

Arve Hansen, Andrei Rogatchevski, Yngvar Steinholt, and David-Emil Wickström. 2019. *A War of Songs: Popular Music and Recent Russia–Ukraine Relations*. Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag. £36.00. 247 pp. ISBN 978–3–8382–1173–2 (Paperback).

Popular music and its relationships with post-Soviet identities are one of many domains of cultural activity where Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine upended scholars' impressions of cultural dynamics that had prevailed ever since the collapse of the USSR. Among them all, music seems particularly capable of reflecting these wider patterns because Slavic and east European cultural studies has already developed an extensive conceptual framework for interpreting the complexities of postsocialist national identity construction through popular music, especially in the transnational music markets created where state socialist federations have broken up. The pattern of musical exchange in the post-Soviet space, especially between Ukraine and Russia, used to offer a largely frictionless contrast to the post-Yugoslav situation, where the aftermath of ethnopolitical conflict and how popular music was harnessed to nationalist agendas during the Yugoslav wars created sensitivities over the presence of music and musicians from 'opposing' sides in the conflict which still echo a generation later; today the Ukrainian/Russian context shows compelling parallels with the post-Yugoslav case instead, especially between pressures in Ukraine to detach national cultural identity from resonances with Russia and the pressures in wartime Croatia towards outright cultural separation from Serbia and 'Yugoslavia' – which did not match the everyday realities of many of the public even when Croatia was at war.

Arve Hansen, Andrei Rogatchevski, Yngvar Steinholt and David-Emil Wickström – four scholars who have been observing post-Soviet popular music since well before the outbreak of the Euromaidan protests, and some of whom have already written together on topics such as 'Russian rock' and the politics of Pussy Riot – document four aspects of this turn in this collaborative monograph. Its existence and indeed its title originates in a collection of digital materials they had already been sharing with each other before the Russia–Ukraine conflict began, and where they started tagging music that pertained to the conflict 'war of songs'. The first chapter, based on Hansen's observations of the Euromaidan while living in Kyiv and interviews with protestors and musicians four years later, details the musical cultures of protest in 2013–14, showing how the Euromaidan's many 'anthems' (p. 77) reflected the distinct phases of protestors' experience, from the early rallies in November to January and February's deadly clashes with police: an important chapter in its own right, this also serves to set the political scene for the three chapters which follow, each based on a case study developed by a particular author but refined with input from all four.

The second chapter examines the phenomenon of 'answer songs' exchanged between musicians from Ukraine and Russia since the conflict began, highlighting support for or opposition to the separatists as another axis of political identity besides the Ukrainian/Russian divide. The third chapter continues the previous chapter's interest in parody by turning to satirical reworkings of the Russian national anthem, on both sides of the conflict (Ukraine's anthem, for various musical and cultural reasons, has not lent itself to parody to the same extent). The fourth chapter presents an invaluable summary of the breakdown in Russian and Ukrainian relations through the Eurovision Song Contest, starting its narrative before 2014 to incorporate the Orange Revolution of 2004–5 (with numerous musical as well as political continuities with Euromaidan, not least the participation of Ukraine's 2004 Eurovision winner Ruslana in both events), Kyiv's first Eurovision hosted in 2005, and Georgian television's attempt to use its entry to ridicule Putin when Moscow hosted Eurovision in 2009 a year after the Russo-Georgian War – an episode which in hindsight prefigures the much more protracted tussle of antagonistic cultural diplomacy in which Russian and Ukrainian TV have engaged since a Ukrainian entry dedicated to Crimea won the contest in 2016. (Indeed, the withdrawal of 2019's Ukrainian contestant Maruv after she refused to sign a contract temporarily restricting her from performing in Russia shows that at least one more round has unfolded since the volume went to press.)

Although this volume only explores four areas of how the Russia–Ukraine conflict has altered popular musical relations between the two countries for the foreseeable future, its detailed illustrations help to explain why the rupture cuts so deep. The richest chapter, with the most grounding in first-hand research into the broader contexts of the music it describes, is probably the first, but all spotlight the digitally mediated dynamics through which musicians have reconstructed national ‘self’ and ‘other’ on both sides of the conflict, with glimpses of its significance in the wider post-Soviet space. Its extensive translations of lyrics will be particularly useful for readers who do not speak Ukrainian or Russian but still have comparative interests in the conflict and its musical repercussions. With the conflict still ‘live’, it is far too early to predict how Ukrainian and Russian musical relations will be reconstructed in the future, though only time will tell whether market pressures for musicians to grow their audiences beyond their own countries’ borders among listeners who speak closely related languages might lead to pragmatic restorations of cross-border sales and performance as they have in the post-Yugoslav space. In Croatia, early pioneers of ‘return’ in genres entangled with state media and nationalist interests were criticised in 1998–2000 to extents that almost ended their careers, yet by the end of the 2000s cross-border performance had become routine even for most pop musicians, besides those who held out because of their own participation in nationalist politics or fidelity to an individual pledge. The ebb and flow of Croatian/Serbian musical relations now goes unmarked much of the time, yet is always vulnerable to politicisation when it suits a certain party or impinges on socially sacrosanct issues of memory politics: it may yet be that Ukrainian/Russian musical relations turn towards a similar détente. However they develop, this book will remain a snapshot of the conflict’s first years.