

## **Concerts and festivals: Public performances of folk music in Sweden.**

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### **Abstract**

*This article deals with public performances of folk music in Sweden. After a few introductory remarks on events as study objects, follows a brief historical survey of some main forms or formats of such performances. An analytical model is then presented, which is used to explain some of the changes that has occurred in public presentations of folk music in Sweden. Then the modern folk music festival is examined, a type of event that in short time has been spread all over the world. Folk music festivals, it is argued, can be read as texts, complex as they are, full of significance, pregnant with meaning. But they can also be seen as instruments, powerful tools for change, manipulation, for overriding old power structures and cultural borders, as well as setting up new.*

### **Introduction**

Scholarly and practical work on music festivals seem to concentrate more on what is shown, or even what should be shown, and less on festivals themselves.<sup>1</sup> Although presentations on festival stages are often about differences - even celebrating diversity of musics, ethnicities, cultural identities and the like -, the festival as an arena produces important similarities, which may not be that visible or apparent, but which nevertheless frame and shape the performances in a powerful way. “Festivalization” adapts music to festivals, in much the same way as “medialization” adapts music to recording technologies, such as LP:s, audio cassettes, or CD:s (Forry 1986, Wallis & Malm 1984, Lundberg, Malm & Ronström 2000).

The basic idea that underlies the approach in this article is that format matters - that the “when” and “where” are as important to cultural performances as ever the “what” and “how”. “The medium is a message” is my more modest version of Marshal McLuhan’s famous proclamation almost half a century ago (McLuhan 1964). Signs, sounds, images, and the technologies used to

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<sup>1</sup> The number of guides to festivals, handbooks for potential festival organisers and colourful reviews of festivals is indeed impressive. Scholarly works on music festivals are less common. In ethnology, anthropology, and folklore, there is a rich literature on festivals as cultural statements, rites of passage etc See for example Cantwell 1993, Chretien 1994, Dundes & Falassi 1975, Whisnant 1983. Short overviews are Falassi 1997, Stoeltje 1992. Only a limited number of these studies deal with music festivals.

transmit them make up an inseparable unit, and it is this unit which is to be analyzed as “the message”. An example near at hand is that whatever the messages intended by the producers of all the millions of programs on the thousands of TV channels out there, there is a powerful message that cannot be overlooked in the simple fact that almost all of these programs are shown on TV sets made by a few extremely powerful multinational companies. Whatever the standards set by such companies, they will become ours.

Format matters; the medium is indeed a message. Thus the phenomenon we call music needs to be understood not only as sound, but as situated performance, including all types of behaviour involved in music production, as well as the arenas, situations and media in which these types of behaviour occur. “Music as situated performance” must not be understood as merely a version of old well-established centre-periphery relations, such as text-context, or form-content. On the contrary, it aims at overriding such relations, by turning to the event itself as the prime unit of observation and analysis. Thereby melodies and sounds become as important as other types of behaviour on and around the stages and arenas where music is performed. In fact, a large part of the many important changes in the use and understanding of music through the last centuries can be seen as changes in musical events, rather than in the music “itself”.

## Five Phases in the History of Public Performances of Folk Music in Sweden

A precondition for any presentation of folk music is of course the construction of “folk musical traditions” as reproducible commodified objects. Other preconditions are arenas that could be used for such presentations, and audiences that are willing to listen. In Sweden the notion of a “Swedish folk music” was established during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by academic scholars, such as E.G. Geijer, in close cooperation with romantic writers and artists, such as P.D. A. Atterbom. “*Folkvisa*” (folk song) was recorded in print for the first time in 1804, and “*folkmusik*” (folk music) in 1823 (Rehnberg 1976). A public concert life was born in Swedish urban centres in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. To meet the musical needs of the growing bourgeoisie, a number of small and large arenas and venues for public performances of music were established.

By the 1840s all the preconditions for public performances of folk music were already at hand. In November 1844 Richard Dybeck (1811-1877), educated in law, but all his life devoted to folk music and folk life research, staged the first in a long and successful series of “evening entertainments with Nordic folk music” (Ivarsdotter-Johnsson 1994).

