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Allison Brooks-Conrad

Lawrence University, abrooks.conrad@gmail.com

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**Sounds of the Singing Revolution: Alo Mattiisen, Popular Music,
and the Estonian Independence Movement, 1987-1991**

Allison Brooks-Conrad
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Musicology
Advisor: Professor Erica Scheinberg

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Upon arriving in the Estonian capital Tallinn, by ferry from Helsinki, Finland, passengers may first notice the tall, pointed spires in Old Town, the traditional, Eastern Orthodox onion domes on Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, or the small clusters of high rise buildings, some of which are unmistakably Soviet in their design. As the ferry pulls into Tallinn Bay, an enormous grey and white band shell, emerging between the hills to the southwest, soon comes into view. Though not part of the iconic Old Town skyline, the band shell and surrounding festival grounds played an arguably more important role in developing Estonian identity. Throughout the summer of 1988, hundreds of thousands of Estonians gathered at these grounds, usually reserved for music festivals, to listen to political speakers, sing Estonian songs, and peacefully protest their homeland's status as a Soviet state.¹ At one particular event on September 11, 1988, called Eestimaa Laul 1988, over 300,000 Estonians congregated to hear speakers from political groups like the Estonian Popular Front and the Estonian Heritage society and to listen to performances by prominent Estonian musicians.² The festival included one particularly electrifying performance of a set of three songs by Estonian composer Alo Mattiisen, his band In Spe, and popular Estonian singer Ivo Linna, accompanied by 300,000 audience members singing along.³

¹ Walter Clemens, Jr. *Baltic Independence and Russian Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 111.

² Ibid.; Hank Johnston and Aili Aareleid-Tart, "Generations, Microcohorts, and Long-Term Mobilization: The Estonian National Movement, 1940-1991," *Sociological Perspectives* 43, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 690, JSTOR.

³ "Eestimaa Laul 1988," video, 2:17:22, July 8, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uy6Trbfv4tc>. Originally released as *Eestimaa Laul 1988*, directed by Toomas Lepp (1988, Tallinn: Eesti Infofilm and LunaVista Productions, 2008), DVD. This video provides over 3 hours of minimally edited

Since the introduction of *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies three years earlier, Estonia had led the way as the Baltic states each sought a path to independence from the Soviet Union.⁴ While all three Baltic states counted music as part of their cultural identities, as well as one of their organizing tools during their respective struggles for independence, Estonia was the first to use music in testing the limits of *glasnost* in 1987, which I will discuss in more detail later in this paper.⁵ The cultural elite who constructed Estonia's nationalism in the mid-19th century had emphasized the role music would play in their nation, forging a direct link between Estonian nationalism and music; over a century later, faced with Soviet oppression, Estonians relied on music to carry their message. Perhaps related to the special role music played in the Estonian sense of nationalism was the state's open attitude towards popular music during the 1980s, which allowed for an Estonian popular music scene full of experimental styles, new interpretations of Western music, and musical activism. Composer Alo Mattiisen emerged as one of the most influential members of the Estonian music scene in the 1980s, not only by defining Estonian popular music as being political and activist, but also by incorporating experimental reinterpretations of larger Western popular music traditions. Ultimately, we can use

footage of Eestimaa Laul 1988. There are very few published descriptions of this particular event, so this video serves as a valuable source for understanding the format and function of Eestimaa Laul 1988. More importantly, though, the dramatic image of 300,000 Estonians singing together is better captured through video than written sources, though I imagine that neither truly compares to actually experiencing the event.

⁴ Clemens, *Baltic Independence and Russian Empire*, 74-75. Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies, introduced in 1985, proposed economic reforms (*perestroika*), accompanied by new, more lenient policies regarding free speech (*glasnost*).

⁵ Guntis Šmidchens, *The Power of Song: Nonviolent National Culture in the Baltic Singing Revolution* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 237-238.

Alo Mattiisen's contributions to the Estonian music scene of the 1980s as a framework for interpreting the various musical influences shaping Estonian music during that period, music that ultimately played a vital role in the country's struggle for independence at the end of the decade.

In describing Mattiisen's active role in the Estonian independence movement, I analyze a collection of songs he wrote and premiered in 1988, called the *Five Fatherland Songs*. In many ways, the songs themselves served as a catalyst for revolution and as a unifying force that brought Estonians together to protest for independence. Despite the songs' incredible popularity in Estonia, no published musicological analysis of the *Fatherland* songs—analysis that describes the way the music sounds, the broader musical trends or styles it evokes, or the way the audience might have understood it—exists in English. In order to fully understand the role these songs played in the Estonian independence movement, as well as their place in the broader context of popular music from the late 1980s, and to suggest their significance to an Estonian audience, I provide such an analysis in this paper.



Figure 1. Estonia and surrounding countries. (Wikimedia Commons contributors. "File: Baltic Sea map.png." Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. Accessed April 22, 2018. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Baltic_Sea_map.png&oldid=122117203.](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Baltic_Sea_map.png&oldid=122117203))

A Brief History of Estonian Nationalism and Music

Since the Middle Ages, Estonia has been a nation or territory under occupation by a foreign power. For centuries, various nations have controlled the region, preventing native Estonians from living autonomously.⁶ In the 19th century, Estonia was under Russian control and Germans in the region (from previous occupations) held all the economic and political power.⁷ The Estonian National Awakening began to emerge against this backdrop. This 19th-century swell of

⁶ Vello A. Pettai, "Estonia," in *Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania: Country Studies*, ed. Walter R. Iwaskiw (Washington: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1996), 12-14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

nationalism was an effort on the part of cultural elites to define Estonian nationalism through the music, poetry, and literature they created. Among the poets who inspired nationalist sentiment with their work are Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, who, in 1857, wrote the country's first epic poem, *Kalevipoeg*, depicting an ancient mythological Estonian leader; and Lydia Koidula, Estonia's first female poet, whose Romantic and nationalist poetry serves as the text for many of Estonia's national songs.⁸

Estonia also has a rich folk music tradition, which likely inspired members of this cultural awakening to emphasize music as a form of national expression. For example, Estonian song anthologies and hymnals written in Estonian were published in the 1840s; choirs exclusively for ethnic Estonians were founded in the same decade.⁹ The first Estonian song festival focused on mass singing, or *Laulupidu*, took place in 1869, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the emancipation of Estonian serfs.¹⁰ *Laulupidu* have occurred continuously since 1869, even during Soviet occupation. The festivals involve tens of thousands of participants from around the country who gather at the festival grounds in Tallinn to sing nationalist songs together. Estonian composers responded to these new musical cultural institutions, like choirs and song festivals, by writing nationalist songs about their newly found Estonian pride.¹¹

⁸ Ibid., 36-37.

