

THE VOICE OF UKRAINE: MEDIATING NATIONALISM AND
COSMOPOLITANISM

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

Popular culture and content of TV broadcasts are strongly related to national identity, and local audiences expectations and tastes. Franchised TV talent shows, such as *The Voice*, are a significant part of the global TV culture, and when adapted to the local context reflect local viewers' perception of the self. *The Voice* in Ukraine attracts the audience with an appealing combination of skilled vocalists as contestants, tasteful musical content masterfully framed in a technically advanced stage set, and commentaries from the most popular celebrities in Ukraine. Additionally, the complex internal relationships within Ukraine, the relations with West (Europe and the US) and East (Russia and other post-Soviet states) create a unique discourse around the contestants of the show.

This Thesis investigates how the show, in mediating nationalism and cosmopolitanism, represents the Ukrainian national identity. The study is pertinent because, in Ukraine, the recent tragic events of the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014, the Annexation of Crimea, and the continuing conflict in the eastern part of the country all have stimulated a contested ground for national identity debates. I argue that, for commercial purposes, the show is able to touch on different perspectives about Ukrainian identity by employing symbolism as an appeal to different parts of a multifaceted Ukrainian society. By doing so, *The Voice Ukraine* mediates nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

My study of *The Voice Ukraine* consisted of two interrelated components: media analysis of roughly 70 episodes of the show between 2014 and 2018 and reception analysis of the audience's comments on the show's official YouTube account, where all the performances are made available after the TV broadcast. The timeframe of my analysis – seasons four (2014) to eighth (2018) – encompasses significant changes in Ukraine's social and political life.

The Voice Ukraine is a liminal space for the contestants, who compete to become a celebrity. It is also a space for the performance of Ukrainian popular culture and national identity. This thesis opens perspectives for future study on national identity performance in popular culture, offering a fruitful ground for race, gender, and queer studies.

DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my husband Dr. Oleksandr Tanskyi, who was an inspiration for me to begin my studies in the US and provided constant support in the challenges of combining studies and life far from home.

This study is my very personal confession of my constant love to the best country in the world, to my Ukraine. Слава Україні!

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Contributors

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All other work conducted for the thesis was completed by the student independently.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a highly politicized and globalized world, mass media and popular culture in a particular country is a medium that balances the contemporary international cultural trends and the development of a local culture. Popular culture and content of TV broadcasts are strongly related to national identity, and the local audience's expectations and tastes. Franchised TV talent shows, such as *The Voice*, are a significant part of the global TV culture, and when adapted to the local context become a reflection of local viewers' perception of the self. This study focuses on the representation of the Ukrainian national identity in *The Voice of Ukraine*.

The Voice's format being the combination of a talent show that creates new celebrities from ordinary people, and a reality show that reveals contestant's personal life, contributes to its global popularity. *The Voice* in Ukraine attracts the audience with an appealing combination of contestants being skilled vocalists, tasteful musical content that is masterfully framed in a technically advanced stage set followed by commentaries from the most popular celebrities in Ukraine. Additionally, the show's creators seeking bigger ratings employ the symbolism appealing to both the "person" of the media personality that the audience can relate to and the "collective" that this celebrity should represent in terms of affiliation to the Ukrainian nation or Ukrainian country.

Holos Kraïny¹ proposes to create a winner-celebrity coming from the people; someone who sings for the people, and becomes a reflection of the popular perception of a Ukrainian singer. The complex internal relationships within Ukraine, the relations with West (Europe and the US) and East (Russia and other post-Soviet states) create a unique discourse around the contestants of the show. In these conditions, the producers of Holos Kraïny decide whether a contestant will sing a Ukrainian folk song, or a Soviet “well known and nostalgic” song, or a Western pop hit; to wear a traditional folk costume or a modern and provocative “cosmopolitan look,” to dance with an ensemble like they do in those famous American musicals or not move at all. Each decision of the chosen repertoire, the contestant’s edited personal story, and enacted performance is made to satisfy the expectations of the audience with appealing content. Additionally, during the broadcast the audience is prepared to participate in an enactment of democracy assigning the title of the Voice of Ukraine.

However, until 2014, there were not many debates regarding why the Ukrainian show has Russian celebrity-experts and foreign contestants competing for the title of The Voice of Ukraine. Why in 2014, in Holos Kraïny, there were so few Ukrainian songs and why English repertoire and western popular culture dominated a show in Ukraine? Why Ukrainian folk songs used to be less frequent in the popular talent show on during prime-time in one of the biggest Ukrainian TV channels?

¹ The title of the show, “Голос Країни” (Holos Kraïny), literally translates as “The voice of the country” (Bilaniuk 2016).

The central research question of my study is *how the show, in mediating nationalism and cosmopolitanism, represents the Ukrainian national identity*. Addressing the question in this thesis is pertinent because in Ukraine, the recent tragic events of the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014, the occupation of Crimea, and the continuous conflict in the eastern part of the country all have stimulated a contested ground for national identity debates (Proshak 2015). These debates draw on the nationally based narratives of the powerful medieval country of Kyivan Rus and Cossack military order, which was followed by almost 300 years of dominance by the Russian Empire in Ukraine. This includes the law of the Russian Empire that forbids publication in the Ukrainian language and its usage for official documentation, taking over the control of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, establishment of the ideology that Ukraine is “small Russia” and Russia is her “big brother.” At the same time another part of the Ukrainian territories being at different times controlled by Poland and Austro-Hungarian Empires were nurturing Ukrainian nationalist ideas that found their expression in resistance to 70 years (until the 1991 collapse) of communist ruling established on all current Ukrainian territories. The main target of the Soviet regime was to eliminate the class of intellectuals and property owners, and any ethnic difference among “the people” of the Soviet Union. Additionally, these debates are fueled by the diverse ethnic and cultural composition of the current Ukrainian population.

In this thesis, I analyze the role of the talent show in Ukraine as the performance of Ukrainian identity. Some scholars studying Ukrainian national identity from social, economic, and political angles have suggested that there is a lack of homogeneity in the

perception of Ukrainianness among Ukrainians (Korostelina, 2014; Wolchik, Zvigliyanich 2000; Proshak 2015). Ukrainian identity was not clearly defined since the first years of its independence by the country's officials, business and cultural elite in its internal affairs, or with the foreign policy and relationships with Europe and Russia (Korostelina, 2014). For a long time the Soviet Union's legacy of Russian culture dominated in Ukraine, suppressing the development of its own popular culture.

Scheiner McClain studied topics of identity construction on a popular talent show by the example of American Idol (2010). McClain asserts that show appealing to a fandom creates a collective identity, through the interactive discourse viewers form an imagined community, sharing a communal identity (Anderson, 1983/2003). These viewership communities establish strong attachments to what is considered as "ours," which is perceived as better than "theirs," which in turn motivates support for "our" contestant – often through voting and other participatory mechanisms.

The topics of nationalism and cosmopolitanism within the Ukrainian public sphere, and specifically at Holos Kraïny, were studied by Laada Bilaniuk. Her research was mostly focused on the representation of people of color in Ukrainian media and public performances. She asserts that the participation of African descendants as contestants on Holos Kraïny reveal tensions regarding constructions of Ukrainianness and foreignness, the unexpected performances of Ukrainian songs in Ukrainian illustrated the complex interaction of language and appearance, in which blackness was fetishized, and the combination of Ukrainian speech and blackness even more so (Bilaniuk, 2016).

Despite the increasing number of works that study the Ukrainian national identity, little has been written on how the celebrity is constructed on a Ukrainian popular talent show is representative of the national identity. Most scholars have focused instead on audience engagement with entertainment TV shows in comparison to newscasts (Babenko, 2011; Kraynikova 2012; Shcherbyna, 2014).

Methodology

My study of *Holos Kraïny* consisted from two interrelated components: the show itself and audience participation. I conducted a media analysis of the recorded performances of the show released in the official webpage of the 1+1 channel that airs the show and on the official YouTube account. The latter I used for the analysis of how the show's audience interprets the performances broadcasted in the show.

In order to understand how the show portrays the national identity, it is important to understand that the show itself is combined from two interrelated components, such as "The Voice" as a globally franchised media product, and Ukraine as cultural, social and political context for the show's production/adaptation (see the picture 1). The diagram illustrates my approach to analyze the show, results of which will be presented in the following chapters.

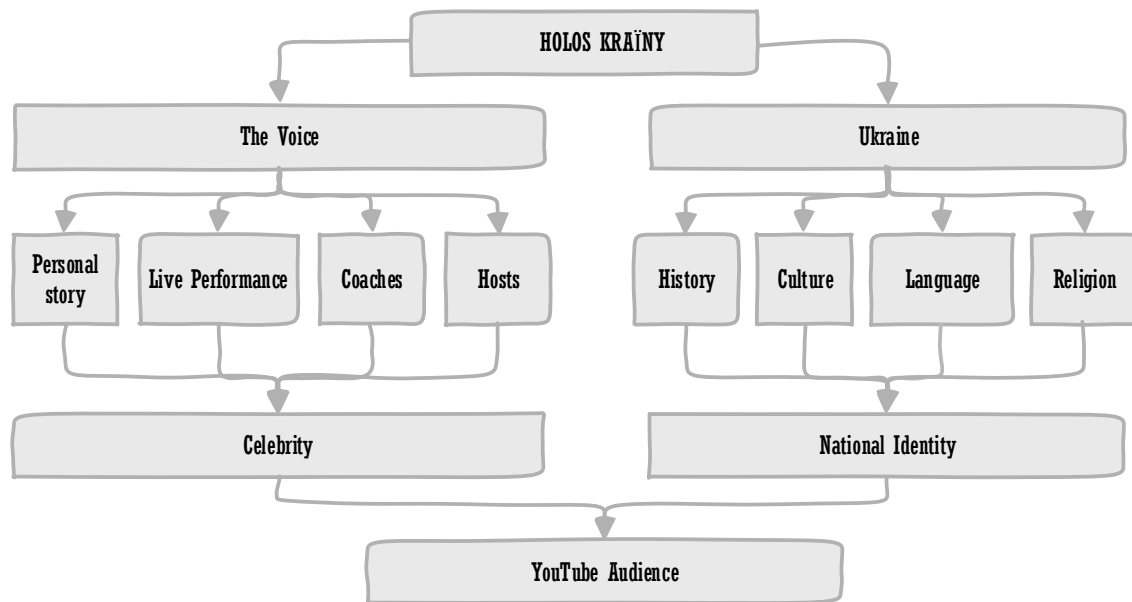


Figure 1. The Voice of Ukraine

Each season of The Voice has fourteen episodes, which can contain from fourteen up to sixteen live musical performances, personal stories of the contestants and the commentaries of the coaches and hosts. *Live music performances* were studied from the sonic and visual elements, such as:

Sonic Elements

- a. Vocal style: the show is not limited a specific vocal style, but rather includes a range of styles, with contestants trained in the classic Western Art tradition; jazz, R&B, and pop styles; and Ukrainian folk traditions.
- b. Repertoire: the style of the songs, popularity and historical context, the lyrics, and the arrangements.

Visual Elements

- a. Stage set: a big portion of the visual content of the show is built around the background visuals, props onstage, and rarely incorporated dancers.
- b. Costumes: dress serves as the reflection of the singer's personality and compliments to conveying of the message encoded in the performance.

Personal stories. The show includes biographical sketches for each new performance of the contestant. This is particularly important for the audience to 1) localize the contestants in a geopolitical space outside the show, 2) follow the amateur-professional transformation, 3) establish (or not) an effective rapport with the contestant. In the personal story, each contestant reveals personal as well as social problems that may find their resolution in participation and/or victory in the show.

The coaches. The judges/coaches' instructions and comments are important not only to help the contestants to move forward in the show. They also encourage audience support and participation, ground certain aesthetical decisions, and help to link the personal trajectories and the contestants' performances. The comments of coaches are present in the personal stories (as answers to their off-screen questions) and after each contestant's performance. The coaches' commentaries amplify the contestant's personal problems, shine a light on social problems, and affect the audience's perception of the performance.

The hosts are those who moderate the coaches' commentaries, provide the brief overview on the contestant, and by this they construct the audience's perception of a

contestant, which is crucial at the stage of the live broadcasted rounds, when the audience gets to decide which contestant to pursue closer to the victory.

Another part of The Voice Ukraine is the Ukrainian social and political context, which is the condition for a show's local adaptation, content performed and representation of national identity. The *historical context* determines the specifics of the local *Ukrainian culture*. This finds its expression in the topics of the contestant's personal stories created by incorporating and appealing to the audience's narratives and repertoire that should address the traditions of folk music along with trends of the contemporary Ukrainian popular culture including the influence of the Western-European, US and global popular culture. Also, the historical and cultural context determines the *language* of the interactions of coaches, hosts, and narrator. *Religion* became a narrative that was provoked by Revolutionary events to find its way back through the show in the secular country of Ukraine after 70 years being in the shadow of the communist regime.

Reception analysis of the show's *audience* on YouTube gives a perspective that is addressed in the show – the production is actively encouraging the Internet audience to interact, having the official account where the performances have been released the day after the televised broadcast. YouTube serves as an important database of the viewers' unpolished and uncensored comments under each video and reveals the audience's perception of the performance of the celebrity and national identity on The Voice of Ukraine.

Holos Kraïny as a popular TV show plays a dual role – on the one hand it represents the demands of the audience, which consumes the reflection of self, on the other it holds the power of shaping the nation’s self-perception. I argue that for commercial purposes the show is able to touch different perspectives on Ukrainian identity and employs symbolism as an appeal to different parts of the multidimensional Ukrainian society and by doing so, mediates the nationalism and cosmopolitanism present in the Ukrainian society.

Thesis structure

To explore the research question posed in this chapter, the thesis is organized into five chapters. In the following second chapter, main historic narratives related to Ukrainian national identity, and the social and historical context necessary to understand present Ukraine are discussed. The chapter covers the narrative of the Kyivan Rus state and Cossacks’ political culture that serves the source of inspiration for the Ukrainians in the process of nation building. The chapter discusses the facts of the rewriting of history by the Russian Empire, establishing the domination of the Russian culture over Ukrainian by constructing attitude of “older brotherhood” between the nations. Also presented in the chapter are the origins of Ukrainian bilingualism and inclusion of a Ukrainian language to the narrative of national security, alongside the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that nowadays has become independent from the Russian influence. The revolutionary experience of the Ukrainian nation is discussed from the perspective of the geopolitical influence of Russia and the West on the directions of development Ukraine has pursued for the last couple decades. The chapter presents a view on the

ethnically diverse composition of the Ukrainian population; here the reader can also find a reason why the Western aspirations of the Ukrainian population are the result of influence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Additionally, the established ideology of the Soviet Union contributed to the cosmopolitan views within the Ukrainian population; one element of that ideology was titled “workers of the world, unite!” and, at the same time, it also aimed to eliminate any ethnic diversity among the Soviet nation.

The chapter defines the contemporary Ukrainian imagery through the national symbols, which includes not only elements of clothing such as the *vyshyvanka* (traditional embroidered shirt) and the *sharovary* (wide Cossack pants which later became a common look of a male folk costume), but also established state symbols and other symbols of Ukrainian culture. Also presented here are the basics of Ukrainian folk voice style and traditional clothing. The chapter covers the topic of the Ukrainian culture distortion by the Soviet Union policy of “*Ukrainization*”, which resulted in the existence of a narrow view on Ukrainian folk culture which is usually referred as “*sharovarshchyna*” (derived from *sharovary*).

The third chapter will be devoted to the show *The Voice Ukraine*. Here the show is studied from the features of local adaptation into a Ukrainian context of the globally popular TV franchise. The chapter familiarizes the reader with *The Voice* by the thorough description of all the stages of the show, which are discussed regarding the goals of the producers and all the participants of the show: the contestants, coaches and hosts. The chapter presents a set of thirteen case studies that reveal the approaches of how *The Voice* in Ukraine speaks to the nationalism, cosmopolitanism and how the

performances navigate both of these paradigms. Discussion of the case studies is built from the complex perspective of paying attention to a personal dramatic story, the choice of a song, a costume, presented stage set, expressed comments of coaches and hosts.

The fourth chapter addresses the question of celebrity construction during the show, which includes a description of the narratives of celebrity creation that are common for the reality talent show, such as the rags-to-riches narrative, the narrative of authenticity, and the transformation into a celebrity. Specifically, I will focus on the technique of attaching the labels – small phrases that work as hashtags in social media, that are able to create in the viewers' perception a shortcut to an image of the contestant. The chapter also presents the reception analysis of the YouTube audience of the *Holos Krainy*. The official platform of the show serves as an indicator of the success or failure of a contestant's talent, and the producers' and coaches' jobs. The chapter will also provide a collection of comments, corresponding to the case studies presented in the second chapter, that represent the opinion of the Internet audience, as these confirm the success or failure of the nationalism and cosmopolitanism incorporated in the performances. I will consider how the audience attaches values to a contestant and what elements of Ukrainianness the local viewer sees in the contestant's performance.

Conclusions will be presented in the fifth chapter, showing how through looking at a popularly franchised talent show such as *The Voice*, adopted into local Ukrainian context, each season portrays local identity, and partakes in changes in the Ukrainian social and political life, that have been employed to create a content appealing to the viewership in commercial purposes.

CHAPTER II

NATIONALISTIC AND COSMOPOLITAN TRENDS IN UKRAINE

Since its emergence in the early 2010s, Ukraine's *The Voice* has mediated tensions between the "European West" and the "Russian East." In this chapter the main historic narratives that will be discussed constitute the current Ukrainian transitional state of its identity, which resulted in the way it was performed in *Holos Kraïny*. In order to understand how the show appeals to the Ukrainian audience, this chapter provides the historical background for understanding the main attributes on which Ukrainians ground their national consciousness, such as the heritage of the medieval country of Kyivan Rus, the military self-government of the Cossacks, and religion from the perspective of over 300 years of tensions with Russia. The chapter discusses the Revolutions as the reason that provoked the search for the definition of the Ukrainian identity. Further, the chapter describes the national symbols and folk culture that appeal to the nationalism among Ukrainians. Next, this section of the thesis presents different perspectives on the Ukrainian national identity among different parts of the Ukrainian population and addresses the regional identity that often becomes grounds for expression of both - nationalist and cosmopolite attitudes within Ukrainian politics, media, and culture. Lastly, the chapter provides what serves as a base for the cosmopolite aspirations of the Ukrainian population to the Western and Eastern directions.

The current Ukrainian national identity is in the condition where there is actually a lack of common perception of Ukraine and consequently its identity, there is an

absence of a consistent national ideology that would prescribe a nationalistic or cosmopolite narrative that would unite and inspire Ukrainians (Korostelina, 2014). This results in the “deficiency of solidarity, a limited long-term outlook, and a generational divide in values and beliefs” (Korostelina 2014, 89).

John Storey asserts that ideology is a crucial concept in studying popular culture (2018). He adds that the concept of ideology is used in cultural studies interchangeably with the term culture overall and popular culture in particular. Studying Ukrainian national identity representation in the popular culture and franchised TV show, it is important to understand that ideology is a “systematic body of ideas, articulated by a particular group of people” (Storey 2018, 2). Considering that within Ukrainian population coexist different perspectives on Ukrainian national identity, the state institutions through “some text and practices” in governmental and private media represents certain ideology which is “distorted images of reality” of Ukrainian self (Storey 2018). This image supports the interests of the “dominant groups” - politicians, oligarchs who benefit from this particular political, economic and cultural organization of society. These text and practices (TV shows, popular music culture, movie industry) “always present a particular image of the world” (Storey 2018, 3) creating a context for establishing Ukraine and its relationships with the country’s neighbors and other geopolitical units.

At the same time, *The Voice* in Ukraine as a popular TV show do not necessarily has a clear unified ideology guiding its production and broadcast, rather that, as I am going to demonstrate further in my thesis, the show articulates a range of ideological

narratives about Ukraine's place as an independent nation. For example, the in the sixth season (2016) debates between coaches took place about performance of famous classical Ukrainian song performed in by two foreign contestants of *Holos Kraïny*. Claims of the coach revealed a complex ambiguous position that comprised certain nationalistic idea that Ukrainians should perceive their cultural heritage to be worth performance on the popular international talent show, followed by cosmopolite ideas that foreign contestants performing the song were able to convey its deep meaning better than some local Ukrainian singers.

The collapse of the USSR dictatorship resulted in the proclamation of the independence of Ukraine in 1991. The development towards democracy “was generally desired, but was not fully understood” by Ukrainian society (Proshak 2015, 11). The civic position of the Ukrainian population, brainwashed and shattered through 70 years of Soviet repressions, was not able to understand and employ the “rights, freedoms and choices” offered by the western model of democracy (Proshak 2015, 11). For many years after proclaiming independence, Ukrainian politics was an “arena of diverse and often-competing narratives regarding the concept of national identity” (Korostelina 2014, 88) and main debates were occurring between “change agents” who were Pro-European in the way of future development and “veto players” who advocated for integration with post-soviet states” (Proshak 2015, 11). The positions taken by the different political camps can be summarized in the nationalists, who “utilize ethnicity-based narratives” and usually exist in opposition to Russia and former Soviet based narrative. The cosmopolite narrative is mostly represented by the Russian-speaking

population of Ukraine who want to be considered an equal ethnic group with Ukrainophones (Korostelina 2014, 101).

Nationalism in Ukraine

Benedict Anderson considers a nation as an imagined political community, where people most likely do not know each other but feel the comradeship and shared identity that unites all them in the readiness to sacrifice themselves in order to defend the nation. He also asserts that the causality of that feeling resides in the language that is spoken and transmitted through (printed) media. The connection between nationalism and media can be expanded to the variety of modern media venues such as television and social media platforms on the Internet. Anderson argues that, “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community” (Anderson 2006, p. 46).

Kuzio, also studying the attitudes to the term of nationalism in Ukraine, asserts that term nationalism is the most abused term in contemporary Ukrainian studies because of its misuse within the political and historical realm (Kuzio, 2000). He further states that nationalism has usually been defined in pejorative terms by scholars and politicians since imperial Russian times, and during the Soviet Union operation it obtained the attachment to hostile capitalism as “bourgeois nationalism”, which was defined by the regime as “any kind of show of national consciousness, cultural, ideological or political tendencies which did not coincide with state ideology on the nationality question and could threaten its rule or become the basis for separatist tendencies” (Kuzio citing Kasianov 2000, 82-83). This resulted in the perpetuation of the

negative attitude in people's' perception of nationalism. In contemporary Ukraine, the term is still undefined completely and due to its post-soviet legacy was reduced to the norm according to linguistic criteria and attached to Ukrainophones (Kuzio 2000, 79).

Tensions with Russia on Ukrainian heritage and religion

According to Eric Hobsbawm, modern nations generally “claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity” (Hobsbawm 1983, 14) which means that nation’s self-perception is based on historic narrative of the country’s origins and development. The contested attitude towards nationalism in Ukraine is related to the perception of the country’s past among its population, and is a result of the rewriting and distorting of history by Russia and the USSR. Dashkevych states that, for centuries under the control of the conquerors, Ukrainians had no opportunity to influence the recording of their history, as a result of which the history of Ukraine was written mainly to please those conquerors. The historian stressed the eradicated distortion of the history in the Russian Empire, aimed at the creation of a historical myth about the affiliation of Russian and Ukrainian nations based on common origins of Moscow Principality and Kyivan Rus (Dashkevych 2011), the adopted Orthodox religion and title of Rus that nowadays is easily associated with the country of Russia. Kyivan Rus was a powerful medieval country that has its roots in the fifth century when the city of Kyiv² was established.

² Kyiv was established in 5th century by Vikings who gave the name Rus for the country that was developed later. The people of Rus were called Ruthenians, which settled the territories around Kyiv (Zhylenko 2002)

The debatable topics about cultural heritage that Ukraine shares with Russia begins with the name Rus itself. The origins of name Russia (Россия), as well as its relation to the Kyivan Rus (Русь) was always grounds for many debates. Ukrainian historians connect the Rus as being the name for the nearest to Kyiv lands, and the name Ros, Rósia to be the reference to the central Ukrainian territories. The latter was adopted by the Moscow tsars (Zhylenko 2002). Dashkevych states that, common with Kyiv, origins of Moscow were mythicized by Russian rulers in order to cover the significant influence on the country's establishment by Mongols. The central position of Russian ideology in that regard is that Russia is a direct heir of Kyivan Rus, because Moscow was established in 12th century by the Yuri Dolgorukiy – a son of Kyiv Grand Prince Volodymyr Monomakh. Following that, a common view on the name Russia insists that in Greek, Ruthenian lands were referred as “rossia” – which was adopted by the tsar Peter to refer to Moscow Principality in Cyrillic. The historian stresses the existence of faked “All-Russian chronicle collections” initiated by Empress Katerina II in the 18th century which perpetuated the kinship of the Russian with Ruthenians and that Russia has the legitimate rights on the heritage of Kyivan Rus (Dashkevych 2011). These manipulations let the current Russian propaganda continue Peter and Katerina's Imperial ideology and claim the cultural heritage and territories that were settled by Ruthenians as Russian.

This myth also incorporated another set of references to current Ukrainian and Russian territories that served as the basis for the establishing of Russian domination that is usually referred as “older brotherhood.” This notion relies on the terms “Malaia

Rossia” (small Rossia) and Greater Rus,³ which after many years became used with distorted meaning. The aggressive policy of uniting the old Ruthenian lands under Moscow ruling implied the point that great Russia (current Russia) is the main land, and small Russia (current Ukraine) is the second order lands.⁴

The current name for the country, “Ukraine,” was introduced in the 17th century by the military rule that was regulated by Cossacks in Ukraine in seventeenth to eighteenth century – then known as Hetmanate. In Ukrainian language the name Ukraine literally means “in the Country,” following the logic of “Small Rus”. Cossacks were professional warriors, recruited mostly from the non-noble parts of the Ruthenian population and organized themselves into a military organization known as “Zaporozhian Sich” which was located below the rapids of the Dnipro river and has defended the Southern frontier of the Polish Commonwealth against the Tatars (Kohut 2015). Cossack Ukraine engendered a particular political culture – a set of attitudes, believes and values that established a foundation for modern Ukrainian culture and identity (Kohut 2015). Cossacks claimed from Poland certain prerogatives, or “liberties”,

³ in the 17th century the term “Malaia Rossia” (small Rossia) was used by the Ukrainian clergy and the Cossack leader Bohdan Khmelnytsky in reference to the original Ruthenian lands, especially while dealing with the Moscow Tsar asking for help in preserving the Ruthenian (Orthodox) faith from Catholicism of the Kingdom of Poland which at that time was controlling significant part of the ruthenian territories. (Kohut 2015) Small Rossia encompassed the Kyivan Rus lands. Greater Rus was used for all of the territories that were at different times controlled by Kyiv grand princes, one of them later became the Principality of Moscow, another one was known as Belarus. Greater Rus title was officially utilized after the Moscow tsar Peter the First changed his title to “sovereign of Great, Small and White (Belaya) Russia” (Kohut 2015, 40)

⁴ “Ukraine” was displaced by “small Russia” and “Ukrainian nation” by the “Small Russian” in association with Hetmanat and its territories which were still partially included to the Poland-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Kohut 2015).

which prescribed the personal freedom from serfdom established by the Polish government on Ukrainian territories: the right to bear arms, the exemption from certain taxes, the right to brew alcoholic beverages (only for consuming within the Sich). The Hetmanate which adopted the one of the first in Europe state constitution in the early eighteenth century became the key phenomenon of Ukrainian national history and state-building as an example of self-government which inspires contemporary Ukrainians in their aspirations to create their own national consciousness (Subtelny 1993).