In this first phase of public performances of folk music in Sweden we find young urban professionals as the main actors, performing in urban settings, often in concert halls, in front of an upper class or bourgeois audience. The performances typically aim at demonstrating to an ignorant but friendly audience the great values of old and almost forgotten folk traditions. It was through performances such as Dybeck's, that the new ideas of "the Swedish nation" was filled with concrete substance, with capacity to evoke strong feelings of patriotism among the urban bourgeoisie. It is thus not by chance that it was Dybeck's new words to an old ballad collected in his home region, and presented by himself at one of his musical soirées, that later on became the Swedish national anthem.

In this way the "message" of folk music in Sweden was framed and shaped from the very beginning by the urban setting, by stage performances in the new concert halls, and by the composition of the audience. Folk music became a part of a growing repertoire of urban musical entertainments, and thereby marked by all the performance practices and manners that belonged to such entertainments. These practices and manners have persistently clung to much folk music performances ever since.

### A second phase

A second phase begins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the ideas of "folk" and "nation" became institutionalised, put to existence so to say by organizations, systems, structures, etc.<sup>2</sup> Public performances of folk music were an instrumental part of this development. In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *spelmanstävling* (fiddlers' competition) was born. The famous painter Anders Zorn arranged the first fiddler's competition in Dalarna in 1906. The idea soon spread throughout the country. While the first of these was arranged outdoors in a small village in the countryside, using a cart as main stage, most later competitions were arranged in regional urban centres. On the stages we now find "the folk" itself, peasant fiddlers appearing in the role of "the old peasant fiddlers". As main actors in the background, however, we still find urban educated professionals: teachers, doctors and the like. A typical venue for these events was the big hall of the local school, a natural environment of the organisers.

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<sup>2</sup> The obvious example is Skansen, the worlds first outdoor ethnographic museum.

The first fiddlers' competition in Visby, Gotland, was arranged on July 4, 1908. The idea came from the town's lord mayor, who was also a member of "The Musical Society". To the organizing committee belonged prominent persons of the local elite. In his speech to the fiddlers and the audience at the competition, the rector of the lyceum in Visby where the event took place, spoke about folk music and other remnants of the old as important parts of the cultural identity of the modern nation. "We have to recognize ourselves", he said, "and others have to recognize us. A nation with only modernities and nothing of the old, would be a nation without a face, recognizable only by its deformation." (Arwidsson 1989:71). However, to the referees of the competition, much of what was performed sounded too modern. They suspected that the fiddlers "might had misunderstood the idea of the competition, and not always understood the difference between old and new, between the own and the foreign". (Arwidsson 1989:73). At subsequent competitions such misunderstandings were dealt with in advance, to ensure that only melodies considered by the organisers to be old and valuable were played.

The overall horizon that gave meaning to these first folk music competitions was the nation. All participants were Swedes, representing their villages, parishes, regions and of course also themselves as individual artists. Although not always overtly stated, the events were constructed and projected as symbolic representations of the nation. All the explicitly displayed differences in repertoire, style and performing manners among the performers merged to a representation of a larger unified, albeit more complex whole, "a unity in diversity" of the time.

In these events, folk music was projected as an individual art of especially gifted men. Most of these men were old and therefore seen as especially competent in valuable old music. The competitive alignment stressed the unique, performative qualities of folk music performances – folk music as art - but also contributed to a higher level of objectification, even reification, of tunes and styles. It was during this period that the persistent idea that certain types of tunes, from certain times and places were more valuable than others, was firmly established not only among organizers but also audiences and the performers themselves. As shown by the example from Visby, at the first competitions there were different opinions among organisers and fiddlers about which tunes were the best to compete with. These differences soon disappeared as the fiddlers took over the attitudes towards their music from the educated urban professionals.

