. Norway's stylistic gambit was to present its entry as a juxtaposition of two earlier styles, acknowledging European singer-songwriters from the 1960s and ABBA's multistylistic rock sound of the 1970s. The gambit, however, failed, perhaps due to Kalvik's uninspiring performance, perhaps also due to the failure of any other remotely similar combination of styles.

For Finn Kalvik, receiving nul points at the 1981 Dublin Eurovision was the beginning rather than the end of a successful singing career in and for Norway. He survived his internationally poor showing, in part attributed to his flirtation with Benny Andersson as a Swedish producer, entering the NRK's Melodi Grand Prix throughout the 1980s in hopes of reaching the Eurovision once again as Norway's entry. His recordings

³¹ In 2007, Norway, however, awarded twelve points to Sweden and ten points to Serbia.

³² On the evening of the Grand Prix, Norway was sandwiched between Ireland, the host, and the United Kingdom, whose Bucks Fizz emerged victorious at the end of the evening.

sold well, and by the turn of the twenty-first century, he had passed the million-album sales mark with *Dagdrivernotater* (“Day Drifter Notes”). In the 1990s Norwegian broadcasting also transformed his last-place performance in the Eurovision to a symbolic performance of Norwegian cultural effacement and national distinctiveness with a comic routine, the “Finn Kalvik Show,” on the popular television comedy, “Åpen Post.” For the networks that shaped the images of Norway’s self-identity, the ignominy of nul points had become a national icon. For Finn Kalvik, “Aldri i livet” would have the honor of becoming his best-selling song on his best-selling album.³³ For the European cultural politics of Norway, victory has again and again been snatched from the jaws of Eurovision defeat.

Aesthetic Networks – The Making of Eurovision Song Styles

The old and the new enter into a complex mix in the formation of Eurovision song styles. Song writers and producers often turn to the past to evoke a sense of familiarity, a style that diverse listening publics will find attractive. The old also acquires the pretense of bearing with it the winning formulae of the past. If it worked for ABBA or Céline Dion, why should it not enjoy success when revived years later? If hip-hop or country have universal appeal, why should they not have European appeal? Simple revival, nonetheless, is a risky business, for singers who reimagine the past must contend with the ways in which nostalgia transforms the past – a previous performance in a distinctive style – becomes better with age, hence less reproducible. The ABBA style, the single most dominant style in Eurovision history, as witnessed by the choice of “Waterloo” as the most popular song in the first half-century of the Eurovision, has proved most resilient through its many revivals and imitations.³⁴ Those revivals, however, have yet to produce another winning song.

The mixture of styles and the explicit use of revival for the entries in the 2007 Helsinki Eurovision was particularly striking, even extreme. The more pejorative judgment passed on the style-mix held it to be eclectic. The rather more positive judgment made an argument for a

³³ For an extensive interview with Finn Kalvik and a revealing analysis of his continued interaction with European media networks, see Moore, *Nul Points*, pp. 70–115. In the interview, Kalvik himself revels in the quarter century of success that accrued to “Aldri i livet” in the quarter-century of its post-Eurovision life: “‘Aldri i livet’ is now more popular than ever, for a whole new generation, because they just used it for the music on a big TV commercial in Norway... This song has really... stood a test in time.” *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13.

³⁴ As part of the fifty-year retrospective held in Copenhagen in October 2005, viewers were asked to vote for the best song. ABBA’s “Waterloo” proved to be an easy victor.

growing intertextuality, necessary as a means of accounting for the rapid expansion of the ESC into Eastern Europe and beyond. The question of style networks, particularly after the turn of the millennium and the growth to forty-two entries by 2007, had led to a growing distance, historically and musically, from the dominant Eurovision styles prior to the 1990s and the almost parallel spread of the European Union and the Eurovision Song Contest.

At one level of intertextuality in the song styles of the new millennium, regional styles increasingly formed canons, or even reproduced them. In southeastern Europe, the entry for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Marija Šestić's performance of "Rijeka bez imena" ("The River of Sorrow," by Aleksandra Milutinović and Goran Kovačić) explicitly employed the style of *sevdalinka*, the Bosnian national song style. *Sevdalinka* emblemizes Bosnia historically, not least because of the mixture of traditions that it realizes, not only south Slavic traditions, but also Ottoman and Sephardic song. The use of ballad vocal style, the small instrumental ensemble with obvious Turkish components (e.g., the *saz*), and extensive use of metaphor in the song lyrics (e.g., the bridge over the river of sorrows that directly evokes the bridge at Mostar) are recognizable not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Bosnian diaspora communities elsewhere in Europe³⁵, but they have entered the repertory of revived song styles in the Eurovision Song Contest. The Bosnian entry from the previous year, Hari Mata Hari's "Lejla," drew upon the sound and imagery of the *sevdalinka* in strikingly similar ways.³⁶ The influence of *sevdalinka* might well be said to have extended beyond the stylistic borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina: It provides one of the contexts for understanding the convergence of regional styles in Marija Šerifović's "Molitva."