After the Pereyaslav⁵ agreement that put Ukrainian territories on left bank of Dnipro river under Russian control, the Cossacks were embraced by the Imperial power because the large military formation was an efficient protection of the southern borders from Tatars. Cossacks were praised and called “kazack” in a Russian manner. But this powerful military organization of free people was a potential threat to the existence of serfdom, so Russian Empress Katerina II decided to disband the Cossacks and destroyed the Sich in the late eighteenth century. All the lands owned by the Cossacks’ leaders were given to the Russian and foreign nobility. Aiming to destroy the positive attitude of the Cossacks after their elimination, Katerina II added that, “mentioning “Zaporozhian Cossack” will be considered by us as an insult of our imperial majesty” (Subtelny 1993). A significant part of Cossacks escaped to the Ottoman Empire, where they were allowed

⁵ The agreement between the Cossack leader and Moscow government, that resulted in the situation where all large Ukrainian cities were subjected to Russian control, royal governors were allowed to collect taxes from Ukrainian peasants and townspeople, consent was given for the appointment of Moscow by the Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and it was supposed that hence the hetman's election was to take place in the presence of the king's envoys, and the new Hetman himself now had to go for confirmation to Moscow. (Subtelny 1993)

to settle at the mouth of the Danube river. Later they were settled in Kuban⁶, soon after that they became known as Kuban Kazacks. The Ukrainian Cossack culture was very strong in Kuban till the mid-20th century. The heavy influence of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union created a distorted image of Cossacks. Even the traditional clothes for Cossacks were changed under the influence of neighboring Caucasian nations. The culture of kazacks was exploited by the Imperial Russian and Soviet governments and equalized to the Cossacks. In the recent military actions in Donbass, namely the kazaks were taking part in the “rebellions” of the Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republic (Koreneva 2015). The image of the Ukrainian warrior was distorted and reduced to the Russian mercenary.

Protection of the orthodox faith was the reason for Cossacks to cooperate with Moscow Principality. Religion became a powerful tool of Russian influence and political control in Ukraine up until the 21st century.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church was established in Kyiv, in 988 A.D. by Grand Prince Volodymyr as a part of the Constantinople Church. Later, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church obtained its independent status, and had its patriarchy in Kyiv till 1686. The Pereyaslav agreement prescribed the transition of Ukrainian Orthodox Church into subordination to Russian Orthodox Church, which was followed by a great fire in the oldest Ukrainian Monastery - Kyiv Pechersk Lavra. The fire in 1718 destroyed the

⁶ Kuban is historical-geographic region next to the Black Sea and the North of Caucasus Mountains and separated from the Crimean Peninsula to the west by the Kerch Strait. Nowadays it is referred as Krasnodar Krai of Russia.

archives and library that stored artifacts from the times of Kyivan Rus (Kostenko, Ostapenko 2018). This fire coincided in time with changing the name of Moscow Principality to the Russian Empire by Peter the First and the issuing of the chronicles that lacked facts that testified to the difference in Ruthenian and Moscow origins, and hide the long process of resistance of Constantinople to the transition of Kyiv (Ukrainian) Orthodox Church to the Moscow (Russian) Orthodox Church.

After that, and until the establishment of communism in 1921, the Ukrainian orthodox churches were all subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church. During the Soviet Union, the Church withdrew into the shadows due to the Soviet's forced politics of atheism. A large number of priests were either executed as "enemies of the state," or sent to labor camps in the far East of the USSR. In 1992, a year after collapse of the Soviet Union, the two groups of Orthodox churches located in Ukraine united to establish the Ukrainian Orthodox Church independent from the Russian Church. The Russian Orthodox Church under its former head, Aleksey II, and the current one, Kirill, obviously defends the old division in its bid to strengthen the Orthodoxy under Russian leadership and to maintain the status of Moscow as the Third Rome, which was established after falling of Constantinople in the fifteenth century (Borowik 2006).

Revolutions as Russian/Western influences

In order to understand how *The Voice*, in its local Ukrainian adaptation, was going to unite the multidimensional perception of the Ukrainian singer-celebrity navigating the nationalistic and cosmopolite perceptions of their audience, it is useful to study Ukraine's *Revolutions* that became a condition for the show's production, being

the driving force, which uplifted the notions in the Ukrainian public sphere in regards to Russian/Western influences.

The protests of the Orange Revolution (2004-2005) and the Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014) indicated that civil society in Ukraine was willing to get away from the seemingly permanent transitional state of the country's political and economic situation (Proshak 2015). The idea that the authority in the country being centered in the institutions that are filled up by citizens, which have the responsibility to hold the governors accountable for performing just and moral governance, was the driving force of Maidan (Proshak 2015).

Since the first protests of the Orange Revolution in 2004, the competitive influence between European West and Russian East has become a part of public discourse. The opposition to the results of a presidential election became grounds for a media campaign between “pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko and pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich” (Jordan 2011, 160). The protests began after the “apparent falsification of the election results, corruption, voter intimidation and electoral fraud” (Jordan 2011, 160) in favor of Yanukovich. People went into the streets holding orange flags, other branded symbols, and banners that expressed their dissatisfaction with the government that did not prevent those falsifications. The protests were peaceful and did not involve a violent answer from the government, and eventually provoked the rerun of the elections with the victory for Yushchenko. This created a perception of the newly elected president that would move Ukraine closer to the EU and farther from Russia.

The Yuschenko's government did not implement the promised changes in the Ukrainian political or economic situation, which resulted in recompense of Yanukovych, who was elected for the next term. However, Yuschenko put a lot of efforts toward a revival of Ukrainian national consciousness. He established a Holodomor⁷ memory day, advocated for the equalization of rights of anti-Soviet resistance UPA⁸ soldiers and USSR WW2 veterans, initiated reconstruction of the historic museums, and supported the separation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from Russian dominance.

The "illiberal democracy pursued by the Yanukovych government" (Proshak 2015, 11) resulted in the other revolution – the Revolution of Dignity. On November 21, 2013, President Victor Yanukovych refused to sign the Union Association Agreement with the European Union (EU). The decision provoked protests all over the country. The protests, later known as "Euromaidan" (the name of the square in Kyiv, "Maidan Nezaleznosti"), supported moving Ukraine closer to Europe politically, economically, and culturally. The protesters demanded that Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, and the Cabinet of Ministers he headed, sign the Association Agreement with the EU. Azarov

⁷ Holodomor - organized by Soviet Union in 1932-1933 famine as a result of starvation policy that killed millions of Ukrainians under government forced collectivization of all farms and businesses owned by peasants. Some historians believe that the famine was planned by Joseph Stalin to eliminate Ukrainian independence movements. The famine is officially considered by the modern Ukrainian government to be an act of genocide (since 2006).

⁸ UPA is the Ukrainian Povstans'ka/(Insurgent) Army led by clandestine Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists OUN) originally was operating in the Western Ukrainian territories under Polish rule aiming on establishment of Ukrainian independent state on all ethnic Ukrainian territory. OUN was considering the Nazi attack on the USSR as a promising opportunity to establish an independent Ukrainian state. One of the leaders, Stepan Bandera, was in charge of proclamation of short-lived Ukrainian Independent state in 1941, because of which was imprisoned by the Nazi government

signaled he wanted to change the foreign policy towards the Eurasian Customs Union⁹ led by Russia. During the protests, there was a clear sense that this move posed a threat to Ukraine as an independent country.

After the police's beating of students on November 30th 2013, the "protests started being called the Revolution of Dignity in response to the offence against human dignity" (Horkusha and Fylypovych 2015, 347). The protests intensified after the police beat peaceful activists on the evening of December 1st, 2013. Conflicts between police and protesters started to become more frequent and violent. On January 22, 2014 two of the protestors were killed in Maidan Square. Between February 18, and February 20, 2014, 73 protesters and 11 police officers were killed in the same place. News about the tragic events circulated on TV and the Internet, with people receiving regular updates on social media. On February 22, 2014, the so-called "Revolution of Dignity" successfully pushed for Yanukovych's ousting and for the establishment of a new Ukrainian government.

Alongside with Maidan and the Revolution of Dignity, Ukraine had other protests - the so-called "Anti-Maidan," which was organized by government officials aligned to Yanukovych and financially supported by oligarchs that had close ties with Russia. In those protests, in Kyiv and several big cities located in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, low rank state employees were required to participate. A powerful tool in the

⁹Eurasian Customs Union is a customs union which consists of all the Member states of the Eurasian Economic Union - Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan (<http://www.eurasiancommission.org/>)

hands of the current Ukrainian government and its pro-Russian politicians was the special units of so-called “martial arts schools” used to create provocations within Maidan protests and to discredit them as peaceful protesters, allowing police to use force in their protest suppression.

In March 2014, “unidentified” military units – groups speaking in Russian with no Ukrainian accent – went on the offensive to annex Crimea and other East Ukrainian regions to Russia. Later, these type of units were used in two East Ukrainian regions which, using the coverage of “local anti-Maidan protesters,” occupied Donbas and were aiming to unite with protesters in other Southern and Eastern Ukrainian regions to create a new political unit which later would become a part of Russia following Crimea. The most bloody and dramatic events happened in 2014-2015 during the 242 days of the Donetsk International Airport defense, which took lives of 60 Ukrainian soldiers, the Battle of Ilovaisk where 366 Ukrainian military were killed and 158 are still counted as missing in action (tsn.ua).

These created an international crisis as the EU and the UN accused Russia of violating the International Law. This was relevant after an illegal Referendum was organized by separatists in the Crimean Parliament in cooperation with high-ranking Russian officials and after President Putin obtained the resolution from the Russian Parliament to use the Russian military forces in Ukraine. The leaders of Germany and France were meeting with the Ukrainian and Russian Presidents in Minsk, Belarus in February 2015 to create an agreement, which would lead to a peaceful resolution of the

conflict. However, this conflict is still going on and almost every day brings the news of killed or injured soldiers and civilians in Donbas.

The media coverage of the conflict was different in Ukraine and Russia, with the proliferation of fake news about events on Maidan, and the situation in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine coming from Russian governmental TV channels and news agencies. In Ukraine, the tone of media coverage changed according to the inclination (pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian-European) of the local media moguls. Social media became an active and powerful source of (dis-)information. These different perspectives existed in the Ukrainian media as a result of continuously contested nationalism based on the revival of Ukrainian national statehood from Russian influence, with cosmopolitanism that, after collapse of the Soviet dictatorship, was tempted to the Western world democratic values.

In 2018 historical changes occurred, the Synod of the Constantinople Orthodox Church recognized the illegal annexation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church by the Russian Church of 1686 (unian.ua). Eventually, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was restored the possessions it lost in the seventeenth century (except for the lands of Belarus and parts of current Russia) with the proclamation of the Metropolitanat¹⁰ of Kyiv with Epiphaniy as the head of the church. The church was recognized by Holy See (unian.ua).

The victory of Ukrainian politics and clergy were possible due to changes in the religious life in Ukraine, which nowadays is taking back its positions in people's lives after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Currently, Ukraine is officially a secular country,

¹⁰ The Orthodox Church unit that encompasses the city where the head of the Church lives and all the lands and smaller clergy units are subordinate to.

where the church and the state are separated. But, during the powerful social uprising of the Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014), the church became a significant part of the social protests. The priests of different Ukrainian Christian confessions¹¹ would come to Maidan to support the protesters. They were trying to “reconcile” the police with protesters or blessing those who were hurt or killed. The Churches near Maidan were used as hospitals. The bells of St. Michael’s Cathedral were ringing to call for more people to come to Maidan on December 11th 2013 to resist the police that went on the offensive against protesters. Later, when the fights in the Eastern Ukraine took place, the priests went to the war zone with the soldiers to support the spirit of the army as chaplains.¹²

National symbols and folk culture

Nationalism in Ukraine following the Revolution of Dignity obtained the symbolism that incorporates national symbols, folk culture and historic personas. The elements of Ukrainian folk embroidery and the colors of the Ukrainian flag began being incorporated in urban design, the symbols of Ukrainian traditional clothing became a symbol of the nationalist position, Ukrainian language became required not only for the high-ranked officials, but mandatory for use in media. Ukrainian media adopted this

¹¹ there are Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Ukrainian Patriarchy, Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, Ukrainian Greek Catholic, and others.

¹² Chaplain is a Christian clergyman attached to a private chapel of a prominent person or institution or ministering to a military body. Collins English Dictionary 8th edition, HarperCollins Publishers, 2006. Accessed May 8, 2018 via Lingvo 12.

attitude and began incorporating the national symbols and utilizing more Ukrainian-language content.

For example, Ukrainian state after proclamation of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, implemented the national symbols different from communist ones and presumably rooted on the historic past. According to the Constitution of Ukraine, the national symbols of Ukraine are the National Flag, Emblem, and Anthem of Ukraine. The National Flag (see picture 2) is a banner of two equal horizontal stripes of blue and yellow (zakon.rada.gov.ua). The official website for the Cabinet of Ministers created the special portal for “young [Ukrainian] citizens” which states that “the national symbols of Ukraine include yellow-and-blue colors,” adding that these colors “were always very conscious as the national [symbol]” (children.kmu.gov.ua). Incorporating “history as legitimator of action that cement the group cohesion” (Hobsbawm 1983, 12), the portal also states that the emblem of the country is a trident, which the Ukrainian people perceive as a guard (children.kmu.gov.ua). The National Anthem of Ukraine is M. Verbitsky's music with the words of the first verse of P. Chubinsky's poem “Ukraine’s has not yet died” ¹³that was written and adopted as the anthem of independent Ukraine in 1992.

¹³ "Ukraine’s has not yet died neither glory nor will. The fate, will smile to us, young brothers. Our enemies will die like dew in the sun. And we, my brothers, will govern our land. Refrain: We will give up our soul and body to our freedom. And we will show that we, brothers, of the Cossack lineage ".



Figure 2. National flag of Ukraine¹⁴

Additionally, Ukrainian culture perpetuated different types of symbols. For example, symbols of flora and fauna (bull, horse, stork, nightingale, rye, wheat, cherry, viburnum, poppy, willow) are the frequent heroes of arts, poetry, and crafts. A country looking house – *khata* and geographic names and locations, such as Dnipro, Carpathians, Maidan, Zaporizhia Sich, steppe, forest became symbolic and frequently used in the Ukrainian media. Symbols of Ukrainian architecture can include a mill, an orthodox church of byzantine or baroque style, the Red building of Shevchenko Kyiv and Chernivtsi National Universities, the Kyiv, Lviv and Odessa Opera Houses, Khotyn Fortress. Traditional dishes of Ukrainian cuisine became symbolic: *borscht* (beets soup), *salo* (bacon), pies, *varenyky* (dumplings). Folk graphics: embroidered ornaments such as the *ryshnyk* (embroidered towel), ornament of painted Easter eggs, Petrykivka paintings

¹⁴ Aleksej Leonov, “Ukrainian Flag Blue,” photo retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, publication date August 22, 2009, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ukrflagblue.jpg>

are used in urban and household design. Musical instruments such as *bandura*¹⁵, *sopilka* (wooden flute), *tsymbaly*¹⁶ are still used in performances of the folk ensembles as well as in contemporary folk jazz and rock bands, and in electronic music. Traditional clothing such as *vyshyvanka*, *zhupan*, or a *vinok* (flower wreath) became festive indications of nationalistic position. All these symbols are the folkloric fundamentals for Ukrainian state and its media to “construct invented traditions” (Hobsbawm 1983, 6) and create the powerful ritual complex to display on the festivals, official ceremonies, replicate in media to inculcate a sense of identification with the “institutions representing, expressing or symbolizing it such as nation” (Hobsbawm 1983, 9). Different from a custom, which inheres certain level of flexibility, tradition relies on invariance and embody the “emotional resistance to any innovation by people who become attached to it” that foregrounds a tradition in the society (Hobsbawm 1983, 3).

Under oppression of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, Ukrainian culture obtained a specific perception called “cultural inferiority complex” that has continued to be expressed in independent Ukraine (Bilaniuk 2016, 342). This inferiority complex resulted in the disapproving perception by Ukrainians of their own folk culture. Scholars explain this as a result of the Soviet policy of Ukrainization.

The policy of "rootization" was established in 1923 by the Soviet government throughout the republics, in Ukraine this policy was referred as Ukrainization. For the

¹⁵ Bandura – a multiple-string (up to 56) plucked Ukrainian folk musical instrument.

¹⁶ Tsymbaly - traditional Ukrainian folk music instrument, a type of chordophone composed of a large, trapezoidal box with metal strings stretched across its top.

Soviet regime this was a compelled action, “because the “rooting” of the communism was not very successful in Ukraine” (Ageeva 2017). The decree of the People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR of 23 July 1923 introduced Ukrainian as a language of teaching in all types of schools. In addition to education, the new policy was mainly focused on two domains - state institutions and culture. This policy lasted for a decade and was rapidly followed by feminine persecutions, and executions of the Ukrainian cultural elite and population, leaving positive and negative impact on Ukrainian culture and identity. On the one hand, Ukrainian language and culture was given a way into social life, development through publishing, theatre and music. The negative side of this policy was the cultural outcomes: the rootization should not create nationalistic messages that would fuel the separatist movements (Ageeva 2017). This can be interpreted as that the Ukrainian culture was distorted in a way to become less attractive to the population.

In the 1920s, in Soviet Ukraine the search for new forms and styles in literature, fine arts, and in theater started. The term “overturning” became fashionable in the dramatic arts where the topics related to the Ukrainian village, folklore, and the peasant way of life were turned into a kitsch. “The search for new forms of cultural expressing was executed through denial and parodying the old ones” (V. Yermolaieva, J. Nikishenko 2017, 30). In 1930, bandurists were executed in Kharkiv during the specially organized congress; nevertheless, bandura remained present in the performances in its “modernized” concert variant. Additionally, some products of commercial activity (advertising, ethnic stylization of restaurants, souvenir production etc.) were added to

theatrical, musical, and art representations as a way of producing the “nationally flavored” elements (V. Yermolaieva, J. Nikishenko 2017).

These “nationally flavored” products and this approach to portray Ukrainians were actively used by the Soviet regime in the social, political and cultural lives of people. The image of peasant Ukrainian was used in official banners, female folk look with flower wreath made from plastic and male “Cossack” was performed in the festivals, national Soviet exhibitions and in media and eventually began being perceived as real authentic Ukrainian culture. This phenomenon is usually referred to as “Sharovarshchyna,” which attempts to present Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian identity with pseudo-national elements of peasant and/or Cossack clothes and everyday life (V. Yermolaieva, J. Nikishenko 2017). This approach then was adopted in independent Ukraine.

The Ukrainian folk clothing having its roots in the clothing of Kyivan Rus almost did not change its main elements, which is clear from the names of clothes that still exist, such as a *svyta* (cloak), a *kozuhkh* (fur coat), a *sorochka* (shirt). The Ukrainian clothing has features of Scythian and Byzantine clothes. The insignificant changes in clothing were also influenced by historical times and changes in statehood, within the borders of Ukrainian lands (e.g. during the Cossack era as an adaptation to military clothing). In general, Ukrainian national clothes have the same components. All clothes differed depending on the season of the year (summer, spring/fall, winter), the social class of the population of Ukrainian lands (Cossacks, urban settlements, rural population), and from the climatic features of the area. For example, the clothes of the

population in the forest in Northern Ukraine (Polissya, Volyn) were different from the clothing of the Carpathian mountain population (Eastern Galicia and Transcarpathia), and from the forest-steppe (Podillya, the Dniester, Slobozhanshchyna) or steppe lands (Zaporizhia, Bessarabia).

Elements of Ukrainian folk clothes (see figure 3): the shirt – *sorochka* (both in women's and men's clothing) necessarily decorated with embroidery, which varies depending on the region¹⁷. The bottom clothing varied for female and male Ukrainians: the skirt – a stitched form of female bottom clothing¹⁸, and trousers (*sharovary*) as a piece of male bottom clothing¹⁹. Zaporizhia residents wore red *sharovary*, “width up to 5 arshins²⁰,” belted with a silk belt (Nikolaieva 1996). This became basic clothing for Cossacks, that later was used in the creation of an image of a Ukrainian male in Imperial Russian arts and Soviet Union propaganda.

The outerwear existed according to a season - a *kozhukh*²¹ and a *zhupan*²². Existed also some costume replenishment, such as belt, headgear, shoes, and jewelry. The

¹⁷ Because of the embroidery on the shirt it is also called a *vyshyvanka* (embroidered shirt)

¹⁸ The skirt was accompanied by *zapaska* (the oldest Slavic variant of an unstitched skirt, known throughout almost all Ukraine and has small local variants of design, mainly consisting of two narrow pieces of woolen self-made fabric), an apron (white front part of the *zapaska*, which was embellished with the embroidery at the bottom), *plachta* (partially stitched swirling skirt, an integral part of the Central Ukrainian national costume).

¹⁹ Pants were linen or woolen. Pants could be narrow, with which they wore a shirt loose or wide, but with *sharovary* the shirt was always tucked in.

²⁰ Arshin – is a unit of length in a system of measures used in Kyivan Rus and subsequently in the Russian Empire, equal to 28 inches.

²¹ *Kozhukh* is winter outerwear made from sheepskins with fur inside.

²² *Zhupan* is also an outerwear, but made from expensive fabrics - heavy silk or woolen cloth, brocade or from a thin woolen self-made fabric, often blue or green, it was long and fitted at the waist.

custom to decorate the head with flowers was very widespread²³ and became an integral part of female folk costume in portraying female Ukrainian by the cultures of former Soviet Union and Russian Empire.



Figure 3. Ukrainian traditional clothing²⁴

²³ Plaiting their hair in two braids, the girls wrapped them around their heads and attached flowers to them, creating the impression of a wreath put on the head. There were different styles of wreath that differed with materials, design, forms and technique of their manufacture. Among other things, a scarf was used - square dressing of the head widespread throughout Ukraine (Nikolaieva 1996).

²⁴ “Ukrainian traditional clothing stamps 2004,” issued by Ukrposhta (National Postal Service of Ukraine), scan by: Vizu (Original colors), minor image editing (cropping & color balance): A. Makukha (Non-natural colors), picture retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, latest access April 12, 2019, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ukrainian_traditional_clothing_stamps_2004.jpg

Ukrainian folk culture derived a unique music culture that can be recognized by the specific voice. The main characteristics of the Ukrainian folk manner of singing is with mixed voice registers, which uses both the chest and the head resonators, with the precise articulation and diction, a naturally opened mouth for vowels, in which the pronunciation reproduces the features of a certain dialect, conversational style, and peculiar timbre.

To study the performance of the Ukrainian folk culture at the popular talent show, it is important to mention technical features of producing “traditional” or folk style of singing. Based on a variety of linguistic intonations of the Ukrainian language, specific singing technical features were formed and became widespread in Ukrainian folk singing. The folk manner of singing has techniques such as sliding down and up to the note, overtones, forechlags, lingering in words on vowels, repeating the syllables, glissando, vibrato, rapid breaking off the sound etc. The basics of the singing tradition are the “conversational” singing, “sing as you speak” - one of the important principles of Ukrainian folk singing (Skoptsova 2016, 61).

Contrary to popular belief, Russian folk voice sounds similar, but has a crucial difference in the way of voice producing. Russian folk voice is based on the nasal and head resonators, but the main technique of the voice producing is called “on a smile” - with mouth almost shut, and relies on the higher registers.

Ukrainian folk voice is a manner that is hard to learn, this specific way of singing comes orally from the grandmothers, who are the keepers of the traditions. It is the most

natural way of singing that rests on the natural Ukrainian speech. Ukrainian folk voice is taught at the specific folk subdivisions of the voice departments in all major Ukrainian music schools,²⁵ but usually the admission is favorable to those who already sing in the folk manner.

Ukrainian language being fundamental for the folk music and culture was a debatable topic in Ukrainian society and was for years before and after obtaining independence in 1991.

Bilingualism is widespread in Ukraine as a legacy of the Russian and Soviet domination while the Constitution declares Ukrainian as the official language in Ukraine (zakon.rada.gov.ua). The language-based identification of Ukrainians let identify some groups, such as Ukrainian Ukrainophones, Russians as Russian-speakers, Ukrainians that speak Russian, and mixed language *surzhuk* (like Spanglish).

Generations of people that lived most of their lives in a “united Soviet nation” with the mandatory and ubiquitous Russian language, in 2014 were confronted with the idea that the Ukrainian language is one of the main parts of a Ukrainian national security. Right after the Revolution, in March 2014, when the “unidentified” Russian-speaking military units appeared in Crimea and Donbas, the main idea of justifying that military action was titled: saving the Russian-speaking population from the Ukrainian nationalists that took power in Kyiv.

²⁵ Folk voice department divisions exist in National Music Academy of Ukraine named after PI Tchaikovsky in Kyiv, Kharkiv National University of Arts named after I.P. Kotlyarevsky, Lviv National Musical Academy named after M. Lysenko, Odessa National Academy of Music named after A.V. Nezhdanova and other universities and colleges.

Ukrainian language was oppressed for centuries and established as a language for peasants and the uneducated. The Imperial Russian government in 1863 issued the Valuev Circular by which the publication of religious and educational books was prohibited, but the publication of fiction was permitted (Vernadsky 1990). The reason for the publication of the circular was the suspicion held by the royal power that the publication of books in the Ukrainian language stimulated the growth of separatist, pro-Polish and anti-royal sentiment. In 1876 the action of the Valuev Circular was consolidated and expanded, according to which the publication of any literature in the Ukrainian language was forbidden completely (Vernadsky 1990).

During the rule of the Soviet Union, Ukrainian language was used only for propagandistic purposes of fighting with Ukrainian nationalists, establishing the attitude that Ukrainian language is spoken only in the rural areas, while in the city the Russian language will serve to spread the unified messages of communist government among workers. Additionally, the “Rootization” policy utilized the “expositional” function of folklore in the USSR, which was supplemented by its provincializing of the folk culture, emphasizing the hopelessness of all national languages and cultures of the USSR, except for Russian (V. Yermolaieva, J. Nikishenko 2017).

Propaganda is usually referred as a political influence through the news and traditional printed media. In Russian Empire, in different forms of pictorial art was incorporated form of presenting Ukrainian rural population and landscapes, avoiding representation of urban Ukraine. The twentieth century and development of popular media, such as cinematograph, television, and internet opened the channels for

propaganda “as a means of manipulating and controlling domestic populations” (Redmond 2017, 281). In the Soviet Union entertainment propaganda existed in a form of presenting one-sided view of current or historic event, promoting certain values and attitudes. The goal of these representations was “engineering people to love and accept the state” (Redmond 2017, 281) planting the negative perception of a foreign countries that are not ally with USSR. Its popular media were also aiming to create a certain attitude for evaluating the country’s regional representatives, even when the state engages the ideas that contradict to the attitudes existed before among local population of Ukraine or other Republics. Regional identity representation in USSR were based on propagandistic view on non-Russian ethnicities and nations as inferior to the leading one Russian-based Soviet identity.

Supporting that the ubiquitous number of cultural products transmitted from Russia through Russian TV channels and radio stations, alongside with powerful influx of Western pop culture made the development of Ukrainian language music almost impossible.