### A third phase

A third phase took place during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By this time the institutions, systems and structures to which the national movement of the preceding century had given birth began to take over the organization of folk music performances. Through the institutionalization folk music was transformed into a means to display the nation not as an abstract idea, but as a living reality. In this period, the fiddlers' competitions gave way to fiddlers gatherings, *spelmansstämmor*. These events were typically staged outdoors, from late spring to early autumn, often in the premises of a local outdoor ethnographical museum, an old farm or the like. Most of the musicians and the audiences at such events were new urbanites, people with one leg in the old peasant society and the other in the new industrial society. As devoted organizers in the background of such events, we again find educated urban middle class professionals. As opposed to the competitions, these non-competitive events emphasized informal, low-keyed interaction through and around music, such as playing together in larger, ad hoc groups just for fun. Even if there were stages with formal acts, the real action took place off-stage and was termed by the fiddlers themselves *buskspel*, (playing in the bushes). As a result a common standard repertoire, *allspelslåtar* (lit. "all-play-tunes"), was established, and new manners of playing became widespread, most notably the practice of improvising a second or even a third voice to the melody.

### A fourth phase

A fourth phase of public presentations of folk music began directly after the Second World War. The horizons of folk music events changed dramatically: folk music became international. New models for presenting folk music were tried out, and one of the most important came from Eastern Europe. In 1947 the first international "Youth festival" was arranged in Prague. A prominent part of this huge manifestation of "peace and understanding the East-European way" consisted of a competition between folklore groups from many countries. This festival set a standard for folk music festivals in the East Europe that lasted many years. The new format required new standards of performance: larger events, stages, audiences and ensembles, and more elaborate performances of "national folklore", including dance, song, music, performed by well-trained artists in "original" peasant costumes. All this called for professionals with competence in staging large international events. Gifted choreographers, like Igor Mojsejev in Russia and the Russian-born ballerina Margarita Froman in Yugoslavia, succeeded in expanding the folk dance genre with elements from modern dance theatre. The same process took place also in many

countries in Western Europe, although perhaps not at the same professional level. In the late 1940's and early 1950's composers and arrangers like Gunnar Hahn in Sweden, and Filip Kutev in Bulgaria, just to mention a few, expanded folk music into orchestral music, by creatively adapting the original music styles to a new format.

Again, an important part of the new format was national representation. But if earlier folk music was mainly used to represent the nation to an audience of supposed "insiders", compatriots, now, more often than not, folk music was used to represent the nation also to "foreigners" from other nations. Thereby the meaning of the "folk" changed, from the lower stratum of a nation (for example "the peasantry"), to the entire population of a nation, "the people". In this process two entirely different notions of "folk" merged: the romantic "folk", and the socialist "people". The resulting and often puzzling amalgamation of old peasant styles and newer working class styles, accompanied by romantic and socialist rhetoric, is still prominent in public performances of folk music in many parts of Europe.

#### A fifth phase

A fifth phase began in the 1980's, when a new type of folk music events emerged, in which the horizon was neither national nor international, but rather transnational, representing "unity in diversity" on a global scale. Although the performers may come from many parts of the world, the events are not inter-national, since what is represented is not primarily nations. Rather these events are staged as a global botanical garden of musics, forms, styles etc, often used as "brands" or "trade marks" of villages, regions, nations, ethnic groups, bands, artists, record companies, and agencies. This development reflects major changes in global economical and cultural systems.

It is in this context that "world music" was born and distributed, and where it still bears most of its meaning. In the new "world music" or "roots music" festivals, the commodification of "tradition" is brought to a new level. The much praised creolisations, hybridizations and syncretisms propagated in these festivals presuppose a standardised set of reified "pure" elements that can be mixed but not blended, so that the mixing itself is highlighted. Modelled upon rock festivals, these events typically present many successive musical acts, from large stages served by professional crews, to large and often young audiences, and offer exotic foods and local beers in excessive quantities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> These features make these "new" festivals in fact more similar to the "old" types of festivals typically

## **Doers, knowers and makers**

Some of the changes outlined above can be analysed by use of a simple model. Any field or arena of music consists of at least three typical positions in relation to the actors' motives or goals.

Many actors' prime motive is simply to make music. These we can call "doers". To make music, doers have to obtain extensive knowledge and resources, and these are primarily understood as means to reach the goal. Abstract, theoretical knowledge that does not relate directly to the music-making often play a subordinate role. For the typical doer, quality and authenticity are anchored in the music-making itself and the experiences that evolve from it: "As long as it feels all right, it is all right".

