

PARADOX OF WRITING FOLK MUSIC NATIONAL REPRESENTATION AND SONG WRITERS IN RUSSIAN KARELIA

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The role of folk music song writers is often ambiguous. In Russia, such songwriters have worked as leaders of local choirs. In so doing they have become mediators between local traditions and the present day music scene but they have also been blamed for corrupting authentic traditions. Their role in drawing interest towards national cultures and creating valuable works in local languages has been very important. When identity is considered to be continuously constructed in everyday practices, we can see that musical activities are also an integral part of forming local societies.
Keywords: Karelia, national representation, folk choir, I. I. Levkin, V. Pällinen.

Vloga piscev ljudskih pesmi je pogosto dvoumna. V Rusiji so takšni pesniki delovali kot vodje krajevnih zborov. Krajevna izročila so posredovali na sodobno glasbeno prizorišče, pri čemer pa so bili deležni tudi kritike, da kvarijo avtentično izročilo, čeprav je bil njihov vpliv na spodbujanje zanimanja za narodne kulture in ustvarjanje pomembnih del v lokalnih jezikih zelo pomemben. Če na identiteto gledamo kot nenehno ustvarjano v vsakdanjih praksah, vidimo, da so tudi glasbene aktivnosti integralni del v oblikovanju lokalnih družb.
Ključne besede: Karelija, reprezentacija narodnega, ljudski zbor, I. I. Levkin, V. Pällinen.

Exploring the role of inventors in folk music leads to an interesting contradiction between the originality of local traditions and the need to find new material for music performances. Such creative work has been conducted by instrument makers, leaders of ensembles, and composers. They all have had to adapt to changing circumstances and cultural transformations but have also benefited from the opening of opportunities in public cultural life (e.g. Smith 2002; Slobin 1996). Song writers have often been blamed for corrupting or diluting (as well as popularizing) local culture, but at the same time they have enabled small languages and ethnic identities to continue to survive by moulding local types of music and rituals to modern scenes for (East European) folk choirs.

Russian Karelia as a peripheral border area has maintained old epic singing and made extended folklore collections accessible for Finnish and Russian research in the 19th and 20th centuries. Passionate emotions and discussions have evolved around changes in folk tradition and reformulations of old styles because by definition, folk music is considered to be a result of a collective tradition (Nettl 1983). While researchers, intellectuals and politicians have debated over the meaning of national traditions, the voices of local actors – singers and songwriters – have often been bypassed for a number of reasons: because these people lacked formal training, because they presumably were not dedicated enough, or because they leaned towards being too popular in

their music. Nevertheless, the continuity of singing within the frames of local tradition provides the necessary space for introducing influences of popular styles and has increased the popularity of folk music at the local level.¹

In scholarly debate, the reproduction of traditional music has been discussed by way of strong binary oppositions: stage performances have been seen as destructive to local traditions and its political content as brainwashing that does not heed local interests (e.g. Frolova-Walker 2004; Kurkela 1989; Zhulanova 2000). Nevertheless, folk music has been performed in several different ways, each depending on the nature of the representation of national cultures. These changing positions have in turn also affected the actual sound and communication in music. Signifying practices are at the heart of cohesion in any society as it produces meaning and constructs a sense of belonging (Shank 1994: x). Still, in modern times these experiences are effectively mediated in face-to-face musical activities; however, the meanings associated with and conveyed through music may also cross long distances and borders (Frith 1996: 111). The question is: whose tradition is represented, by whom and for whom when folk music is performed?