The shift for reevaluation of popular culture and music occurred after the changes in the Ukrainian social and political life after the Revolution 2013-14, the Annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and active conflict caused by Russian military forces. These events provoked Ukrainian media to remove all references of Russia. In June 2014, 1+1 Media Group, which produced Holos Kraïny, reduced the amount of Russian content, such as the series about “brave Russian soldiers and policemen” – that then was ubiquitous on Ukrainian TV. This tendency spread among other channels and

obtained support from authorities, which at that point were issuing lists of media content forbidden from being broadcast both on TV and in cinemas (tsn.ua). Additionally, many Russian artists were banned from giving concerts in Ukraine for their support of the Russian Annexation of Crimea. Following that, Ukrainian radio stations and TV channels gradually removed music and video clips of banned Russian singers from their broadcast (mincult.kmu.gov.ua). These actions stimulated a development of Ukrainian music industry; firstly the Russian-language content produced by Ukrainian artists filled all the niches that were occupied by banned Russian celebrities. Later on, in 2017 the Ukrainian government announced the “language quotas” that obliged TV and radio stations to have 75% of the broadcast in Ukrainian (nrada.gov.ua). This resulted in the blossoming of music in Ukrainian, which in November 2018 showed to occupy up to 51% of Ukrainian radio broadcasts (nrada.gov.ua). This stimulated production of Ukrainian-language content and let the Ukrainian artists who were in the shadows while producing songs in Ukrainian become very popular because of radio and TV interest of filling the broadcast. Ukrainian music and Ukrainian performance became a trend and stimulated the media moguls to adjust some of their media platforms in favor of Ukrainian content only. The newly blossomed Ukrainian music industry in 2015 began to have the “M1 Music Awards” set up by the biggest music channel M1. Additionally, in 2018 the return of the first Ukrainian national music award “Zolota Zarptytsia” (Golden Firebird) was announced, which originated in 1996 and is devoted to Ukrainian-language music only.

Regional Differences

Ukraine is the biggest country in Europe considering that most of the Russian territories geographically located in Asia. Ukraine has several distinctive regions: Northern Ukraine, Central and Western Ukraine, and Eastern and Southern Ukraine including Crimea. Each region during the long history of geopolitical influences derived its own perception of Ukrainian identity. The generalized division on a regional level can be presented as such. Ukraine Northerners, the heirs of the Great Kyivan Rus, which was conquered by many foreign powers, but was able to preserve its culture and language. Next is Western Ukraine, formerly Eastern Galicia, which has the deep Ukrainian national consciousness and tendency to extreme nationalist positions. At the same time, Southwest Ukraine is composited from a lot of border minorities of Slovaks, Hungarians, and Rumanians that claim identity of their own. Western Regions that had never been a part of the Russian Empire were included in the USSR during WW2. People in the Western Regions believe that the Soviet government colonized the region, and express orientation towards Europe. The Mid-West of the country is mostly agrarian, considers itself Ukrainian and speaks Ukrainian. The Eastern Ukraine, which constitutes regions currently partially occupied by Russia, was heavily industrialized with coal mining and metallurgy. The biggest part of the region considers itself as Donbass and opposes the Ukrainian national movements due to being always heavily influenced by Imperial Russian and Soviet culture. The Mid-East of Ukraine is also

industrialized and russified, but does not deny its Ukrainian identity, however it has positive attitudes towards Russia. The Southern Ukraine similarly to Donbas is heavily dominated by Russian culture, but with Ukrainian countryside. These territories up until 20th century were populated by Crimean Tatars, the indigenous nation of Crimea. Crimea itself, being conquered by the Russian Empire, experienced deportation of many ethnic groups (Greeks during the time of the empire, and Crimean Tatars, Germans, Italians, Bulgarians and Greeks deported once again in 1939-1945), settlements of Russians, and later inclusion to the Ukrainian SSR, became a mostly Russian-speaking people after WW2. In 2014 Crimea was annexed by Russia (Jancen 2015, Korostelina 2014). Thus, “Ukraine is divided indeed, but there is no fixed bounds and the parts run over each other” (Jancen 2015, 51).

The population of Ukraine consists of Ukrainian 77.8%, Russian 17.3%, Belarusian 0.6%, Moldovan 0.5%, Crimean Tatar 0.5%, Bulgarian 0.4%, Hungarian 0.3%, Romanian 0.3%, Polish 0.3%, Jewish 0.2%, and the last 1.8% is classified as Other (indexmundi.com). It is also diverse in ethnic groups of those who consider themselves as Ukrainian, such as Podolyans, Boyks, Hutsuls, Lemky, Polishchuks, Slobozhans and many others subgroups in each region of Ukraine. Some of the Ukrainian regional identity became more represented both on festivals organized with support of the government and in the popular culture. For example, Hutsul identity were

depicted in the popular TV series “Ostanniy Moskal”²⁶ and performed in the fifth season of Holos Kraïny. Hutsuls are the indigenous ethnic group that occupies Western Ukrainian regions on both sides of the Carpathian Mountains, and are mostly settled in Eastern Galicia²⁷. Hutsul language is to some extent not understandable for another part of the Ukrainophone population, but alongside with another Western Ukrainian ethnic groups (Boyks, Lemky, Podolyans) are perceived as the most European Ukrainians because the territories were part of Poland and Austro-Hungarian Empire and had less influence from the Soviet authoritarian ruling.

The nostalgia for the European past of western Ukrainian cultural and political elite exists in opposition to the Russian aspiration of Eastern Ukraine (Bechtel 2015). This associated mostly with Eastern Galicia (Halychyna) - a historic-geographical region in Western Ukraine²⁸. Even in twenty-first century, a memory of the Austrian times “when Lemberg²⁹ was the capital city of the crown land” is still vivid (Bechtel 2015,

²⁶ Ukrainian comedy television series, premiered in 2015 on the 1 + 1 TV channel casted many popular Ukrainian cinema and TV celebrities.

²⁷ Some historians refer to Hutsuls as heirs of the Kyivan Rus, inhabitants who ran away from Mongols and settled in the Carpathian Mountains that occupy Western regions of contemporary Ukraine (encyclopediaofukraine.com). They have a distinguished image among Ukrainian culture, with their colorful, richly ornamented folk costume and handwoven textiles, the Hutsuls are known for their artistic wood carving and implements of brass, leather, and bone; their outstanding ceramics; their handmade jewelry; their vibrant and kilim weaving; ornaments and particularly their way of painting Easter eggs, and distinctive wooden folk architecture.

²⁸ Eastern Galicia encompasses contemporary regions of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil and was recognized in the 18th century in the Austrian Empire. Before that, Galicia was a part of Poland, hostile to minorities up until the Soviet Union invasion during WW2, which was perceived as a “foreign intrusion” (Bechtel 2015, 184).

²⁹ Lemberg was a name of Lviv in German language in the Austro-Hungarian times.

184). Under that ruling Ukrainians were given their national rights, Ukrainian language was officially allowed in Lviv university, and autonomous status was given for Eastern Galicia³⁰. Austrian culture is still noticeable in Lviv architecture and castles around the city, Vienna-style coffee shops are part of the Lviv resident's daily routine.

The attitude of the Western Ukrainians in resistance to Russian influence and Soviet legacy that implies the close ties with Russia was adopted by the Ukrainian government after the Revolution of Dignity. For example, the UPA claim "Glory to Ukraine, Glory to the Heroes! Ukraine's above all!" became used in the public discourse after the Revolution, especially after newly elected president Poroshenko pronounced it in the Ukrainian Parliament in 2014 (Stienen 2015). Further initiation of the "decommunization" law that prohibits Soviet Union symbols, street naming and official holidays, condemns the communist regime, and open archives of the Soviet secret services. The Soviet holiday of "defenders of the Fatherland" which was known as "Day of the Soviet Army and the Navy" celebrated annually on February 23rd were moved ahead to October 14th which is associated with the Day of Ukrainian Cossacks and with the day of UPA formation.

The perceptions of the UPA are controversial in the Ukrainian society. The legacy of the Soviet Union left the attitude of "Nazi collaborators" (Stienen 2015, 204)

³⁰ Ukrainian delegates were acknowledged in the Parliament in Vienna, the local Sejm in Lemberg derived a national program, which gave a development to local cultural and political elite.

reflecting the cooperation of the OUN with Nazi Germany for the promise of Independence for Ukraine. This idea is still reflected in the attitude of the South and East of Ukraine, alongside the Russian attitude. In 2014 this attitude became a rich ground for Russian propaganda establishment in the occupied territories of Donbas and Crimea, as well broader eastern and southern parts of Ukrainian territories controlled by Kyiv. The image of Stepan Bandera was used as a symbol describing the “neo-nazi Ukrainian nationalists” which took power in Kyiv after the Revolution, equalizing Ukrainian nationalism with fascism (Kuzio 2015).

However, some part of the Ukrainian population sees OUN UPA as “pivotal elements in the history of Ukrainian liberation” (Stienen 2015, 204). The Ukrainian perspective on the Second World War contradicts the Soviet Union and Russian mindset about brotherhood between the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarus populations having fought together against the Nazi occupants. The Ukrainian position is that both Nazi and Soviet military were seen as “two forms of occupying powers” (Stienen 2015, 204). At the same time, during the Revolution of Dignity, radical participation on the front lines of the Euromaidan by protesters from “The Right Sector”³¹ resulted in the people’s perception of nationalism being attached mostly to ultra-right supporters, whose extremes do not allow it to be included in the wide public discourse.

³¹ The Right Sector - is the most radical wing of Ukraine's Maidan protest movement political organization and party which aims "build a nationalist Ukrainian state and stage a nationalist revolution" (bbc.com)

Another perspective on the regional identity that is well-known and loved within Ukrainian society is represented by a cosmopolite narrative of Russian-speaking people of Odessa. Of the numerous regions within current Ukraine, Odessa and Sevastopol have always been the cities with special status politically, economically and culturally along with Kyiv. Odessa from its settlement was the small Tatar city with a Greek population, and then after the invasion of the Russian Empire, it became one of the largest cities and obtained its specific status due to the international seaport³². Odessa became a cosmopolitan city that was a “politically restive, artistically volatile nexus of diverse national, linguistic and ethnic groups” (Stanton 2003, 117). The residents in Odessa speak Russian, which inheres the “influence of Ukrainian and Yiddish in grammar, lexicon, and phraseology, and Odessa folk humor reflects Jewish sensibilities” (Rothstein 2001). The language of Odessa is perceived as one of the unique tourist sightseeing experiences. Odessa is filled with Klezmer, the repertoire of the songs reveals the mixture of languages, dealing with various aspects of the Jewish experience but also with the life of the criminal world, employing the stylistic conventions of the so-called blatnaia pesnia (gang song). Odessa is usually referred as “Odessa-mama”

³² Odessa was settled at the beginning by mostly western Europeans, and then received a large influx of Jews because unlike other big cities in the Russian Empire it allowed Jewish settlement. Odessa was also embracing Russian and Ukrainian populations.

following the gang slang that embodies the carefree and sometimes dangerous life³³.

Many TV series, such as “Likvidatsiya”³⁴, which were shot and broadcasted in Ukraine representing that unique culture of Odessa. Its music style is popular not only on a regional level, but performed in popular talent shows, such as Holos Kraïny.

Regional identity based on geographical location represents different perspectives on Ukrainian national identity and inheres both the nationalistic and cosmopolite perception of Ukrainianness. Representations of the regional identity are used in the Ukrainian social life; politics adopt the regional attitudes at the governmental level. Ukrainian media and popular culture tends to embrace the features of regional identities by portraying the stereotypes constructed within a regional culture and then transmitting them on a national level.

Cosmopolitan inclinations in Ukraine

To study cosmopolitanism in Ukraine, it is useful to understand this ideology of a “citizenship of the world”. The perspective presented by Kwame Anthony Appiah offers the possibility of a cosmopolitan community in which individuals with different origins can build relationships based on mutual respect despite their differing beliefs (religious, cultural, etc.) (Appiah 1998). He presents the concept of a liberal cosmopolitanism,

³³ The reputation as a criminal city was established in the time of Imperial Russia and continued to exist in the Soviet Union. Gang culture has a specific place in Odessa folklore, it contains the unique, grotesque elements invoking to easy and wealthy life, and the desire to show off (Sylvester 2001).

³⁴ Liquidation (2007) - is a highly popular Russian TV series about post WW2 criminal Odessa. In 2014 according to the initiative of Ukrainian ministry of Culture and Secret service of Ukraine this TV series were banned in Ukraine due to support of some lead actors of Annexation of Crimea and military actions in Eastern Ukraine.

which “celebrates the fact that there are different local ways of being” which do not have to become a homogenous culture “as long as these differences meet certain general constraints” (Appiah 1998, 94).

Appiah presents the basics of cosmopolitanism as the freedom to create oneself, which is a process that occurs in connection with “a range of socially transmitted options from which to invent our identities” (Appiah 1998, 98). Discussing these social options that people attach their affiliation to, Appiah distinguishes the nation and the state. The author asserts that nation is subjective and very important, but states, matter on a more basic level, “they regulate our lives through forms of coercion that will always require moral justification” (Appiah 1998, 97). This means that people derive their identity based on the nation they live in, but their life depends on the state. Appiah refers to that phenomena as cosmopolitan patriotism. (Appiah 1998, 98).

Explaining this term, Appiah pushes away from the fundamentals of the nation, where interactions within society are based on sharing language, which means participating in a “complex set of mutual expectations and understandings” (Appiah 1998, 99). He further explains this through the notion of a common culture, which is “shared beliefs, values, signs and symbols” (Appiah 1998, 99) and is the crucial factor for the existence of individual and family life. However, for a society to exist in the mixed ethnic and/or racial composition of population within a single country, Appiah offers to embrace the different ways of social and cultural life by relying not on a common culture, which focuses on cultural specifics of a dominant ethnic or racial group, but on the conditions that are necessary for coexistence which means to “share

the political culture of the state” (Appiah 1998, 107). Appiah considers national identity as a “form of identity that is central to the possibility of a modern patriotism” (Appiah 1998, 98) which includes the diversity of social and cultural life that is based on the common institutions.

This perspective accurately depicts the rivals of defining national identity in current Ukrainian society. To reduce all of the cultural diversity to the one denominator of Ukrainian by cultural specifics, or religion or language (Ukrainian in different regions has various dialects) would mean to neglect a lot the diversity of Ukrainian culture.

Cosmopolitanism in the Ukrainian public sphere inheres a trend which is mostly represented in the Ukrainian media, which “constructs Ukrainians as global subjects” by displaying ethnic and racial diversity and representing it as part of Ukrainian identity, what in its turn can be viewed as a “claim to cosmopolitanism and equality” with what “first-world” nations and economies are associated nowadays (Bilaniuk 2016, 341). Bilaniuk presents discourses regarding identity in Ukraine, which are perceived to have their basis in a combination of biological origin and cultural heritage as “nationality” or ethnicity. She also provides the notion that Ukraine’s Constitution, adopted from the Soviet constitution and ratified in 1996, attempted to embrace ethnic diversity left after the Soviet Union’s collapse by using the Ukrainian word *narod* (a people) which is defined in the Constitution as “Ukrainian citizens of all nationalities” (Bilaniuk 2016).

Narod is a term used in the Soviet Union alongside with the word Soviet. “Sovetskiy narod” applied the “establishment of a tolerant coexistence [of different ethnic groups and nations] based on the common Soviet identity (Korostelina 2014,

137). The distorted notion of cosmopolitanism established within 70 years of its existence among Soviet proletariat was based on Russian language. Considering current Ukrainian population, *narod* falls in the concept that is embracing the cosmopolite aspirations of Ukrainians and is partially a base for establishing the cosmopolitan patriotism offered by Appiah.

The collapse of the Soviet Union symbolized the falling of the so-called “iron curtain,” Western European and American popular culture filled the comparatively monotonous post-Soviet Russian-language and Ukrainian cultural environment, and became the example of how their own popular culture should develop. Following the global tendencies of inclusion, minority identities came to take part in the construction of Ukrainian identity (Bilaniuk 2016). At the same time, the Soviet Union’s legacy left the belief of Ukrainian artists that making it to Moscow can provide a larger audience and profits if one would produce music in Russian. Georgian culture is filling out large cities of Ukraine; a big number of newly opened Georgian restaurants are followed by the partaking of Georgian contestants in talent shows, such as *The Voice*. The gracious victory of Jamala at the Eurovision Song Contest³⁵ in 2016 with the song “1944,” the story of her devotion to her family during the Soviet deportation of Crimean Tatars, this ethnic identity, oppressed in the annexed Crimea, became a respected part of Ukrainian culture.

³⁵ The Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) – annual singing competition, that held among mostly European countries. In the televised contest each contestant represents his or her country by performing a 3-minute song. Each year the ESC takes place in a country that won the contest the previous year.

Based on the conducted fieldwork in Kyiv in 2004 and 2009, Bilaniuk asserts that the visibility of people of color in Ukrainian media and public performances is multidimensional.

Bilaniuk pushes away from the notions that parallelism between Africans and Ukrainians as having shared histories of oppression leads one to consider Ukraine as a post-colonial country, to the notion that for Ukraine the notion of race is not attached to an identity. The participation of African descendents as contestants on *Holos Kraïny* reveals tensions regarding constructions of Ukrainianness and foreignness. Unexpected performances of Ukrainian songs in Ukrainian by black contestants illustrated the complex interaction of language and appearance, in which blackness was fetishized, and the combination of Ukrainian speech and blackness even more so (Bilaniuk, 2016).

Bilaniuk, during her fieldwork in Ukraine, noted that people of color were often entertainers in the Ukrainian media, and the Ukrainian media market demands, exoticizes and commodifies blackness. At the same time, black people take part in the construction of the Ukrainian national identity (Bilaniuk, 2016). Bilaniuk argues, that “blackness and Ukrainianness mutually constitute each other in the cultural products such as *Holos Kraïny*, as people navigate the desires for cosmopolitan modernity” (Bilaniuk, 2016, p. 342).

Conclusion

The eventually obtained Ukrainian Independence created a lot of challenges on the way to reaching economic and political stability alongside the construction of the country’s identity and development of its culture. Along the way to reaching these goals,

there occurred two revolutions, one of which was violent and resulted in the loss of lives. Ukraine lost a significant part of its territories in result of Crimea's Annexation, and was forcefully involved in an active military conflict with one of its neighbors, which is also one of the world's largest and most powerful countries. This is a continuation of Ukraine remaining the battlefield of geopolitical interests that has lasted for many centuries.

Ukrainian national identity rests on a medieval greatness of Kyivan Rus and of Cossack's bravery, of rich folk culture and traditions, Ukrainian language and religion. At the same time, Ukrainian identity has traces left by centuries of foreign influences, that constitute it to a certain extent, and create a variety of perceptions. The current transitional state in Ukrainian identity is a result of history distortion, oppressions of local culture and inculcations of foreign cultures.

Rapid changes in social and political life provoked the increase of nationalism within the Ukrainian society. At the same time, the current Ukrainian multiethnic population and the desire to become a part of the first-world economies stimulated the cosmopolite aspirations.

On the one hand, nationalism, which according to Anderson is grounded on the shared imagined community in Ukraine after the Russian and Soviet dominance has a negative connotation and is understood as extreme radicalism. On the other hand, nationalism after the Revolution of Dignity obtained symbolism that incorporates national motifs, folk culture and historic personas, which stimulated Ukrainian language to become an important part of national security, and thus more frequent in the media

and people's lives. Ukrainian culture and the Church are redefining themselves after the cessation of direct Russian influence.

At the same time, Ukraine for the last 70 years having been put in the condition of the unified Soviet nation, meets challenges of multiculturalism and globalization with western democratic conditions of inclusion and non-discrimination of the diverse population of Ukraine (Proshak 2015). Western orientation was foregrounded when the Western Ukrainian territories were in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and intensified after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Cosmopolitanism in Ukrainian society is an internal condition and a result of a global trend as well.

Cosmopolitanism by Appiah creates an opportunity for people of different origins to coexist in a cosmopolitan community in which individuals with different origins can build relationships based on sharing political culture and not common culture. For the last 27 years of Ukrainian independence, media and popular culture became a platform where "people navigate their desire for cosmopolitan modernity" (Bilaniuk 2016, 360).

Ukrainian media reflects the current Ukrainian identity by portraying different nationalistic, cosmopolite narratives and those that mediate nationalism and cosmopolitanism. In the next chapter these narratives are represented in the Ukrainian version of the show *The Voice* will be studied.

CHAPTER III

HOLOS KRAĬNY

The red carpet leads the viewer further, into a fully-packed coliseum and onto the middle of the stage, from underground erupts the giant hand holding a mic while showing the victory sign. The motion picture is accompanied with rock-style music by an amplified guitar and multilayered vocals singing: “This is the voice of Holland.” The title “The Voice” is shown flying through its letter “O” and then directs the viewer to the stage in the filming pavilion of the show. This is how the popular talent show *The Voice of Holland* begins. The show was launched and produced by Dutch showbiz guru John de Mol in 2010 airing on RTL4. Talpa media, which is headed by John de Mol, who also owns the rights of *The Voice*, claims in press releases that: “the record-breaking show is currently being watched on every continent, airing in over 180 territories. The show received numerous awards, including 4 Emmys and 4 Producers Guild Awards while scoring record-breaking numbers on social media. *The Voice* has close to 71 million Facebook fans and almost 16 million Twitter followers. *The Voice* and *The Voice Kids* have 33 billion YouTube views and almost 34 million subscribers today” (Talpa.TV). Currently, *The Voice* unites 66 countries in a search for the best adult and young singer respectively.

Based on the expertise of locally acclaimed singers, producers and on the audience participation through voting *The Voice* had a specific “hook” for the audience – the selecting process was based only on the vocal superiority of a contestant. It was

emphasized visually with large rotating chairs, each with red buttons, where four experts sit facing away from the stage to make their decisions. (Martinez, 2014).

The first two countries with local versions of *The Voice* were the US and Ukraine. In the US, the show was broadcast by NBC and competed for the same audience members with other popular talent shows such as *American Idol* (2002, Fox), *America's Got Talent* (2006, NBC), *The Sing Off* (2009, Fox), *The X Factor* (2011, Fox), and *Rising Star* (2014, ABC). On the moment of launching of *The Voice* in Ukraine, local viewers watched "Karaoke Na Maidani" ("Karaoke at the Maidan Square" Inter, 1999-2007; 1+1, 2007-2009; STB, 2009), "Fabryka Zirok" ("Star Factory" Novyi Kanal 2007-2011), "Narodna Zirka" ("Folk Star", TRK Ukraina 2009-2012), "Zirka+Zirka" (1+1, 2010-2011) as well as adaptations of American shows such as "Ukraine's got talent" (STB, 2009) and "X Factor" (STB, 2010) (Babenko, 2011).

The closest in format with *The Voice* is the *X Factor*. The latter also implemented the four judges/coaches that have the authority to let the contestant advance in the competition, and several stages of pre-recorded selective processes that result in live-streamed stages that incorporate audience voting which eventually proclaims a winner. Both shows are also the combination of a talent show and a reality show. The backstage inputs that portray the hard work on their rehearsals, alongside scenes of the contestant's personal life make this format very appealing to the viewer.

The one crucial difference between *The Voice* and the other shows, lies in the first stage of selection, Blind Auditions, which cause the extravagant contestants (freaks) who usually attract more significant viewership, impossible for the judges to identify or

use them in the show if one does not have real singing talent. Additionally, because of the Blind Auditions, the show is not working to obtain only those contestants, who fall into certain archetypes which would grant each season the successful formula of gaining the most of audience adoration. *The Voice* format is focused on advanced voice performance and music content accompanied by the live band, and also incorporates social and political components of current interest. The audience, during the show, is being educated about a good taste in singing performance, in result, votes not only based on a rags-to-riches narrative, but taking into consideration a talent wrapped in a story that reveals current social problems and political narratives.

In this chapter, I will discuss the performances from *The Voice Ukraine* that relate to the narratives which reveal main controversies exist in the Ukrainian society regarding national identity. I will describe and analyze performances from season 4 (2 March 2014 - 8 June 2014), to season 8 (28 January 2018 - 29 April 2018); this framework specifically focuses on the show's reflection of changes in the Ukrainian social and political life after the Revolution in 2013-14, the Annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the active conflict caused by Russian military forces, described in the previous chapter. As suggested above, since its emergence in the early 2010s, Ukraine's *The Voice* has mediated tensions between the "European West" and the "Russian East." Throughout this chapter, I present the apparent presence of these tensions in the performances broadcasted in the show. *Holos Kraïny* became a unique combination of narratives that incorporate the Ukrainian collective idea to be a real part of the Western world (Europe and the USA) and produce the show at the level of Brit Awards and

Grammys. The latter also implies that the cultural and ethnic diversity that should be evident in the show on a global level and as a reflection of the internal conditions of Ukrainian society, which is diverse in its ethnic composition. At the same time the show aims to attract a significant part of the Ukrainian population that still supports connections with Russia and other post-Soviet countries. On top of this, nationalistic loyalties triggered by the social uprising, and active military conflict both make this claim to unite the multidimensional Ukrainian society and represent the real voice of the country to be an ambitious goal.

I begin my study by looking at the basic visual and sonic order of *The Voice of Holland* franchise. The main theme and stage titles of the original Dutch version of *The Voice of Holland* in English are understandable for both Dutch and English-speaking audiences. Unlike the Dutch version, producers of the Ukrainian version did the adaptation. The main visual and music intro of the show composed by Martijn Schimmer remains similar in a Ukrainian version, except for the lyrics of the vocal part. In the Dutch version, it sounds like: “This is the voice of Holland.” In the Ukrainian version, the melody did not let it be simply translated as “this is the voice of Ukraine” in English, because it will drastically narrow the audience. In addition, local producers could not just translate it into Ukrainian as “Це є голос України” (read as “ze ye holos Ukrayiny”) because of two reasons. Firstly, it sounds dissonant with the rhythm of the original theme. Secondly, the phrase “це є” (this is) does make sense but is not common to the Ukrainian language in terms of sentence structure. The other option for creators that follow the franchise license could become the phrase that sounds “Голос України”

(read as “Holos Ukrainy”) which literally translates as “the voice of Ukraine” and almost perfectly matches the rhythmic pattern of the original theme but cannot be used because of its content. In other words, it is the title of the official periodical of the Ukrainian Parliament where the issued bills and laws are required to be printed in a way to obtain their legitimization. The issue of synchronization with the rhythm of the original theme was solved to the slogan “Голос твоєї країни” (read as “holos tvoyei krainy”) which literally translates as “The voice of your country.” The specificity of the country name Україна (read as “Ukraina”) in the Ukrainian language is similar to the word for country (У)країна – (U)country, which in combination with “твоя” (your) can be interpreted by Ukrainians as “Ukraine”. This approach also resulted in the local version of the title of The Voice in Ukrainian, which sounds like “Голос Країни” (read as “holos krainy”) which literally translates as The Voice of the country. In this study I will refer to the show using transliteration from Ukrainian into English, which is Holos Kraïny.

The Ukrainian version of The Voice, according to a format of *The Voice of Holland* consists of 4 stages: the Blind auditions, the Fights, the Knockouts, and Live Streaming of Quarter, Semi and Superfinals. Unlike the adaptation of the show’s main theme, the titles of the show’s stages are translated into Ukrainian without adaptation – “Сліпі Прослуховування” (read as “slipi proslukhovuvannya”), “Бой” (“boyi”), “Нокаут” (“nokauty”), and “Прямі Ефіри” (“pryami efiry”) respectively. Originally the visual and sound aesthetics are taken from a boxing industry and are familiar to Ukrainians, who are fans of boxing mostly because of the successful 10 year-dominance

of the Klitchko brothers in the heavyweight division of the world's professional boxing industry³⁶.

The contestants' performances are interspersed with their personal stories and the comments of the celebrities who hold coaching positions³⁷. It has backstage inputs from co-hosts and supports the interaction with the audience in social media and voting during the finals. Additionally, the show's commercials, while inviting potential contestants to the casting which is run by the music producer and production crew, reveals the existence of a stage that is hidden from the television audience. During the casting, a perspective contestant should be ready to perform 5-6 songs using the audio tracks without vocals, and reveal their personal narrative and intentions regarding their participation in the show. Then they wait for an invitation to the Blind Auditions. Some of the contestants are invited to casting by scouts. Inna Ishenko, a superfinalist of the sixth season reveals the story about how scouts invited her when she was singing and playing bandura³⁸ in the streets of Poltava. There are cases when a potential contestant is asked to record a video of his or her musical performance and send it to the production crew, who would then decide if they should invite the participant to the casting and make comments about the preferred song to perform.