There is a long tradition of regionalizing Eurovision song styles. The earliest regional song style, perhaps, is that of the San Remo song, the Italian competition that preceded the Eurovision Song Contest and served as a model for the ESC well into the 1970s. More recently, there has been a struggle to establish a broader cluster of styles to characterize the expansion into Eastern Europe. Turkey and Greece weave national styles into a regional counterpoint. A still-inchoate texture with Caucasus and Anatolian elements is evident in the first- and second-time en-

³⁵ *Sevdah in Wien, Tondokumente zur Volksmusik in Österreich*, vol. 5, *Bosnische Musik* (Vienna: Institut für Volksmusikforschung an der Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Wien, 1996).

³⁶ In the promotional video the *sevdalinka* ensemble is filmed playing on the bridge at Mostar.

tries, Georgia and Armenia.³⁷ Crystallizing this style was Ruslana's "Diki tanzi" in 2004, with its extensive use of folk and folklike instruments, especially the incorporation of an athletic percussion section. There was no clearer example of this regional style at Helsinki than the Bulgarian entry, Elitsa Todorova and Stoyan Yonkoulov's "Water," in which the percussion substyles ranged from traditional Bulgarian through the North Indian *tabla* vocables in the Middle Eight to the Japanese *taiko* virtuosity of the singers themselves.

If regionalizing Eurovision styles has increased over the past decade, there has been no concomitant retreat of international popular styles. At the 2007 Helsinki Eurovision this could not have been more striking. The heavy-metal style of Finland's Lordi, which had proved victorious in 2006, remained seductive in 2007.³⁸ The Czech Republic and Iceland both turned to metal styles, even though they would eventually pale in comparison with Lordi. African American styles mixed in diverse ways, for example in Belgium's "LovePower" with its reliance on 1970s Motown. Hip-hop, in contrast, continued to display the rather marginal and tentative position it had occupied through much of the past decade, appearing in the bridge sections of songs such as Israel's "Push the button" and Turkey's "Shake It Up Shekerim."³⁹

Unusually striking as a practice of reviving past styles in the 2007 ESC was the explicit reference to individual musicians and songs from earlier eras of popular song, as often as not to earlier Eurovision songs. Hungary's Magdi Rúzsa virtually imitated Janis Joplin in her "Unsubstantial Blues." Bobby Darin seemingly sang in impeccable German in Roger Cicero's "Frauen regier'n die Welt." Norway's Guri Schanke ("Ven a bailar conmigo") almost slavishly imitated Mari N's flamenco-tinged winning style for Latvia in 2002. Sweden's The Ark ("The Worrying Kind") paid homage to its Swedish ancestors, ABBA, enough to garner a modicum of support from its Scandinavian neighbors.

Many of the 2007 entries plied the boundaries between eclecticism and hybridity. England and Ireland both struggled to reimagine the past as present, utterly failing to perform in a style that was meaningful to the

³⁷ It is already clear, for example, that Armenian entries will make extensive symbolic use of the national instrument, the single-reed *duduk*.

³⁸ Finland itself can lay claim to a long tradition of metal styles, thus allowing one to make the argument that Lordi's 2006 "Hard Rock Hallelujah" was equally as local as global.

³⁹ Kenan Doğulu raps in the middle eight of "Shake It Up Shekerim" unequivocally to evoke Sertab Erener's use of hip-hop in the middle eight of "Every Way That I Can", her victorious Eurovision entry in 2003.

voters. Latvia and Slovenia entered with operatic performances, Bonaparti.LV's "Questa notte," with its doubling of the power of the "Three Tenors" stentorian sounds, and Alenka Gotar's "Cvet z juga," with its invention of the Eurovision operatic diva. Whether Italian opera will find fertile soil on the Eurovision stylistic landscape is difficult to predict. A song such as Latvia's "Questa notte" may be a bow to the Three Tenors and to the historical influence of the San Remo Festival on the Eurovision. The operatic style may also open questions about the very absence of Italy as a symbol of a particular vocal style that would reroute the nature of singing among Eurovision competitors. Whatever their historical role becomes, "Questa notte" and "Cvet z juga" have won a place in the Eurovision song styles of the Baltic lands and of southeastern Europe.