REPRESENTATION OF LOCAL TRADITION

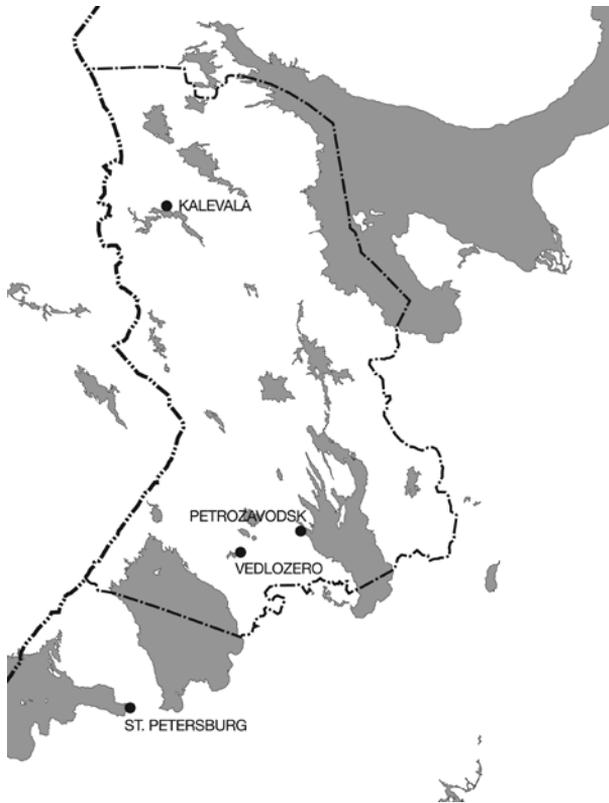
Representation is an important issue in the analysis of relations between culture and society. This concept refers to two levels of meanings. The study of representations in musical activities is not only concerned with the sound of a cultural product but also with its discursive practices, intentions and everyday politics (Lycan 2006; Said 2001: 8). The act of representation may at the same time depict something as well as it may advocate somebody (Simpson and Weiner 1989). The dual nature of the concept underlines its uncertain character. Objects in the real world are treated with symbols. Their references to the ideal 'object' are constantly negotiated, as noted by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1994: 52). Description is always open to interpretation and leaves space for different views on what is represented and what is the essence of the object upon which a representation is built. This means that cultural representations can be interesting political tools that can also construct identities in unexpected ways (Hall 1996; 1997; Knuuttila and Lehtinen 2010: 10).

Music functions differently in different contexts. For example, in the Republic of Karelia, contemporary folk music ranges from the entertaining popularity of the State Folklore Ensemble "Kantele" to the academic teaching and research of the archaic roots of Finno-Ugric music at the Petrozavodsk Conservatory. In addition to these binaries in performance practices, there are also local communities with their own

¹ Ulrike Bodemann (1983) has explained that these adaptations of folklore – folklorisms – are cultural reactions to situations in which a society feels a threat to its very existence.

musical activities. The ideology and intentions of these should also be studied because local artistic activities continuously play an important social role in music traditions, identity construction and the revitalization of small languages. It is a totally different matter to do music for a local audience than to produce it for a wider Russian or international audience. At the local level, the meaning of music for the construction of identity is accentuated, whereas in the international context, its aesthetic and competitive aspects are the determinant qualities.

In this article, I will discuss the role of modernizing² folk music in the context of nation-building processes in a small Russian republic during and after the Soviet era. The analysis is based primarily on the work of two songwriters, Ivan Levkin in Vedlozero and Veikko Pällinen in Kalevala. While folk music activities developed according to the popular Soviet model, these songwriters were able to root the new song material in the social sphere and thus were able to keep the local tradition process alive as part of everyday culture.



² By the concept modernizing folk music, I refer to the transformative process of folk songs and folk melodies. Finnish scholar Lauri Honko (1990) has described these radical changes with the help of concepts folklore's 'first life' and 'second life' in order to explain and expose the changes in the nature of folklore.

KARELIA

Karelia has been divided since pre-historical times between the East (Russia) and the West (Finland/Sweden), although the actual place and influence of the border has changed many times. The Karelian language is closely related to Finnish and, thus the cultural and ideological ties with Finnish have been manifold. In the 19th century, Finnish folklorists, composers and artists within a movement called Karelianism went to Russian Karelia in search of common Baltic-Finn origins.³ This region in which people spoke an exotic, but understandable language became a source of great inspiration. The common features of this culture seemed ancient and in this way, Karelia ideologically resembled a forgotten and supposedly shared past of the Baltic Finns.

The political interest towards Russian Karelia arose in the wake of successful folkloric findings. Already before the Russian revolution, both Russian and Finnish authorities had attempted to integrate the Karelian speaking population into their orbit. After the independence of Finland in 1917, the question of the status of Karelia became an important issue in peace treaty negotiations. The Karelian speaking population in the Ladoga area remained in Finland, but in Russia, the Karelian areas in two *gubernias* were united to form the Karelian ASSR, a republic based on Leninist national policy as well as the basic ideas of European nation states (see Hirsch 1997: 264). The local Party leadership was drawn from a group of red refugee Finns, who were supposed to be able to represent the Karelian and Veps-speaking population (Baron 2008; Kangaspuro 2000: 143). In the beginning, Karelians (i.e. the “national” population) formed a slight majority, but soon industrialization caused immigration from other parts of the Soviet Union. Today Karelians make up less than 10% (and Veps 1,5 %) of the total of more than 700,000 people in Karelia.