³⁶ Marther, Victor. "In This Corner a Dominant Heavyweight who creates Much Less Buzz" The New York Times Online, last modified April 22, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/23/sports/in-this-corner-a-dominant-heavyweight-who-creates-much-less-buzz.html>

³⁷ Celebrity from the local music industry who plays the dual role: as a judge during the televised contestants' selecting process when the judges are sat facing away from the stage and make their decision, choosing performers based on his or her vocal capabilities; and then as mentors of the team of contestants which prepares them to become The Voice of the country.

³⁸ Old traditional Ukrainian usually 55-string folk musical instrument

In the first televised stage, called the Blind Auditions, the pre-selected contestants perform for the four coaches, who select their team of 16 artists by blindly listening to their vocal performance with their chairs turned away from the performers and pushing a button when they are interested to turn and face the contestant. If two or more coaches turn to the contestant, he or she chooses which coach they want to work with. The Blind Auditions is the stage where the least amount of the preparatory crew's input is included. However, more of each contestant's undiluted personality can be seen through choosing a song and a costume without interference, and intentions regarding the purpose of partaking in the show are more easily revealed. This stage is recorded a long time before the broadcast, and agency of deciding the advancement of contestants is held only by the coaches. The contestant's personal story usually precedes the performance; this is where the contestant reveals his or her background, sets the goals to reach in this round and in the show overall. For example, most of the contestants confess that their desire in the Blind Auditions is to turn at least one coach to be able compete in the further rounds. However, sometimes a contestant reveals more ambitious goals, such as Anyanya Udongvo from Nigeria, who stated that he was going to improve upon his results in the sixth season, compared to the fourth season when he was eliminated in Knockouts.

The act of walking out on the stage to sing becomes a variable ritual that has done by each contestant, with components such as, being shown on camera opening the doors with the sign "the stage", taking the mic from the tech person and the steps onstage are usually followed with complete silence and the specific lightning and sound

effects that signal the start of the song. The music of the live band starts from the four beats given by a drummer. After the song ends, the coaches that did not push their buttons are turned around to make their comments about the contestant's performance, even if he or she was not chosen by anybody. Only in the most recent season, the 8th, the rules were changed and the coaches are not turned around to make their remarks and cheer up the unchosen contestant.

During the next televised and pre-recorded round, the Fights, each coach pairs two of his or her team members to perform together as a duo with a song chosen for them by their coach. The Fights stage is when the work of the coaches is focused on revealing the strongest parts of each contestant and eliminating the weak chain in their teams. After completion of their performance the host gives the coaches an opportunity to comment on the performance and then asks the contestants' coach to make a choice and select one of the two performers to advance in the competition. The chosen contestant is allowed to leave the stage to prepare for the next round, while the other has the chance to be "stolen" by another coach and therefore saved from being made to leave the show. The opportunity to steal a contestant is given in each season, but before the sixth season, each coach could steal only one contestant throughout the whole round of Fights. In the last three seasons the number of steals is not limited, but a stolen contestant would join the team of a new coach and substitute a previously stolen by this coach contestant.

The third televised stage that was also recorded ahead the broadcast, the Knockouts, is the battlefield for the eight remaining contestants on each of the coaches'

teams. The coaches' main task is to make this round the most dramatic and challenging for contestants, choosing the song that is perceived as being on the edge of the contestant's vocal and performing skills. For contestants it is the time to show the biggest potential in attracting the audience support for the live broadcast of the finals that happen later. In this phase, the contestants are placed on the stage in pairs as they were in the previous phase, with the fateful task of choosing songs on their own with help and advice from their respective coaches to perform individually. In the fourth and fifth seasons, the Knockouts followed the original format, when the contestants were paired together onstage and after both individual performances, one of the contestants was eliminated from the show decisively. The host asks each coach to reveal a pair of contestants to compete onstage, and the next pair are revealed right after the resolution of a previous battle. This approach contributes to the dramatization of the round, since the contestants do not know when they will be performing. Starting in the sixth season, the contestants are called onstage in an order that their coach reveals during the show to perform individually and then they are placed on the four chairs next to the stage representing the obtained places from the first to the fourth. After all four chairs are occupied, the next contestant can replace a contestant placed earlier on one of the chairs according to the number that is revealed by a coach based on his or her performance. The newly placed contestant causes the other, lower-ranked contestants to shift down in order, which leads them to being dropped out of the show.

The fourth and final stage is the Live Streaming weekly shows in which the public can call and text their votes, narrowing each coach's team of 4 artists to one, and

from that final group of four contestants, the audience eventually proclaims a winner. Live broadcasting rounds are the Quarterfinals, the Semifinals and the Superfinals. These are traditionally the part when the whole show's production is focused on creation of the content (personal story and performance of each contestant) that would appeal to the audience by incorporating the most dramatic and current narratives. For example, Yana Blinder partaking in the Quarterfinals of the seventh season revealed the story of her search for her father who abandoned her family years ago. The results are surprising for her because her father's entire lineage was Ukrainian, confirming her personal feeling of kinship with Kyiv. This narrative of kinship between Russia and Ukraine attracts the audience members that support affiliation with Russia.

At the stage of live broadcast each contestant is meant to attract a certain part of the audience, and the show's producers are interested in coaches completing their team (for the Semi- and Superfinals) with contestant(s) whose possible target audience does not intersect with that of a contestant from another coach's team. The performances along with the personal stories, hosts' and coaches' comments are distilling the most appealing content, the content that provokes the audiences' involvement. This content includes the personal dramatic narratives, that often relate to current Ukrainian social and political issues.

The first live streaming of the Quarterfinals begins with opening up voting for one coach's team, the numbers are assigned to each contestant and numbers for texting and calling revealed. Before the performance, the personal story reveals the changes in the contestants' life that is connected to the participation in the show, his or her

intentions regarding the potential of winning the show and what personal outcome will accompany the victory. During the performance of each contestant, the voting information appears on the bottom of the screen and remains until the moment when the hosts close the voting for the team. For the performances of each team, the voting starts and ends individually. The two contestants from each team are revealed by both coach and audience voting, with audience preference revealed firstly, and then the coach giving a long and tearful speech decides the second semi-finalist that will perform the following week.

The Semifinals is a round where the contestants have an opportunity to perform with their respective coaches. This stage consists of three performances from each team: the solo performance of each contestant and a trio made of the team with their coach. Each performance is precluded with a personal story, where a reason is revealed about why the victory is important for the contestant. The story before a performance with their coach is comprised of the contestants and the coach revealing details about their relationships within the team and present the idea that these two represent their coach's team. Again, the voting process starts and ends for each team, and the choice of advancement of one of the contestants is divided between the coach and the audience. The coach is asked to unevenly divide the 100 percent between his or her contestants (50-50 is not allowed). Then the audience votes are also translated into percentage and, combined with the results from the coach, eventually proclaim a finalist from the team.

The live-streamed Superfinals are the climax of the whole season. The highest level of emotional display of the contestants and coaches is the main focus of the

episode. Each of the coaches competes with each other in the creation of the emotional appeal, targeting the audience response because in this round all advancements and eliminations are made only by the audience. Each contestant prepares two single performances and one with their coach. The voting takes place three times and resets after each count, each time dismissing one contestant with his or her coach from further performances and the possibility to win. The concert also includes the performances of Ukrainian celebrities, or contestants from previous seasons that became popular after the show. The last voting release occurs when the coaches stand onstage by their contestant. The winner is given a statuette of the show's logo, the hand showing the V-sign holding a mic, and a contract with the recording company is announced as well. If the show's financial sponsors prepared another prize, such as the keys from a new apartment in Kyiv, a representative of the company is allowed to announce it, and then presents it separately from the main show's prize in a different location.

As revealed by a creative producer of *Holos Kraïny* - there is no internal censorship within the production process. The decision of producers is to show the coaches', hosts' and contestants' work as it is, including conflicts during the coaches commenting on the contestants' performances, and the music producer's cooperation with the coaches in choosing the repertory and working on the songs' arrangements. The coaches' mission in the show is to help their contestants "reveal their mission and reach their goals", as well as "prepare and present the real voice of Ukraine"

([youtube.com/goloskrainy](https://www.youtube.com/goloskrainy))³⁹. At the same time, the production crew is prepared and equipped to capture every emotion of contestants and coaches. Thus, using the script for the contestants' performances, highly prepared music band, and rehearsed actions of the crew, the producers tend to rely on coaches' improvisation rather than on choreographed interactions to transmit a sense of realness to the audience.

The Coaches and Hosts

The first two seasons of *Holos Kraïny* (2011-2012) dedicated a significant portion of the show to Russian elements. Not only was it common to see contestants performing Russian pop, rock, and folk songs (in Russian, obviously), but half of the coaches were Russian celebrities. As it claimed to present "the voice of the country," little space was left in *The Voice of Ukraine* for Ukrainian content. Invited in the first season were Diana Arbenina, a Russian rock singer and Stas Piekha a pop singer who is also the grandson of popular Soviet singer Edita Piekha. In the second season Valeria, a popular Russian female singer substituted Stas. The third season (2013) marks a shift in the show: for the first time, all four coaches were Ukrainian celebrities. They included two frontmen of the most popular Ukrainian rock bands, the musicians and composers: Oleg Skrypka, leader of the group "Vopli Vidoplyasova" and Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, frontman of the "Okean Elzy". The other half of the coaches' positions were dedicated to Oleksandr Ponomariov and Tina Karol, both popular singers, songwriters and

³⁹ "Voice of the Country: Top Secret" is the film about the *Holos Kraïny* production. It includes video archives that are not included in the programs. Released on the official YouTube account of the show. Latest access April 20th 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYetOmwkH9s>

participants representing Ukraine in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2003 and 2006 respectively.

In the fourth season (2014) the coaches were Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, Ani Lorak, Sergey Lazarev and Tamara Gverdtsiteli (see Appendix A). Svyatoslav Vakarchuk obtained the Ukraine's most prestigious and honorary title of Honored Artist of Ukraine⁴⁰. Ani Lorak (Karolina Kuiek) is a Ukrainian singer, songwriter, actress, entrepreneur, and former UN Goodwill Ambassador. During more than 20 years of her singing career, Lorak have received the title of National Artist of Ukraine, she also has been cited as one of the most powerful and influential women in Ukraine (focus.ua)⁴¹. Ani took 2nd place in Eurovision 2008 in Serbia. Tamara Gverdtsiteli is originally a Georgian singer who started her career in the former Soviet Union. She gained popularity by having a powerful classical voice (contralto) with Georgian ethnic flavor. Her career started at a Soviet National festival in Dnipro (former Dnipropetrovsk), Ukrainian SSR, later became a National Artist in Georgia and in Russia, and was performing on classical stages in Europe.⁴²

⁴⁰ Vakarchuk is a supporter of social events, such as Orange revolution and Revolution of Dignity, became a parliament member in 2007 and a member of the parliamentary committee for freedom of speech issues and renounced his seat in 2008. Vakarchuk is a supporter of cultural projects founded by him with the Charity Fund "Lyudi Maybutnyogo" (People of the Future). Unlikely from his father, Ivan Vakarchuk, the former Minister of Education and Science in Ukraine (2007–2010), Sviatoslav expresses no political ambitions when accused in potentially taking part in the presidential elections in March 2019.

⁴¹ Lorak also became very popular in Russia and was a frequent participant of top-charts, annual music concerts and awards. For partaking in one of these awards “Золотой Граммофон” (Golden Gramophone Award) Lorak in 2014 was accused of support of Russian annexation of Crimea and occupation of Eastern Ukrainian Donbas regions and was socially protested and eventually Lorak disappeared from the Ukrainian pop culture.

⁴² Is famous in Ukraine in the legacy of the Soviet Union and known for cooperation with the Ukrainian poet songwriter Yuri Rybchinsky, who substituted her in Knockouts in the 10th episode of Holos Kraïny due to Gverdtsiteli’s rapid medical condition.

Sergey Lazarev is a Russian singer who became famous within the popular boys-band Smash in all Post-soviet countries and in Ukraine as well. After the breaking up of the band, Lazarev became a solo pop singer and finished third in Eurovision 2016 in Sweden. He is known for his friendship with Ani Lorak and this was emphasized in the Holos Kraïny.

In the fifth season, the coaches' chairs were occupied by Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, Tina Karol, Oleksandr Ponomariov and Potap. Oleksandr Ponomariov is a famous Ukrainian pop singer with a classical style voice⁴³. Ponomariov became popular and received the title of National Artist of Ukraine and has a music production company titled "Z Ranku Do Nochi" (from the morning to the night), the same as the name of his first album. Ponomariov was the first participant from Ukraine in the Eurovision 2003 in Latvia. Tina Karol (Tatyana Liberman) is a popular Ukrainian singer, songwriter, actress, and television presenter. Increase of her popularity was triggered by Karol's victory at the "New Waive" international music festival in 2005 in Riga, Latvia. She represented Ukraine in the Eurovision Song Contest 2006 placing seventh. In 2015, she won the M1 Music Awards in the category of "Best singer" and has a title of National Artist of Ukraine. Alexey Potapenko, known professionally as Potap, is a popular performer in the band "MOZGI" and the duo "Potap & Nastya" in styles R&B, hip hop,

⁴³ Ponomariov obtained classical education in Khmelnytsky, Lviv and eventually Kyiv alongside with participation in many Ukrainian festivals which made him popular. Ponomariov got married to a daughter of Mykola Mozgovy - legendary Ukrainian singer, songwriter, PhD, head of Voice Department in National Pedagogical Dragomanov University, General and Artistic Director of the National Palace of Arts "Ukraine"

and pop. Potap is also a songwriter, director, screenwriter, composer, TV presenter, executive and music producer of the music production company “MOZGI Entertainment”⁴⁴.

In the sixth season most of the coaches stayed in the show, except for Oleksandr Ponomariov, who was substituted with young and popular singer Ivan Dorn. Ivan Dorn is a Ukrainian singer who was born in Russia. He was also known as a DJ, TV presenter and producer. His music combines elements of house, disco, funk, jazz, pop, hip-hop, UK garage, and soul.⁴⁵

In the last 2 seasons of the show the coaches' chairs were occupied by the Ukrainian pop stars, such as Potap, Tina Karol, Jamala, and Sergiy Babkin. Jamala (Susana Jamaladinova) is a Ukrainian singer, songwriter, actress originally from Crimea⁴⁶. Jamala was given a title of National Artist of Ukraine after winning the Eurovision Song Contest in 2016 and bringing the Eurovision back to Ukraine.

Sergiy Babkin is a singer and songwriter, for a long time has been loved for being a co-performer in the famous band/duo “5NIZZA”⁴⁷. After breaking up the band,

⁴⁴ The artists and bands of MOZGI while receiving many Ukrainian and Russian awards, are popular also in many post-soviet countries. Because of that Potap is known as one the most successful Ukrainian music producers. In 2014 was involved in a scandal receiving award in «RU.TV» and giving a speech “from all Ukrainian Artists” with his pants off and continue having concerts in Russia.

⁴⁵ Has a lot of concerts in Russia, where he became known through social media and after scandal performance on New Waive festival in Latvia in Summer 2014 where he performed song of a Ukrainian band Skryabin in Ukrainian wearing the sweatshirt with national emblem of Ukraine. In 2017 Dorn won the Best Russian Act award on MTV EMA 2017.

⁴⁶ Jamala identifies herself with Crimean Tatars ethnic group – natives of Crimean Peninsula. Jamala has a opera singing education in Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine (Kyiv), but did her career in pop music uniting in her songs jazz, soul, funk, folk, pop and electro styles.

⁴⁷ The band's music was a combination of styles such as reggae, rock and hip-hop, which was performed in a minimalistic music folk style limited to vocals, beatboxing, and acoustic guitar,

Babkin recorded an album called “Brussel” for project set up by Sviatoslav Vakarchuk that is also called Brussel. Later Babkin developed a successful solo singing career, which he has been complementing with both stage and motion picture acting, as well as TV hosting.

The host of seasons four and five of *Holos Kraïny* was Olha Freimut, Ukrainian TV host, journalist, writer and model. Known because of hosting the morning show “Pidyom” (Waking up) and “Revisor” at Noviy TV Channel. In the Fifth season, during the live streaming phase, Freimut was joined by Yuri Gorbunov, who is famous for hosting the Ukrainian version of popular TV show “Tantsi z Zirkamy” (Dancing with the Stars)⁴⁸. From season six, through three consecutive seasons, *Holos Kraïny* was hosted by Kateryna Osadcha and Yuri Gorbunov. Osadcha, along with *Holos Kraïny*, continues to host her own show “Svitske Zhyttia z Katerynoyu Osadchoyu” (“Social Life of the Upper Classes with Kateryna Osadcha”). Apart from the hosts, *Holos Kraïny* has a narrator who announces contestants/performers, sometimes co-narrates the personal story of a contestant, fills up the breaks between performances, announces the coaches, and makes transitions between their comments.

Media Analysis: Language and style of repertoire performed at *Holos Kraïny*

incorporating theatricality of stage performance. The band was developing independently from large music labels, and created youth subculture in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany.

⁴⁸ TV show based on the format of the British TV series *Strictly Come Dancing*, where celebrities paired with professional ballroom dancers compete each week by performing one or more choreographed routines that follow the pre-arranged theme for that particular week (1plus1.ua/tanci-z-zirkami)

One focus of the media analysis conducted on five seasons of the show from 2014 till 2018 was on the language and style of the performed repertoire in the show (see figure 4). The main categories of language of the repertoire were choices such as Ukrainian, Russian, and English. The category entitled “other” includes languages of the songs such as Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, German, Polish, Georgian, Albanian. Regarding the style, it was categorized as folk, popular (including jazz and soul), rock (including punk, metal and slow rock ballads). Additionally, classic style was defined as classical music pieces and musical theatre pieces. Electronic music is represented the least in the show, but as it is a style that is becoming popular in Ukraine, it is important to study its dynamics.

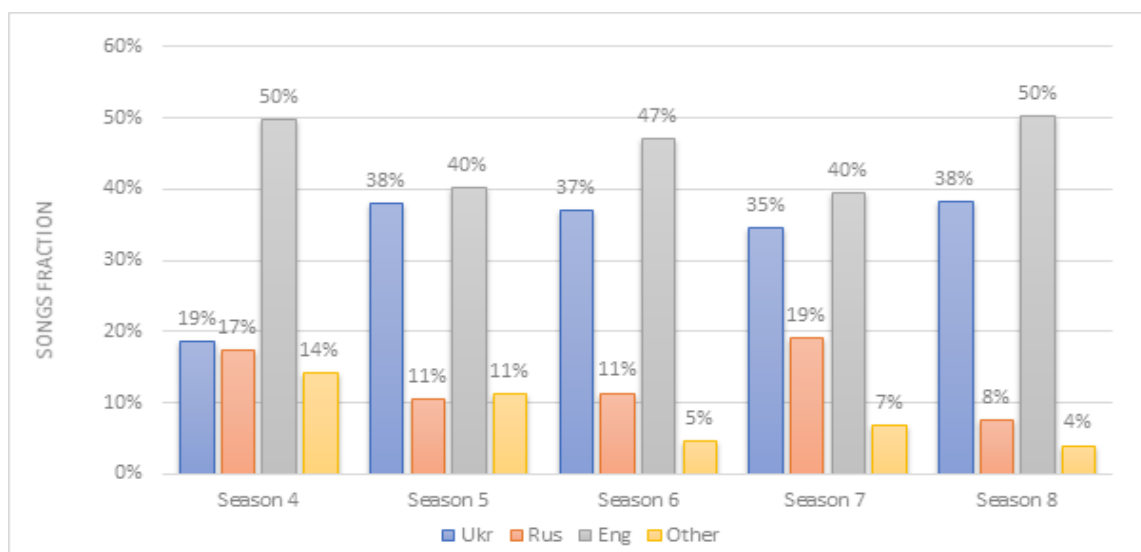


Figure 4. Ratio of songs by language in each season

The analysis displayed that songs in Ukrainian became more frequent in 2015 and have kept growing through 2018. This can be explained as a rise of nationalistic sentiment, which occurred in Ukrainian society in response to the Revolution 2013-14,

the Annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the active conflict caused by Russian military forces. Additionally, changes are noticeable in the ratio between usage of English, Russian and other foreign language content, which correlates with establishing the quotas on the language of TV and radio broadcast by the Ukrainian government mentioned in the previous chapter.⁴⁹ The gradual decrease in the number of songs in Russian from season four to season eight is also somewhat evident. This trend breaks only in the seventh season with rapid increase of the songs in Russian. This partially resulted from the increased number of the contestants that took part in the Blind Auditions in 2017 due to an additional seventh day of televised casting to complete the team of one of the coaches. While the average number of songs performed in the Blind Auditions in fourth, fifth, sixth, and eighth seasons was about 82 songs, in the seventh season it was 95 songs. Qualitative analysis showed that the popular songs in Russian, which were frequently performed in the fourth season, were in the next seasons narrowed to those that were not recently produced and did not deal with praising Russian or Soviet Union culture. Mostly, Russian language repertoire used in the show was substituted by the songs in Russian of Ukrainian production, which were performed by top Ukrainian singers (and coaches of the show).

This tendency can also be explained with internal changes in the Ukrainian music industry, where Ukrainian musicians have filled the niches of Russian-language music that were occupied by Russian celebrities banned in 2015 for support of the Crimea

⁴⁹ see page 34

Annexation by Russia. The high frequency of songs in English as well as the presence of other foreign language content means that in this way the show embodies the desires of partaking in the Western (both European and American) and global popular culture. But the tendency of increasing songs in Ukrainian testifies for the reevaluation of the Ukrainian cultural heritage, development of music in Ukrainian that fills up the popular culture and is performed in the show.

Regarding the music style (see Appendix B), in seasons four and eight, the most popular category was English pop songs (25%-32%), with Ukrainian Pop music increasing each season (9%-21%). Overall pop music was represented by 55-64% of songs, which is explained in that the show is focused on a vast audience and primarily represents popular culture.

The second most popular genre of music performed in *Holos Kraïny* was Rock (23%-28%) with dominance in English language (10%-15% from total number of songs in the season). While the amount of English Rock songs was holding steady for all seasons, the amount of Ukrainian rock songs has almost tripled from 4% to 12%. This is natural, because rock culture in the show was represented by the most popular rock star, Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, and therefore, the significant positions that rock music occupies in the Ukrainian music industry were showcased.

Folk music, more specifically Ukrainian, became more frequent in the show compared to the fourth season, which shows that *Holos Kraïny* addresses the surge in popularity of pop and folk songs in Ukrainian as a response to Russian aggression in Ukraine. Classical style became less common on the show, while electronic music

became more frequent. This is a result of global music trends and the appearance of local Ukrainian singers and bands that produce electronic music.

Recurrent narratives

Other changes that can be noticed are related to the topic that is picked for each season. While the franchised visuals and sounds of the playbacks, stages, announcements and logos stay unchanged, the visual representation of the breaks between the performances in the episode, the coaches presentation and their comments are defined by the season's topic. For example, season four was titled as "Perezavantazheniya" (reboot), all the episodes of the season were united under the idea to make the show better and more spectacular - the stage set incorporated more complex visual and sound equipment, and contestants' performances were filled with technological innovations, while the fifth season had the slogan "Zhyttia Pochynayetsya z Holosu" (the life starts from the voice). This season marks the shift in representation of the contestants where the individual stories contain more dramatic personal narratives for each contestant, sometimes incorporating the direct invocations to the common Ukrainian social issues that are used in all talent shows such as the single mother, an abandoned child, or lack of support from the family of a contestant's singing career. Additionally, the fifth season incorporates the current Ukrainian political situation, revealing the narratives of refugees from Crimea and Eastern Ukrainian regions, veterans, participants in the Revolution of Dignity and volunteers. Narration changes in this seasons accordingly: in the fourth season, the focus of a personal story was on backstage celebrity creation, the narrator revealed their story and intentions alongside

the respective contestant. In season five and further seasons, the narrator's function was gradually narrowed to announcing the contestants in the Live Streamed Finals.

During the media analysis, I selected a few themes that speak to nationalism and cosmopolitanism. *Symbolism in the representation of Ukrainianness* is a topic devoted to an explicit appeal to the audience's nationalistic sentiment incorporating the Ukrainian national symbols such as colors of the national flag, emblem, historic and legendary personalities and architecture, artworks, etc. This topic also incorporates a representation of Ukrainian folk culture and underlines the discussion among Ukrainian cultural studies titled as "sharovarschyna"⁵⁰. *Celebration of regional identity* is one more point that reveals the problematic ground of incorporating symbols that originate from a certain part of Ukrainian territories and have now become a trend in media. A good example of this is the representation of Hutsuls - indigenous people of Western Ukraine in the Carpathian regions of Lviv, Uzhorod and Ivano-Frankivsk. This topic also represents cosmopolitanism as an inherent characteristic of the Ukrainian population. For example, the city of Odessa is host to a very ethnically diverse population which produced a unique culture that is also reflected in Holos Kraïny. *Religion* is an important narrative that is recovering after 70 years of being in the shadow of the Soviet Union. Being separated from the public sphere for many years, religion eventually found a way to become a part of the social life during both the Revolution and War in Eastern Ukraine.

⁵⁰ see page 29

This narrative represents nationalism by means of provoking the debates regarding Russian influence through the Church.

Representation of a *Soviet Union and Russian culture nostalgia* is the narrative that appeals to cosmopolitanism and in the show works through the incorporation of well-loved symbols of former countries, the Soviet Union and Russian Empire, that still echo within some parts of Ukrainian population. At the same time, the production of *Holos Kraïny* integrates the ironic presenting of such symbols (incorporating humor in visual images on a stage set, or comments of the coaches) to prevent a negative reaction of the nationalistic part of the audience. *Revolution and war* being a crucial moment in Ukrainian social and political life, allows the foreigners to portray a narrative that the Ukrainian audience can relate to. This narrative bridges the relationship with Russian descendants or Russian-speaking people by portraying the other side of the war with Russia.

The *mediating nationalism and cosmopolitanism* narrative represent the collective Ukrainian idea to become a real member of a western (European) society with its own unique culture. The show becomes a platform, which navigates the topic of continuous national struggle for Ukrainian independence and revival of the Ukrainian culture and identity with cosmopolitan aspirations of the Ukrainian culture to inhere a global culture and become globally recognized.

Performance of nationalism in Holos Kraïny

The shift in Ukrainian political and social life in 2013-14 that provoked the Ukrainian media to remove any references to Russia was neither accidental nor unique.

In June 2014, 1+1 Media Group, which produced *Holos Kraïny*, reduced the amount of Russian content, such as the series about “brave Russian soldiers and policemen,” that were ubiquitous on Ukrainian TV. This tendency spread among other channels and obtained support from authorities, which at that point were issuing lists of media content forbidden to broadcast both on TV and in cinemas (tsn.ua). Later on, in 2017, the Ukrainian government announced the “language quotas” that obliged TV and radio stations to have 75% of the broadcast in Ukrainian (nrada.gov.ua).

Symbolism in the representation of Ukrainianness

The technique of incorporating Ukrainian national symbols is used quite often within Ukrainian media. The performances of Vitalina Musienko and Alina Lutcenko the winners of the sixth and eighth seasons respectively, portray the usage of these symbols to provoke active audience participation in the process of voting for the advancement of contestants through texting and calling during the live-streamed Finals of the show.

Usually, the Ukrainian folk culture is represented in the show explicitly but not overwhelmingly. The producers tend to manage a balance in performance of Ukrainian folk songs where the contestant would be wearing only some elements of Ukrainian folk costume. Incorporation of the folk and traditional symbols in the stage set or a back screen visual would complement the performance of the popular song, and the contestant wearing contemporary clothing.