Networks of Networks

Minority and identity issues that emerge as voices of European difference in the Eurovision Song Contest stretch across a series of networks, which interlock and facilitate interaction in complex different ways. Using a table that is intentionally too schematic, I should like to suggest four networks, which allow us to account for political issues that are both the same and different from Eurovision to Eurovision. Networks of emerging difference form in many places and through complex processes, and it is through viewing these together and through examining the complex networks of modernity to which Friedrich Kittler and others have identified, that we come more fully to understand that minorities never emerge simply as the powerless half of a minority-majority dichotomy.⁴⁰ Though these networks reflect distinctive processes of counterpoint among the voices of European difference, they are also homologous in the ways that a continuum stretches from the local to the global in each network. Above all, the continuum represents the dynamic quality of identity formation and the relation between and among popular music, the nation, and Europe.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Friedrich A. Kittler, *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1987), and Saskia Sassen, ed., *Global Networks, Linked Cities* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002).

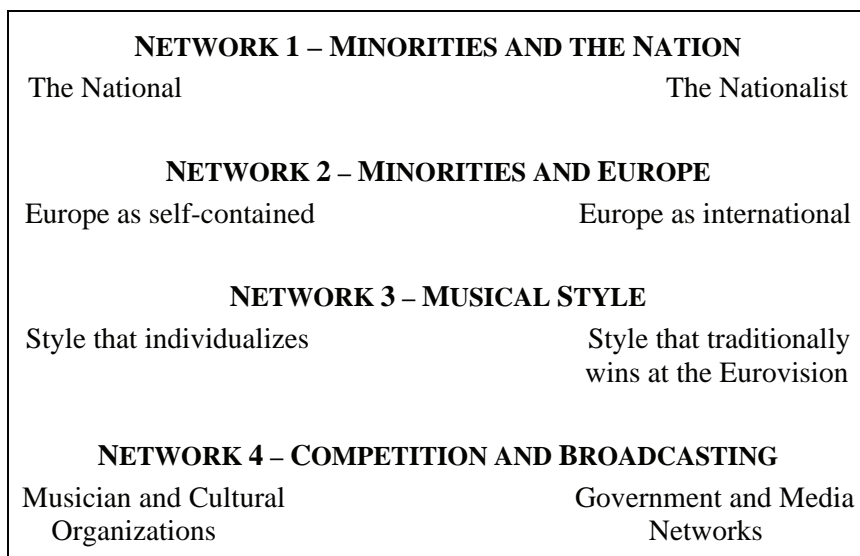


Figure 5. Typology of Eurovision Networks

By proposing still-abstract models of networks, I intentionally draw attention to the cultural and performance sites at which the Eurovision Song Contest is open for the emergence of many different voices of European difference. The emerging minorities might draw their identity in more traditional ways, that is, within the nation and in contradistinction to a national majority. Just as often, however, emerging voices may reflect histories of cultural encounter that are global and stretch beyond the borders formed by European nation-building. Issues of race and racism, for example, offer persistent evidence of the failure to integrate local racial minorities as well as to resolve colonial conflict. The failure of a person of color to win at the Eurovision Song Contest during its first 45 years, therefore, critically enters the networks as evidence of deep levels of racism and the suppression of minority voices.⁴¹

To account for the minorities that have emerged during the first half-century of the European Song Contest, I again schematically sketch the categories of “Eurovision Minority Identities” in Figure 6. By deploying the Eurovision Minority Identities across the four network mod-

⁴¹ Frequent criticism is leveled at Eurovision entries during the past decade for turning too often to African American popular styles, from gospel to blues to Motown, usually with the dismissal that these styles are “not European.” Such criticism, however, neglects the rapidly growing presence of participants who people of color, in other words, the changing racial makeup of Europe itself, reflecting both postcolonial integration and globalization.

els of Figure 5, I make a further move toward rendering the networks less abstract. Minority identities, in fact, begin truly to emerge from them rather than being masked by the seeming sameness that victorious entries are accused of exploiting.

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) National Minorities (Huzul, Breton, “Eastern Jews” in Israel) 2) Indigenous Minorities (Saami) 3) Minorities Formed by Borders and Contested Territory (Belgium, Cyprus, Baltic) 4) Historical and Religious Minorities (Multicultural, Multireligious Balkans) 5) Transnational/Stateless Minorities (Roma, Jews) 6) New European Minorities (Muslim Europeans, Guest Workers) 7) Postcolonial Minorities (Algerians in France, South Asians in UK) 8) Global Minorities (African American, Sexual choice) |
|---|

Figure 6. Eurovision Minority Identities

It is because the Eurovision Song Contest is so often dismissed as being devoid of diversity, musical or cultural, and because the national and international media networks are so often accused of suppressing the voices of the powerless and of protest, that emerging minorities may find their ways to its networks of minority identities and multicultural diversity in especially trenchant ways, which, too, are deserving of attention. How remarkable is it that an international popular music contest accused of consciously circumventing minority identities can spawn so many networks from which those issues emerge in new and distinctive forms? Viewed separately, the voices of European difference that have participated in the Eurovision Song contest have long seemed as if they were merely innocuous cogs in the commercial machinery of the contest. Viewed together in the complex of networks that emerge from the Eurovision, they reveal a changing and diverse Europe, where many rather than few musical identities have become a reality.