Despite the diminished proportion of “national” population, the Karelian ASSR remained a national republic in the USSR and therefore also had the special task of fostering local ethnicities and traditions – Karelian, Veps and Finnish. Its cultural policy was based on the Finnish language because the leadership was originally Finnish, and the Finnish language was argued to be more established and more suitable to the administrative and educational needs of the Karelian people.⁴ After the war, Finnish regained formal status as the official language in Soviet Karelia, although its role as an everyday language diminished. Simultaneously, the linguistic colonization of the

³ The results of academic collection were impressive: after publication of Kalevala in 1835, Finnish researchers managed to record tens of thousands of verses of Karelian epic poetry. Also, musical collections and published Karelian songs became an important part of comparative musicology in Finland before the First World War.

⁴ Actually, both Finland and the Soviet Union had employed similar rhetoric concerning their desire to unite Finnish and Karelian sister nations. This kind of propaganda was used especially during the 1930s and 1940s and was one of causes of the two wars between Finland and Soviet Union in 1939-1944.

Karelian people continued, while the written Karelian language started to evolve only in the late 1980s.

The foundation of the Karelian ASSR brought with it a remarkable Finnish influence on musical life given that “national” policy was advanced by many Finnish immigrants⁵ and cultural officers (more on this topic, see Suutari 2004). In the 1930s, however, artistic ideology changed in the USSR, and folk art and local popular traditions became the model for all arts. The ideology of “national in form, socialist in content” meant inclusion of local choirs and dance groups as actors of Soviet cultural policy. In the long run, the aim was to assimilate national differences. The model for all arts came from folk traditions, but the forms and manners of representation were common to all (Olson 2004: 39). Due to strained international relations, Finnish dominance in the cultural life of Soviet Karelia was harshly criticized, and Finns were accused of philistinism and espionage. For a short period of three years, national policy shifted from a Finnish to a Karelian emphasis. For example, Finnish writers were replaced by Karelian epic singers in the Soviet Writers’ Union of Karelia (Ylikangas 2004: 378). The Karelian and Veps songs and dances formed the basis of the activities of *kolkhoz* choirs in Karelia, although the repertoire was complemented with political songs of a Soviet character.

During the Stalinist period, folklore was explained as being a reaction to political and cultural changes and differed radically from folklore in the western world. According to Lozanova (1938), in bourgeois countries, folklore made people passive mediators of the past but in Soviet folklore, people were creative, and the process of tradition reflected changes in society. Writings in the 1930s typically described how the “old world” met with the new, as modernization, electricity, mechanical primary production, and new forms of education reached people living in the villages. This motivated the rise of ethnographic work in Soviet Karelia (e.g. Gudkov and Levi 1941; see also Hakamies and Fishman 2007).

THE MUSIC AND FOLK CHOIR OF I. I. LEVKIN

“Amateur art groups were important, but also feared [politically]”, said a former Karelian ASSR vice-minister of culture William Hall, who worked as an actor in the Finnish theatre in Petrozavodsk. For a period of time he was also a director of the Kantele Ensemble (interview 24.3.2004). He explained that in Soviet reality, people searched for knowledge and art experiences “behind” the official line and newspaper writings. Previously inspected publicity (censorship) in the Soviet Union was very strict, and

⁵ For example, the leading figure in musical life of the 1920s and 1930s was composer Kalle Rautio (1885-1963), who was born in Finnish Ostrobotnia but moved to Soviet Karelia in 1922 from California.

many artistic elements were discarded. Therefore, the audience willingly tried to find less controlled channels that mediated unconventional ideas and repertoire.

In village clubs, amateur art groups (*samodeiatelnye kollektivy*) gathered enthusiasm and local talents. Because local color in the repertoire was favored in the inspections, village choirs could use folk singing styles as well as to some extent their own repertoire. The music of Ivan Levkin (1903-1974) is an interesting example of the creative work within Soviet Karelian amateur art. Through his songs, he could represent local Karelian singing traditions in a Soviet musical context. He was a self-taught musician, accordionist and composer as well as the founder of choirs in three Karelian villages – Spasskaia guba, Olonets and Vedlzero – where he worked from 1936 to 1961.

I have gone through Levkin's collections in the National Archives of the Republic of Karelia (NARK). Especially interesting are the two large handwritten booklets of Levkin's own material, which include more than 200 songs and poems in Karelian and almost the same number of texts in Russian. Levkin also collected texts and poems for the repertoire for club festivities. It is still unclear how much of the material was actually produced by Levkin, and how much of it he just collected for club performances. The uppermost function of his material seems to have been to provide evenings with continuously reproduced material regardless of its origins.