⁹ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 70.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ A note about Estonian identity: Perhaps the clearest indication of Estonian identity or ethnicity is language. Estonian is a difficult, singular language and is unrelated to Lithuanian, Latvian, or Russian. The 19th-century Estonian National Awakening, during which cultural elite Estonians constructed their vision for

In the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Estonia, which was under Russian control at the time, began to formally organize for independence, becoming independent in 1919.¹² Estonia existed as an independent nation for only 20 years, before being secretly ceded to the Soviet Union as part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939.¹³ Estonia continued to exist under Soviet occupation, as the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, subjected to intense Russification efforts, until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. After the introduction of *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies in 1985, Estonians soon began to test just how far these new policies of political openness extended. After successfully protesting Soviet plans to strip mine in Estonia, environmentalists, scientists, and even politicians began to think about protesting with a bigger goal in mind: regaining their independence.¹⁴

The movement for independence, which became known as the Singing Revolution, didn't gain momentum until May 14, 1988, at a popular Estonian

Estonian nationalism, also marked the emergence of Estonian-language publications. During the Soviet occupation, language furthered the divide between Estonians and Russians, since Russians who relocated to Estonia as part of Russification efforts rarely learned the Estonian language. Furthermore, non-Russian immigrants (people from other Soviet states) who moved to Estonia typically didn't learn the language, even if they stayed in the country, creating even more of a distinction between ethnic Estonians and everyone else, not merely an "occupied" and "occupier" dichotomy. The state's official language was Russian until 1988, when the Estonian parliament voted to change the official language to Estonian. In other words, it seems as though people who spoke or knew Estonian were Estonian. See Clemens, *Baltic Independence and Russian Empire*, 17, 105, 131, 151.

¹² Pettai, "Estonia," 15-16.

¹³ Romuald Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 15-16. The secret Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, signed in 1939, established Nazi German and Soviet spheres of influence in Eastern Europe. As a result, Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union without the nation's knowledge or consent.

¹⁴ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 237.

summer music festival, Tartu Music Days, where Alo Mattiisen, his band In Spe, and singer Ivo Linna premiered a collection of five nationalist songs called the *Five Fatherland Songs*.¹⁵ The songs, which celebrated Estonian national pride, were a great success, and the next day of the festival, audience members returned with old Estonian flags, that they hadn't flown since Estonia's brief era of independence fifty years earlier.¹⁶ Because the songs were so well received, Mattiisen and his group performed again in the capital city of Tallinn, a few weeks later, to even larger crowds proudly displaying Estonian flags. When police tried to intervene, the crowd moved, en masse, to the national festival grounds on the outskirts of Tallinn and joined together in song.¹⁷



Figure 2. The national song festival grounds in Tallinn, Estonia in October, 2016. Photo by Allison Brooks-Conrad.

Following the success of what became an impromptu, nighttime song festival that spanned three nights, Estonians began to work quickly to take advantage of the

¹⁵ Ibid., 210.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 209.

new momentum of their movement. They began mobilizing into political parties, forming a parliament, and making demands of the Soviet government.¹⁸ The song festival grounds in Tallinn became an informal meeting place and symbol of the revolution, hosting numerous concerts and rallies to gather support and inspire the masses to become involved.¹⁹ Tensions between the Soviets and Estonians peaked in 1991, when Soviet tanks rolled into Estonia after Estonia officially declared independence in the wake of the failed coup in Moscow aimed at removing Gorbachev from power.²⁰ With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Estonia finally gained its independence, without a single shot fired, unlike events that led to independence in the neighboring Baltic states.²¹ Many scholars attribute Estonia's entirely peaceful revolution to the country's cultural and political unity, bolstered by their national singing tradition. By rallying around song, rather than splitting into political factions, Estonians were able to face Soviet forces as a united front.

¹⁸ Clemens, *Baltic Independence and Russian Empire*, 133.

¹⁹ Warren Waren, "Theories of the Singing Revolution: An Historical Analysis of the Role of Music in the Estonian Independence Movement," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 43, no. 2 (December 2012): 447, JSTOR.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 445-446.

²¹ The Latvian and Lithuanian independence movements were similarly driven by music, but with less success. Unlike in Estonia, both Latvia and Lithuania suffered casualties despite their attempts at musical, non-violent protest (Pettai, "Estonia," 11). Without doing an in-depth, comparative study, however, it is difficult to know why the Estonian independence movement was the only one without violence and casualties. In Latvia, the rock opera *Lāčplēsis*, or *Bearslayer*, is generally credited with sparking revolution in the same way the *Fatherland* songs did in Estonia (Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 246). In Lithuania, the band Antis (understood to mean "Anti-S" or "against-Soviet") wrote and performed music that celebrated Lithuanian nationalism and formed the basis for their revolution (Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 235). One distinguishing factor between the revolutions in Latvia and Lithuania and the revolution in Estonia, besides the loss of life, is the lack of a central meeting place. While so much of Estonia's movement unfolded at the song festival grounds, a connection to a physical place doesn't seem to have factored as prominently in either the Latvian or Lithuanian movements.

Whenever violence seemed imminent, large groups of peaceful and dedicated Estonians continually overwhelmed Soviet troops and Soviet sympathizers, simply by outnumbering them.²²

Estonian Popular Music in the 1980s

Before writing some of the most important songs of the revolution, Alo Mattiisen was just one of the many artists shaping the 1980s Estonian popular music scene. In many respects, this music scene was characteristic of the broader music scene in the Soviet Union during that era. Most popular music in the Soviet Union existed underground, meaning music was created and distributed outside of the legal, state-run music production network, and was therefore not subjected to the state's content and style requirements.²³ Heavily influenced by Western musical styles and idioms, Soviet underground scenes grew and developed into a vibrant collection of musicians and genres, despite the environment of censorship.²⁴ The popular music that was state approved was released through the Soviet Union's giant recording production company, Melodiya. State-sanctioned music, also called

²² A famous instance of this tactic occurred on May 15, 1990, when, in retaliation to the Estonian declaration of independence on May 8, about 2,000 pro-Soviet demonstrators (mostly Russians living in Estonia) surrounded Toompea Castle, which housed the Estonian Parliament (a body that had formed in an attempt to legitimize their independence movement). Fearing violence, or even a coup d'état, the parliament members inside Toompea Castle broadcast a message over the radio, calling upon the Estonian people for help. The thousands who showed up formed a human barricade to block the Russian protestors, overwhelming them. They then formed "a corridor" allowing the surrounded pro-Soviet protestors to peacefully exit (Clemens, *Baltic Independence and Russian Empire*, 192).