For another type of actor it is precisely the abstract knowledge about music that is the goal. We can call these "knowers". Their goal is the knowledge itself and the research involved to find answers for questions about when, where, how and who. The typical case is of course the academic researcher, but in reality most knowers are amateur-researchers who do not belong to Academia. The result of focusing upon knowledge is that most activities consist of, and circle around, words. Typical knowers perform most of their activities at desks, in archives, libraries, classrooms and at conferences. Quality and authenticity are anchored in scientific procedures. This makes exegesis an important activity, that is, discussions about how sources and materials can be interpreted. From the perspective of the doer, the results of such discussions, often presented as central products of many years of research, can seem of remote interest because of the lack of obvious relationship to music-making. In Sweden, as in many other countries, the differences in perspectives of "doers" and "knowers" have become institutionalized in conservatories and departments of musicology.

A third type of actors are those whose prime motive is to distribute and sell the results of the activities of doers and knowers. Producers, managers, salesmen, entrepreneurs of different kinds: we can call them "makers". The goals of doers and knowers are for makers more often than not means to reach other goals, for example to raise attention, spread messages, attract audiences, or to make money. Typically, quality is related to how successfully these goals are reached, and therefore quality is readily translated to quantity.

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described in ethnological and anthropological literature.

Doers, knowers and makers are three positions that actors can take in relation to a musical field. One and the same individual can easily move between all three positions. They make up a system, a model that can be used for description and analysis of processes of change in the control of, and power over, the expressive forms that make up the centre of a musical field.

### Shifting power over the Middle Ages

An example is the displacement in the power over the “Middle Ages” that has taken place since the 1980’s. Earlier the Middle Ages belonged almost entirely to knowers because of their control over the access to the firsthand-sources, for example the unique and precious medieval books (incunabular), in special research libraries. Knowledge about the Middle Ages thus became profoundly marked by their special interests and filtered through their perspectives. The type of knowledge needed by potential doers to enact other versions of the Middle Ages was not produced at all by the knowers. Instead they produced many – to the doers mostly uninteresting - debates about interpretation and origins. But during the 1990s the monopoly of the knowers was broken due to the publishing of source material on the Internet. Thereby the sources became directly accessible, in transcription or facsimile, to a growing number of young people interested not in knowing, but in doing. In their hands, these sources were quickly transferred to handbooks for performers by adding simple, concrete “do-it-yourself” instructions to the original texts.

A specific example of this process is Thoinot Arbeau’s “Orcheseographie” first published in 1589, one of few sources on dance modes of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. For centuries it was available only to a small number of dance professionals and researchers. Between the 1880s and 1970s the book was published in several limited editions. In the 1990’s the entire work was scanned and made available on the Internet by several persons independently from each other, all of whom had links to then fast growing Middle Age movement around the world (with one of its centres in the world-wide organization, Society for Creative Anachronism). Most of these “doers” seem to have little or no interest in source interpretation and criticism, but all the more for how they themselves could learn to perform the dances. To meet these needs, to the new Internet editions have been added simple “do-it-yourself” instructions that seem to be modelled upon the “getting started” sections of software manuals. On the Internet you can also find appropriate music, advice on style, clothing, shoes and much more. As a result of this rapid development, during the medieval week in Visby, Gotland, young enthusiasts dressed up in medieval-style clothes dance their home-made versions of dances, most of which have not been danced at all for centuries. These are performed to their own homemade songs or to any music that happens to be

available to them. Their interest is not to create authentic replicas of the original dances, but rather to experience the dancing itself. There are many similar examples whereby Internet provides not only an easily accessible channel to original sources, but also to “cookbook” recipes for how to make the best use of them, that is how to achieve the strongest possible experience.