Levkin did not write musical notation, so the contents of the texts as well as their poetic structure are the keys to the analysis of this material. Only about ten songs were published as choir arrangements during his lifetime. After perestroika, the importance of his music increased, and several of his songs are included in song compilations (e.g. Elyna 2003 and Nikitina 2010). However, the source information is also unclear in the current compilations. For example, Elyna has estimated that in addition to the 12 songs in the collection where Levkin is mentioned as a composer or text author, several other songs accredited as traditional could actually be his songs as they originate from his choir's repertoire. This describes Levkin's working method very well: he took material from several sources, wrote Karelian texts and prepared a program for his choir.

Other archived documents describe the concert repertoires of his choirs in their entirety. Most of the songs they performed were in Russian and are of Soviet origin; however, local subjects also play a significant part in the repertoire. The best proof of his creative work is the numerous texts that speak of the surrounding villages, their landscape and people. This kind of material was strongly encouraged to be written for popular Party evening entertainment arranged in clubs during the 1950s. The former director of Vedlozero *sovkhov*, Pekka Efimov, told me that because the district concentrated on farming, most of the songs' lyrics concern agriculture and kolkhozes. Typical textual structures are Karelian (and Russian) small *chastushki*, but also other forms of song texts were common in Levkin's production. His most well-known songs, how-

ever, were of large melodic contour and form – such as *Laulu Petroskoille* (Song for Petrozavodsk), *Ongo kaunis Karjala* (Is Karelia beautiful) and *Aunuksen pellot* (Fields of Olonets). The width of melodic shape, the emotional quality and romantic harmonic structure with a certain Russian influence underlines what Max Peter Baumann has described as the conservative conventions of 19th century national civic society art (1976: 65-67). Furthermore, the Kantele Ensemble commissioned *chastushki* and songs from Levkin.

Laulu Petroskoille (1959) is a typical optimistic story about the changing Soviet landscape. With great effort, new roads were built from the former remote villages to the capital Petrozavodsk through a rocky landscape. The result was that all people could travel comfortably to the beautiful city – and knit wool comfortably on the way.

<i>A ku dorogat kylih stroittih</i>	<i>And when the roads were constructed to the villages</i>
<i>Kivet-kannot kai matkal murrettih</i>	<i>Stones and stumps were all broken on the way</i>
<i>A kui mashinat linnah ajetau</i>	<i>And while cars drive to the city</i>
<i>Buito villaizet kerät kurutau</i>	<i>The balls of wool are knitted</i>

Laulu Petroskoille, 2nd verse. Words and music by Ivan Levkin 1959.

The actual political message (pro-Lenin or similar) was rarely underlined in the texts. When Levkin wrote this song, Karelian was not used as a literal language or in public situations. He wrote the text in his own Livvi dialect, and the manuscript was written with Cyrillic letters (while today the Karelian language is written in Latin letters). Actually, the folk songs and especially the material written by the choir masters were the only way of using Karelian, the language of the villages, in public. The south Karelian dialect, Livvi, was so distinct from the standard Finnish that the local population could not use the official minority language without schooling. Surprisingly, the North Karelian dialect is closer to Finnish, and the Karelians there have no difficulties in using standard Finnish.⁶

Choirs such as Levkin's were powerful sources of social well-being and empowerment for women in the villages. "Life was enjoyable, and singing and dancing were a delight for the women" described Anna Makkoeva, an Ingrian born woman who had sung in *Vedlozerskii narodnii khor* for almost 50 years (interview 13.10.2005). She told me that even if their husbands did not allow them to participate in choir activities, they would leave for rehearsals without permission, "fleeing" from home. If her husband could have his hobbies – "drinking" – she could also have hers, she concluded. She acknowledged that active choir masters such as Levkin and Maria Muhorova would go out and ask people to join the choir. Levkin was a demanding leader, and, according to

⁶ Also most of the well-known Karelian writers, such as Jaakko Rugojev, Antti Timonen, Ortjo Stepanov and Nikolai Laine came from the northern part of Karelia.

Makkoeva, rehearsals were strict, not just fun but also a great deal of work. The choir was nominated by the ministry of culture as one of nine “national”⁷ choirs in Karelia, and this meant that the choir had to have 40 concerts annually in the local Vedlozer-skii (later Pryazhinskii) district. Furthermore, the choir’s history is marked by regular success in republic-wide competitions. The voice of Levkin has also been preserved in the archives of the Karelian Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In a recording from 1959, he sings eight Karelian folk songs with a small group of singers in Vedlozero. This impressive recording shows how Levkin was able to personally build a bridge between local folk song traditions and the Soviet folk choir style through his mastery of the local vocal style. Melodically, linguistically and stylistically his work shows how local elements may be creatively transformed into Soviet folklore on an amateur basis. For example, the Kantele Ensemble and its folk group Aino leaned towards similar material, but their work was based on notations and, thus, on Western aesthetics and the Soviet variety stage. Levkin did not read music and therefore kept local stylistic variety alive.