²³ Thomas Cushman, *Notes from Underground: Rock Music Counterculture in Russia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), xi.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

“official” or “commercial,” was generally considered by the public as “pop” music; underground music, (“unofficial” and “noncommercial”) was considered as “rock” music.²⁵ Because their music was “noncommercial” or not for sale, rock musicians in the Soviet underground scene constructed a narrative where their music was not only more authentic than official music, but a form of artistic poetry.²⁶

However, unlike the “official” and “unofficial” music model in most of the Soviet Union, Estonia’s popular music scene was notably more progressive, not only in terms of what was considered “unofficial” music, but also with respect to the “official” music that was recorded and distributed through Melodiya Estonia.²⁷ In fact, Western musical styles often found their way into the Soviet Union and the underground scene through Estonia.²⁸ Due to their proximity to Finland, Estonians listened to Finnish radio and learned about Western musical trends.²⁹ By the late

²⁵ Alexandra Grabarchuk, “Close to the Edge: Soviet Progressive Rock and Genre Formation,” Academia, accessed April 23, 2018, http://www.academia.edu/26548581/CLOSE_TO_THE_EDGE_SOVIET_PROGRESSIVE_ROCK_AND_GENRE_FORMATION. A version of this article was published in *Prog Rock in Europe: Overview of a Persistent Musical Style*, ed. Philippe Gonin (Dijon: Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2016); See also Cushman, *Notes from Underground*, 124. Cushman, quoting Artemy Troitsky, explains that “Pop music is considered to be music which ‘is created with the sober calculation...of a commercial reward’” (128).

²⁶ Cushman, *Notes from Underground* 104. Soviet rock was also decidedly apolitical. Cushman describes how the only instances of Soviet underground rock musicians writing political music was when they wrote music intending to “fight the state by encasing the state in a more general critique of the existence which the state itself had wrought” (110).

²⁷ It seems that in Estonia, the “unofficial” music scene was not an underground scene for music writing and production, but rather can be understood as Western music that was not distributed by Melodiya Estonia.

²⁸ Sabrina Petra Ramet, Sergei Zamascikov, and Robert Bird, “The Soviet Rock Scene,” in *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 199.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 200.

1980s, Estonians were listening to both unofficial Western bands and official Estonian bands. Sabrina Petra Ramet, in an essay on Soviet Rock, describes a poll of musical tastes, taken in Estonia in 1987. Included in the top ten bands among the Estonians polled were ELO (Electric Light Orchestra), ABBA, and the Beatles.³⁰ Ivo Linna's Rock Hotel, Rein Rannap's Ruja, and Karavan, each of them Melodiya-sponsored Estonian groups, also made the list.³¹ Finnish radio charts from the era also offer a glimpse of what music Estonians were picking up from across the Baltic sea. Charts from 1988 point to a fairly equal mix of prominent Finnish musicians and groups from Western Europe and the US, such as Kylie Minogue, Michael Jackson, and Bananarama.³² The most popular group (or the group that enjoyed the most weeks with the highest selling single in Finland) is British duo Pet Shop Boys, known for their danceable, synth pop music style.³³

In addition to the "unofficial" Western music scene, the relatively open attitude towards music in Estonia, especially from Melodiya Estonia, the autonomous Estonian branch of the Soviet state-run record company, likely also fostered an "official" musical scene that was directly influenced by Western styles.³⁴ While its corresponding label in Russia, Melodiya Moscow, was known for releasing

³⁰ Ibid., 199. It's possible that some Estonians were listening to black market recordings by these artists, but they were probably also hearing their music broadcast on Finnish radio.

³¹ Ibid.

³² "List of number-one singles of 1988 (Finland)," Wikipedia, last modified December 10, 2014, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_number-one_singles_of_1988_\(Finland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_number-one_singles_of_1988_(Finland)). Originally published in Jake Nyman, *Suomi soi 4: Suuri suomalainen listakirja* (Helsinki: Tammi, 2005), 18.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Timothy W. Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 214-215.

state-approved music that met the strict standards of state-determined “taste culture,” Melodiya Estonia took a more liberal approach.³⁵ In the early 1980s, the label released music by a variety of groups representing a variety of genres, such as Karavan, a soft-rock group; the rockabilly-style cover band Rock Hotel, fronted by Ivo Linna, the charismatic, popular Estonian singer; and the first release from Erkki-Sven Tüür’s experimental prog rock group, In Spe.³⁶ Pop music compilations released by Melodiya Estonia during the 1980s also indicate some of the diversity and variety in the “official” music scene, illustrating some of the ways that Western musical styles were heard and incorporated by Estonian artists. In studying “Eesti Pop” music compilations from the 1980s, four larger musical trends seem to emerge: a traditional, western-sounding 1980s pop style, characterized by synthesizers, keyboards, and a danceable beat; a 1970s light-rock style, reminiscent of Western groups like Boston and the Eagles; a rock-and-roll or rockabilly style, inspired by early British and American popular music; and a prog rock-like style, marked by long, experimental, instrumental tracks.³⁷

³⁵ Cushman, *Notes from Underground*, 38. Though Estonia existed as the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, a member state of the Soviet Union, the Estonian branch of Melodiya was apparently granted quite a bit of autonomy. Melodiya operated differently in each member state. For example, Melodiya Belarus only approved artists who performed in Russian and had much stricter censorship and regulations than Melodiya Estonia. See Maria Paula Survilla, “Rock Music in Belarus,” in *Rocking the State*, ed. Ramet, 221.

³⁶ Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc*, 215. Eventually, Alo Mattiisen would take over from Erkki-Sven Tüür to lead In Spe after Tüür left to study composition. Tüür is now a frequently commissioned and performed avant-garde composer. See “Biography,” Erkki-Sven Tüür, accessed April 15, 2018, <https://www.erkkisven.com/cv>.

³⁷ *Eesti Pop VII*, various artists, Melodiya C60 24663 009, 1986, Spotify; *Eesti Pop X*, various artists, Melodiya C60 28303 003, 1989, Spotify.

Despite Melodiya Estonia's open attitude towards musical expression and the influx of Western music entering the country through Finland, there were still some limitations on Estonian musical messages and expression. The Estonian punk scene, for example, had a large following and was famous for sarcastic, thinly veiled critiques of Moscow. Because Estonian punk was more openly critical of the Soviet government, punk artists and punk concerts were often the target of Soviet censors and law enforcement, despite the fact many of these bands were "official" Melodiya groups.³⁸ Perhaps the most storied example of this contradiction between "official" music and state censorship occurred in 1980, when a concert by Propeller, a young punk band, was abruptly cancelled a few minutes after it started.³⁹ The audience, upset about the cancellation, retaliated by throwing vegetables at the authorities, who construed the event as a violent riot and banned Propeller and their music as punishment.⁴⁰ While other groups, such as In Spe, the prog rock group Alo Mattiisen would eventually lead, were taking full advantage of Estonia's largely open-minded musical scene and developing experimental musical styles that incorporated Western trends, they were likely still conscious of the underlying, omnipresent threat of Soviet censorship.