The knowers’ loss of the monopoly over the sources has meant that they can no longer control definitions of content, meaning, right or wrong. This has given the doers new possibilities. This is but a small part of a massive trend in many parts of society that may be summarised “from informative to performative”. Many observers have pointed out that in recent years museums, schools, TV, and radio, have come to centre around the sensual, emotional and experiential, rather than the earlier so central intellectual capacities. When emotions and experiences are foregrounded, objects are transformed into instruments for the experiencing subjects. The objects are interesting as long as they produce emotional experiences. This creates a drive for raised levels of esthetical expression. Then esthetics, not ethics, moral or knowledge, become leading principles of how to evaluate life (cf Bauman 1994). These two shifts - from knowers to doers and makers, and from knowing, doing and making, to the results and effects (emotional experiences, performances, profits, raised attention etc) - represent a new order in the power structures around the production and managing of knowledge that without doubt will have many consequences in the future (Lundberg, Malm & Ronström 2000).

### Shifting control over folk music in Sweden

The development of folk music in Sweden can also be described and analyzed as shifts from knowers to doers and makers, and from knowing to doing and making. As we have seen, the concept of folk music was coined in the late 18th century on the initiative of knowers. The content grew out of long-standing negotiations between knowers and doers. By the late 1900s folk music had become petrified into a national symbol, and as such it survived well into the 1970s. Then a new generation of young doers simply took over the power over the definitions and moved folk music from the urban salons and the national manifestations, to large popular outdoor celebrations.<sup>4</sup> With the popularisation of folk music during the 1970’s and 80’s the emergence followed of a new and earlier almost insignificant type of actors in the field of folk music: record producers, managers, festival organisers, and so on. With them followed stickers, flyers, riders, posters, demos, important features of a pop/rock musical format that during the following decades

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<sup>4</sup> In 1975, the fiddlers gathering in the small Dalecarlian village Bingsjö attracted more than 50.000 visitors.

became standard also in the field of folk music. In the course of only a few years, makers took control over arenas and media central to the field. Their perspective soon came into conflict with those already established, and the result was the birth of a new type of folk music, in Sweden first coined “FUP” (*folkmusik utan polis*, or “folk music without police”), then “new folk music” and *världsmusik* (“world music”).

A result of these shifts is that the ideas about the locus of music, or as Erwin Goffman puts it “where the action is”, has changed. Earlier in Sweden folk musicians tended to hold that the music was located in the interaction between musicians, and between musicians and audience. This was institutionalized in the *spelmansstämma*, and expressed through its focus on informal playing together. Recordings were seen as secondary representations of music. Today, often the opposite is true, as already has been the case for a long time among rock and pop musicians. The prime locus of modern folk or world music is formally controlled situations, such as studios or rehearsal rooms. Live performances are increasingly seen as secondary representations of recordings, or recordings still to be made.

As in the field of the Middle Ages more and more of what is considered to be the “original” sources of folk music have become available on the Internet, as transcriptions, midifiles, recordings, texts etc. Thereby the doers are equipped with new tools, while at the same time knowers rapidly lose control to makers over such important parts of the field as aesthetical evaluations and definitions of central concepts. This shift is partly a result of the impressive general growth of both doers and makers in most fields of music in the last decades. Earlier, when music was an activity of the few, makers were neither many nor significant. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the music market has exploded. The more doers the bigger market, and the bigger market the more makers. Today, the number of makers in the field of folk music is larger than ever before. It is among the makers that we find many of folk musics’ most “burning souls”. What they are burning for is not necessarily more or better music, but raised visibility, attention and status for “their” kind of music, for their ethnic group, if not for their record company, artist agency or festival. Through this development folk music has become a part of a growing world-wide “attention economy” (Goldhaber 1997a, b).

## Festivals

An important type of musical arena today is the music festival. A concert is a highly formalised and focused event, limited in time and space, most often indoors and with one or a small number

of successive acts. A festival is made up of many acts, either from one big stage, or from many different smaller stages. Festival behaviour typically includes moving around, eating, drinking, smoking, small talking, and having a day out, sometimes even several days- and nights. The performances are often distributed over a weekend, or more, in a large hall or outdoors, which in Sweden's case means summer season.