Vitalina Musienko came to the show at the age of 18. Originally, she came from the small city in the Poltava region in Central Ukraine, but at the time of the show she

was studying at the National University of Radio Electronics in Kharkiv, in the Department of Micro and Nano Electronics. Musienko was experiencing a pivotal moment in life at the time; she needed to decide which path to choose in her professional life and hoped to get some help with that decision through *Holos Kraïny*. Her performance of the song “Vidma”(The Witch)⁵¹, turned all four of the coaches’ chairs around, and when making her decision, Musienko claimed Sviatoslav Vakarchuk as her future coach, stating he is the “new” Shevchenko⁵². Vakarchuk, praising her strong voice, claimed she was the Voice of Ukraine based on his own personal opinion. Her successful path in the show led her to the last stage of Superfinals where she competed with Inna Ishenko. During her personal story in the first live episode at Quarterfinals, Vakarchuk and the show’s narrator both claimed that she had a unique voice, one that is born once in a century. Such strong claims attached to Musienko have not been explained; supposedly they should not be questioned by the public because they are based on Vakarchuk’s perception and the expertise of the show’s creators. This is especially noticeable when, in the quarterfinals Alla Mazur - the host at 1+1 channel, which after the weekly final newscast airs *Holos Kraïny* - wearing dress with traditional embroidery claims that for Musienko’s young age her voice skills are unbelievable and adds, “her nano- and radio-electronics can wait while she will be the voice of the

⁵¹ The song is written by Illaria – quarter finalist of the second season *Holos Kraïny*.

⁵² Taras Shevchenko (1814 -1861) was a Ukrainian poet, well known as a writer and artist, determinative for Ukraine public and political figure, as well as folklorist and ethnographer. His literary heritage is perceived among Ukrainians to be the foundation of classics of the Ukrainian literature and the modern Ukrainian language. Shevchenko is praised for many of his artworks as a painter and illustrator. Shevchenko’s narrative partially constitutes the Ukrainian national identity.

country”. The personal story before the performance revealed the most memorable parts of the season involving Musienko, including her advice to the audience to make some drastic decisions on the way to reach their dreams. That night Musienko had already performed the Ukrainian song “Zhuravli” (crane bird)⁵³ and “Nebo nad Dniпром” (Sky above Dniпро)⁵⁴ along with the composer and her coach Sviatoslav Vakarchuk. Her personal story revealed the support of her fellow villagers: kids wearing *vyshyvankas* and traditional costumes at the local school yard, smiling while holding the posters in support, and shouting for her victory. The song chosen for her third performance of the evening was called “Ukraina” (Ukraine), and was written by legendary Ukrainian singer and composer Taras Petrynenko. Musienko walked onstage wearing a yellow maxi dress in front of a blue stage background as an invocation of the Ukrainian national flag. The wreath of flowers on her head was also an apparent signifier of the traditional Ukrainian costume. Musienko’s voice at the beginning of the song sounded common for pop culture, regardless of the origins of a singer, but approaching the culmination of the performance, it obtained a flavor of the Ukrainian folk voice style⁵⁵. There was no specific stage set, except that, on the biggest screen in Ukraine,⁵⁶ were many visuals of national symbols: monuments of Independent Ukraine on Maidan Nezaleznosti – central

⁵³ Another name for the song is “Чуєш, брате мій” (Listen, My Brother) is written by Lepkiy brothers but perceived by Ukrainians as a folk song. The song is associated with the the struggle for Independence and its lyrics is about poor Ukrainians who had to leave their native land seeking the better life abroad.

⁵⁴ The very popular song of “Okean Elzy” written by Vakarchuk.

⁵⁵ see page 31

⁵⁶ According to the creative producer of the sixth season of the show. "Voice of the Country: Top Secret", latest access April 20th 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYetOmwkH9s>

square in Kyiv, the monument to Duke de Richelieu – the most recognizable monument of Odessa, and other architectural monuments from all the parts of Ukraine, such as Lviv Opera House, Khotyn Fortress, the Main building of Chernivtsi National University and the Main Red building of Taras Shevchenko National University in Kyiv, The Mill located in Pyrogovo Museum of Folk Architecture and Culture of Ukraine in Kyiv famous Ukrainian artworks, such as “Kateryna” painted by Taras Shevchenko. At some point the camera showed the Crimean Tatar Flag held by former-contestant of Vakarchuk’s team Iskender Islyamov, who was in the audience. At the end of the performance the host Yuri Gorbunov asked Vakarchuk to provide some comments regarding Musienko’s performance, and Vakarchuk, after expressing gratitude to the author of the song, Taras Petrynenko, concisely noted that he thought that Vitalina was The Voice of the Country. Later on, Musienko would be proclaimed the winner and a true holder of that title.

Another example of using the traditional symbols in the performance of the winner happened during the most recent season of *Holos Kraïny*, the eighth. Alina Lutsenko - a humble girl from the city of Bila Tserkva in Kyiv region. During her victorious path in the show, the portrayal of her personal story embodied the traditional values of the Ukrainian family. From the first time she appeared in the show at the Blind Auditions, Lutsenko stated that her goal for the performance was to “show my soul, the soul of Ukraine” (season 8, episode 1)⁵⁷ She also revealed the dramatic story of her

⁵⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14AR8D4BW2k>, latest access February 10, 2019.

parents sacrificing a lot for their daughter to be able to go to the festivals or singing competitions. Her mom would “sleep on a bags while doing construction works in Kyiv” and her father would “ wear the same pair of sneakers for 5 or 6 years”. In the personal stories throughout the show, Lutsenko would be depicted sitting at the dining table and singing with her family at their customary gatherings, where they would come together for dinner, while singing Ukrainian songs, playing the accordion, creating beats with spoons and shouting “glory to Ukraine!” Before the performance in the Semifinals, the legendary Ukrainian folk singer Nina Matvienko expressed her support of Lutsenko, claiming the contestant as her follower in Ukrainian popular culture. Also, Lutsenko’s performance of the song “Mynaye Den” (The Day is Going By) written by Mykola Mozgoviy, devoted to the memory of the “genius and legendary”(Season 8, Episode 12)⁵⁸ Ukrainian singer and songwriter who passed away in 2010. After the performance, Potap claimed that, “if a Ukrainian nation has a code that unifies and contrasts our nation from others, this national code has its keeper. And this keeper is you, Alina. Because you, Alina, [are] Ukraine. You sing like Ukraine does”.

Lutsenko represents the image of “humble and devoted to family, a young woman that is strong enough to be able to fight all the obstacles on the way to her dream,” and this appeals to a wide audience, regardless of the country. What makes her appealing to a Ukrainian audience is the additional nationalistic component. From the Blind Auditions, Lutsenko was incorporating the claims that appeal to the national

⁵⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raK3uteV4pU>, latest access February 10, 2019.

consciousness through her desire to sing Ukrainian songs that presumably would show the “soul of Ukraine”, while in the Fights and Knockouts she sang popular songs in English. Additional support from the Ukrainian folk idol Matvienko, foregrounds the association of Lutsenko with “genuine female Ukrainians” portrayed in the show.

Another attempt to represent an authentic folk Ukrainian performance, in order to appeal to nationalism in the Ukrainian audience, took place in the Blind Auditions of the eighth season. A man in traditional Cossack clothes bows respectively for camera and starts his personal story with the claim that “Cossacks were, are and will exist,” in addition to video of two Cossacks exercising their skills of saber⁵⁹ fight. He greets the audience and the judges, and reveals his name as Cossack Siromaha who came from Dnipro city, while in the video he stands in a field holding a flag. Revealing his story, he is shown wearing a vyshyvanka, going through his normal morning routine with his family of a wife and three sons, whom he raises “in Cossack traditions” such as having a cold shower and physical exercises every morning. He says that he can fight with a sable and a sjambok⁶⁰ (his sable fight is shown parallel to his words), and he can cook, but what he can do best is sing, and that is his most powerful weapon. Siromaha adds the utterance “with [a] word [I] can cut from the neck to the belly button” while video of cutting the firewood with an ax is shown. Coming onstage wearing traditional Cossack clothes, Siromaha takes off his hat, bows to the audience, sits next to the fisgarmonia⁶¹

⁵⁹ Saber is a type of a sword with a curved blade used by Cossacks

⁶⁰ Sjambok is a thick leather whip

⁶¹ Portable pulp organ - a musical instrument of the family of harmonics, characterized by the presence of a piano keyboard and a floor or desk arrangement.

and begins playing and singing the Cossack song “Zasvit vstaly kozachenky” (Cossacks get up before sunrise). While he sings, all the coaches and the audience in the filming pavilion are amazed, and by the end of the song his unusual timbre turns all four coaches around. He finished his performance by shouting “Slava Ukraini! Ukrainkomu kozatstvu slava, slava, slava” (Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Ukrainian Cossacks! Glory! Glory!), and the surprised audience and coaches replied to him “Slava!” (Glory). Then, amazed and slightly scared, the coaches began to communicate with him, asking who he is and where he is from. Tina compared his mission with mission of Holos Kraïny - to promote authentic Ukrainian culture. Potap asks to him to show his skills with the sjambok, which Siromaha refers to as “Cossack rozviazavsya” (Cossack untied himself), and he demonstrates it as it makes a loud whipping noise. While choosing which coach to go along with in the show, he kneels on one knee and after rising he gives a speech that everybody knows, that on the Sich⁶² there were no women, but he personally respects women, mothers, sisters and daughters and that they have something to teach us. Eventually, he chooses Jamala as a coach. He finishes his speech with gratitude to all the coaches who create music for the people’s joy and concludes that “if a heart is not singing, what [is] to live for?”(season 8, episode2)⁶³.

In the next round he performed a song that is much loved by Ukrainians called “Krayina Mriy” (The land of the dreams) by Oleg Skripka in Fights with the female trio, and he was advanced to the Knockouts where he sang the “Monakh” (Monk) by the

⁶² see page 18

⁶³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-14IB-iDXU>, latest access February 10, 2019

Ukrainian band Dakhabrakha who is mostly famous abroad, and whose songs heavily rely on Ukrainian folk in combination with world music. During his time in the show, his rhetoric did not change. He was promoting the idea that, “Kozatskomu rodu nema perevodu” (the Cossack lineage will not disappear), which resembles a phrase from the Ukrainian anthem and Cossack folk songs. Leaving the show in the Knockouts, Siromaha claimed, “while Cossacks live - Ukraine will live too.”

Representation and celebration of an authentic Ukrainian folk culture seemed not to be a goal for the Holos Kraïny before the sixth season. At that time many contestants performing the folk songs were not advanced from the Blind Auditions at all, or were only able to reach the Fights. With this trend, Holos Kraïny attempted to educate people with Ukrainian folk song that for a long time would sound only from the TV channels and radio stations funded by the government. At the same time, these performances follow the tendency in the Ukrainian media and fashion to focus on “all Ukrainian” and precisely on authentic Ukrainian folk culture.

Holos Kraïny incorporates national symbols that appeal to most of the Ukrainian audience. Additionally, the show portrays regional symbols, presenting them on the national level, which attracts additional regional viewership. This approach allows Holos Kraïny to become a mediator of Ukrainian national identity.

Regional identity celebration

Ukrainian culture is rich and regionally diverse. Every region is known for its local dialect of the Ukrainian language and specific cultural features such as the crafts and music. But there is a uniting Ukrainian mass culture, which has a subculture of the

so-called “wedding music”. Wedding musicians run the large traditional weddings in rural areas, and play Ukrainian songs for the enjoyment of the people present. This is a well-known subculture for most of the Ukrainian population, even the Russian-speaking portion, but it is perceived as a low culture that has no place in the media or on a big stage.

In the fifth season, Ivan Pylypets came to the Blind Auditions from a small village in Western Ukraine, with an idea of singing the Ukrainian songs from his region to promote them throughout the country. Ivan works at his household (farm) and has a daily job at the department of culture and tourism in County Administration. He leads weddings, all official holidays at the County, and also writes his own songs. With the ideas of promoting Hutsul and wedding songs, he reached the semi-finals where he performed the much loved song “Teche Voda” (Water flows), which is perceived as a classic of Ukrainian popular culture. His personal story revealed his difficult journey in Ukrainian popular culture, where folk and traditional songs were not “a [proper] format” to be played in radio stations, because the existing trend in media was occupied by Russian music or English-language western pop culture hits. He claimed that his experience disproved that stereotype. Pylypets believed that folk song is a genetic code of the nation that was established through generations, that each heart in the East, West, North and South sing these songs. He wants to make an “injection” of Ukrainian folk song, to make Ukraine as a country “to be ill with the folk song, to love and be proud of

it” (season 5, episode 13)⁶⁴; the same way that people who are so in love with another person, are said to be sick with love. The performance starts with the host Yuri Gorbunov wearing traditional Hutsul clothes, resembling his role in the popular Ukrainian series “Ostanniy moskal” (The last moskal). Gorbunov reveals the story of Pylypets leaving his village and on his way to perform in Kyiv, and in the end his performance brings joy and the desire to send texts in support of Pylypets. The music started with *tsymbaly*⁶⁵. The stage was filled with six hay sheaves. Ivan, wearing a stylized *vyshyvanka*, was singing as embroidery patterns appeared on a screen in the background. In the second verse, the sheaves started going around the stage and later, dancers in traditional Hutsul clothes came out of the sheaves and performed folk dances. Pylypets finishes his performance with the shout, “Гей, Карпати!” (hey, Carpathians). Potap, commending his performance, expressed surprise about his voice and that his repertoire had led him so far in the show. Tina concluded that he had succeeded in his mission to sing and promote the cheerful Ukrainian wedding songs.

This representation of a typical Hutsul descendant is rich for producers to attach the audience and portray many stereotypes that would appeal to the Ukrainians. The Hutsul identity is a signifier for the Western regions of Ukraine that their culture is performed in Kyiv and transmitted to all Ukraine, who then becomes attached to it. A contestant such as Pylypets is not usual in the *Holos Krainy*, rather he is a “freak” of the show, the extravagantly singing character that attracts the audience. Pylypets is a

⁶⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFfuD15J7_0, latest access February 10, 2019

⁶⁵ see page 27

traditional wedding musician, representative of a well-known “wedding music” subculture. Amongst the wedding musicians he is not especially recognizable, however, he performs music that is loved by many people, which is what Holos Kraïny tries to attract.

Religion

The first religious contestant that appeared on Holos Kraïny was Oleksandr Klimenko in season 7. In the seasons prior the seventh, religion was represented only by the sons of priests, such as Andriy Podkaliuk in the fourth season, and Nazar Bretsel in the sixth. All four coaches turned to offer Klimenko a place on their team, and he chose Tina Karol’s team. Klimenko is a priest in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that follows the Moscow Patriarchy. The Voice’s Live Show featuring Klimenko coincided with the holy day of Easter – the biggest celebration in Christian communities worldwide. The choice of the song was his personal decision, and his way of uniting his activities in both the religious and secular realms in that holy day. Klimenko was singing the original version of “Axion Estin,” a special prayer to Mary that is chanted in the Eastern Orthodox Church. For a long time, the prayer was a part of services and was translated into old Slavonic, Russian or Ukrainian - languages that are usually used in Ukrainian churches. But Klimenko sang it in the Greek language. I argue, that singing the prayer in the original Greek version was to keep the secular Ukrainian audiences watching the performance. The aesthetics of the stage set, Klimenko’s traditional Orthodox priest clothes, the music arrangements, and incorporation of a male choir were, from one point of view, an invocation to the traditional services in Ukrainian churches. From another, it

was a recreation of a Greek service, where the church choir is usually male. And from the third, it was a parody of the music style of the famous New-Age music project called Era. Era is well known in Ukraine and worldwide mostly by their single “Ameno”. The band was created by French composer Eric Levi, and uses lyrics that, although they sound similar to Greek or Latin, are in fact deliberately devoid of any exact meaning. Klimenko’s performance made his coach Tina listen to his singing while standing with her hands put together almost in a prayer and gesturing him to hold the breath position for producing a solid vocal sound. Klimenko was not a professional singer. Nevertheless, being an orthodox priest who sings as a significant part of his daily routine in the church, he received professional vocal training from his coach during the rehearsals. This practice of a coach helping the contestant to sound well in the live performance with the song that needs to be prepared in the short period of time that is usual in Holos Krainy. Many coaches, especially vocalists, use their experienced performance practice and reveal their vocal and performance “secrets” to all their contestants. Even in Blind Auditions there is an approach to attract a contestant to a coach by offering “help to deal with the great voice” of a contestant. This powerful performance by Klimenko assisted his advancement to the super finals, where he eventually was proclaimed The Voice of the Country.

Religion in Ukraine was in shadow during the times of Soviet Union, and far from the media attention during first decades of Ukrainian independence, but became a part of Ukrainian social and political life after the Revolution of Dignity. The Church became a significant part of the National security narrative in the last years of the

military conflict in Eastern Ukraine, triggered by the news that priests of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that was subordinate to Moscow refused to perform the burial service for the Ukrainian soldiers killed in Donbas. The performance of Klimenko within the show appears to be a call for love, peace, and Christian values. Outside the show, it appears as an idea of a unity within Ukrainian Orthodox Churches that are under Moscow supervision, an idea that is undermined and falls into the debates in Ukrainian society about the independence of Ukrainian Orthodox Church. That debate in 2018 resulted in provoking the Ukrainian clergy and diplomats to work towards the eventually victorious decision by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople of providing the Ukrainian Orthodox Church the status of a Metropolitanat (independent and equal status among all orthodox churches) with the center located in Kyiv.

The nationalism performed in *Holos Kraïny* relies on the employing of national symbols, and when those are attached to a contestant's personal narrative that is also relatable to the audience, it creates this image of appealing Ukrainianness. The show emphasized that effect by claiming the voice of a contestant to be outstanding. The performance of the Ukrainian folk culture is portrayed in such a way as to be perceived by the audience as authentic Ukrainian, and the show also relies on the increasing amount of Ukrainian-language content. The show appealed to the nation's feelings by using the opinions of famous Ukrainian media personas (the coaches) to crown a contestant with the title of "The voice of the Country". The show portrayed the regional identity by employing the common stereotypes that are known by a Ukrainian viewer. The religious topic played a more complex role, opening up the controversial topic that

uprooted the contested ground of national security and resistance to the Russian influence through the church.

Performing cosmopolitanism in Holos Kraïny

In this section I included the narratives of Cosmopolitanism as an ideology of a shared community based on mutual respect, despite their differing beliefs (religious, cultural, etc.) (Appiah 1998). Applied to current Ukrainian context, these narratives discussed below perpetuate the idea of the Ukraine being a part of the Western world, embracing diversity as a global tendency and internal Ukrainian condition⁶⁶.

Soviet Union and Russian culture nostalgia.

A narrative of the former country is very carefully articulated in the show. There are a lot of songs that many generations were raised on during the last decades of the Soviet Union and even the first generation born in Independent Ukraine was exposed to them. Nostalgia is a narrative exploited in Ukraine mostly by pro-Russian politics, which oppose the current problematic independence and the desires of affiliation with the European Union. Fueling a sentimentality for the past, typically for a period of time in the former Soviet Union, nostalgia aims to emphasize any and all personal associations with these ideas. These narratives are usually associated with a happy and careless childhood, “when the ice-cream cost 3 kopeks” – “a haunting memory that is already in evidence everywhere, expressing at once the compulsion to get rid of it [...] and the panicked nostalgia over its loss” (Baudrillard 2006, 468). A lot of symbols of the Soviet

⁶⁶ see page 36

Union are still present in architecture and city design. However, the protesters of the Revolution of Dignity destroyed one statue of Lenin in Kyiv, and that move was followed by the “decommunization law,” which removed a significant part of remaining architectural pieces with symbols of the Soviet Union attached to them⁶⁷. For the generations born and raised in the ubiquitous communist ideology, those statues had a natural attachment to their childhood which will never return, while the independence of Ukraine in its transitional state regarding social, economical and political realms with added Revolutions and war, amplify the feeling of loss of the happy and safe life in a powerful country.

In Holos Kraïny this narrative is articulated through the choice of songs that originated in the Soviet Union and still have an audience to appeal to. These controversies are evidenced by the performance of Roman Russu in live-streamed Quarterfinals of season seven.

Roman came to the show from Odessa to continue the family tradition of taking part in Holos Kraïny. His wife performed in the Blind Auditions in the sixth season while pregnant, but was not chosen by any coach. His family supports him and he represents the family and dedicates the song to his wife. He chose Potap as a coach, and throughout the show he was called a true man because of his low baritone voice, and for being tall with a large build.

⁶⁷ On May 21, 2015 the so-called laws on decommunization, approved by the Ukrainian Parliament became valid. The new law prohibit Soviet Union symbols, condemns the communist regime, open archives of the Soviet secret services. (zakon.rada.gov.ua)

In the Quarterfinals Russu performed the song of Muslim Magomaev,⁶⁸ “Chertovo Koleso” (Ferris Wheel). The song starts with a black and white picture, Roman wearing half suit-half raincoat performs with the mic on the stand in front of the Soviet-style “estrada”(pavilion stage). Later on, his face appears in full screen on the background and turns around like carousel. That approach causes smiles in the audience and coaches when such a comic scene appears while the arrangements of the song, the style of Russu’s voice, and the lyrics resemble Soviet Union popular culture. After this round Potap advanced him to the Semifinals. This performance illustrate the Show’s appeal to the nostalgic mood of the older population, which then attracts their participation (voting), and at the same time the ability to laugh at it in favor of another large part of the contemporary Ukrainian audience.

Another topic that invokes nostalgia and appeals to the audience that supports close ties with Russia was represented in the fourth season during the performance of Mykhailo Myrka and Viktoria Vinnikova in the battle round with the song “Vdol po Piterskoy” (Along the Piterskaya street). The song is known as a Russian folk song that was picked up by Piotr Tchaikovsky and performed by legendary Russian opera singer Fiodor Shalyapin. The song reveals the story of a usual evening in Moscow life during the time of the Empire in winter, and is associated with a festive mood. Vennikova, in the story prior the performance, reveals a phrase that is used in a Soviet musical movie called “Svadba v Malinovke” (The Wedding in Malinovka) that is associated with the

⁶⁸ Muslim Magomaev - popular singer in the Soviet Union originally from Azerbaijan.

narrative that describes the specific condition of when the song needs to be sung: “so that the soul first opens out and then closes back”(season 4, Episode 9)⁶⁹ . Myrka, being Ukrainian, specifically from a small village in the Lviv region in Western Ukraine, had struggles singing the song, due to its specific invocations to Russian cultural narratives that are foreign to him. Viktoria, being from Kharkiv, which is a region located on the Eastern Ukrainian border with Russia, felt comfortable about the song because those regions were historically a part of the Russian Empire and affected by Russian culture. Their coach, Tamara Gverdtsiteli refers to this song as a masterpiece that is known all over the world and needs to be sung very precisely, “note to note”⁷⁰. Vennikova was wearing a white dress, red boots and earrings, which slightly invokes traditional Russian costume, while Myrka was in a formal dark jacket with jeans and wearing a black scarf. The host, Olga Freimut, announcing Myrka, referred to him as “a real patriot that charmed all Ukraine” and juxtaposed him with “a female Ukrainian with a French charm,” Viktoria Vennikova (referring to her performance in the Blind Auditions with “Padam, padam” by Edith Piaf). The performance started with Myrka lingering in an operatic voice style for the first word of the song, while Vennikova takes her hand to the side and bringing it fist to her hip like in Russian folk dance. While Myrka continues the first verse, Vennikova continues resembling the Russian folk dance moves by making accents with her shoulders according to the beat of the classical arrangements of

⁶⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8a6ITIVy9K4>, latest access February 15, 2019

⁷⁰ “Note to note” usually means that performer should reproduce the melody very precisely, singing every note written by a composer.

the song. Vennikova picks up the song and continues her theatrical performance involving all her body in a Russian folk-pop style while Mykhailo stands still despite the cheerful beat of the song. On a screen that comprises the backdrop, the visual of gilded wooden carvings associated with Russian merchant style of architecture is visible. Commenting on the performance, Freimut would claim that she was afraid Myrka's sonorous voice would break the stage set. Picking up the same idea, Vakarchuk compared Myrka's performance with Shalyapin's singing, which is known for causing the window glass clinking. He added that Mykhailo has a great voice, while the artistic performance of Viktoria created the proper atmosphere of the song. Mykhailo was chosen to advance to the Knockouts for having better voice performance skills.

Not many people listen to folk songs often, especially Russian folk songs. Tamara Gverdzteli being the National Artist of Russia represented cosmopolitanism in the Holos Krainy not only by her own cosmopolite persona, but also by the repertoire of songs she was choosing from for contestants to perform. This song alludes to the times of close, propagated affiliation of Ukraine with Russia that still has many followers in Ukraine and attracts this part of the audience to watch Holos Krainy. Contributing to this were the references of Vennikova to the movie shot in the Soviet Union that represents the transnational identity of the Ukrainian-Soviet citizen that has features of both Russian and Ukrainian cultures.

Interestingly, the show was broadcasted alongside the process of Crimea annexation by Russia, and this performance was playing in favor of Russian actions in Ukraine, promoting the Russian culture.

Celebrating regional identity

This topic reveals the cosmopolite ground titled “shid i zahid razom” (East and West [of Ukraine] together). Ukraine is the biggest country in Europe, and includes territories with different ethnic populations of Ukrainians whose traditions and language have their own local features. Also, different parts of contemporary Ukrainian territories were at different times under the ruling of countries such as the Polish Kingdom, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, which left traces of different cultures blended into local cultures. Incorporating these symbols under the idea that all of these sub-cultures are part of Ukraine provokes debates and prompts the viewership to interact with the show. Felix Shinder, a representative of Odessa, had the performance that best represented a regional identity (Morozov) in the Blind Auditions of the 5th season.

The first shots of a personal story with the sounds of klezmer created the mood for the participant, which for the Ukrainian audience is apparent to be from Odessa. Two friends in pretentious festive clothes - one in a hat with a flower at the brim, black suit with tie and red handkerchief in a front pocket is holding the mic. His friend’s outfit is simpler – vest, shirt and a hat, having a guitar rehearsing the accompaniment before going to the stage. In the interview Felix greets in Russian, and from the first words the well-known Odessa accent and language can be recognized.

Felix Shinder calls himself an Odessa patriot and his accompanist refers to him as “the king of Odessa folklore”(season 5, episode 1)⁷¹. Meeting with one more friend, they are filmed in traditions of Odessa small gangs’ style – messy, funny and running. Felix claims adoration of the style of concert life with drinks and broken glasses, because the most important thing in drunk singing is “that it sounds from the bottom of the heart”. Felix reveals that in the show he wants to show his real self. In his muted moves towards the camera while he approaches the stage, it is easy for Ukrainians to recognize the common attitudes of Odessa.

He bows ironically to the audience before his friend starts the first notes of an accompaniment. Alongside comes the colorful abstract visual that is interspersed with the amused audience’s faces. The first phrase is strongly articulated with a hoarse voice and causes the coaches some amusement and surprise. The song is in the style of Odessa street romance. His moves give the impression that he is giving everything to his singing, Potap confessed that their performance was “to tear the shirt” – very sincere, recklessly devoted to music and full of energy. Apparently an amateur in singing, Felix made the audience follow each his word and intonation. Potap and Vakarchuk turned at the last seconds of the song and Felix in way a very common to Odessa, greeted them before noting to his accompanist, “in what a great company we are tonight!” Discussing their performance, all the male coaches tried to employ the language that is used in Odessa, and choosing the coach to go with, Felix with his accompanist did a guessing

⁷¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGYv8Kjz_i8, latest access February 11, 2019

game “stone, scissors and paper, one two three” – levity in decision-making, as all in Felix’s performance was an embodiment of a stereotypical descendant of Odessa.

People like Felix are the tourist attraction alongside with the seacoast; people from all over post-Soviet countries are coming to the city for such experiences of Odessa. For the Russian-speaking Eastern and Southern Ukrainian population, the image of the Odessa resident in some way represents them, the cosmopolite identity of Russian-speaking Ukraine that seeks to be recognized as equal Ukrainians alongside Ukrainophones, those who speak native Ukrainian languages.