Estonian Prog Rock and Mattiisen's In Spe

Progressive rock, or prog rock, is a complex, multi-faceted genre that can be difficult to define. Ethnomusicologist Jay Keister and musicologist Jeremy Smith

³⁸ Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc*, 216.

³⁹ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 221.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 221-222.

offer one definition, emphasizing how prog rock relies on the “introduc[tion of] formal structures and instrumentation of classical music, jazz, and world music into rock,” resulting in LP albums that are “complex, multi-movement works.”⁴¹ Furthermore, according to musicologist John Palmer’s definition, prog rock compositions are “slightly longer tracks,” and include “experimentation with studio technology, and incorporation of ‘unusual’ instruments.”⁴² Prog rock groups have often included traditional rock band instrumentation, like guitar, bass, keyboard, and drums, but also highlighted synthesizers and nontraditional rock instruments. Additionally, because prog rock rejects traditional popular music standards for length, harmony, or instrumentation, the genre offers the artist a vast space for experimentation and the listener an opportunity to reflect and listen introspectively.⁴³ The characteristics described by Palmer, Keister, and Smith do not necessarily describe all prog rock groups. In an attempt to offer more encompassing definitions, musicologist Chris Anderton suggests that compositions that incorporate diverse instrumentation and include long, virtuosic, heavily instrumental tracks be reserved for the “symphonic” prog rock subgenre.⁴⁴

Born in many ways out of the 19th-century Romanticism movement in art, literature, and music, prog rock (specifically “symphonic” prog rock) is envisioned by many of its artists as a genre that places emphasis on artistic expression, musical

⁴¹ Jay Keister and Jeremy L. Smith, “Musical Ambition, Cultural Accreditation and the Nasty Side of Progressive Rock,” *Popular Music* 27, no. 3 (October 2008), 433, JSTOR.

⁴² John Palmer, “Yes, ‘Awaken,’ and the Progressive Rock Style,” *Popular Music* 20, no. 2 (May 2001), 243, JSTOR.

⁴³ Chris Anderton, “A many-headed beast: progressive rock as European meta-genre,” *Popular Music* 29, no. 3 (October 2010): 420, JSTOR.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 419.

legacy, the role of the individual, and other traditional Romantic ideals.⁴⁵ Describing “symphonic” prog rock, musicologist John Palmer also notes that “the importance, and often primacy, of instrumentation is one of the defining characteristics of progressive rock.”⁴⁶ He goes on to explain that “the incorporation of thematically important instrumental passages into songs increased the length of tracks to unforeseen proportions,” and that these long tracks resulted in “the challenge to create both variety and unity in extended...tracks.”⁴⁷ Some prog rock groups responded to this challenge by producing concept albums, or albums that functioned as a self-contained narrative through the collection of tracks on the LP. Some concept albums, like Jethro Tull’s *Thick as a Brick* (1972) are one single track for the full duration of the album. Other concept albums are comprised of a series of related tracks that are long enough to convey a narrative and offer the opportunity for introspective listening, but too long for radio play, like King Crimson’s *In the Court of the Crimson King* (1969), Yes’ *Fragile* (1971), or Genesis’ *Selling England by the Pound* (1973).

One common trait of “symphonic” prog rock is the incorporation of classical, concert-hall music. One extreme example is “Cans and Brahms,” a track from prog rock group Yes’ album *Fragile* (1971). “Cans and Brahms” is simply an excerpt of the third movement from Brahms’ Symphony No. 4 performed on a synthesizer. Similarly, an album by Emerson, Lake, and Palmer, another prog rock group, is the band’s reinterpretation and retelling of Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an*

⁴⁵ Ibid., 424.

⁴⁶ Palmer, “Yes, ‘Awaken’, and the progressive rock style,” 245.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Exhibition, following the movements and structure of the original version. In some movements, the group simply performs an arrangement of the original music, while other movements are complete departure from the original.⁴⁸ Other groups developed their own methods for incorporating other musical styles and genres into their own unique brand of prog rock.

Prog rock originated in Great Britain in the late 1960s; groups like King Crimson, Yes, Jethro Tull, and Genesis were all part of the initial English tradition. In an attempt to discuss variations of prog rock that differ from the English tradition, Anderton characterizes subgenres by geographic region. His discussion of Italian and French-Belgian traditions most closely mirror the traditions in Estonian prog rock. Italian prog rock, according to Anderton, often combines classical music traditions with rock, usually by composing in traditional classical or baroque forms, like New Trolls' 1971 album, *Concerto Grosso per I New Trolls*.⁴⁹ Similarly, French and Belgian prog rock groups often combine traditional components of classical ensembles, such as string and woodwind sections, with continuously present electric bass.⁵⁰

In the Soviet Union, prog rock existed in a grey area between "official" and "unofficial" music. Musicologist Alexandra Grabarchuk argues that the Soviet genre or style *estrada* functions as a sort of Soviet prog rock because it fostered a sense of

⁴⁸ For more on Emerson, Lake, and Palmer's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, see Eric Hung, "Hearing Emerson, Lake, and Palmer Anew: Progressive Rock as 'Music of Attractions,'" *Current Musicology*, no. 79/80 (2005): 245-259, <https://currentmusicology.columbia.edu/article/hearing-emerson-lake-and-palmer-anew-progressive-rock-as-music-of-attractions>.

⁴⁹ Anderton, "A many-headed beast," 427.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 429.

musical experimentalism that resulted in concept albums, experimental instrumentation, and long tracks.⁵¹ However, as Thomas Cushman points out, *estrada* was “official” music and in some circles, synonymous with commercialized music.⁵² The general understanding, as discussed in the previous section, was that “official” music was commercial and inauthentic, as opposed to “unofficial” music, which was supposedly too deeply felt, too authentically emotional and introspective, and too poetic for a commercial market. However, accepting Grabarchuk’s definition of *estrada* as a form of Soviet prog rock, the genre meets requirements for both sides of the Soviet musical dichotomy. While *estrada* was “official” music that was recognized and supported by the state, as a genre it shared more characteristics with “unofficial” music. *Estrada* albums were often concept albums (meaning they included long tracks intended for contemplative listening), and *estrada* tracks were often experimental in instrumentation and musical techniques, suggesting the genre’s similarities to “unofficial” underground music and explaining why it might have seemed inappropriate for the “official” music commercial market.