There are several easily distinguishable types of festivals. One type especially common in the world of rock and pop music presents many acts on a few large stages over a rather short period of time (most often a weekend) and in a limited, often fenced, space. Another type, more common in the world of classical music, consists of a large number of separate concerts, distributed over a week or even a month. Yet another type, "the carnival", is characterised by a large number of non-staged, sometimes even improvised ad hoc performances in streets and squares, in close interaction with the audience, sometimes so close that the border between performers and audiences disappears. In all types of festivals the performances are loosely connected in time and space, by a common festival area, a common theme, or simply by a common organisation and PR.

#### A short history of festivals in Sweden

Up to the end of the 1960s festivals in Sweden were mainly devoted to the distribution of "classical" or "art" music, often in the form of a "Festspiel" or local "music weeks". The typical aim was to give "underprivileged" people in remote areas a chance to listen to "good music". In the late 1960s Woodstock became a model for a new type of festivals, focusing on music, but typically including also many other activities. Many of these festivals were large inclusive parties, attracting large numbers of visitors. Much of the music at these festivals was rock or pop music, often labelled "alternative music", but their aim was often to include any type of music that could be considered "alternative" or "progressive", most notably forms of jazz, folk music and new experimental music genres. During the same time also the jazz festivals became more common.

During the two following decades the number of festivals grew steadily, in more and more places, presenting a wider range of musical genres. During the 1980s and even more during the 1990s the contents of festivals have become broader. Festivals then became used by commercial actors, policymakers, local and regional politicians, for the purpose of marketing and promoting goods and images. Carnivals were introduced in the early 1980s by cultural activists and by music administrators employed by the Swedish National Institute for Concerts. Modelled primarily upon

carnivals in the West Indies, the new Swedish carnivals were arranged mainly as an act of social engineering, to produce and distribute “culture” to the inhabitants of the newly erected suburbs around Sweden’s three biggest cities, Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö. During the last ten years the old concert-type festival and the newer carnival type have amalgamated into huge happenings and folk feasts, called *kulturdagar* (culture-days) or even *kulturnatta* (culture-night), often arranged in co-operation between private entrepreneurs and local political (communal) administration.

A distinct trend in the last decades of the 20th century is that music festivals of all these types have become more numerous. On the one hand, old recurrent musical events have been recast and reframed into festivals, on the other hand a large number of new festivals have been instigated. The growth is not evenly distributed. Some genres of music and some places are festival-denser than others, due to factors like tourist flows, the supply of local resources and expertise etc.

To sum up you could say that from being arenas for carefully selected musics and audiences, festivals during the 1980s developed into arenas for a wider range of musics and audiences, although still often focussed upon one specific genre - folk music fans in Falun, rock fans in Hultsfred, early music lovers in Skara, medievalists in Visby etc. During the last decades festivals have turned into folk feasts for all kinds of people, with all kinds of music and a large variety of non-musical activities. Today there are water festivals, gay festivals, food, medieval, local and many more festivals all over Sweden.

Festivals can be seen as expressions of a number of important changes in society. An explanation to the increase of festivals is that they are cost-effective events, for audiences, arrangers, and musicians. For relatively low investments in money, time and energy, audiences get access not only to many different artists, but also to foods and goods from distant places, as well as meeting old and making new friends. For arrangers all musical events – including festivals - are risky undertakings. But with many different kinds of artists it is possible to spread risks more effectively, and in the same time diminish the total costs per artist. Co-ordination between festivals and split costs for artists and PR, also contributes to increased efficiency. To many musicians festivals is a means to reach large audiences with small efforts, audiences that they otherwise might not reach at all. So, the increase in numbers of festivals can by and large be

understood as an answer to the growing demands of the market economy on maximisation of profit and continuous rationalisation and effectivisation also in the fields of music.

## **Festivalization**

The increasing number and importance of music festivals has led to a number of changes in musical practices that could be summarised as festivalization. An effect of festivalization is increasing concentration of music in time and space. Concentration in time produces a ketchup-like effect: first nothing, then nothing, and then suddenly everything at once. Since one of the points of organizing festivals is to gather large numbers of people, most festivals take place outdoors during two, three hectic summer months. As a result, an important part of musical life is generally split up between a long production period, with small resources, low intensity, low visibility, big investments but small revenues, and a short period of distribution, sale and consumption, with high intensity and visibility, large resources and audiences.

