

Global Sonic Cultures Essay: A critical contextualisation and analysis of a sonic case study of your choosing.

The song Shum by Go_A is examined in this essay. It will go into great length on the song's historical context, cultural relevance, and influence on the Eurovision Song Contest. I will also talk about the artist's history and the significance of some of the song's lyrics. I will discuss the Eurovision Song Contest and how it's affected by folk music. This essay will also go into some instruments used in the song and their cultural significance. The essay will also cover the cultural differences between popular music and folk as genres.

GO_A is "a Ukrainian electro-folk band that combines astonishing authentic Ukrainian vocals, modern electronic dance beats, African drums, and a powerful guitar drive into a bright, fierce, and unforgettable sound" (Go_A, Main Page 2023). Shum is a Ukrainian folk song that combines both traditional Ukrainian instruments and modern electronic beats to create an upbeat, catchy rhythm with meaningful lyrics. The song itself was made public to prepare for the 2021 Eurovision Song Contest, an international songwriting contest. The European Broadcast Union explains Eurovision as: "Every year, nations from all around Europe and beyond compete in the Eurovision Song Contest, a music competition." (The Origins of Eurovision, 2022). Shum was released on January 22, 2021. It was posted to Go_A's own YouTube channel.

Go_A was selected for Eurovision via a selection programme called Vidbir. Vidbir is a show held months before Eurovision to decide the Ukrainian representative for Eurovision. This is done by having each act perform, and then the decision is put to the celebrity panel and the public to vote on. Vidbir was significant, as the winner was selected by a combination of tele voting points and jury points. This shows that the Ukrainian people saw the song as a good representation of Ukraine as a whole.

The traditional Ukrainian instrument, the Sopilka, was also played in the video. a Sopilka, as defined by the Ukrainian Encyclopedia: "A wind folk musical instrument of varied construction made of wood or bark. Generally cylindrical, blocked at one end, and with 6 to 8 finger holes" (Struk, Sopilka, 1993). "The song is connected to a genre of pagan "spring songs" often performed in both urban folk music revivalists and rural settings such as the Carpathian mountain regions of Western Ukraine." Reyes, M., & McGee, K. (2023)

Incorporating traditional Ukrainian folk music in "Shum" is a key component. Shum includes a traditional Ukrainian folk chant known as Kolomyjka. "A short form of song, composed of two verses, fourteen syllables, makes up a complete thought; it is being produced by the common people. Sometimes a few of these stanzas are linked together. Most of the truths of life are expressed in this form of people's poetry." (Kowalsky, 1925)

The inclusion of traditional folk inspiration in "Shum" is crucial since it contributes to the presentation of Ukraine's distinctive cultural traditions. The inspiration came from Ukrainian folk songs and mythology. GO_A themselves say, "The inspiration came from the original Ukrainian folk song and dance. Our ancestors used them to wake up the spirit of the forest and spring. The title of the song 'Shum' is a game of words. In Ukrainian mythology, 'Shum'

is the spirit of the forest, but its literal translation is 'noise'. So they are making noise to bring 'Shum'" (Go_A 2023).

But "Shum" is more than just an homage to Ukrainian folk music. because of the use of modern electronic sounds, the song has an energetic feel. This fusion of the historic and modern demonstrates broader cultural developments in Ukraine and worldwide. "Shum" serves as an example of how traditional music may be updated and reinvented for a modern audience. It does this while still holding on to the prominent features of folklore music; it stays true to the source material and honours the Ukrainian culture while embracing the beautiful simplicity of other European genres. "Shum's powerful vibes captured folks who don't know a word of Ukrainian and Ukrainians who have never heard folklore alike." (Shandra, 2021)

The song Shum was initially a cover of a traditional folk song of the same name. The song was only meant to be appreciated as Ukrainian folklore; it was never planned to compete in the Eurovision Song Contest. The song was so well-liked by the band's fans that the band made it an official song and entered it in the Eurovision Contest. However, the song had to undergo considerable changes to be submitted for Eurovision. "The original version was too long and borrowed lyrics from existing traditional songs, which is prohibited under Eurovision rules. The purpose of the original track was to recreate the folk ritual at live performances with their audience" (Fuster, 2021).