Svetlana Nikolaeva, a teacher of the Petrozavodsk Conservatory, described to me the narrow line Levkin walked in striving to preserve and develop Karelian speaking music culture while at the same time conforming to political control:

Nikolaeva: I think his fate was tragic. He was a natural talent, a folk musician from the Kondopoga area where people spoke Karelian but mostly sang Russian songs. Before Stalin’s massive purges, people believed in a better future. Some still believed even after the purges, because they did not know what had happened.

Suutari: So could Levkin find a balance given the demands of the time?

Nikolaeva: No, he could not. I met his brother’s wife in Spasskaia guba. Her interview was cut from the TV documentary we had made [in 1985]. She spoke of a tragedy in the village in 1937: one night NKVD [security police] arrested around one hundred men in the village, including Levkin’s brother. I know from historical documents that it was not easy to be a brother of an enemy of the people at that time. I think that after this he started to write Soviet songs, ideological songs in order to survive. We cannot say for sure what he thought and what he believed in. Certainly the pain in his heart stayed there. In the last years of his life, he became an alcoholic. His dream was the renaissance of the folk tradition, but unfortunately it did not come to pass. His task was to work for the Soviet Union. Otherwise he would have met with trouble. (Nikolaeva 2005)

⁷ *Narodnyi khor* is usually translated as national choir, but it is not exactly the same, because *narodnyi* does not imply a nation-building process (like the similar term *natsionalnyi* does). *Narodnyi* could also be translated as “folk”, or “of the people”.

Amateur activities were monitored by the ministry of culture (the Republic House of Folk Art) in Karelia and Party organs. Especially Party members like Ivan Levkin had to agree and respond to the political needs of the time. Party archives contain documents with serious criticism directed against Levkin in the 1940s and 1950s despite the favor and respect he received from his singers. Levkin dreamed of the revival of the language and cultural traditions of his people, but instead he witnessed continuously accelerated assimilation⁸ (to Russian and Soviet culture) during his lifetime in the regions where he lived and worked. He himself had to find a balance between political motives and his own traditions because he thought his task was to work in favor of the Soviets.

In the 1950s, choral music and folk choirs expanded everywhere in the Soviet Union. There was anxiety among Soviet music scholars that folk songs torn away from their original context would become pale and short-lived, as musicologist L. Kershner from Leningrad assessed while evaluating the results of Karelian song festivals in 1951:

Questions about the relationship between Soviet music and classical traditions are clearly illuminated in the Party resolution on Muradelli's opera Great Friendship [1948]. The meaning of tradition is exactly the same in the case of folk music art. A folk song separated from its origins is as bloodless and short-lived as a composers' work separated from its folk origins is pale and useless. Therefore, singing parts that are not characteristic of folk songs distort them. ... Regarding song traditions, the best choir [in Karelia] is the Olonets choir, but even [in their program] there appears some strange chord – and the charming appeal of the music is lost. Presumably, Levkin, who is acquainted with and loves the Karelian traditions of singing, does not let the choir develop in an inappropriate way. (Kershner 1951)

Active singers could be counted in the millions, and the Soviet choirs were warned not to become “ethnographic museums” but to maintain the dynamics of living tradition (Rodykin 1956: 55). Thus, new and old forms of folk tradition could ideally be performed side by side. However, choirs moved towards Soviet standards and away from local traditional styles (Koposov 1962; Olson 2004: 173) as a result of the increased education of choir leaders and of the abundant materials provided by cultural authorities.

⁸ By assimilation to Soviet and Russian culture, I mean primarily the process in which people changed their language from Karelian to Russian. However, culturally speaking, they also left their old-fashioned life-styles and occupations in order to become Soviet workers. Villages (without ‘future perspective’) were torn down and people adopted new ways of life in cities and central villages. All this meant that Karelian ways of life started to vanish, and younger generations did not consider themselves as Karelians anymore. Furthermore, members of the older generation were often ashamed of their ethnic origins and accent (see e.g. Suutari and Shikalov 2010).