Beyond offering an intriguing example of the malleable genre divisions between “official” and “unofficial” music, *estrada* also serves as a possible explanation for why Melodiya Estonia released prog rock albums such as In Spe’s *Typewriter Concerto in D Major*. Prog rock, which isn’t designed for radio broadcast, probably wouldn’t have been among the types of music Estonians heard when tuning in to Finnish radio. But because it was “official” music, *estrada* would have

⁵¹ Grabarchuk, “Close to the Edge.”

⁵² Cushman, *Notes from Underground*, 127.

been easily accessible to Estonian musicians like Mattiisen, influencing their ideas about experimental, introspective music.



Figure 3. A young Alo Mattiisen at the piano, 1978. Photo by Aivar Mihkelson. Courtesy of Jõgeva Music School, Jõgeva, Estonia.

Mattiisen's contributions to the Estonian prog rock scene were with the prog rock group In Spe; he would eventually collaborate with them again when writing the *Five Fatherland Songs*. In Spe was originally founded by Erkki-Sven Tüür, who envisioned the group as an Estonian version of classic prog groups like Yes, King Crimson, and Genesis.⁵³ After Tüür left In Spe in the early 1980s, a young Mattiisen took over the group's artistic direction, and *Typewriter Concerto in D Major* (1985) was their first release with him.⁵⁴ Recalling Anderton's geographic prog rock subgenres, *Typewriter Concerto in D Major* seems especially reminiscent of both the

⁵³ Erkki-Sven Tüür, "Biography."

⁵⁴ "In Spe," Symphonic Prog, Prog Archives, accessed September 27, 2017, <http://www.progarchives.com/artist.asp?id=166>. *Typewriter Concerto* was In Spe's second release. The album doesn't sound particularly like the groups Tüür hoped to emulate, likely because Mattiisen had a different artistic vision for the group.

Italian and Franco-Belgian styles. Perhaps this album's most obvious connection to the Italian prog rock tradition is title track's classical form. The concerto itself is in four movements (titled *Allegro Vivace*, *Largo*, *Allegro*, and *Finale*), presenting an interesting hybrid of traditional form and nontraditional instrumentation. In addition to the typical rock instruments (guitar, electric bass, percussion), Mattiisen includes various synthesizers, often imitating a string section. The most atypical instrument, of course, is the typewriter, which functions as the virtuosic soloist. The typewriter's part is sometimes in dialogue with the "accompaniment" (synth, bass, drums), but sometimes, such as in the second movement, the typewriter simply provides dramatic flourishes, similar to an ornamented harpsichord realization. Since the typewriter can't be melodic, instruments of the "orchestra" often provide the melody, while the typewriter functions percussively. The third movement includes a cadenza-like section, where the typewriter performer makes full use of all the possible sound effects a typewriter is capable of creating. The entire work is in four movements, and concludes with a final section that revisits earlier material, reminiscent of a 19th-century cyclic symphony, or more contemporaneously, like a rock opera.⁵⁵

Other tracks on the album are more reminiscent of Anderton's French-Belgian hybrid ensemble style, but are also written in traditional classical forms. For example, *Rondo Of The Broken Arm*, the album's sixth track, is closely related to *Typewriter Concerto in D Major*, both through similarities in timbre and style, but also because the track is another example of nontraditional instrumentation (like

⁵⁵ On rock operas, see Jessica Sternfeld, *The Megamusical* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2006), 27.

synthesizers) in a traditional musical form (in this case, a rondo).⁵⁶ Another intriguing track on the album is the final track, titled *Departure*. While In Spe doesn't have a string section, in *Departure*, the synthesizers are reminiscent of one. This track in particular recalls Estonian composer Arvo Pärt's 1977 composition, *Cantus In Memoriam Benjamin Britten*, due to the seemingly nebulous form and the synthesizer's effective mimicking of the sweeping, yet static nature of the strings in the Pärt composition. It is unknown whether Mattiisen, in composing *Departure*, was intentionally echoing the most famous Estonian composer or if he was merely drawing on similar musical idioms.

The remaining tracks on the album also seem to exist in the same sonic world as *Departure*, where synthesized strings contribute to a contemplative, otherworldly sound. The album arguably represents the joining of two different prog rock veins: the rhythmic, driven, experimental style from *Typewriter Concerto* and *Rondo*, and the vast, introspective, Pärt-esque style from tracks like *Departure* or the fifth track, *Feeling of Eternity*. Perhaps a hallmark of his compositional approach, Mattiisen draws from multiple composing styles in *Typewriter Concerto in D Major*, exemplifying his mastery of so many disparate musical idioms. Later in this paper I will discuss how Mattiisen incorporates similarly diverse musical idioms in writing the *Five Fatherland Songs*. *Typewriter Concerto* was one of the only releases by Mattiisen and In Spe before the *Five Fatherland Songs* in 1988; it's unclear how active the group was in the interim, especially given the other projects Mattiisen was involved in.

⁵⁶ It is unclear what the "broken arm" in the track's title refers to.

Estonian Political Music After *Perestroika*

With the introduction of Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* initiative in the 1985 and its accompanying *glasnost* policy that reformed the Communist party and allowed for member nations to be both somewhat more vocal about policy and involved in domestic politics, Estonians began their first steps toward independence.⁵⁷ The policies, which allowed for some free speech and freedom of expression, were initially designed to help modernize the Soviet economy by creating more autonomous member states in the Union.⁵⁸ Musical groups throughout the Soviet Union responded to *glasnost* and *perestroika* differently. In Russia, the introduction and implementation of these new programs forced musicians to emerge from the underground, into a musical market that they had little experience with.⁵⁹ Similarly, many were skeptical of this supposed "openness," and did not immediately know the extent to which they could exercise these new artistic freedoms.⁶⁰

However, in Estonia, perhaps thanks to the already liberal-minded musical scene, many musical groups continued to flourish. As mentioned earlier, the first test of the new *glasnost* policies occurred in 1987, when Soviet leaders proposed strip-mining phosphorus in northeastern Estonia. Because the environment presented a serious but still (at that time) politically neutral issue for protest, Estonians saw the strip-mining proposal as an opportunity to test the extent of their

⁵⁷ Clemens, *Baltic Independence and Russian Empire*, 75.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 321. Clemens goes so far as to say that "Glasnost did more for local nationalism than for economic reform" (*Baltic Independence and Russian Empire*, 321).