Revolution and war

Incorporation of the topics related to fighting for freedom is relevant to the Ukrainian collective idea and is universal in its ability to incorporate the foreign participants. In the Ukrainian context, this topic can be used in different directions such as the Revolution(s) and military conflict with Russia. With these ideas of struggle for freedom through Revolution, Armenian singer Sbrui Sargsyan in the Superfinals of the 8th season performed, revealing the common experience of Ukrainian and Armenian social and political life. An alternative perspective on the war with Russia was shown in the contestant from Russia with her performance of a Russian folk ritual song during the Blind Auditions of season six.

Sbrui Sargsyan is a famous Armenian singer. She took part in the X-Factor in Armenia where she reached the finals and took second place. Her performances in Holos Kraïny, as well as her voice, were always powerful and skilled- full of energy, with a high level of performance skills, which includes the wide range of her voice, ability to

convey emotions without losing her volume, and her peculiar timbre with the Caucasus flavor. Other contestants from Potap's team claimed her as one of their main competitors, and the hosts were claiming her as "the strongest voice of the show" (season 8, episode 14)⁷². She attracted the Armenian diaspora in Ukraine to support her, and her goal from the beginning of the show was to bring a victory to Armenia. To provoke Ukrainians to vote for her in the superfinals, while competing with the Ukrainian contestants from other teams, Potap concluded from the results of audience votes, which gave Sbrui 69% of the support, that Ukrainians fell in love with her. Commenting on the reaction of the audience on YouTube, Potap mentioned that people from a lot of countries were watching and positively responding to her performances, which supports the idea that Sbrui unites the world audience in their desire to see the Ukrainian version of The Voice. Sargsyan stated in her personal story that "freedom does not have a nationality and borders" and every person feels that inside and goes through the struggle for freedom in life. Sbrui was relating the 2018 Armenian revolutionary experience with Ukrainian Maydan and the Revolution of Dignity that took place in 2013-14. She performed the Rag'n'Bone Man's song Human devoted to the people who did fight and continue to fight for his or her freedom. The song started from the rhythmic sounds of the brass section, the camera showed broken TV sets on stage while on the background screen were blurred colors of Ukrainian flag. From the first verse, events were shown on the screen that have changed history like civil rights

⁷² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGYv8Kjz_i8, latest access February 11, 2019

movements and the fight over apartheid in South Africa. Videos starring such historic figures as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, and the Pope were shown during the performance as well. On the phrase “But I'm only human after all” in chorus, the word HUMAN was uniting a big number of pieces of videos, which later on, were showing the events of Revolution in Kyiv on top of Ukrainian flag. By the end of the performance, the video of the Ukrainian revolution had changed into that of protest events from Yerevan. After the song, Potap stressed Sbrui’s words regarding a freedom that does not have a nationality. Sargsyan was the first Superfinalist that left the competition that night.

Another topic that in Ukraine is closely related to the Revolution is the war. Since 2014 there have been military actions in the Eastern Ukraine that result in the deaths of both Ukrainian soldiers and civilians every day, and Russian soldiers as well. Holos Kraïny presents alternative view on Russian people, which mainly are seen as an enemy throughout these military actions. Yulia Yurina, from the first clips of her personal story, portrays a different perspective, representing the kind and talented Russian that loves and respects Ukraine and its culture. Yulia came from the Russian city of Anapa, which is located in the Kuban region, where historically the Ukrainians and Cossacks were resettled from central Ukraine, which at that time was a part of the Russian Empire. Yurina is shown dancing and singing in folk costume with a Ukrainian folk ensemble, while she reveals her purpose in coming to Ukraine was to study Ukrainian folklore. She shares the tragic story connected to her move to Ukraine and coming to revolutionary city of Kyiv to the Maidan during the most violent events on

February 19th, which spoiled her relationship with her father, who has not spoken to her for a year and did not even come to her wedding to her Ukrainian fiancé. She decided her only way to tell people to stop fighting and killing, was to perform “Sukhoplyas” – a Russian folk custom song which women used to sing while their men were leaving for war. Yurina was wearing a red floral wreath and black lace outfit, singing in a Russian folk voice style while accompanying herself with a drum. Most of the song’s lyrics in Russian are understandable for the Ukrainian audience, and they portray the story of a young son who asks his mother to not let him to be recruited into an army that will send him to a war.

The topics of revolution and war are universal for embracing the foreign contestants in the show that is meant to present the Voice of the country of Ukraine. By incorporating the notions of individual and national freedom these performances help the Ukrainian audience to relate to these contestants’ experiences through their music performance, which serves as a mediator that smoothes the ethnic and national differences. Additionally, the tragedy of a war is also universal and, presented “from the enemy’s side,” showcases the idea that war is cruel to both sides of a conflict. This idea allows the Russian descendant to be embraced by the Voice of Ukraine, and represents the show’s and Ukraine’s cosmopolite identities.

Cosmopolitanism is represented in *Holos Kraïny* by incorporating the topics that oppose the nationalistic position that was perceived to be the majority for the Ukrainian state after the Revolution of dignity, the military conflict with Russia, and the Crimean annexation. This touches the Russian-speaking Ukrainian population that wants to be

perceived equally to Ukrainophones. The show portrays nostalgia for the “peaceful times” in the Soviet Union where two nations - Ukrainian and Russian - coexisted in peace and everybody understood and spoke the Russian language. Russian culture was perceived as “ours”, sportsmen were cheered like they were “ours”. That population reacts painfully on this separation, the cessation of the presence of Russian pop culture and “old good Soviet cinemas”.

At the same time, the breaking point, the Revolution, creates the new dimensions of manifesting cosmopolitan identity. Ukrainians never felt such unity with the Georgian⁷³ nation as after the Crimean annexation and the war in Donbas; the Armenian revolution is compared with the Ukrainian in terms of changing the government forcefully. Through the topics of war, Ukrainian and Russian nations have in common thousands of military dead on both sides of the conflict.

How The Voice Ukraine mediates nationalism and cosmopolitanism

This is the topic that embodies current Ukrainian attitude towards the music performance to be “as good as at Brit Awards or Grammys” and, at the same time, to be recognized as a uniquely Ukrainian. The ambiguous approach to the representation of the Ukrainian folk culture united with world music and foreign music styles is present in the performance of Katya Chilly in the quarter finals of season seven, and the duo comprised of Nigerian Anyanya Udongwo and Azerbaijani Chingis Mustafayev in the Fights round of season six. Additionally, a Ukrainian society composed of different

⁷³ In August 2008 Georgia was forcefully involved in a hybrid war with Russian military forces, which resulted in losing parts of the territories of Ossetia region.

ethnicities united under the notion of a Ukrainian citizen represents the cosmopolitanism at an internal level. The performance of the winner of the fifth season, Anton Kopytin, in the Superfinals is a good example of that attitude.

In the Ukrainian popular culture, Katya Chilly is a unique persona who amazes everybody by her high-pitched voice, her music style, which is an interesting mix of vernacular and popular culture such as folk, pop-rock, dance, jazz, new age and world music, and the development of her career. She became very popular in the late nineties to early two thousands, when she was awaited in music festivals, and her songs were played on radio stations and tape recorders. Instead of commodifying her popularity, Chilly released a small number of copies of her album “Rusalki in da house” (“Mermaids in da house”), and stopped further production, letting her fans dub the cassettes in their homes. Her second album “Son” was never officially released, but distributed informally on the Internet. Some of her video clips like “Lubov Moya (My Love)” do not exist in official version but only as videos by her fans. In 2017 Katya Chilly came to the Blind Auditions of the Holos Kraïny and made all four coaches turn, asking her to continue taking part in the show, though she was already guaranteed to continue. She continued taking part in “The Voice,” performing her own songs and doing so on bare feet because this is how she feels comfortable on stage and able to transmit her music.

She performed Ukrainian folk song “Kustova” (Bushes song) from village Stari Koni in Polissya historic region in Northern Ukraine (season 7, episode 12)⁷⁴. The song starts with tambourine beats and chords of an Indian sitar in front of the visualized bushes on a background screen. Chilly stands bare foot on green “grass,” wearing a short green dress with leaf applications, and begins singing in a traditional Ukrainian folk manner. After a few moments, a female choir with kids in traditional, everyday clothes joins the multi-vocal musical performance. The back screen shows the forest shaking, and on top of it appears Chilly’s face, which moves. The movements of her body seem to help her sing, and letting the sound go higher and up to heaven contributes to a multidimensional and multivocal, complex music performance that occurs onstage. After the song, Jamala was both criticized and praised Chilly at the same time, saying that this was a performance, done within the same style as in the previous rounds, though going beyond the usual performance on a talent competition such as Holos Kraïny. To which Chilly’s coach, Tina Karol, replied that the idea of their cooperation with Chilly is to let her hold the bar performance high. Karol also stressed on the importance of Chilly’s rebirth in Ukrainian popular culture, probably implying that a local listener needs to see this style of Chilly’s performance more than once to understand and start appreciating it.

All of Chilly’s performances in Holos Kraïny are a representation of an idea that the Ukrainian folk music can sound unique and authentic even with non-traditional, unexpected instruments, costumes, sounds and interpretations, which emphasizes the

⁷⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cM8QP9O6fl>, latest access February 11, 2019

uniqueness of Ukrainian folk voice style, melodies, and specificity of the language used in the folk songs.

For many years in Ukraine, “traditional folk culture” - folk dances and folk songs, performed at festivals, national holidays or on TV, were causing some unexpected reactions, such as sickness or laughter. This was a result of the policy of Ukrainization, established by the Soviet Union in the 1920s to provoke Ukrainian farmers to join the collectives, and the Ukrainian elite to be aligned with the communist commandment. This policy aimed at creating the distorted image of Ukrainian folk culture with incorporation of the ideas favorable to the Soviet ideology⁷⁵. This representation of Ukrainian culture was filled with pseudo-national peasant and Cossack clothes, elements of everyday life representing a narrow view on traditional culture (Ermolaeva, Nikishenko, 2017). Holos Kraïny was contesting this point at the Fights of season six in the performance Anyanya Udongwo and Chingis Mustafayev.

At the end of the first day of the Fights round broadcasted on April, 17th 2016, contestants Anyanya Udongwo and Chingiz Mustafayev sang the famous Ukrainian song “Reve ta stogne Dnibr shyrokiy” (Roars and Groans the Wide Dnipro). The original classical version of the song, written by Danilo Kryzhanivsky, and the lyrics of Taras Shevchenko, was given to the foreign contestants by their coach Sviatoslav Vakarchuk to give an equal chance to reveal their potential and “it will be a symbolic to Ukrainians” (season 6, episode 8)⁷⁶. The song started traditionally with a piano

⁷⁵ see page 28

⁷⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGYv8Kjz_i8, latest access February 11, 2019

accompaniment and Chingiz sang it following the original melody and added a little Azerbaijani flavor by lingering in the solid note with traditional melismas for Turkish ethnic melodies. Anyanya also followed the original and also deviated with jazzy melismas. The third verse the contestants sang together in interval, and repeating the first verse, they began with modulation and farther deviation from the original melody adding intervals, repeats and melismas. Coaches Vakarchuk and Potap disagreed on estimates of their performance. Potap did not understand if there was supposed to be a humorous element or not, that the Nigerian and Azerbaijani contestants performed in Ukrainian with a thick accent while keeping most of the song grounded on a classical version of the melody and arrangements. On the other hand, Vakarchuk was very satisfied with the performance, and delivered this speech: “when you hear that people who were born and raised here [in Ukraine] feel about this song that way - this causes laugh and tears. Ukrainian music is the most beautiful in the world, and unfortunately for many years and even today some people perceive it as something like second-order, with horylka⁷⁷ at the table - that what we call *sharovarschyna* - and this is bad for us first. We should make this song to play for the whole world. Ukrainian songs deserve that. We always look somewhere else, but do not notice our own ‘well with diamonds.’ This what is a problem and that is causing the laugh from this performance [referred to Potap]. For me as Ukrainian it causes tears. Ukrainian culture, Ukrainian state not always can be reduced to an idea of who was born here, or which accent one speaks. But this is idea that this

⁷⁷ Ukrainian name for vodka

land is loved by all the people which are present on this land and live, such as for Vanya [Dorn] who came from abroad but glorify our country.” Vakarchuk’s argument was that Ukrainianness depends not on nationality and citizenship, but on how a person who is living in Ukraine embraces its culture. “I would rather have on the stage in this country such singers who sings with an accent, but from the bottoms of their hearts, instead of those who stands on the stage formally with a perfect pitch, but in fact they are driven only by money and thoughts how to earn another honorarium”.

This ambiguous speech reveals the contested ground of the perception of the Ukrainian traditional culture. From one point it is very nationalistic, conveys a message that promotes the Ukrainian culture. From another, the national idea according to Vakarchuks’ speech rests upon the cultural heritage, which can be embraced by a foreigner. Being a Ukrainian patriot and active social and political figure Vakarchuk promotes both ways of deriving the Ukrainian national identity of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, which is expressed in ideas that Ukrainians should appreciate and promote Ukrainian music abroad so that Ukrainian song would be performed all over the world, at the same time, non-Ukrainians can and should perform Ukrainian songs.

Anton Kopytin represents cosmopolitanism within Ukrainian society, embodying the narrative of Russian-speaking East and South that opposes the Ukrainophones West and North of Ukraine. Kopytin with his family lived in Donetsk and worked as conferencier in Donetsk Philharmonic Theatre. In six years of marriage Anton with his wife bought a house and a car, and raised two kids. As soon as the conflict in Eastern Ukraine started Kopytin left Donetsk to save his family from war and moved to Kyiv

along with many refugees from the Eastern Ukraine. To support his family, he would take any kind of jobs, like a taxi driver, or a construction worker, as well as a singer in bars and restaurants. In the Blind Auditions he turned around two out of four coaches performing “Con Te Partiro” with perfect classical tenor voice and chose Tina Karol’s team after she commented his performance with: “you are the voice of our show” (season 5, episode 4)⁷⁸.

Later in Superfinals Tina would state: “He proves that Ukraine is united. He fights for his life. This [the show] is his chance for a brighter future”(season 5, episode 14)⁷⁹. His first performance in the last episode of the fifth season of *Holos Kraïny* was with Queen’s song “I Want to Break Free”. He sang in two mics, one of which was vocoder that changed his voice to sound like “Darth Vader from the Star Wars”. It was not a unique practice for the winner of the show in Superfinals to sing English language song without invocations to Ukrainian symbols. Igor Grohotsky who won in the fourth season, also performed an English language song, “Summer Moved On” by A-Ha. But unlike Grohotsky, Kopytin was attached to the message of united Ukraine. Additionally, in the second and third round of Superfinals, Kopytin would perform the famous Ukrainian song “Материнська любов” (Mother’s love) with his coach Tina Karol in front of the video of his pregnant wife on the screen. His last and victorious performance on the show was with the legendary song “Dva Koliory” (Two colors) about the traditional symbols of family and the Ukrainian nation.

⁷⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGYv8Kjz_i8, latest access February 11, 2019

⁷⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2pIBAsgEJY&t=376s>, latest access February 11, 2019

Holos Kraïny creates a unique combination of nationalism and cosmopolitanism by representing Ukrainian folk culture in a way that inhere unique cultural features, such as Ukrainian folk voice and music, while balancing them with foreign instruments, such as atechnically advanced stage set that eventually makes the performance interesting and relatable for both local and foreign listeners. In the show, foreigners perform classical Ukrainian music, and their interpretation opens a perspective to Ukrainian music sound all over the world. This position is emphasized by the celebrity-coach that explicitly express his ambivalent position, mediating national claims with cosmopolite. Lastly, the notion of a united Ukraine from East to West is performed through song by a Russian-speaking contestant in English and is followed by a nationalistic attitude of Ukrainian songs performed further in the episode to join Ukrainian nationalism and cosmopolitanism together.

Conclusion

The proliferation of the TV franchise as a type of relation in the contemporary media comes from the idea that “it is easier to copy someone else’s success than to take a risk on a new, untested idea” (Moran, Keane, 2008, p. 168). At the same time, *The Voice* launching in Ukraine should have to insert “the pull of local and national cultures” to appeal to the local audience and ensure profitability (Waisbord, 2004, p. 359).

The appeal to the local Ukrainian culture had to navigate the content to properly address the tensions between the “European West” and the “Russian East.” The local Ukrainian identity not having been defined for over two decades of its independence stimulated the show’s producers mediate the nationalism and cosmopolitanism that was

present in the multiethnic Ukrainian society. The show approached that by displaying contestants, inviting celebrities and hosts, representative music content to address these tensions.

Holos Kraïny was relying on the feeling of an “imagined community” of a Ukrainian population by incorporating national symbols, performing folk culture, representing regional identity balancing with well-known Ukrainian mass culture, and uprooting the controversial topics of religion in Ukraine.

Cosmopolitan Ukrainian identity was represented through the performances of the “Soviet and Russian, well known and nostalgic”, personal and national freedom were mediated through the topic of Revolution, and displayed another side of the military conflict.

Bridging the paradigms was performed by world music, a Russian speaking winner of the Holos Kraïny who was attached to the notion of a united Ukraine, singing a western hit, and foreign interpretations of a classical Ukrainian piece as a deliberate position of a celebrity-coach whose authority in disseminating political messages is confirmed by his political past and participation in the Revolution.

The next chapter aims to present the construction of a singer celebrity on The Voice of Ukraine and reflection of the YouTube audience on the nationalism and cosmopolitanism broadcasted in the show.

CHAPTER IV
CELEBRITY CONSTRUCTION IN HOLOS KRAÏNY AND RECEPTION
ANALYSIS

The common component of reality talent shows is that the contestants are not professionals, but amateurs that need to improve their skills as they advance to the next stages in the competition. The idea behind Holos Kraïny is thus to turn amateur contestants into well-known, well-round Ukrainian celebrities. A celebrity is created through appearances on the show, in other media (social media such as YouTube), and through gaining viewers' adoration (McClain 2010). McClain asserts that in the past, celebrities were created behind the scenes, requiring the right mixture of a carefully crafted image, sex appeal, and promotion to produce fan interaction. Talent shows, while mimicking the tried-and-true formula for star creation, attempt to reveal some of the procedures behind the curtain by allowing audiences to view and contribute in the creation process of the star, while at the same time using the same marketing techniques to help create the following popularity (McClain 2010).

In this chapter what will be discussed is the way that The Voice Ukraine constructs a celebrity by incorporating certain narratives, attaching labels - catchy phrases that encompass an image of a contestant, and an approach exclusive to The Voice - to claim a contestant as being the voice of a country. The second half of the Chapter is devoted to the reception analysis of the performances that were briefly

examined in the second chapter to find out how the YouTube audience interpreted the show's mediation of nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

Celebrity creation in Holos Kraïny

McClain states that reality talent shows enact a transformation of power, where the people behind the camera (writers, cameramen and producers) who traditionally for the television industry have held power, now share that power with the people who create the action, “the participants who embrace being recorded” (2010, 23). The contestants of the show consciously or unconsciously decide how to look and behave, what messages to convey however they are doing so within the constructed environment established by the producers of the show. While the show's producers and editors hold an ultimate control over the portrayal of the participants, the surveillance has the ability to “engender a new power in the citizen stars, in effect democratizing television power relations” (McClain 2010, 23). The show makes the star creation process seemingly transparent, asking the audience which talented contestant in their opinion can be “the best celebrity based on their consumer history of celebrity experience (McClain 2010, 34)”. The audience becomes an expert along with the coaches, selecting and confirming the celebrity identity of the winner. McClain presents the role of the audience in celebrity construction in two ways: participation as fans, and voting. The judges' comments also provide hints about which contestant is worthy to win the show. The entire show is promoted through a nationwide media campaign, and the contestants are as well. As a result, according to McClain, viewers may feel empowered through voting, but in fact are just subject to the producers' publicity manipulations (McClain

2010). In *The Voice* the audience is encouraged to select their favorite contestant in the last rounds of the show after eleven weeks of the singing competition being steered only by the coaches. Eventually, viewers are given total power to proclaim the winner solely in the Superfinals.

Audience members may have agency in choosing the winner—however, they are still influenced by the presented narratives. The narratives are manipulated through editing, quotation choices, and stylistic decisions (McClain 2010, 4). McClain has studied these narratives in the context of American Idol which are: the rags-to-riches narrative, the narrative of authenticity, and the narrative of transformation into a celebrity. All three narratives are interconnected and are also incorporated in *The Voice* and consequently in *Holos Kraïny*.

As the show seeks out talents to present as the Voice of the country, the rags-to-riches narrative is the one most commonly used in the show. This narrative begins with a poor, unknown contestant who becomes rich and famous through the program. Anyone can be the star no matter race or background, as the racial diversity on the show underscores (McClain, 2010, 62). For example, Anton Kopytin moved from the rival Donetsk to “save his family from the war” (season 5, episode 4).⁸⁰ All his personal stories contain references about him working hard to supply his family with the essentials after the brave relocation to “nowhere” (to Kyiv where he had no friends or relatives), believing that Kyiv would be hospitable enough for him to become the

⁸⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIfaHY4iH4c&t=257s>, latest access February 13, 2019

popular singer he always wanted to be (in Donetsk he was a compere in the National Philharmonia). Kopytin's struggle for a better life is told not only by himself in interviews, but also his coach Tina Karol, and the 1+1 newscast host, Alla Mazur, emphasize his need for victory, which would bring him the contract with the channel and music video for his promotion. Additionally, Tina presented Kopytin the keys for a new apartment in Kyiv that she bought herself.

According to Chris Rojek (2001), celebrities are people who, in terms of personality, talent or accomplishment, are acknowledged by others as popular or worthy of public attention. In the case of *Holos Kraïny*, the contestants strive to be recognized for their singing performance and consequently to become Ukrainian celebrities. At the same time, backstage inputs and rehearsals reveal their everyday life behavior, making the participants easy to relate to, especially enacting the details of their home lives and reveal their feelings regarding the participation in the show in the interview segments. Additionally, private doubts and fears joined with the contestant's background, and incorporating contestants' family members "humanize the contestant" even more (McClain 2010). For example, in the Blind Auditions of season six, Vitalina Musienko revealed her goal in partaking in the show: "I'm eighteen, I'm at the crossroads and need to understand which way to go" (Season 6, episode 3)⁸¹ – the career quest at this young age is a universal topic which a wide audience can relate to.

⁸¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7ImKPy9Hus&t=194s> Last accessed February 13, 2019

The narrative of authenticity is established in the show by inviting the audience backstage to witness and contribute to the transformation of an average person into a star. Through exposure to the “backstage,” audiences learn about the contestants’ authenticity, making them familiar to audiences, and highlighting their emotions. Authenticity is comprised of emotional authenticity, adherence to an archetype, and talent (McClain, 2010, p. 138) In the context of a reality talent show, “realness is often considered a corollary of honesty; honesty is considered a prerequisite of being on camera and as a characteristic of being authentic. Authenticity is therefore perceived through the emotions of the participants, which are hard to falsify” (McClain 2010, 38). Such emotions performed on camera could be tears onstage emphasized with a close-up, nervous smiling or a grimace addressed to the camera on the way to the stage, or zooming in on a contestant’s shaking hands holding the mic during his or her performance. The narrative of authenticity in *Holos Kraïny* is enacted through the exposure of a contestant’s emotions and works through depicting a conflicted part of the contestant’s background and how the show helps to resolve that conflict. Looking at the example of Musienko, the winner of season six, who was not supported by her parents, they were always insisting on her studying micro- and nano- electronics to get a “normal job,” rather than supporting her in her desire to pursue a singing career. During the Fights and the Knockouts, Musienko was shown as a gifted but unskilled singer, full of doubts. Her coach, Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, mentioned that: “being gifted is good, but she needs to be more confident” – here, doubts were shown as her main problem on the way to success in the show. Eventually, in the live-streamed finals, in the personal story she

revealed in a calm and confident way that she had become an example for people to follow and gave advice to take a step to one's dream job. According to McClain, "realness gives the audience a way to identify with the star and a reason to like the star" (McClain 2010, 36). Additionally, in *Holos Kraïny*, finalists during the live-streamed finals sit next to the stage with the audience, and when announced they come up to the stage to perform. This confirms the idea that "the voice of the country" comes from the ordinary people that are present in the audience and help the viewers relate to the contestants. The narrative incorporated into Musienko's performance constructed the way for a new celebrity to be established at the *Holos Kraïny* through emotional authenticity that establishes a connection between the TV audience and the contestants.

Transformation into a celebrity is the narrative where a large portion of the visual content is given over to the "verification, maintenance, and promotion of current and future idols" (McClain 2010, 204). The common visual stereotype of the celebrities' life is based on walking on red carpets, wearing designer clothes, having the commercial photo and video shoots, appearing in magazines, and being surrounded by many assistants, make-up artists, designers and other crew members, as well as often being asked for an autograph by their fans. By incorporating these stereotypes of popularity, the show "creates the illusion of fame, which in turn actually becomes fame for a short time" (McClain 2010, 205). In *Holos Kraïny* during all the stages the active crew assistance to all of the contestants is revealed. For example, backstage inputs show a special crew member giving a mic to every contestant on their way to the stage. Also, many times during the Blind Auditions in the backstage waiting area a camera catches a

makeup artist finalizing her job on a contestant's look. Additionally, in the fourth season the job of costume designer for each contestant was revealed in every personal story in the final rounds. In all seasons the thorough preparation for the live-streamed rounds is shown as a usual part of a celebrity life – photo and video shooting for the contestant's "voting image"⁸² and "video playback".⁸³ It is interesting that the degree to which these attributes of the celebrity lifestyle are attached to each contestant increases the closer they get to the final rounds. At the beginning, all contestants are placed in the common hall at the Blind Auditions and some of them are getting their makeup done by a professional crew member. Later, they get more of an individual approach from the celebrity coaches during the Fights and the Knockouts, and eventually at the live-streamed finals, the work of the crew shown in personal stories is focused on each contestant, who gets the personal photo and video shooting, comments about them from coaches, rehearsals with their music producer and the full live band. Additionally, the very fact that the contestant performs on a professionally equipped stage, with a complex stage set, and with a full live band of musicians in front of the audience contributes to the celebrity image creation of the contestants. The work of the cameramen also adds to the celebrity status, which apart from the focus on the contestant's live performance includes picking up the adoration of the audience.

⁸² a contestant's photo which appears in the bottom of the screen next to two digits that needs to be sent in order to support a contestant.

⁸³ short video of a contestant showing fancy posing for a camera that priors his or her performance in the live streamed finals

Labels

There are fifty-six contestants that start their journey on the show after the Blind Auditions. The show's producers employ the rags-to-riches narrative, the narrative of authenticity, and transformation into a celebrity, which are common for almost all of them; but to provoke people to vote, each contestant needs to be represented from a unique perspective. At the show, this perspective is created through editing, quotation choices, and other stylistic decision of image creation (McClain 2010). Part of that process is the attaching labels - specific phrases, which characterize the image of a contestant and are presented by a host, coach, or narrator while introducing his or her performance. This process of labeling contestants works as a hashtag in social media. As "we tend to process information using cognitive shortcuts, to help us easily and quickly make sense of an issue that may otherwise be difficult to understand and time consuming" (Simis-Wilkinson et. Al. 2018, 318), the hashtag has become an indispensable shortcut for describing a character's (contestant's) emotional response to plot developments (Jack Malvern, 2015). At the era of interactive media, labels in *Holos Krainy* become a peculiar shortcut to an image of a contestant. The whole image of a contestant, his personal story, intentions and goals at the show are reduced to a word or phrase that defines him or her and differs from other contestants. This is a process that starts from the Blind Auditions when the first revealing of a contestant's personal story occurs, and with every further advancement, the image, as well as the label, is used in different interpretations from which derives the final version that is used in the live-streaming rounds. For example, in the sixth season Anis Etaeb – a contestant from

Tunisia, whose aspiration to change profession from a dentist to a singer in Ukraine, became the groundwork for his label “Singing dentist” in the introduction of his next performances in the show.