In many respects, we can say that Levkin's music was an exceptional melting pot between Soviet choral style, communist ideology, local musical traditions, and Karelian texts. For Levkin it was less important where the program came from – whether it was his own brainchild or borrowed from elsewhere – as long as it mirrored the charming art of his people. It is noteworthy that Levkin was a musician who could represent the Karelian people and responded to the musical needs of his time despite the problems he faced within the Party.

PÄLLINEN'S SONGS AS A LOCAL VOICE AFTER PERESTROIKA

Another interesting personality of the next interwar generation was Veikko Pällinen (1921-2001) from Kalevala⁹ in Russian North Karelia. Pällinen studied accordion as a student of the first 1935 class at the Petrozavodsk music college. After his army service, Pällinen returned to his home village in 1947 and worked there as a choir master and teacher at a music school. Despite Pällinen's formal training, he was described by his colleagues and pupils as a musician who knew the style of North Karelian folk music and played willingly and spontaneously by ear. However, the best known part of his work are his songs, 30 of which were published in a booklet entitled *Kalevan kehto* (Cradle of Kaleva) in 1996. The songs in the compilation are written for a folk choir.

Pällinen did not start to write songs until the 1950s, but there was an exceptional demand for his choir, Kalevala, which he formed only in 1987. In the wake of perestroika, it became possible to speak about the Karelian language and ethnic culture. This was the reason Pällinen assembled middle-aged and older women to form a "veteran choir" in the cultural houses of the Kalevala district. Earlier, he was obliged to speak Russian at work even if his students were Karelian. After perestroika, local emotions burst into the songs that he wrote for his singers.

Songs in *Kalevan kehto* are melodic and well designed for choral use. Their easy melodious style resembles the rhymed folk song typical of North Karelia and nearby regions in Finland. Also, many songs have a noticeable influence from Finnish hit tunes of the 1950s style. (This was due to the influence of Toivo Kärki, the most famous popular composer in Finland.) In listening to these songs, one could easily believe that they were folk songs written by any folk musician (*pelmanni*) of the area. However, a closer look shows the delicate use of parallel keys, circle of fifths, and modulations – skills of an educated composer.

The lyrics, which are primarily in Finnish, deal exclusively with Pällinen's home region. The songs tell about the natural landscape and forests around Lake Kuitti, the shore and parks at Uhtua, as well as the Karelian people at work, or fishing, or on their

⁹ Originally the name of the village was Uhtua, but its name was changed to Kalevala in 1963.

trips. The lyrics are also about love, family and nostalgic memories. In summary, the lyrics represent the feelings of the patriotic post-war generation. When we made a field excursion to Kalevala and sung some of his songs there in the summer of 2008, we noticed that his songs were well-known and appreciated by the villagers. *Kalevan joutsen* is a waltz melody and tells the story of a migrant-bird who flies to the South but returns in the spring to her beloved home region in Karelia. The text can be heard as a metaphor of Karelians – many of whom are obliged to move away from the Karelian countryside.

*Kalevan joutsen joikuen lentää
kauaksi etelään päin
Hyvästi järvet nyt mennä mun täytyy
maihin nyt lämpimähäin
Keväällä taasen suvien aikaan
palaamme järvien luo
Rakkaat ja vehmaat on kotoiset rannat
syntymäseudut nuo.*

*The Karelian swan wings his way and sings
far towards the South
Goodbye lakes, I need to go now
To the warm countries
In spring again at time of thaw
We'll return to the lake
Beloved and green are these familiar shores
those home regions.*

Kalevan joutsen, 1st verse. Words and music by Veikko Pällinen.

After Pällinen's death, the Kalevala choir was taken over by Gertra Remshu (b. 1939). Remshu took on the challenge of developing the choir in the direction of classical choral aesthetics. In the early 1960s, she had studied at Petrozavodsk Music College, where she took chorus master line (major subject). Remshu trained the choir with classical voice exercises, with which the choir was not then acquainted. She explained to me (in Karelian) that Pällinen did not train voices properly: "He was just a musician, *pelmanni*. He wasn't a choir master, and didn't like it when I said how one should sing."

Remshu retired in 2007, and her successor was a young choirmaster, Elena Olshakova (b. 1984), who was recruited from Petrozavodsk. Olshakova had also studied at Petrozavodsk Music College but chose a special line for conducting folk choirs. In addition, from 2007 onwards, she continued her studies at the Petrozavodsk State Conservatory, more specifically at their Finno-Ugric Department. Directing folk choirs differs from classical choirs, and Olshakova introduced new voice training techniques as well as new conceptions of what Karelian voices should sound like (in folk songs). In fact, this caused some embarrassment because the women in the choir had sung all their lives in Karelian and had strong emotions and memories associated with the songs (interview with choir member Venla Soboleva 2.7.2008). Olshakova did not speak Karelian, so they argued with each other and had to teach each other how Karelian sounds are produced.