⁵⁹ Cushman, *Notes from Underground*, 219-220.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

new rights to free speech. Soviet leaders responded with moderation, and a compromise was reached. Historians date the beginning of the Estonian revolution to this environmental protest because, confident from their success, Estonians began seriously contemplating more political reforms.⁶¹

Given Moscow's new, somewhat relaxed position on political speech, Estonian musical groups that had previously been covertly critical of the state or politically involved could now do so openly. For example, the popular punk band Propeller, who had always seemed politically motivated to their audiences, became more overtly political in the *perestroika* era.⁶² In the years following *perestroika*, musical groups with more obvious or clear political messages became mainstream. For example, the punk band J.M.K.E. released their album, *Külmale Maale* in 1989, which included tracks like "Tere, Perestroika," or "Hello, Perestroika," where the group coupled sarcastic lyrics with driving punk guitar, openly expressing their disappointment with the current governmental system. What made this so different from earlier music by Propeller, for example, was that J.M.K.E. now referenced specific policies and practices by the government, when Propeller had resorted to metaphors to veil their attacks and performed vague, noncommittal lyrics.⁶³

For Mattiisen, this new musical openness fostered the perfect opportunity for an attempt at musical activism. In the wake of those early protests against Soviet strip-mining, Mattiisen wrote "Ei ole üksi ükski maa," or "Not a Single Land Is Alone"

⁶¹ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 237.

⁶² Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc*, 215-216.

⁶³ One popular Propeller song involved front man Urmas Alender simply yelling "No!" into the microphone for the entirety of the song. See Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc*, 215.

in 1987 and organized popular musicians throughout Estonia to come together to record it.⁶⁴ Clearly drawing on the success of two highly publicized collaborations that modeled celebrity activism, Band-Aid's "Do They Know It's Christmas" in 1984 and Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie's "We Are The World," from 1985, "Not a Single Land Is Alone" functioned like an Estonian version of the same model.⁶⁵ Each artist performing on the song represented a different region of Estonia, concluding with Virumaa, the site of the proposed strip-mining.⁶⁶ The song's lyrics described the importance of maintaining the land for the sake of the environment and the people living there. Baltic scholar Guntis Šmidchens offers the interpretation that, by using the Estonian suffix "-maa," which means land, but also connotes "fatherland" or "country," the song takes on additional nationalist meaning.⁶⁷ In literally bringing together representatives from each region to perform a song as a single musical group, it became a representation of the entire country uniting to protest unfair treatment by the Soviet government.

⁶⁴ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 237.

⁶⁵ After the initial success of the Band Aid collaboration in the United Kingdom in the 1980s, this musical activism genre has become widespread. Immediately following the release of USA for Africa's "We Are The World," the Canadian counterpart, Northern Lights, released a song to raise awareness about the same Ethiopian Famine crisis. The 1990s saw "Voices That Care," meant to boost morale during Operation Desert Storm. More recently, groups around the world have used the format in times of disaster, like musicians in Mali, protesting jihadist violence in their country, or the multiple songs released by groups of Native American musicians opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline. The genre has become such reliable response to crisis that it was even famously parodied on the American television show *30 Rock* (Season 3, Episode 22, titled "Kidney Now!," released May 14, 2009). Each song has been accompanied by a similar video, highlighting the diverse array of musicians and follows a similar musical form, including a repetitive, simple, and catchy chorus or refrain.

⁶⁶ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 237.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 237-238.

The song was released with an accompanying music video, where the connections between “Not a Single Land is Alone” and other musical activist collaborations are the most clear. Just like earlier examples, the video highlights each of the artists and their diverse vocal and musical styles. Similar to “We Are The World” (USA for Africa, 1985), the artists involved each represent archetypal popular music styles, like punk rock screamers, female pop divas, effortful and masculine rock stars, and smooth, soft rock ballad singers.⁶⁸ Following the format originally presented by the “Do They Know It’s Christmas” video (Band Aid, 1984), the video includes scenes from the studio, shots of the producers at work, and one or two musicians recording their part. There are a few images of the song’s subject, in this case the beautiful landscape in Virumaa. The video, like all other videos from this genre, ends with the obligatory scene of all the collaborating musicians finally appearing together to sing the final chorus of the song, a visual representation of their collaboration and unity, despite their musical diversity.

The melody is a departure for Mattiisen compared to his compositions for In Spe’s *Typewriter Concerto in D Major*, which helped establish him as a serious member of the Estonian music scene. Instead, the mellow, easy-to-sing, pop anthem style is strikingly similar to “We Are The World,” as both songs were from this new genre marked by artistic collaboration for a cause. The song was intended for live premiere at Tartu Music Days, a summer rock festival, but was leaked to Estonian

⁶⁸ “Ei ole üksi ükski maa,” Alo Mattiisen and various artists, video, 5:35, January 30, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r75WMX1WFgk>. There is no record of this track having been released commercially.

radio a few weeks before.⁶⁹ Soviet officials reacted to the obviously political nature of the song by banning it from state radio, but Estonians were still able to listen to the song on Finnish airwaves.⁷⁰ Since radio play was limited, its simple, catchy, anthemic melody was key to ensuring that the song was memorable. Although it's impossible to measure the impact of the song in the strip-mining protests, Estonians opposed to the mining were ultimately successful, and this smaller scaled movement offered a model for incorporating musical anthems in Estonian protests in the years to come.

Estonian Music and the Singing Revolution: Mattiisen's *Five Fatherland Songs*

In 1988, still energized by their defeat of the Soviet plans to strip mine in Virumaa, Estonians began to organize, mobilize, and explore just how far they could push the boundaries of the new *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies.⁷¹ In the wake of his success with "Not a Single Land is Alone," Mattiisen went further with his musical activism, pairing with poet Jüri Leesment to reinterpret and reimagine traditional 19th-century National Awakening poems and choral songs into a collection of rock songs, the *Five Fatherland Songs*, that could inspire the nation.⁷² Each of the *Fatherland* songs is based on a song from the 19th-century National Awakening and quotes the original song's music in some way. Guntis Šmidchens describes the way Mattiisen interweaves 19th-century music and art with

⁶⁹ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 237.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Johnston and Aareleid-Tart, "Generations, Microcohorts, and Long-Term Mobilization," 689.