In the field of folk music this development has led to some important changes. If once folk music was connected to the agricultural calendar, now, through festivals, it is connected to the calendar of leisure industry and mass tourism. Also the locus of folk music has changed. If once folk music was located in rural landscapes, today, through festivals, folk music has become firmly anchored among urban tourist attractions.<sup>5</sup> Yet another aspect of concentration is the creation of a set of highways between festivals, along which a small selection of bands travel. The roads leading to these highways are effectively controlled by gatekeepers in the festival organisations.

Another effect of festivalization is a change in audience behaviour. Festivals in important ways relate to concerts as television to cinema. While concerts and cinemas are highly formalised and focussed performances, television and festival audiences normally engage not only in that what is presented, but also in many other forms of social interaction simultaneously, such as chatting, eating, smoking, etc. For that reason festivals, as television, have notorious difficulties in catching and maintaining the audience's attention over a longer period of time, which calls for more and stronger effects. To be able to penetrate the intense flows of impression that characterizes festivals, festival music is often charged with more and stronger forms of expression (higher sound, more light, flashier clothes, dance, props etc.), and increased foregrounding of new and strong effects that could raise attention. To this raised level of expressions and effects, festival

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<sup>5</sup> There are of course many reasons to this, two of them being that new "folkies" are recruited among young urbanites, and that the leisure industry in Sweden recently has become more geared towards the urban.

audiences in the same way as television audiences typically answer by “zapping”, repeated changes between different stages and performances, which leads to a spiral of constantly raised levels of expressions and effects.

One notable example is the Falun Folk Music Festival (FFF), arranged annually since 1986 in the small town Falun, in southern Dalecarlia. From start designed as a “classical” festival, with many different concerts in different places during an extended weekend, FFF soon developed in the direction of a carnival, with street markets, exotic food vendors and improvised music happenings in streets and parks. In the 1990s the festival was geared towards the pop/rock type, where many different acts appear at a few large outdoor stages in a fenced-in parking lot in the middle of the town. This led to markedly increased level of festivalization, most notably an increase of sound and other effects and expressions. In turn, by the end of 1990s this led to a crisis for the festival, due to diminishing attraction to the original folk music audience, and without any large new identifiable audience groups. Also, the newcomers to a notably higher extent than the original folk music audience engaged in zapping between different activities, of which many were situated outside the festival area. This led to an even more increased level of sound, light and other effects. The result of this change in format was that the original core of presented musics – acoustic folk music, low in volume and total output – gradually were replaced by new “world music” or “roots music”, with considerably higher levels of expression and volume.

### Driving forces and effects

Festivals are deeply embedded in at least three different economies. One is the “normal” money economy. Folk music festivals of today, as other types of festivals, are parts of the global capitalistic market economy. They are markets, fairs, in which music is but one of the commodities that are presented, advertised and sold. Another economy is the symbolic, where the currency is cultural status or value, cultural capital. A third is a growing attention economy, where the currency is such visibility that can produce attention. Festivals can produce desirable visibility and attention capital, at the same time as they can contribute to the devaluation and consumption of such capital.

These economies interact in interesting ways. In a money economy visibility is a means to make money. In an attention economy money is a means to buy visibility. Neither money nor visibility can ensure growth of cultural capital. On the contrary, too much money or visibility can lead to a devaluation of cultural capital. In a money economy profitability is to produce long series that can

be distributed widely (“broadcasting”). In an attention economy profitability is reached through production of difference, and the distinctively different is visible only if produced in small numbers. Music has become a major vehicle for producing and dramatising differences of all kinds. This has made music festivals especially important for investments in attention economy. But as attention is a very competitive market, paradoxically it will end up producing differences that are similar (Lundberg, Malm, Ronström 2000).