"The new version of the song was adapted for Eurovision and is based on Vesnianka folk songs. In Pavlenko's words, it was intended to have 'more positive energy', since the original version, which is based on the folk ritual, is 'a bit tense.' (Suspilne Media, 2021). Vesnianka is a traditional Ukrainian folk song that is performed in the springtime. Ivan Honchar says about Ukrainian folk songs: "Ritual songs are considered to be the oldest due to the preservation of archaic features in the language, melody, rhythm, and poetics. Each song was performed exclusively in the context of a certain rite or ritual action." (Batyrieva, Folk Songs in Rural Ukraine, 2021).

"From 1966 to 1972 and again from 1977 to 1999" (JohnTheGo, 2022), a rule was introduced that said that participants had to perform their songs in one of the official languages of their own country. Up until the mid-1990s, the majority of songs played at Eurovision were done so in the official language of the country. Since the 1999 competition, competitors have had the option to perform in any language of their choice. The number of English-language songs in the Eurovision Song Contest considerably rose as a result of this modification. Due to its international appeal and wider reach, English has proven to be a popular choice among participants and is a language that is widely spoken. To boost their chances of reaching a larger audience and winning the competition, many nations started choosing English as the language for their contributions. This favour towards English songs has meant that folk music is often dismissed.

The range of musical genres covered in the contest is widened by the inclusion of traditional music in Eurovision. "Pop music is a very broad term that describes music that is popular in the mainstream. The term 'pop' refers to all kinds of genres, such as rock, country, rap, etc." (Berlin Music School, Damvibes, 2023). Although contemporary pop music rules the airwaves, traditional music adds depth and variety of performances and allows audiences to

discover a wide range of musical traditions. By performing traditional music, Eurovision celebrates the beauty of various musical genres and encourages musical experimentation. Maud Karpeles was a scholar who looked into what separates folk and popular music. When asked to describe what sets apart folk from other music, she said this: "It is not, of course, the popularity of a song that determines whether it can be classified as a folk song, but the inherent qualities that distinguish it from other types of songs." (Karpeles, 1968).

The fact that "Shum" was performed at the Eurovision Song Contest is also significant. During the competition, people from many countries and backgrounds unite since it has developed into a cultural institution. This exposure can help people become more aware of and comprehend different cultures, which is more important than ever in the contemporary world. It is indisputable that Eurovision has a lot of influence, both in music and politics. The celebration and preservation of cultural heritage can be powerfully facilitated by traditional music. The cultural heritage of many countries should be acknowledged and preserved in an increasingly globalised society.

Shum's famous chorus, engaging melody, and distinctive blending of folk and contemporary components all got a positive response from audiences. The song's effect was furthered by the performance at Eurovision, which featured traditional instruments and fascinating staging. The ability of GO_A to combine contemporary and traditional sounds caught the attention of both Eurovision fans and the larger music scene.

Folk music frequently conveys a strong emotional resonance that can affect listeners' hearts. It can elicit powerful emotions and have a lasting effect on both artists and viewers because of its sincerity and connection to cultural roots. When performers play traditional music during Eurovision, their performances are infused with a sincere passion and sincerity that appeal to the audience. This emotional connection not only improves the Eurovision experience overall but also gives the contest a distinctive and lasting quality. Folk music uses its lyrics, melodies, and traditional instruments to tell real-life stories. "It was understood by ancient Greek philosophers that music evokes an emotional response from both performers and listeners" (Alexandra Habecker, 2018). Folklore and other music forms can be used therapeutically. "Music therapy is a relatively new field that uses studies of music from a neurological and psychological standpoint to find ways of using music in therapeutic applications." (Music Theory, 2018).