⁷² Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 239.

contemporary compositions, creating a connection for Estonians between the 19th-century nationalist movement and the 1988 independence movement.⁷³ Mattiisen collaborated on the songs with Ivo Linna, famous for his work with Rock Hotel, a rockabilly-inspired ensemble that rose to fame by covering Western songs in Estonian, and with the vocal sextet Kiigelaulukuuik.⁷⁴ The *Fatherland* songs represent a stylistic departure for Linna, but Mattiisen insisted on collaborating with him because Linna was, according to Leesment, “Estonian-minded.”⁷⁵ The songs were premiered and performed throughout the summer of the 1988, during a surge of nationalist sentiment. This period was also marked by the emergence of various political factions, driven by different ideologies regarding the best way to mobilize.⁷⁶ The five songs served to inspire Estonians to unite and work together for independence, becoming a huge success, and the soundtrack to the Singing Revolution.

Though the *Five Fatherland Songs* were premiered live in 1988 at Tartu Music Days, I have analyzed versions from the 1990 commercial album release, *Mingem Üles Mägedele*, which borrows its title from one of the *Fatherland* songs. The album, which is essentially a concept album, includes an introduction track and a

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 392.

⁷⁵ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 255. Šmidchens quotes Leesment, who is quoted in Harri Rinne, *Laulev Revolutsioon: Eesti rokipõlvkonna ime*, trans. Sander Livak. (Tallinn: Varrak, 2008).

⁷⁶ Johnston and Aarelaid-Tart, “Generations, Microcohorts, and Long-Term Mobilization,” 689.

closing track that functions as a coda, in addition to the five songs.⁷⁷ Perhaps most striking to a listener hearing these songs today for the first time is how dated they sound, given that the ensemble relies heavily on synthesizers, percussion, and distorted electric guitar, typical of 1980s popular music. There are striking resemblances between the *Fatherland* songs and tracks by Bon Jovi, Elton John, Starship, and ABBA; this will be discussed in more detail below.

Perhaps the most salient context for understanding these songs is the prog rock scene from the 1970s and 1980s, from which Mattiisen emerged as a composer and songwriter. Compared to some of his releases with In Spe, such as *Typewriter Concerto in D Major*, Mattiisen's *Five Fatherland Songs* seem aimed at a much wider audience. Music theorist Kevin Holm-Hudson suggests a potential prog rock subgenre, "prog lite," as a mainstream genre that incorporates elements of prog rock compositions.⁷⁸ While Holm-Hudson almost disparages this watered-down prog rock as more palatable to the masses, this genre may serve as a helpful lens through which to consider the *Five Fatherland Songs*. Mattiisen incorporates aspects of traditional hard rock, like electric guitars and basses, paired with one or two prog rock-specific elements to create a prog-inspired genre.⁷⁹

The most commonly incorporated element of prog rock that Mattiisen borrows is a classical vocal style, characterized by vocalists singing in harmony. Other similar examples include the vocal introduction to "Carry On Wayward Son"

⁷⁷ One characteristic of the concept album is that it requires the listener to listen to the album tracks in order. Similarly, most public performances of the *Five Fatherland Songs* presented the songs in the same order they appear on the album.

⁷⁸ Kevin Holm-Hudson, "'Come Sail Away' and the Commodification of 'Prog Lite,'" *American Music* 23, no.3 (Autumn 2005): 377-378, JSTOR.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

(1976), by Kansas, where the vocals in the introduction helps isolate the introduction from the rest of the song.⁸⁰ Perhaps the most famous example of this choral style is Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" (1974), which incorporates operatic techniques in a wide variety of choral styles.⁸¹ The different choral techniques and quotations that Mattiisen includes in the *Fatherland* songs function differently than the choral sections in "Wayward Son" or "Bohemian Rhapsody." These earlier songs, however, set a precedent for including choral or vocal harmony sections in mainstream music, creating the tradition in which Mattiisen's compositions are rooted.

In what follows, I will analyze the *Five Fatherland Songs*, both in terms of how they may be understood in the context of preexisting popular music traditions and also in order to suggest how they might have been heard and understood by an Estonian audience in 1988. The text of each song is an important component to my analysis, so full text (in the original Estonian) and English translations of each of the *Fatherland* songs is included in the appendix. Scholars often mention the important role this collection of songs played in the Singing Revolution, and these songs are mentioned, along with Mattiisen, in most sources that discuss the revolution. However, no existing published scholarship describes the actual sounds of the music or the meaning this music would have held for the audience, both of which are necessary in order to fully understand how these songs might have impelled the revolution.

⁸⁰ Mitchell Morris, "Kansas and the Prophetic Tone," *American Music* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 20, JSTOR.

⁸¹ Ken McLeod, "Bohemian Rhapsodies: Operatic Influences on Rock Music," *Popular Music* 20, no. 2 (May 2001), 192-194, JSTOR.

“The Most Beautiful Songs” or “Kaanimad Laulud”

The first of the *Five Fatherland Songs*, “Kaanimad Laulud,” or “The Most Beautiful Songs” gets its name from a song originally composed by Friedrich August Saebelmann in 1880.⁸² The original song describes the way Estonians express national pride through song, illustrating the longstanding connection between Estonian nationalism and music. In Mattiisen’s version of the song, he opens by quoting the first verse from the Saebelmann composition:

I give to you the most beautiful songs, / Loved by my ancestors, dear
homeland! / My heart beats strongly in my chest / When I sing to you,
fatherland!⁸³

The quoted verse appears in the song exactly as it sounds in the original, as an *a capella* eight bar phrase, except Mattiisen pairs it with a drum beat on each beat, transforming the traditional choral song into an upbeat march. Then, as a military-style drumroll maintains the march feeling from earlier, the keyboard and flute echo a variation of the original choral melody. Pulsating guitars then indicate the transition to a more contemporary rock style.

Since the percussion and synthesizers, taking over from the choral introduction, quote the original composition, maintaining the atmosphere from the opening, it seems like the song will unfold much in the same vein as the positive and uplifting composition. When the verse, a vocal solo sung by Ivo Linna, finally emerges in A minor, it comes as a bit of a surprise. As the verse transitions to the

⁸² “Friedrich August Saebelmann,” Estonian Music Information Center, accessed November 1, 2017, <http://www.emic.ee/?sisu=heliloojad&mid=32&id=82&lang=est&action=view&method=teosed>.

⁸³ Translation from Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 240.

pre-chorus, though, the melody shifts, building energy. Perhaps mirroring the building anticipation as Estonians begin to mobilize towards independence, the electric guitar enters, coupled with harmonic intensification, before arriving at the chorus, suddenly uplifting in C major and with a fuller texture, thanks to the additional voices that join in.