Often festivals are used as a kind of exchange bureaus. They produce great visibility for relatively low costs that can lead to high attention, which in turn can lead to higher status and eventually also recognition. The visibility can be sold, as can the attention be re-directed. Both state institutions and private companies are interested potential buyers. A big company can buy visibility for money that is then distributed to artists, in exchange for redirecting attention to the company. Individuals and organisations with cultural capital can sell their services to festivals (for example as opening speakers, guests of honour etc), which in turn might raise the visibility and attention for the festival as such as well as for the artists. Often individual artists or groups perform as representatives for a collective of some kind, an ethnic group, a local community, a region, or a nation. The visibility and attention the artist can achieve can easily be transferred to this collective. This makes festivals an important potential resource for groups that consider themselves underprivileged, and therefore strive to raise their status and recognition in society.

Festivals can also be used as an instrument of social control. An example is “Summer 2000” a festival arranged in Stockholm, august 2000, during the last weeks of summer vacations. Under the head-lines “five millions to get peace in the city” the biggest newspaper in Sweden, Dagens Nyheter, reports from the festival. When the Stockholm “Water festival” was closed a few years earlier, the city politicians were reminded by their consultants of the youth riots that flared up in a city park, in august 1987. During the 1990’s the commune cut down most of its youth leisure programs. Thus, the consultants argued, there now was an increased risk for new riots. Therefore the commune undertook to organize the festival “Summer 2000”, with activities in the inner city for youth over 15 years of age, and in the suburbs for the younger ones. Most of the activities included music, according the principle “it is better to hit kids with disco than with a baton.” The commune financed the festival by selling the visibility and attention that the festival produced to sponsors. Only one sponsor belonged to the normal type of sponsors at youth festivals. All the others were media companies: Sony-owned radio-network NRJ, Swedish media-mogul Jan

Stenbeck's ZTV and Metro, the Internet site Spray. The intention of all these companies was to sell the visibility and attention further on to advertisers. The strategy behind Summer 2000 was to diminish negative effects of cutbacks in communal funding of activities for children and youth, by organizing a festival, and to finance this through selling the kids attention to sponsors. This strategy is new in Sweden but has been common in other countries for years. Beer companies are main sponsors of many music festivals, such as the international folk music and dance festival held annually in Rudolstadt, Germany, and the big rock festival in Roskilde, Denmark. More events of this type can be expected in Sweden, only not by beer or liqueur companies.

Festivals are effective arenas for distribution of messages and communication of symbols and signs. They produce and express many of the tendencies that in late the 20<sup>th</sup> century that normally are summarised as "postmodernity". On the one hand a stress on mixes, bricolage, eclecticism, crossover, blurring of genres and categories. On the other a purification and reification of expressive forms and styles, in order to produce fast and clear-cut messages. With the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman a prime effect of festivalization can be described as a strive for "greatest possible impression on shortest possible time" (Bauman 1994), or with words of the Russian semiotician Boris Uspenskij "largest possible number of signs in smallest possible space".<sup>6</sup> The effectivisation and maximisation of precisely those factors that produce visibility and attention, is what makes festivals a part of an attention economy. An important reason behind the increased use of festivals by individuals, groups and institutions, state, communal and private, is precisely their hopes for raised visibility and attention capital.

## Conclusion

Festivals reflect ideas, but also produce, distribute and dramatise ideas. All this makes festivals to instruments for both control and change. Festivals share this Janus-face with many other types of public rituals and ceremonies, and this is yet another explanation to the increase of public rituals during the last decades, and to the fact that so many types of actors make use of them for so many different reasons. First of all, festivals are instruments for control of musical and cultural resources, as well of the aesthetics, ethics, values, symbols, representations etc of the presented musics. Festival organisers thereby become controllers of political and ideological power. And as already noted, while formerly in the field of folk music knowers such as ethnomusicologists, folklorists, ethnologists, have been at the centre of such power, today it is the makers who have taken control over of much public performances of folk music

As instruments of social and cultural change festivals transmit and transfer knowledge, technology, mediate between individuals, groups and cultures. Often festivals are projected as instances of “time-out”, where people may take part in something different, new and more intense than ordinary everyday life in mainstream society. This makes festivals important potential spaces of intercultural interaction, where one can come to understand what one does not understand. New things can be born and tried out, that may eventually challenge or threaten precisely those aesthetics, ethics, values, symbols, representations that are displayed and controlled.

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<sup>6</sup> Lecture at Gotland University, Visby, autumn 1999

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