Traditional music in Eurovision acts as a potent catalyst, promoting inclusivity, musical diversity, and profound emotional connections while celebrating cultural history. Participating nations enhance the Eurovision experience by infusing traditional aspects into their performances, enabling audiences to study and appreciate the richness of other musical traditions. Recognising and valuing traditional music is crucial as Eurovision develops to keep the festival a dynamic celebration of world culture and artistic brilliance. Moses Asch, an American music executive who produced folk and founded Folkways Records, says, "Since folk means people, and this, in turn, means all of us, folk represents all of us" (Asch, Folk Music 1956). I think this brilliantly sums up how folk music can bring people together and unite communities through the power of music.

GO_A (2023) Go_a, Go_A. Available at: <https://go-a-band.com/about-us/> (Accessed: April 27, 2023).

Shandra, A. (2021) Why was Ukraine's Eurovision performance by Go_a so mesmerizing?, Euromaidan Press. Available at: <https://euromaidanpress.com/2021/05/25/pan-european-archetypes-go-a-ukraine-eurovision-performance/> (Accessed: 15 May 2023).

Habecker, Alexandra, "Music and Ireland's National Identity: Connecting Folk Music and Cultural Theory through Emotional Sociology" (2018). University Honors Theses. Paper 582. (Accessed: 15 May 2023)

Struk, D.H. (1993) Sopilka. Available at: <https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CS%5CO%5CSopilkaIT.htm> (Accessed: April 27, 2023).

School Damvibes, B.M. (2023) Pop music genre - definition & history - (+10 examples), Pop Music Genre - Definition & History - (+10 EXAMPLES). Available at: <https://www.damvibes.com/music-theory/pop-music-genre-definition-history/> (Accessed: 15 May 2023).

A, G. (2023) Main page, Go_A. Available at: <https://go-a-band.com/> (Accessed: 15 May 2023).

Kowalsky, H. (1925) 'CHAPTER III The Theme of the Ukrainian Folk Songs and Their Kinds', in Ukrainian folk songs; a historical treatise. Boston, Massachusetts: Stratford Co., pp. 6–7.

Batyrieva, I. (2021) Folk songs in rural Ukraine, Folk Songs in Rural Ukraine | Ivan Honchar Museum. Available at: <https://honchar.org.ua/en/blog/folk-songs-in-rural-ukraine-i140> (Accessed: 09 May 2023).

Milne, J. (2023) Using Eurovision to explore national identities, University of Aberdeen. Available at: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/16970/> (Accessed: 09 May 2023).

Go, J.T. (2022) The rise of English and use of national languages in Eurovision, JohntheGo.com. Available at: <https://www.johnthego.com/2018/04/16/rise-english-use-national-languages-eurovision/> (Accessed: 15 May 2023).

Fuster, L. (2021) Go_a's 'Shum' lyrics greet spring by transforming a traditional 'vyshyvanka' ritual into a rave, wiwibloggs. Available at: <https://wiwibloggs.com/2021/04/12/lyrics-Shum-go-a-ukraine-eurovision-2021/263926/> (Accessed: 11 May 2023).

Asch, M. (1956) 'Folk music', Notes, 14(1), pp. 3–5. doi:10.2307/891896.

Karpeles, M. (1968) 'The distinction between folk and popular music', Journal of the International Folk Music Council, 20, pp. 9–12. doi:10.2307/836063.

Reyes, M., & McGee, K. (2023). Patches of Survival in the Anthropocene: Melancholy and Ecstasy within Go_A's 2021 Eurovision Song Contest Performance of "Shum" (ШУМ). Popular Music and Society, 46(2), 191–212. doi:10.1080/03007766.2023.2188363 (Accessed: 15 May 2023)

The Origins of Eurovision (2022) The origins of Eurovision, Eurovision Song Contest. European Broadcasting Union. Available at: <https://eurovision.tv/history/origins-of-eurovision> (Accessed: April 26, 2023).

Media, S. (2021) Перший. Available at: <https://tv.suspilne.media/news/channel/111713> (Accessed: 09 May 2023).

"Music Therapy with Specific Populations: Fact Sheets, Resources, & Bibliographies," American Musical Therapy Association, last updated 2018, <https://musictherapy.org/research/factsheets/>. (Accessed: 15 May 2023) [Original source: <https://studycrumb.com/alphabetizer/>]