Epilogue – Breathless on the Road to Belgrade

Even as I write this essay, with the heady days of Marija Šerifović’s victory and the subsequent celebrations in the streets of Belgrade still fresh, Eurovision 2008 draws nearer. The floodgates of Eurovision 2007

paraphernalia have only begun to open, and my copy of the official Eurovision DVD has yet to arrive in the mail. Without noticeable decrescendo, the crescendo for the next spectacle of European self-imagination and self-representation will already be audible the moment we choose to listen. The fragments of the old songs and styles, of the Old Europe and its constellation of nations, are flowing together and beginning to cohere. The New Europe, still inchoate, is nonetheless palpable. No one knows what lies beyond the horizon of new beginnings, but surely there will be other new beginnings there as well.

The Eurovision Song Contest, however camp and *jouissance*, minority and majority politics compete for and on the mainstage, allows us to chart the roads that diverge and intersect on the landscapes of a Europe that has the potential to collapse into fragments or cohere with a new wholeness. As a site of power, pleasure, and prayer, the Eurovision Song Contest also becomes the site of politics, utopian and dystopian. That politics, nonetheless, carries with it a sense of responsibility. If nothing else, we are compelled to listen to the politics accompanying new voices of European difference in new ways. As we draw closer to Belgrade, however, it becomes increasingly apparent that contenting ourselves with “if nothing else” is totally insufficient if we are to take ourselves seriously as musicians and musicologists, and as citizens of a world whose dimensions are made meaningful with musics of all kinds.

Филип В. Болман

ПОЛИТИКА МОЋИ, ЗАДОВОЉСТВА И МОЛИТВЕ
НА ТАКМИЧЕЊУ ЗА „ПЕСМУ ЕВРОВИЗИЈЕ“
(Резиме)

Такмичење за „Песму Евровизије“, упркос спектаклу и слављу, представља модерни контекст озбиљног наступа европске политике. Иако многим посматрачима са стране песме могу да делују бесмислено, постоје мреже музичара и агената културе које у датом историјском тренутку указују на повезаност са најсложенијом политиком. Уосталом, такмичење за „Песму Евровизије“ почело је 1956. године, у време совјетских инвазија на Чехословачку и Мађарску, а многи наступи, па чак и неке истакнуте победничке песме, били су директан одговор на променљиву политичку слику Европе.

У тексту заступа алтернативни приступ политици и естетици такмичења за „Песму Евровизије“. Моје полазиште је *Молитва* Марије Шерифовић, победничка песма Србије на 52. евровизијском такмичењу. Пошто су интернационалне реакције тежиле да потисну српску песму и њен успех

протумаче као резултат балканске и источно-европске пристрасности, посебно испитујем начине на које песма рефлектује неке од доминантних естетских промена у XXI веку. Марија Шерифовић није само талентована певачица са изграђеном каријером. Њена *Молитва* указује на вешту комбинацију традиционалних форми и иновативног наступа. Иако је изведена на српском језику – што је преседан у односу на победничке песме које су током протеклих деценија биле на енглеском или француском – *Молитва* је својим мелодијским идентитетом и лирским значењем привукла гласаче из целе Европе.

Теоријски аргумент овог есеја фокусира се на „умрежавања“ и начине њиховог укрштања на такмичењу за „Песму Евровизије“, као и на промене које из године у годину деле сваки *Grand Prix*. Сâмо такмичење организују и реализују европска радио-телевизијска мрежа и национални медији, као њени чланови. Они заједно намећу многе спољашње услове (нпр. избор језика, дужина песме, број извођача на сцени), али поред њих постоје другачије мреже које делотворно оснажују унутрашње промене. Нова проблематика политике мањина, ширење Европске Уније ка Источној Европи и Турској и религијске конотације муслиманских нација и музичара налазе свој пут до Евровизије кроз друге начине повезивања. Истовременим истраживањем свих тих видова умрежавања на примерима такмичења за „Песму Евровизије“ можемо да разумемо другачију Европу и разлике у њој.

(Са енглеског превела Биљана Милановић)

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