I asked Elena Olshakova about learning the voices of different ethnicities and she replied by comparing the Music College (folk choir department) and the Conservatory (the Finno-Ugric Department) in Petrozavodsk:

Olshakova: They differ so much. Soloveva [at the Music College] taught the Russian manner of singing, the classical manner, not the way folk is actually sung or how grandmothers sang. Svetlana Nikolaeva [in the Conservatory] has a different stance: she teaches how grandmothers used to sing, where the breath comes from, what happens in the body, and how to breathe properly.

Suutari: Was it difficult to start at the conservatory?

Olshakova: Yeah, it was difficult. It was easy at the music college, and after that one could go to Arkhangelsk, to the Vologda oblast or to sing in any choir in North West Russia. But Svetlana Iurevna teaches how the Finno-Ugric world lived. Everything comes from the language. (Olshakova 2008)

These three choir-masters represent in an interesting way three different approaches (and educational backgrounds) to the performance of Karelian folk singing. Pällinen concentrated solely on singing. He gathered a group of persons who could speak Karelian and who wanted to sing and dance in the traditional styles of their area. Most of the songs in the repertoire were and still are written by Pällinen. Gertta Remshu introduced a more ambitious approach to singing and started classical voice training for the group. Elena Olshakova continued this development but with other techniques, those drawn primarily from the education of folk choirs. At that time, she had not yet been acquainted with Pällinen's songs because neither the Music College nor the Conservatory included them in their teaching (Olshakova 2008). The Music College leans toward Russian traditions and the Conservatory to more ancient and more archaic styles. Pällinen's songs (as well as Levkin's songs) are too popular and modern and their melodies are too wide-ranging for them.

The situation resembles Laura Olson's study on Russian contemporary folklorism. She observed, among others, how Natalia Giliarova from the Moscow conservatory with her Zabava group was filmed for a television program on Christmas traditions in a small village called Vladykino. Giliarova denounced the changes invoked by Soviet culture as well as the social actors in the village who did not recognize authentic traditions or performed them in the wrong way. In this particular village, the clash was especially painful because villagers had been proud of the continuity of their traditions. They were important for their local identity, and this was exactly why the television program was filmed there (Olson 2004: 211).

Giliarova hoped that by teaching a traditional repertoire and correct ritualistic behavior to the villagers she would invoke their "genetic memory" – the unconscious knowledge of former traditions (ibid.). The political message was clear: the leaders of Zabava disliked Soviet policy that robbed the villagers of their genuine traditions, and they accepted only pre-revolutionary documents as 'real Russian culture'. New forms of folk music had to be produced by a person with outspoken 'anti-Soviet' history (Olson 2004: 218).

Olson was shocked when she saw the television program, in which villagers pretended that a particular tradition was locally “theirs” even though it was clear that they could not have known of it before the filming of the program. Especially the boys looked very uncomfortable. Olson called Giliarova to discuss it, but Giliarova did not understand Olson’s line of questioning. Giliarova thought that people should get to know their traditions and activate their genetic memory, and it did not matter that her group Zabava taught these people those particular songs. It did not even matter that the ritual was actually based on a manuscript composed of pieces from many areas having different traditions. Olson writes that this kind of revivalism has parallels to Stalin’s folklore. In Olson’s opinion, this performance is still a matter of propaganda based on the dismissal of the fact that the village already had its own living traditions that might not symbolize archaic Russian culture but instead villagers’ local social order and identity (Olson 2004: 220).

CONCLUSION

Levkin’s and Pällinen’s songs are as important a tradition for the villagers in Karelia as are the Christmas traditions in Olson’s case. These songs do not directly display archaic forms of Karelian culture, although some of the songs do have the Kalevala epic meter or other archaic formulas. More importantly, they represent the cultural efforts of two Karelian generations and portray life in the Olenets region in the south and around Ozero Kuitti in the north through love, work and dedication. Language is important, as is the feeling of community that the villagers recognize in their songs.

In many, if not in all villages in Karelia, knowledge on how to sing and what songs comprise the proper repertoire to perform has been introduced from outside the village area. This may have resulted in the alienation of folk music practices from local identity and from everyday cultural processes. By 2010, the choir in Vedlozero (established by Levkin in 1937) is no longer active, but the songs from its repertoire are continuously performed by many choirs and even by some folk rock groups. Furthermore, in Kalevala new influences have inspired discussion concerning how to perform in Karelian. However, the choir has anyhow maintained its local color and its ability to represent national identity at the grass-roots level.