Sbrui Sargsyan who came to Holos Kraïny from Armenia, in the Live-Streamed finals was titled simply as “Armenian” (see figure 5). Semifinalist Ivan Pylypets received his assigned label of “Hutsul,” based on his origin from the western Ukraine, where the Hutsul ethnic group is settled. Alina Lutsenko was usually mentioned alongside such labels as “the next Nina Matvienko” because of the support of the popular Ukrainian folk idol and “folk heroine,” one that comes from a so-called ordinary family and reaches the highest rounds.

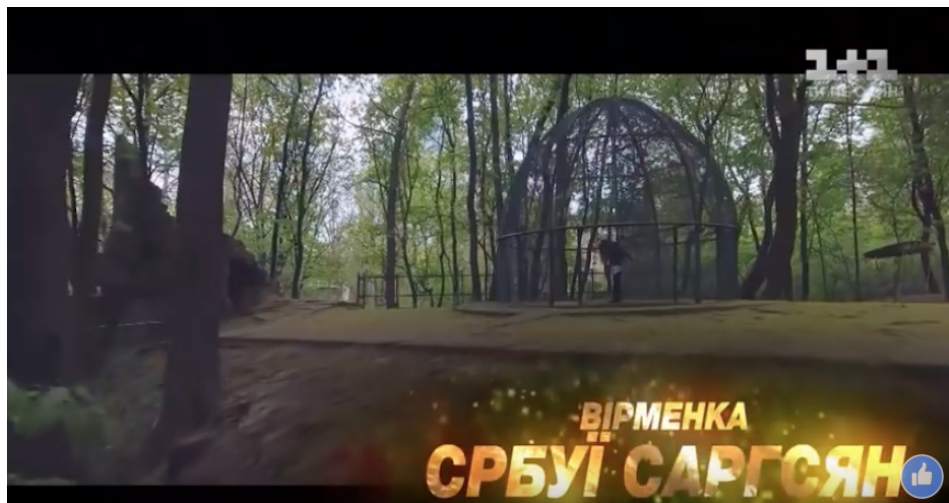


Figure 5. Sbrui Sargsyan with the label “Armenian”⁸⁴

⁸⁴ The screenshot is retrieved from the video released on the official YouTube account of the show. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGYv8Kjz_i8, latest access February 11, 2019.

Announcing Anton Kopytin, the hosts mentioned him as a “family man”, and the one who represents the “unity of Ukrainian East and West” due to his move from Donetsk when the military actions began there. Roman Russu, whose emphasis on the importance of family in life, is referred as “a real man” also because of his massive body type. Katya Chilly and Cossack Siromakha already had their nicknames that were exploited in the show. Interestingly, throughout the seasons, labels were not used for all of the finalists.

In *Holos Kraïny*, celebrity judges who are accomplished musicians, songwriters, and record industry insiders, ensure credibility to the show and to the whole competition by partaking seriously and emotionally; even more, certain phrases repeated while referring to certain contestants “cement the idea that the winner will become renowned, if he or she isn’t already by the end of the show” (McClain 2010, 205). The emotional claim “you are the voice of the Country” became the tool that throughout the seasons were used by different coaches, but at least twice were an important contribution to the victory of a contestant. Vitalina Musienko in the sixth season (in 2016), was praised by Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, the show’s hosts, and the 1+1 newscasts host for her unique vocal capabilities that, in combination with her nationalistic claims, led her to victory in the show. After her performance in the Blind Auditions in season eight (in 2018) Alina Lutsenko, while receiving compliments from coaches, was honored with the title “the voice of Ukraine” by Sergiy Babkin. In this case, her voice was not claimed to be unique, but her performing skills that let her sing songs from different genres, comparison with Nina Matvienko at the Blind Auditions, in combination with her

nationalistic claims such as “I will show my soul, the soul of Ukraine”⁸⁵ made this title affect the viewers’ voting.

Reception analysis

The celebrity that is constructed on the show presents an identity of a celebrity singer. Some studies of celebrities have shown a connection between celebrity identity and national identity. The performance of celebrity identity in symbolic spaces (stages, arenas, TV sets, etc.) foregrounds a process of constructing national identities by connecting personal and collective narratives (Edensor 2002, Connerton, 1989, Marshall, 2016). These narratives, incorporated in the celebrity creation, appeal to the show’s fandom in the released performances on YouTube, where the response among viewers/users is found.

I conducted the reception analysis of the videos discussed in chapter two and studied the audience’s feedback on the videos. To do that, I read all the comments for each of the thirteen videos⁸⁶. While the majority of comments relate to more personal and generic endorsement (or disapproval) of a given performance (e.g., “great voice!” or “very boring and poorly executed performance”), some commentators explicitly consider certain performances as related to national and cosmopolitan ideas and ideals in Ukraine. In this chapter I will focus on this second group of comments. This will complement my analysis on how the show’s audience reacted to the performances and related them to broader political and ideological issues. I was looking for the potential

⁸⁵ see the page 69

⁸⁶ The last portion of my reception analysis was completed on January 3, 2019.

patterns in audience's responses and paying attention to the audience-generated data related to song, performer and his or her voice (including reaction on the contestant's personal story), evaluation of the contestant's costume, questioning the coach's decisions and hosts' claims. I focused my research on YouTube because this platform has an official Holos Kraïny account, and is the primary source of the released performances the day after TV broadcast on 1+1. It also includes the viewers' comments under each video (youtube.com/goloskraïny).

As my study is devoted to Ukrainian national identity, my goal was to analyze the comments of Ukrainian fans of Holos Kraïny on YouTube. I was able to identify the comments of Ukrainian users by language or content. There are comments that explicitly indicate that the user is from Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan or other post-Soviet Union countries with a significant percentage of Russian-speakers in their population. In most cases, his or her comment would indicate the country of origin, or have references and comparisons to the Russian version of the show *The Voice*. Also, it is easy to identify the foreign comments that were made in English, and other languages foreign to Ukraine. All the comments presented here were translated from Ukrainian or Russian myself.

The audience's reception of the performances discussed in chapter two showed similar tendencies in the perception of the narratives portrayed in the show. The analysis is structured in such a way as to address the performance of nationalism, cosmopolitanism and the mediation of these paradigms.

Perception of nationalism performed in The Voice Ukraine among YouTube viewers

Vitalina Musienko "Ukraina" (Ukraine) Ukrainian pop song

Season 6; episode 14 - the Superfinals; 317,171 views since May 29, 2016: 1.5k likes, 282 dislikes, 284 Comments.⁸⁷

A lot of users expressed a positive attitude towards the performance of Vitalina Musienko in the last round of the Superfinals in season six (2016). For example, user Nastia Yakubishin⁸⁸ claimed Musienko to be: "Ukrainian Adele". The song, being symbolic for Ukrainian pop culture, was adored by some users such as Aleksandr Yuschuk: "Taras Petrinenko's song is the second anthem of Ukraine! I really like it!" Alekseev UA commented, "Thank you, from Donetsk. Ukrainian Donetsk Vitalina [Musienko] is the voice of my heart, my Ukraine. Thanks."

At the same time, Musienko's performance was criticized for being sung out of tune. Also, many negative comments were addressed to Vakarchuk for his choice of the song. User *saintor89* said: "Don't you understand that very few people listen, understand, and love folk songs. Therefore, such songs need to be performed at the highest level. And not the way you did it - through mass production". Users perceive this song as being loved, but obsolete - the song was composed in the nineties and current Ukrainian music seems more interesting for the YouTube users. At the same time,

⁸⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciMZVDIg7EI&t=61s>, last accessed February 14, 2019

⁸⁸ all the usernames in Cyrillic were transliterated to the Latin alphabet myself.

Ukrainians truly love this song but would like to hear it only at an exceptional level of performing skills.

But mostly, people were not satisfied with the affect on their patriotic feelings and incorporation of politics in the show. Here again, *saintor89* states that: “Guys, this is the SHOW. THE VOICE. Do patriotism elsewhere. In general, I very much doubt that such contests can do something in this regard... Build roads for patriotism, fight against corruption.”

Following this idea of current corrupted Ukrainian political and economic systems, some of the YouTube users doubt the sincerity of the Holos Kraïny’s voting process. *Anastasiia Morozova*: “Why did they [producers] not show the voting process and results? The people did not see the counting of the votes; it is very suspicious. And why in the audience at the finals, instead of 4-5 people, the group supporting Vitalina (Musienko) occupied almost the entire sector?”

One of the users addressed his critique to Musienko’s coach Sviatoslav Vakarchuk regarding manipulation on viewers’ nationalism:

Valentyn Lutsovyat: “I address this to you, Svyatoslav Vakarchuk. Why [would someone] choose this not very talented girl, just because she can scream songs in Ukrainian? Your tears on each performance of Vitalina [Musienko] were like a prepaid show. The ability to sing in Ukrainian does not mean that one can be the voice of the country. For me, she is not worth this title!!!! It is shameful for your attitude, you manipulate Ukrainians.”

It seems like the YouTube audience of *Holos Kraïny* is able to identify the show's affect on the wider TV audience, who: "voted for the [traditional flower] wreath and Ukrainian national symbols" - *Mary Shkoropad*, - by incorporating symbolism that appeals to patriotic feelings of the viewers.

A significant number of the comments showed that the YouTube audience tends to support the cosmopolite views. For example, *Ina emina* concluded that there is too much of politics incorporated in the entertainment show: "This [Ukrainian] inferiority complex [is expressed in] singing only Ukrainian songs. Music does not know nations; music should be above politics and nationalism. It's sad to watch this screaming and tears, while the first priority is not music, but politics."

Interestingly, there was no correlation between the approval, or critique, of Musienko's performance and the language of the comments. Both poles of the users' reactions were expressed in Ukrainian and Russian, which opposes the idea propagated by some Ukrainian politicians that nationalism is attached to Ukrainophones (Kuzio 2000).

Alina Lutsenko "Mynaye Den" (The Day is Going By) Ukrainian pop song

Season 8, Episode 12 – the Semifinals; published on Apr 22, 2018: 608,858 views, 7.7k likes, 282 dislikes, 710 comments⁸⁹

Overall, most of the YouTube comments expressed admiration of the performance. Users approved her voice and the way in which Lutsenko is worthy to be

⁸⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raK3uteV4pU>, latest access February 14, 2019.

supported by the Ukrainian folk legend Nina Matvienko. Many people referred to Lutcenko as being the soul, the voice of Ukraine, positively reacting and reiterating the coaches' comments. Also, users were pleased by the high level of performance of the "legendary song" of Mykola Mozgoviy.

But there were those, who were doubtful of the proper representation of contemporary Ukrainian voice and affecting the people's opinion like user *N V8*:

By the scale of the voice, namely its nature, she is the strongest participant. According to the vocal manner, style, and voice reproduction, it is the pop culture of 70s-80s. Here is the question. When the coach on a contemporary pop show says that "this is how Ukraine sounds", this is "a real Ukrainian voice", that means that Ukrainian contemporary culture can offer nothing new as a standard after an archaic folk song and pop culture in the 70s-80s. It is bad for the transparency of this competition that public people, professionals of the music industry, publicly encourage people to vote for the victory of certain participants, as in this case! This obviously discredits the other participants and reduces their chances in the audience's voting!"

The Internet-based audience responded positively to the contestant with a high level of performing skills, and to the song that represents Ukrainian cultural heritage. The positive attitude of the YouTube audience occurred because Lutsenko's performance was done in a way that did not incorporate Ukrainian national symbols that would appeal to patriotic feelings, like, for example, was done in the performance of Musienko. At the same time, users are noticing the manipulative affect of the coach's claim, labeling someone as "the voice of the country" and express their disagreement with the reduction of Ukrainian culture to one that is already obsolete because it originated in the culture of the Soviet Union.

Cossack Siromakha "Za svit vstaly kozachenky" (Cossacks Got Up Before the Sunrise)
Ukrainian folk song

Season 8, Episode 2 - Blind Auditions; published on Feb 4, 2018: 1,997,014 views, 27k likes, 1.1k dislikes, 2716 comments⁹⁰

Cossack Siromaha, with his performance in the Blind Auditions, created debates in a record number of comments. Most of the users expressed their surprise and adoration of his performance, like *Olena Moka*: "Thank you, Cossack, for this singing! God, how it is good! My soul flew along with your singing, over the woods, and the mountains of the Mother-Ukraine!" "The country needs such a man as this," was the common attitude toward his manners in interaction with the coaches. *Nazar Buhera*: "When such people demonstrate their grandeur not only in voice, authenticity, but also

⁹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-14IB-iDXU> last accessed February 14, 2019

in such an apt and competent communication and behavior ... That pride for ourselves and our country grows up to the sky.”

The song performed by Siromakha left mostly positive responses regarding the style; for example, *Bornfire SCH*: “It was very weird to hear this song as sad, being the famous song of Marusy Churay,⁹¹ here it sounds like a march [...] Great job by the performer, thanks for the song!”

The performance provoked the uprise of nationalism among users. *Mykhail Haydamak* commented: “when one listens to such songs, he understands that neither Ukrainian power nor freedom will ever die! Glory to Ukraine!” This resembles the first phrase of Ukrainian national anthem.⁹²

Some users were expressing an awakening, realizing how rich Ukrainian history and culture are and attaching it to the importance of protection of the nation. *Andralex*: “Such moments are the ones as if you woke up. How rich is our history, culture, customs! This Cossack has some great wisdom, greatness, spirituality and strength. Our nation needs to wake up before we are destroyed completely.”

Some users expressed a doubt of the “realness” of the costume and the performer’s behavior. Questioning the authenticity of the performance like this is very natural to Ukrainian society after a long history of Ukrainian culture destruction and

⁹¹ Maria or Marusia Churai (1625–1653) was a semi-mythical Ukrainian Baroque composer, poet, and singer. She has become a recurrent motif in Ukrainian literature and the songs ascribed to her are widely performed in Ukraine.

⁹² The first verses of the Ukrainian national anthem are: “not yet died the Ukrainian glory and freedom”

distortion. The established way of representing Ukrainian folk culture in the Soviet Union, referred to as “*sharovarschyna*,”⁹³ resulted in the perception of Siromaha’s clothes onstage to be a costume, that looks like the one from many festive Cossack clothes that official Ukrainian festivities are filled with. The YouTube user *Eugen dp* contradicted that perspective, noting that: “This is a real Cossack, not just a man dressed as a Cossack! This guy lives in my neighborhood, in everyday life he is dressed like a Cossack, not in festive Cossack clothes though, but still in Cossack clothes. He lives like that. There are probably one or two in the whole country.”

The image of the real male Ukrainian began being distorted in the Russian Empire⁹⁴ and for some of the users obtained a new nationalistic meaning in the performance of Siromaha.

King MEN claimed: “Ukrainians, now look, he is a real Ukrainian, devoted to his country, precisely this is what the Russian Empire was exterminating from our lands. Such Ukrainians are real, we are the best in the world, and he is really an example of a Ukrainian who loves the country and all people in it.”

Siromaha’s proper, slightly old-fashioned, Ukrainian language and performance caused the language debates, which are very current for Ukrainian society and politics.

Yana Mdiuk: “Everyone speaks Ruthenian [here she means Russian], and I sometimes do too, but in the heart of every Ukrainian, the Native

⁹³ see page 29

⁹⁴ see page 19

Language [Ukrainian] rests. This song will touch the heart of everyone, those who understand it [the lyrics] would quietly shed a tear. It's difficult to be a Ukrainian!"

L.U.: "We are strong. Do not cry. Speak Ukrainian everywhere and always!"

Stefaniya Mcclurg10: "The song and the performer are truthful, so [the performance] can hurt and be rejoicing [at the same time]. Why is it hard to be a Ukrainian? It's like being yourself! Why is it hard for you?!"

Maxim Yakubets: "Ruthenian is a Ukrainian language. But the "Russian language" is Moscovite's. Please do not confuse it!"

Language debates also touched the description to the video made in Russian on the official YouTube channel of Holos Kraïny: Mitri Laatvaala: "rename this damn word Kazack (in Russian) to normal Cossack (in Ukrainian). The Kazaks came from Rostov and bombarded the East of Ukraine."

At the same time, the positive comments to Siromakha's performance were attacked with offensive, provocative and even aggressive replies that caused online skirmishes between users. It is hard to identify, but some of the aggressive responses were definitely made by Russian users, but some of them may be Ukrainian users and those from territories occupied by Russia such as Donetsk and Luhansk regions. These rivalries occurred because the Cossack is a male symbol of Ukraine, of its history, its freedom-seeking identity, its strength, and embodies the Ukrainian national identity and

was the main target for humiliation by Russian and Soviet Union propaganda. Cossacks were usually depicted as Kuban Kazacks, who were portrayed as great Russian warriors without any attachment to Ukrainianness. The performance created so many positive responses because people were surprised that folk music performance from a man in traditional Cossack clothes can be so powerful and heartfelt. The Soviet policy of Ukrainization and *sharovarchyna*⁹⁵, which resulted from it, established an attitude to folk culture performance especially amongst the young Ukrainian population, as being cheap and something to hide or be ashamed of. This performance by Cossack Siromaha revoked that attitude and showed that Ukrainian folk performance uplifts nationalistic moods among the Ukrainian audience and provokes the debates around Ukrainian identity and history. The rivals include language, authenticity of representation of traditional symbols and folk music performance.

Ivan Pylypets "Teche Voda" (Water Flows) Ukrainian pop song

Season 5, Episode 13 - the Semifinals; published on May 31, 2015, 149.815 views, 0 likes/dislikes, 61 Comments⁹⁶

The performance of Ivan Pylypets did not create any debates in the comments and gained the least number of views. Most of the reactions on his performance are positive. *Lerica*: "I liked it! True People's Voice of Ukraine. Why can the classics and pop music be in the finals, and not Ukrainian songs performed by the Ukrainian guy?"

⁹⁵ See page 29

⁹⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFfuD15J7_0, latest access February 10, 2019

Many comments expressed the nationalistic claims such as “Glory to Ukraine” and praises of the performance of a well-loved Ukrainian song.

However, it seems that in terms of all Ukraine, this representation of regional Hutsul identity did not create such strong attachments. Partially it is a result of the big variety of the ethnic composition in the Ukrainian population and the diversity in costume styles, songs and customs. Contributing to this attitude is also a legacy of the Soviet Union according to which Western Ukrainians were equalized to nationalists (read: Enemies of the State) who kill all Russian-speaking people, which planted an biased attitude towards the Western Ukrainians and their culture. But still the performance of the Hutsul identity incorporating the character from a popular TV series that represents a wedding musician culture causes nationalistic response from a significant part of the Ukrainian YouTube audience.

Oleksandr Klimenko “Aksion Estin” Orthodox Christian prayer in Greek

Season 7, Episode 13 - the Semifinals; published on Apr 16, 2017: 1,130,663 views 9.4K likes, 759 dislikes, 1,113 Comments⁹⁷

The performance of a Greek orthodox religious song by Oleksandr Klimenko had the effect that the performer was trying to create, causing the desire to come to the church even for those who were not religious.

However, it also created debates regarding the appropriateness of a religious persona on an entertainment show such as Holos Kraïny. Users were criticizing the

⁹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRKWvqTIQrg&t=2s>, latest access February 14, 2019

producers of the show, many users expressed doubts regarding his success as the winner of the show, who is given a unique opportunity to record the song and being promoted to participate in popular culture. *Rainbow Crew*: “Propaganda of religion in a secular state looks ugly. First of all, it is addressed to Tina and creators of the show.”

Also, users were seeing the manipulation of the religious persona and his special privilege in choosing the repertoire and costumes unlike other contestants as expressed by *TheHannahUA*: “Everything is spoiled by this cheap manipulation of the religious persona. Yes, the priest is also a person and can participate in the show. But then be kind enough to take off your cassock and not exploit the topic of religion.”

Some users agreed with Klimenko, that the prayer can be an art presented in a TV Show following the success of the Era band⁹⁸ and are pleased with its appearance on a Ukrainian television show. Many users also compared this performance with the Enigma⁹⁹ band. *Simplyman100500*, defending the appropriateness of the prayer at the entertainment show commented: “Prayer is primarily a musical art. And even if it is presented in the form of a show, it didn’t cease to be art. For example, Era had a great success in the nineties, and they did not burn in hell, and here for the first time something like this appeared on the Ukrainian scene.”

However, the nationalistic response to this performance occurred, not as a response to the Ukrainian language or national symbols performed onstage, but rather as

⁹⁸ See page 75

⁹⁹ Enigma is a German New-Age and Electronica band created in 1990. The band has a long history of recordings and exists only doing studio recordings without live performances. Their music incorporated tribal and ethnic influences, as well as Gregorian chants and intercultural soundscapes.

a contradiction to the contestant's affiliation with the Russian Orthodox Church, which at the time when this show was airing¹⁰⁰, was influencing the former Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchy, which Klimenko was a part of. This position is clearly stated by *Alex the Sphinx*: "Separatist, which is covered by a cassock."¹⁰¹

At the same time, other users such as *Roma Kotiuk* expressed the nationalistic aspirations that are attached to the Church and religious figures as protectors of the country: "I would like to hear in the performance of Father Alexander the most important song of Ukraine (The Anthem), only perfected, which will create a new image of our happy Ukraine. And even better, if it is sung all together."

The symbolism of Klimenko's performance was amplified by the Easter holiday that was celebrated in Ukraine that day, which was reflected in the comments such as the one by *Oleksandra Strubitska*: "Christ is Risen! Ukraine will resurrect!"

The contested ground of the place of religion in the life of Ukrainians provoked a serious discussion, unlike the one that occurred during the talent show. YouTube users had a chance to define for themselves: is the religion appropriate in entertainment TV show, what is important about it for the Country, what priests do they want to follow and which Church to go to. Comments show that the users believe that the Church is an

¹⁰⁰ In December 2018, Ukrainian Orthodox Church officially were recognized as an Independent by the Head of the Constantinople Orthodox Church.

¹⁰¹ Cassock is a full-length garment of a single color worn by certain Christian clergy, members of church choirs, acolytes, and others having some particular office or role in a church. Dictionary.com, accessed February 15, 2019

important part of Ukrainian social and political life in terms of national security and national identity.

YouTube viewers' reaction to cosmopolitanism represented in The Voice Ukraine

Roman Russu "Chertovo Koleso" (Ferris Wheel) Soviet Union pop song

Season 7, Episode 12 - The Semifinals; published on Apr 9, 2017: 182,436 views, 1.2k likes, 232 dislikes, 184 Comments¹⁰²

The performance of Roman Russu caused controversial comments after the video was released on YouTube. Many users were confused with the explicitly Soviet pop culture style of the song and arrangements that attracted the audience aged 50+ and with the visual on the background. At the same time, many users appreciated the choice of the song, such as *Svetlana Tsarapkina*: "Thank you very much Potapenko for choosing the song! And there is no irony here, a suitable song to perform for the baritone on a competition, and there are harmonic transitions, both rhythmic and emotional."

Also, users such as *InnaZazazu*, were pleased with Russu's voice, his costume and understood the humor incorporated in the performance and stage set: "The voice - [is] meat¹⁰³ so deep and enveloping)) performance with a humor) it was funny to me."

Also, many users were comparing Russu with Magomayev in favor of the original performer of this song, but other users like *Anna Bliokh*, found the performance very worthy of Magomayev's legacy: "'and your face is flying' [first phrase of the

¹⁰² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnY9mmUFMgI&vl=en> Last accessed March 21, 2019

¹⁰³ Meat (slang) in reference to people's voice means a powerful, deep timbre with skillful voice production

chorus] are the keywords to understanding the video in the background. Muslim Magomayev also overplayed this a little, take a look at his records. Here they [producers] took it for the main idea, and in my opinion, they did everything very well, starting from black and white, the coat, the whole image ... and it suits Roman very well!”

The notion expressed in the show by coaches and hosts many times, that Russu is a real man that is in need for not only Ukrainian pop culture, but the country overall, found its reflection in comments of YouTube users, such as *NN*: “A real man with a real male timbre, well done, Roma.”

The performance, created with ambiguous messages, resulted in the controversial reaction of the YouTube users. The repertoire of the respected celebrity, such as Magomayev provoked nostalgia for older users. The explicit invocations to the Soviet pop culture, balanced with humor in the stage set, and foregrounded with the high level of Russu’s vocal and performance skills, in result make this performance acceptable at the times of decommunization in Ukraine for the nationalistic parts of the show’s audience, and appreciated by cosmopolite fans of *Holos Kraïny*.

Myrka vs Vennikova “Vdol po Piderskoy” (Along Piderskaya Street) Classical piece in Russian

Season 4, Episode 9 – the Fights; published on Apr 27, 2014: 39,119 views, 88 likes, 22 dislikes, 21 comments¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8a6lTIVy9K4>, latest access February 15, 2019

The performance of a song that explicitly represents Russian culture did not provoke a negative response in spite of the fact that the show was broadcasted parallel to the process of the Crimea annexation by Russia. Many users understood that for Mykhailo this song was a challenging task to perform: users were clear that the Lviv descendant was never exposed to that cultural tradition, implying that the Russian language for him is understandable, but foreign. This attitude is well expressed in the comment of *Anton Chastyuk*: “for a Lviv descendant this song is like if Anyanya were to sing in Ukrainian.”

The USSR's attempt to create a transnational (Soviet) identity based on cooperation of the talented people from different Republics is expressed in the comment of *Memory*: “Peace to the world! Amazingly, Ukrainians sing a Russian song in a production of a Georgian.”

Events of Russian annexation of Crimea was occurring alongside the show's production, while Ukrainian society was trying to understand how to join the usual notion that Russia is a Ukraine's “big brother” and its culture is almost like “ours,” with the notion that Russia now is a foreign intruder, so Russian culture is now the culture of an occupant. So, the YouTube users were still perceiving the performance of Russian culture as part of the cosmopolite identity established by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

Felix Shinder Morozov “Fonariki” (Street Lights) Russian street romance

Season 5, Episode 1 – the Blind Auditions; published on March 8, 2015:
1,097,633 views 0 likes/dislikes, 267 Comments

The Ukrainian audience adored this performance; Felix represents that common stereotype of Odessa culture that in Ukraine is usually referred as “Odessa-mama.”¹⁰⁵ Users such as *Natali* adore his positive attitude, charisma, specific slang and accent that are associated with Odessa: “One hundred kilos of solid charm.” The users also adore that Jewish influence of Felix’s as a good example of Odessa residents using the Yiddish terms: “You are tsimes¹⁰⁶ indeed” - *Kaliakamaliaka Mariupolskaya*.

Some comments written in Ukrainian were adoring Felix’s performance, expressing their emotions using the Russian words written in Ukrainian alphabet: “Таки да,мне захателась в Адесу)))[...] Давно я так не балдів від виступу)))” (Oh yes, now I really want to visit Odessa. It is a long time since I was so pleased with the performance) - *Sashko K*.

Many users such as *Andrei Sacks*, expressed their gratitude to Felix for preserving a unique folk culture of Odessa, referring to it as a part of Ukrainian culture: “Thank you, Felix, you are now the keeper of the Odessa chanson, and this song layer must be protected, this is culture, the musical history of the country.”

It is hard to imagine another performance in Russian that would create a nationalistic response in Ukrainian media, like expressed by *Mustache Show* “I liked it, but I wished [it was in] Ukrainian. Glory to Ukraine!”

Odessa being very loved for its unique folk culture has a privilege to speak in the mix of Ukrainian, Russian, and Yiddish languages and still be closely affiliated with

¹⁰⁵ see page 40

¹⁰⁶ the slang word adopted from Yiddish that means something very good, high quality, pleasant.

Ukraine. Ukrainians are proud to have Odessa and express a willingness to preserve its unique culture.

Sbrui Sargsyan "Human" Brit pop song

Season 8, Episode 14 - the Superfinals; published on May 1, 2018: 753.304 views, 11k likes, 735 dislikes, 1,227 Comments¹⁰⁷

Users were disappointed with Sargsyan's early departure from the Superfinals - she left in the first round, though many users adopted the claim expressed in the show by hosts and coaches that Sargsyan had the strongest voice of the season. At the same time, her vocal performance was criticized for having sameness in her dynamics and the lack of a climax of her performance.

Some users such as *Ariana Ilyesh* expressed the adoration of her patriotism to Armenia, which is valued in Ukraine from the perspective of the Revolution and the fight for Democracy and a better life: "she is a real PATRIOT, a genuine PERSON!"

Her performance and invocations to personal and national freedom let her be accepted by a Ukrainian audience. However, not all of the users shared these cosmopolite views, for some of them, the title of the voice of Ukraine means national attachment. *Yulia Sher* very aptly expressed this attitude: "Let's be honest, reach the finals in the voice of a foreign country - this is already super cool for a foreigner. In Ukraine, this is probably for the first time."

¹⁰⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGYv8Kjz_i8, latest access February 11, 2019

Yulia Yurina “Sukhoplyas” (Trampling Dance) Russian folk song

Season 6, Episode 3 – the Blind Auditions; published on Mar 13, 2016 435,735 views, 2.3k likes, 366 dislikes, 285 Comments¹⁰⁸

This performance did not cause vast debates regarding the voice and performing skills, but rather rivals on tolerance toward the Russian citizen and Russian culture. In terms of historical affiliation between Ukraine and the territory she originates from, users praised her desires to study Ukrainian folklore. Some users were amazed with Yurina’s emotional performance and admired her “Incredible energy.” - *Karamel Kuzmina*.

Ukrainian users met her message to stop the war with respect and understanding, since war kills people from both sides. The message expressed by *MrUjin57* bridges the Ukrainian audience with the Russian resident and becomes evidence of the adoption of cosmopolite views: “this is a real citizen, she has a position and she did not sing pop music, but tells us - ENOUGH [of war]! It is at least worthy of respect. Bravo!”

Some users expressed readiness to perceive Yurina as a Ukrainian, regardless of her performance of a Russian folk song, like *Maxim Ustiak* expressed: “Real Ukrainian. Learn the [Ukrainian] language.” However, the advice to learn the Ukrainian language contradicts the consistency of these claims of inclusion.

The cosmopolite views of Holos Kraïny’s audience are mostly attached to become a sterling member of the European community and break the ties with Russia.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yocNvUKAIXs&t=220s>, latest access March 17, 2019

So in order for a Russian citizen to become a Ukrainian singer one should learn the Ukrainian language. That means that Ukrainian cosmopolitanism breaks on the border with Russia where the nationalism begins to force the Ukrainian national identity to rest on the Ukrainian language and culture.

These conclusions are confirmed by a significant part of users, who stressed the difference between Russian and Ukrainian folk cultures: “Some kind of alien song. Melodic formation, performing style. Not to say that’s bad, but alien. And performed accordingly” - *The12miha21*; and some of them even expressed explicit disrespect to Russian culture.

At the same time, many users such as *la Don* still expressed sympathy to Yurina about her breaking off her relationship with her father because of her position about Ukraine: “She went against her father for the sake of Ukraine [...] fools.”

Ukrainian users are expressing the affiliation to the narratives regarding the social life, war and family relations. The Ukrainian YouTube user is more cosmopolite than the TV viewer, but the reaction of both audiences is still less supportive to a Russian contestant in comparison to Armenian, which is common with TV audience. They gave only 17 % votes for the advancement Yurina at the Quarterfinals, whereas advancement to Armenian Sbrui occurred with a great contribution of 69% of TV votes.

The juxtaposition of the paradigms in perception of the Holos Kraïny's viewers in YouTube

Anyanya Udongvo VS Chingis Mustafaiev "Reve ta Stogne Dnibr Shyrokiy" (Roars and Groans the Wide Dnipro) Ukrainian classical piece

Season 6, Episode 8 – the Fights; published on April 17, 2016 1,646,418 views, 11k likes, 1k dislikes, 2,329 Comments¹⁰⁹

The rivalries between the coaches resulted in a huge media firestorm, both offline and online. This performance attracted the audience from abroad, specifically Azerbaijan, which left many comments in support of Mustafaiev. Many Ukrainian users were disappointed with advancement of Anyanya and supported Chingis because: “Azerbaijan is closer [to Ukraine] than Nigeria.” - *impopo impovich*. While one part of users were expressing disappointment about Vakarchuk's decision like *Nata li*: “We don't need one more chocolate rabbit,”¹¹⁰ some of them, such as *Endorph7ne*, tried to find an explanation of it: “it's simple, if Svyatoslav [Vakarchuk] would choose Chingiz he would be accused of racism. Anyanya soon will be weeded out, but carefully.”

According to Bilaniuk, “African Ukrainians and African migrants in the entertainment industry in Ukraine are subject to the demands of a market that exoticizes and commodifies blackness [...] but stereotypes of Africa as a backward continent persist in popular discourse” (Bilaniuk 2016, 360). Bilaniuk also asserts that the “meanings of

¹⁰⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGYv8Kjz_i8, latest access February 11, 2019

¹¹⁰ “Chocolate rabbit” is the song performed by Pierre Narcisse - Russian singer of Cameroon origin which was popular in early 2000s in Ukraine too.

race and national identity are being renegotiated” by the Ukrainian population and in the media (Bilaniuk 2016, 356). This can be seen from the comments of the YouTube users, which do not include blackness as a possible element of Ukrainian identity and do not see Anyanya as a potential winner.

At the same time, *Dayana Banda*, referring to herself as a black-skinned girl, in Russian explains that singing by foreigners causes smiling for a reason; "it's all because the Ukrainian language, unfortunately, is associated [only] with the local culture". She adds that nobody would laugh at a Ukrainian singing in English: "Often things that are unusual are funny. Today you have seen a black man who sang "Roars and Groans the Wide Dnipro," and burst out laughing, but if tomorrow you would see the second, third, and then a dozen dark-skinned people which rehash the entire "Kobzar,"¹¹¹ it may seem at first exciting, then - fashionable and further - normal."

However, many users, who think that the cultural affiliation is based on the origin, expressed the critique of the performance from a nationalistic perspective, contradicting the cosmopolite claims of Vakarchuk after the performance.

Aleksandr Sekretny: "I think that Ukrainian songs will never be reproduced by any foreigner in the native way. The Ukrainian song originated in folk culture with its mentality. And the matter is not in

¹¹¹ Kobzar is a collection of poems by Taras Shevchenko, which is perceived as the foreground of Ukrainian literature, and counts as a symbol of independent Ukraine attached to national identity.

the language, but in the spirit of its people. About the dark-skinned man, I really liked him, and the second one too, but better they would sing their own music, which is closer spiritually.”

Many users supported Potap in his idea that this song sounded ridiculous and criticized Vakarchuk for the choice of the song: “with ethnic melisma from one and soul tricks from another, this song sounded frankly absurd”. - *Aleksandra Sviridenko*. Following that assessment, users such as *Sergey Dogadailo* were not liking the performance because the contestants did not know either the real meaning of the lyrics of the song, nor that this was the intro to Shevchenko’s ballad “Prychynna”: “the ballad about tragedy, feelings, about life with its various challenges remaining in the memory of people, as a banal story about windy weather on the Dnipro.”

However, a significant percentage of the users were disappointed in Potap, who questioned the style of the representation of the classic Ukrainian song, and perceived his words about the contestants’ accent very aggressively in favor of Vakarchuk’s cosmopolite views on a Ukrainian singer. Potap also was criticized for speaking in Russian and performing in Russia. It reflects the ambiguous speech of Vakarchuk which invokes nationalistic values of the local Ukrainian culture and encourages the inclusion of foreign representatives “with their accented but sincere performance” (Season 6, episode 8)¹¹² under the notion of a true Ukrainian singer. User *Roman Prokopenchuk*

¹¹² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGYv8Kjz_i8, latest access February 11, 2019

attached the common habit to laugh at people with certain differences as being of the “retarded Moscovite [Russian] Empire,” which is contrary to the Ukrainian habit of tolerating differences, a further sign of the affiliation of Ukraine to the “Western European civilized world.”

At the same time, Vakarchuk was criticized for the politics brought up on the show: “A musical and initially entertaining show was turned into an educational propaganda show - such a Soviet-style” - *Gordon Freeman*, - the conflict provoked the desire to skip all the coaches’ discussions with their “deliberate patriotism, artificial smiles and insincere scuffling in front of each other.”

Additionally, for the second time in the sixth season of the show, Vakarchuk was disparaged for his disputably nationalistic position: “since one sang in Ukrainian, it doesn't matter if it is offending to the ears - one should become the Hero of Ukraine?” - *Al An*; and accused of affecting the viewers’ perception of the performance: “This wrathful Vakarchuk's monologue is nothing but manipulation of the mindset of the viewer.” - *Stas*.

The performance, which inheres the unusual representation of the Ukrainian traditional culture and controversial messages from the coach, resulted in online debates regarding appropriateness of such interpretation, and which two non-Ukrainian singers were better suited to represent the Ukrainian Voice. The readiness to embrace the singer from Azerbaijan is a result of the Soviet Union’s legacy, especially facing the Nigerian descendant whose skin color hints at the existed reevaluation of the position within the Ukrainian society regarding race and Ukrainianness.

Katya Chilly “Kustova” (Bushes song) World-music representation of the Ukrainian folk song

Season 7, Episode 12 – the Quarterfinals; published on Apr 9, 2017, 514,164 views, 3.4k likes, 1.4k dislikes, 663 Comments¹¹³

Chilly’s performance caused different kinds of thoughts under the video. Many users, following Jamala’s comment after the performance¹¹⁴, were not satisfied with Chilly singing in the same manner in all the rounds and getting advancement for it. Following that idea, the YouTube audience was not positive about Chilly coming to the show being famous already, that she commodifies her fame instead of giving way for emerging talents. Additionally, many users criticized Chilly’s style of performance and her voice, such as Alina Olkhovskaya who wrote: “All the song [she was singing] at one screaming note”.

At the same time, many users compared her voice with the call of nature and admired her “cosmic” sound. Some users expressed the assumption that Chilly has a mission to recover old, ethnic Slavic that is in Ukrainian culture, and claimed her as the voice of Ukraine, underlining her mission of promoting the Ukrainian folk culture, and the awakening of traditions, saying that Chilly should be praised for that.

Oleg Ravlo: “She is the real Voice of the country because, apart from the unique voice skills, she still carries our unique folklore to the

¹¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cM8QP9O6fI>, latest access March 17, 2019

¹¹⁴ see page 88

*broad masses in a very accessible and understandable way for
people.”*

*Yaromysl Hladokress: “Katya Chilly, this is the embodiment of the
voice of Ukraine. The unique, shrill, which wakes up the national roots
to its very foundation.”*

Tatiana Scherbak: “She is a national attainment”

The other users like *Darina Leheza* were expressing the cosmopolite ideas regarding the world-music style of Chilly’s performance, which is worthy to be known abroad: “This performance reminded me a lot of DakhaBrakha¹¹⁵, they have already been touring around the world for a while, but in Ukraine they are almost unknown. One needs to respect such creativity, it is not like anything else; it is Ukrainian!” Some of them even compared cosmopolite Chilly’s performance to be worthy of being performed at the Eurovision Song Contest: “Luxurious performance - directing, lighting, arrangements (Indian instruments), stage presentation. [it is worth] the live opening of Eurovision” - *Lana V.*

Katya Chilly represents a narrow niche of the Ukrainian pop culture, that is why her performances are met without understanding from a general TV audience and many

¹¹⁵ DakhaBrakha — is world-music quartet from Kyiv, Ukraine. Reflecting fundamental elements of sound and soul, Ukrainian «ethnic chaos» band DakhaBrakha, create a world of unexpected new music. The name DakhaBrakha means «give/take» in the old Ukrainian language. (www.dakhabrakha.com.ua/en/about)

YouTube users (Chilly was advanced to the Quarterfinals by her coach Tina Karol, the coach also moved Chilly into the Semifinals, where she got only 7% of audience votes and was not advanced to the Superfinals). However, the YouTube audience supported the performance by 3.4k likes, that is almost three times more than the number of dislikes, and shows the tendency to more cosmopolite ideas than a TV audience. The users expressed understanding that Chilly's performance goes beyond the usual representation of Ukrainian folk culture and embraces the notion of a unique cosmopolite Ukrainian identity. At the same time, incorporated folk motifs united with instruments from other parts of the world under the style of world music also appealed to the internet users of the Holos Kraïny YouTube page who are able to perceive the mediation of nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

Anton Kopytin "Break Free" Rock song

Season 5, Episode 14 – the Superfinals; published on Jun 7, 2015, 216,880 views, 0 likes/dislikes, 73 Comments¹¹⁶

This performance got the least number of comments of all the performances discussed in this chapter. Mostly users expressed the positive attitude to Kopytin's performance, also people were responding to the notion frequently used in the show of a "real man who is a good family guy."

The YouTube users, in spite of the controversial attitude to the Eastern Ukrainian descendants for their separatist movements, agreed to the notion made in the show that

¹¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2pIBAsgEJY>, latest access March 17, 2019

Kopytin represents the united Ukraine from the East to the West: “our Ukrainian land is so rich with talents” - *Natalia Hetman*.

Some of them, such as *Smart Max3* agreed also with Kopytin’s victory in the show that he being a Donetsk descendant, can represent the whole Ukraine: “[he is] The Voice of Ukraine”

The very fact that the winner of *Holos Kraïny* in the Superfinals performed the song in English and in a very unusual way of using a vocoder in the live performance did not create any amazement in the YouTube audience. But what really pleased the users was the debunking of the of the pro-Russian Donbass descendant stereotype, proving that the latter can be very talented, intelligent and pro-Ukrainian. The users expressed the notion that Kopytin represents the internal cosmopolitanism of the Ukrainian identity.

Conclusion

Holos Kraïny constructs a celebrity using the rags-to-riches narrative, the narrative of authenticity, and the transformation to celebrity; additionally, the show employs the technique of attaching the labels to the contestants and proclaiming them as the voice of the country. Celebrities, constructed in certain symbolic spaces can become a foreground of the national identity representation. Furthermore, through voting, *Holos Kraïny* enacts democracy in participation of Ukrainian celebrity creation, which in context of post-totalitarian Ukrainian society is a desired power and a fruitful site for the show’s affect.

The perception of the performances discussed in chapter two by the YouTube audience of *Holos Kraïny* showed that, overall the Internet audience tends to be more cosmopolite than the show's TV audience. The users were able to identify the incorporation of the national symbols, choice of song, and coach's claims attaching the title of "The Voice of the Country" to affect on audience's patriotic feelings. At the same time, users are more likely to leave positive feedback when the performance of a Ukrainian music is not loaded with national symbols. The representation of regional identity did not provoke a powerful response from the YouTube audience, such as the performance of the religious figure. The latter stimulated the controversial debates regarding the place of religion in the Ukrainian society and resistance to the Russian influence.

The YouTube audience of the show expressed the cosmopolite ideas on embracing the invocations to the former countries' cultures and expressed support of the foreign contestants who share the same values of personal and national freedom. The inclusion of a Russian contestant works through the approval of the contestant's detachment from Russia and encouragement to become a Ukrainophone.

At the same time, the YouTube audience follows the show's navigating the nationalism and cosmopolitanism through the debates of appropriateness of interpretation of the Ukrainian traditional music heritage made by foreign contestants, the representation of the Ukrainian folk culture in the world-music style, and praising the representation of a united Ukrainian nation "from the East to the West."

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The research on the Ukrainian national identity was a very personal goal to understanding my own country, it explained many topics that were not defined in my own perception of Ukrainian history and society. The study was very current in finding the reasons that created obstacles in the long process of Ukrainian nation building at the moment when the country slowly awakened from the constant extended foreign Russian influence, which cultural outputs I still sometimes consider as “ours”. Born at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union and raised in the 1990s, I was following the Soviet legacy of being exposed mostly to Russian pop culture, learning Ukrainian history from the books that were printed in the Soviet Union or right after its collapse, consuming the results of centuries of Ukrainian history distortion. I did not like performances of Ukrainian folk ensembles and did not think much about the reasons for my feelings.

The winter of 2013-2014, and what the Ukrainian media calls the “Russian spring”¹¹⁷ of 2014, have been mind-changing for me. I realized that Russia is not a “brother” (however, I never thought of Russia as an elder brother), and started questioning everything I knew about Ukrainian history, especially in relation to Russia. Later, when the Ukrainian government opened the ex-KGB archives for public,

¹¹⁷ Russian spring is a term used in reference to the fast annexation of Crimea and appear of separatists speaking Russian with no Ukrainian accent seizing the cities’ administrations in bordering with Russia Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Ukrainian journalists and historians began issuing articles, which were gradually changing the perception of my country. I realized that a lot of what I knew about Ukraine was either Imperial Russian, or Soviet propaganda.

I still unintentionally question the authenticity of the Cossack Siromaha's performance, but criticize the "heavily" constructed image of Vitalina Musienko. I cry watching the "Mynaye Den" being performed by Lutsenko at her good level of performing skills, dancing with Pylypets during his very cheerful performances. But I do not feel any attachment to the Russian songs such as "Vdol po piterskoy" or to the explicitly Soviet style of song and costume of Roman Russu. I was surprised watching the priest singing the prayer in the primetime on one of the biggest channels in secular Ukraine. I was on the side of Potap in the conflict with Vakarchuk regarding performance of Anyanya Udongvo and Chingiz Mustafaev. I did not quite enjoy the unusual folk culture representation performed by Katya Chilly. But I was cheering for Anton Kopytin's victory, because he was from Donetsk, where I have cousins located, in the Donetsk territories occupied by Russia.

In this research I am mediating my own nationalism and cosmopolitanism, balancing my inner proudness of being Ukrainian with my cosmopolite identity of an American graduate student at Texas A&M. I burdened myself with delivering the history of Ukrainian identity and delivered it in English, which would not be readable for most of the Ukrainian population. Being far from very politicized Ukrainian social and media environment helped me become more critical about the news about home that still sneaks through the social media and Ukrainian history that I continued to explore, but

made me very easy to be touched by Ukrainian culture and especially folk culture. *Holos Kraïny* made me cry at least once during almost every episode of the five seasons that I analyzed.

It was challenging to represent the very controversial Ukrainian history that isn't under Russian/Soviet propaganda and deliver the objective truth as much as it is possible when "history is written by victors," while also not reaching the extremes of current Ukrainian counter-propaganda. The second challenge was to present Ukrainian history that is over fifteen hundred years old in a way to be comprehensible to the reader who is not familiar with it. On top of that I was narrowing my description of historic narratives to those related to the show. It was a challenge to distill from over a 1000 performances that I watched and analyzed to the final number of twelve case studies. The most complicated part was to not let my own bias to become a basis of the analysis.

From my personal perspective, the most constructed image at the show in terms of appealing to most of the audience's feelings was that of Vitalina Musienko. Her personal stories were based on the rags-to-riches narrative, narrative of authenticity, and the transformation into a celebrity, incorporating the praise from her coach, Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, and the newscast host Alla Masur. Her performances in the live-streamed rounds heavily relied on the national symbols, the choices of songs was made in order to appeal to the audience's nationalism. After her performances, Vakarchuk was shown with his eyes full of tears and while commenting he used his authority in Ukraine to claiming her to be the Voice of Ukraine.

Vakarchuk himself, was trying to affect people's opinions, claiming in the seventh episode of season six (2016): “changes in Holos Kraïny are faster than reforms in our country.” He meant that educating the Ukrainian audience with the “national ideas” expressed in the show is doing a more efficient than the government. Using his ambiguous political affiliation (he was a member of a parliament in 2007-2008, supporter of both Ukrainian Revolutions, and frequently asked about his presidential ambitions) Vakarchuk was using the contestants’ performances as an opportunity to incorporate politics into the show. His speech discussed in the second chapter regarding the performance of Anyanya Udongvo and Chingiz Mustafaev with the traditional version of the Ukrainian song is a precise example of that. Tina Karol in the fifth season (2015) was also incorporating the very current narrative of refugees from Eastern Ukraine in the personal stories of Anton Kopytin under the notion that “Ukraine is united from the East to the West” which successfully led the contestant to victory, which was also a victory for his coach. Karol also used Ivan Pylypets’s affiliation with wedding musician mass culture as a chance to win the competition among the coaches. In the next season, the sixth, in the first episode Tina was claiming the she was on the show to build a new era of Ukrainian music.

The new era of Ukrainian music coincided with a new era in Ukrainian social life. The show serves a great depiction of what Viktor Turner described as a “rite of passage,” incorporating the “talking codes,” which are “gestures, music, dancing, graphic representation and the fashioning of symbolic objects” (Turner 1979, 465). According to Turner, all performances, in order to take place require “framed spaces set

off from routine world.” The show itself plays a role in the liminal space, which is the second stage of the rite of passage, that separates the talented vocalists/contestants from their real life for the transformation into a celebrity, able to perform in live streamed TV program.

Turner asserts that for each major social formation there is a “dominant mode of public liminality”, that can represent the temporal condition where the society is able to perform the ideal version of itself, juxtaposing it to reality. This liminality can be a social protest, where people united with an idea of a better future take the authority from a government that is deciding on behalf of their country. That happened in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity.

The rapids of Ukrainian social and political life provoked Ukrainian society to question the standards of the existing social, political and cultural order. The existence of the attachment to Europe among significant part of Ukrainian population can be viewed as cosmopolitan manifestations. However, it is important to acknowledge that it is not necessarily represent the cosmopolitanism that exist in Western Europe.

In the recent presidential campaign in Ukraine in 2019 one of the leading candidates is Volodymyr Zelensky, who has never before been a politician, but is a popular comedian actor, screenwriter, and director of Ukrainian film studio “Kvartal 95.” This is a unique case for Ukrainian politics, before the representatives of popular culture were involved only in Parliament elections that led such celebrities as Sviatoslav Vakarchuk to obtain a place in the Parliament.

Turner offers the idea, that for the society to understand itself, it needs to set up a framework, within which “images and symbols can be scrutinized, assessed and, if needed be remodeled, rearranged” (Turner 1979, 468). A popular TV show, such as *Holos Kraïny*, having the wide range of the Ukrainian audience of one of the biggest Ukrainian TV channels that airs, the show serves as a framework for the Ukrainian society to discern itself. The national identity performed there serves as a metalanguage - symbolism of representation and expression that enables both participants and spectators, to realize how far they have transgressed their perceived Ukrainianness and question it in the context of social changes.

Holos Kraïny creates the framed space where boundaries are pushed for the transformation of the perception of nationalism and cosmopolitanism in Ukraine, which performing in the show obtains the positive changes in perception, being praised in representing folk culture, Ukrainian pop culture and national symbols. The internal diversity of the Ukrainian population is taking its positions of presenting the regional traits and elevating them to the level of national, as a “form of affirming a national identity in the process of formation” (Martin-Barbero 2006, 630). The show becomes a platform for renegotiation of the religion in secular Ukraine, showing some of the participants crossing themselves before go onto the stage. *The Voice in Ukraine* became a liminal space for constructing the cosmopolite Ukrainian identity, which firstly was based on the Soviet Union principles of transnational Soviet identity based on the Russian culture; the show embraces foreigners under the notion of personal and national struggle for freedom and incorporating the “other side of a war.” Both paradigms were

being mediated through the liminal space of the show by uniting Ukrainian folk with world music and making the “world perform the national”.

This is the first step in the search of how Ukrainian national identity is represented in the Ukrainian popular culture and franchised TV show. More can be done in studying further seasons of the show (season nine began being broadcasted in January 2019) or focus on more narrow areas of nationalism, researching the dynamics of folk Ukrainian culture representation in relation to the narrow view referred to as “*sharovarschyna*,” appeal to the Ukrainian tragic events such as Holodomor, war in Eastern Ukraine and Revolution. The show portrays the topics of Crimean Tatar and their struggle to live in Crimea annexed by Russia. *Holos Kraïny* is rich to offer the wide range of black performance in predominantly white Ukraine pursuing the study done by Bilaniuk. The Voice in Ukraine can be studied from the perspective of how gender performed in the show. Queer studies will also find a well-provided ground for the analysis of the transgender and crossdresser performers. The scholarship can be enriched with post-communistic cross-countries research of the representation of the national identity in *The Voice* franchise.

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APPENDIX A

THE WINNING CONTESTANT, COACHES AND HOSTS OF THE SEASONS¹¹⁸

Season		4	5	6	7	8					
First aired	Last aired	Winner	Runner-up	Third Place	Fourth Place	Winning runner-up					
		Contestant				Coach					
		Winner	runner-up	Second runner-up	Third place in final	Presenter					
2-Mar-14	8-Jun-14	Igor Grohotskiy	Marlene Karimov	Olga Melnyk	Mykhailo Myrka	Sviatoslav Vakarchuk	Ani Lorak	Sergey Lazarev	Tamara Gverdtsiteli	Olha Freimut	N/A
8-Mar-15	7-Jun-15	Anton Kopytin	Tatyana Reshetnyak	Andriy Luchanko	Eugene Tolochny	Tina Karol	Potap	Sviatoslav Vakarchuk	Oleksandr Ponomariov	Olha Freimut	
28-Feb-16	29-May-16	Vitalina Musienko	Inna Ishchenko	Pavel Paliychuk	Vlad Karaschuk	Sviatoslav Vakarchuk	Tina Karol	Potap	Ivan Dorn	Katya Osadcha	Yuri Gorbunov
22-Jan-17	23-Apr-17	Aleksandr Klimentko	Ingret Kostenko	Vera Kekeliya	Anna Kuksa	Tina Karol	Potap	Sergey Babkin	Jamala	Katya Osadcha	Yuri Gorbunov
28-Jan-18	29-Apr-18	Elena Lutsenko	Andriy Rybarchuk	Anna Trinchher	Srbui Sargsyan	Sergey Babkin	Tina Karol	Potap	Jamala	Katya Osadcha	Yuri Gorbunov

¹¹⁸ The table was retrieved with minor modifications from “The Voice of Ukraine,” Wikipedia, last access March 21, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Voice_of_Ukraine

APPENDIX B

RATIO OF SONGS BY LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Season	Language	Music styles					Total
		Folk	Pop	Rock	Classical	Electronic	
Season 4	Ukrainian	3%	9%	4%	2%	0%	19%
	Russian	0%	14%	3%	1%	0%	17%
	English	0%	32%	15%	1%	1%	50%
	Other	0%	9%	1%	4%	0%	14%
	Total	3%	64%	23%	8%	1%	100%
Season 5	Ukrainian	7%	21%	8%	2%	0%	38%
	Russian	0%	9%	1%	0%	1%	11%
	English	0%	25%	14%	1%	0%	40%
	Other	1%	7%	0%	3%	1%	11%
	Total	8%	63%	23%	6%	1%	100%
Season 6	Ukrainian	9%	18%	9%	1%	0%	37%
	Russian	1%	5%	3%	1%	2%	11%
	English	0%	31%	15%	1%	1%	47%
	Other	0%	2%	1%	2%	0%	5%
	Total	10%	55%	28%	5%	3%	100%
Season 7	Ukrainian	6%	17%	11%	0%	0%	34%
	Russian	0%	12%	6%	0%	0%	19%
	English	0%	27%	10%	0%	2%	40%
	Other	2%	3%	0%	0%	0%	7%
	Total	8%	59%	28%	2%	3%	100%
Season 8	Ukrainian	6%	19%	12%	1%	1%	38%
	Russian	0%	4%	4%	0%	0%	8%
	English	0%	31%	11%	1%	8%	50%
	Other	0%	3%	1%	1%	0%	4%
	Total	6%	57%	27%	2%	9%	100%