The Soviet network of cultural houses and clubs still play an important role in cultural life in rural Russia. Paid choir masters and their accompanists work closely regarding the needs of ordinary people. Despite the fact that they employed a top-down approach concerning how folk music should be written and performed, personalities like Pällinen and Levkin have been able to operate as mediators between local traditions (and popular view of folk music) and the wider (and more contemporary) context of Soviet and Russian folklorism still used today.

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Field work in Vedlozero (with Sanna-Riikka Knuuttila) in August 2004, and in Kalevala June-July 2008 (with Sanna Kurki-Suonio). Several trips to Russian Karelia with interviews and archival work at the National archives (NARK) and at the Karelian Research Centre, Petrozavodsk 2003–2010.

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Olshakova, Elena 2 July 2008 Kalevala, Russia

Remshu, Gertta 5 July 2008 Kalevala, Russia

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Interviews with Olshakova and Nikolaeva were conducted in Russian and the others in Finnish and Karelian.

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PARADOKS USTVARJANJA LJUDSKE GLASBE REPREZENTACIJA NARODNEGA IN PISCI PESMI V RUSKI KARELIJI

Vloga piscev ljudskih pesmi je pogosto dvoumna. V Rusiji so takšni pesniki delovali kot vodje krajevnih zborov. Krajevna izročila so posredovali na sodobno glasbeno prizorišče, pri čemer so bili deležni tudi kritike, da kvarijo avtentično izročilo, čeprav je bil njihov vpliv na spodbujanje zanimanja za narodne kulture in ustvarjanje pomembnih del v lokalnih jezikih zelo pomemben. Če se identiteta nenehno ustvarja v vsakdanjih praksah, so tudi glasbene aktivnosti integralni del v oblikovanju lokalnih družb.

Ta članek obravnava reprezentacijo narodnega v Kareliji in ljudski glasbi. Območje raziskave je ruska Karelija, tematika pa kulturni razvoj od sovjetskega obdobja do danes. Terensko delo je bilo opravljeno v Vedlozeru in Kalevali, drugo gradivo pa je bilo zbrano v arhivih v Petrozavodsku, v Rusiji in na Finskem. Ožje območje je Republika Karelija (prej ena od socialističnih republik ZSSR) v Ruski federaciji. Ima čez 700 tisoč prebivalcev, Karelijcev je manj od 10 %, govorcev karelsčine pa še manj.

Članek obravnava dva pisca pesmi in njune zборе, ki so bili dejavni v kulturnih ustanovah domačih krajev. Vodje zborov so bili večši pisci pesmi, pa tudi plesnih koreografij in aranžmajev. Številne njune pesmi so v Kareliji še vedno popularne. Ustvarjajo most od tradicionalne glasbe in pevskih slogov k sodobni popularni glasbi in funkcijami glasbe v družbi. Čeprav je vsakdanja glasba v več ozirih nevidna in zunaj avtentičnih kategorij, je pomembna za ustvarjanje občutja pripadnosti in socialne identitete. Peti v karelsčini je sestavina identifikacije, saj pesmi pojejo o naravi, Karelijcih in njihovem življenju.

Ivan Levkin (1903-1974) in Veikko Päällinen (1921-2001), oba Karelijca, sta delovala v domačih krajih – Levkin v vaseh južne Karelije in Päällinen v Kalevali na severu Karelije. Bila sta navdušena za ohranjanje karelskega jezika in tradicionalne vokalne glasbe v sodobnosti, čeprav sta delovala v razmerah, ki so bile za kulturne ustanove kritične in zahtevne: t. i. hiše kulture, kulturno ministrstvo in partijski organi so bili namreč tesno prepleteni, kulturne dejavnosti pa nadzorovane.

Po perestrojki sta karelska glasba in jezik postala vse pomembnejša in dejavno v rabi. Zlasti zbor v Kalevali, ki ga je vodil Päällinen, je postal glasnik enkratnosti lokalne kulture. Za njim so bili zborovodje odvisnejši od izobrazbe, ki so jo prinesli iz republiške prestolnice

Petrozavodsk. Predstavitve so postale zapletenejše, kar odpira številna vprašanja o paternalizmu in pomenu kulturnih dejavnosti za lokalno identiteto.

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»Kam bi s to folkloro?« / “What to Do with Folklore?”, conference participants (GNI ZRC SAZU Archive).



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