The song's text quotes and reinterprets the text from the original song. For example, when the verse first begins in A minor, vocalist Ivo Linna, singing in a slow dotted rhythm, adopts a dark, mournful, and almost foreboding tone. The vocals, almost a quasi-whisper, seem at odds with the quotation from the original song. Mourning the short-lived Estonian nation from 70 years earlier, Linna sings

The most beautiful songs remained unsung, / Lost in endless slogans
and pledges and flags,⁸⁴

The text continues, highlighting the violence, economic practices, and inefficient infrastructure that had come to characterize the Soviet occupation.⁸⁵ As the chorus approaches, Linna's vocals sound intentionally effortful, as if he's working hard to control the sudden build in energy. At the chorus however, marked by a key change to the relative major, the mood seems to have shifted entirely. In an excited, declamatory style, Linna sings that

The most beautiful songs are still unsung, / And alienation is still
undefeated. / The torches that have never yet burned / Now all must
ignite at both ends.

⁸⁴ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 240. Šmidchens characterizes the recurring theme of "the most beautiful songs remained unsung" as national Estonian culture never being given the chance to fully emerge and develop, likely because Estonians' life as an independent nation was so short (239).

⁸⁵ Šmidchens' translation of the verse reads: "The most beautiful wishes were not fulfilled, / Lost in harmful senselessness and rubles and sloth" (*The Power of Song*, 240).

The earlier lament, that “the most beautiful songs remain unsung” because Estonian national culture was never fully developed before the country was occupied yet again in 1939, is reimagined as a triumphant challenge. “The most beautiful songs are still unsung,” and the challenges Estonia has faced for the last few decades are still very present, but as the hopeful, declamatory C major chorus asserts, now is the time for change.

Šmidchens claims that “The torches that have never yet burned / Now all must ignite at both ends” is a reference to the 19th-century Estonian heroic epic poem, *Kalevipoeg*.⁸⁶ In the poem, the hero, Kalevipoeg, used torches to show Estonians he was coming home.⁸⁷ Since these torches “have never yet burned,” Estonians shouldn’t wait for a mythical figure (or any other sort of miracle) to bring them to independence; instead, they need to bring about change themselves.⁸⁸ The energetic and uplifting music accompanying this metaphor ignites the listener, making revolution seem like an exciting and achievable goal. Operating as a triumphant call to action, the chorus exudes confidence that “the most beautiful songs” will eventually be sung.

Nowhere on the album is Mattiisen’s background in prog rock more evident than in the long instrumental solo following the second chorus. The music sounds just as it did after the first chorus, where the energy continued to build, suddenly

⁸⁶ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 239.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid. A later verse pointedly says “Whoever begged for freedom from above, / Feeble and pathetic is he. / Whoever quenched thirst, unmindful of danger, / Clears stones from the road!” further indicating that the message is meant to emphasize the importance of action from individuals, rather than waiting for some miracle (Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 240).

releasing before the verse. However, this time, the mood shifts immediately as the steady percussion slows and the music begins to feel suspended in time. The steady percussion, present throughout the entire song, is replaced by a much slower, sparser rhythmic pattern. The keyboard plays continuous broken chords, creating a vast, expansive feeling and functioning as a backdrop to a slow, improvisatory solo. After leaping to a higher register and sustaining, the electric guitar emerges, improvising on a similar motif. As the percussion begins to play faster rhythmic values, the solo becomes more melodic, before launching into an intense final build. The guitar seems to search for and revolve around the tonic before finally arriving back at C major, at which point the chorus begins again. Because this introspective instrumental solo begins immediately after the chorus and then ends immediately before a reprisal of the chorus, the solo functions as a moment suspended in time, perhaps intended to underscore the timelessness of the track and the associations with both the 19th-century movement and the current struggle for independence. The instrumental section sounds reminiscent of another In Spe song, "Vallis Mariae," from Mattiisen's debut album with In Spe, *Typewriter Concerto in D Major*, discussed earlier in this paper.

The chorus, because it is so different from rest of the song, combining the uplifting, positive atmosphere from the original composition with the instrumentation and timbre from the rest of the contemporary song, provides an example of yet another musical style. The chorus is reminiscent of a Europop style, including specific similarities to ABBA hits like "Dancing Queen" (1974), "SOS" (1975), and "Bang-A-Boomerang" (1975), such as the excited, youthful energy. More

specifically, though, both “The Most Beautiful Songs” and these particular ABBA tracks involve similar melodic contours and a similar vocal timbre, thanks in part to the backing vocal sextet on “The Most Beautiful Songs,” which sounds like some of the moments when all four members of ABBA sing in harmony. When looking more closely for similarities in instrumental timbre, perhaps Starship’s “We Built This City” (1985) serves as a useful comparison.⁸⁹

The most striking similarity between the two songs, though, is rhythmic. In his article discussing various rhythmic patterns that operate as hooks in 1980s popular music, music theorist Don Traut highlights a particular accent pattern hook in “We Built This City.”⁹⁰ The accent pattern, which Traut describes as a “<35>” pattern, involves syncopations that land on the third eighth-note of a common-time measure, dividing the measure into a group of three eighth-notes and five eighth-notes. In the chorus of “The Most Beautiful Songs,” the same accent pattern occurs, the syncopations emphasizing the melodic highpoint. Because Mattiisen included this particular syncopation pattern (“<35>”), which Traut argues occurs and operates as a hook in numerous hits from the 1980s, he was likely envisioning it as a hook, in an attempt to make the song memorable and catchy.⁹¹

⁸⁹ For more on Starship, the final incarnation of the group that was originally Jefferson Airplane, see Patrick Burke, “Tear Down the Walls: Jefferson Airplane, Race, and Revolutionary Rhetoric in 1960s Rock,” *Popular Music* 29, No. 1 (January 2010): 65, JSTOR.

⁹⁰ Don Traut, “‘Simply Irresistible’: recurring accent patterns as hooks in mainstream 1980s music,” *Popular Music* 24, No. 1 (January 2005): 63, JSTOR.

⁹¹ In the introduction for each verse, Mattiisen employs another one of the hooks Traut discusses, or “<333322>,” which occurs as a four bar phrase (Traut, “‘Simply Irresistible,’” 62).

“Go High up Atop the Hills” or “Mingem üles mägedele”

The second of the *Five Fatherland Songs*, “Mingem üles mägedele,” or “Go High up Atop the Hills,” is a rebuke of Russification efforts on the part of the Soviet government. The song draws from a poem and song of the same name; the poem, originally by Mihkel Veske, is a classic example of 19th-century nationalist poetry that emerged as part of Estonia’s National Awakening and the song, written by Karl August Hermann, is another traditional choral composition.⁹² This is one of the only tracks where Leesment is not credited, so it is likely that Mattiisen wrote the text himself. Šmidchens explains that the “Hills” in question in this song are three settlements or suburbs of Tallinn, products of Russification, built almost exclusively for Russian migrants, referenced in the first verse as “Musta, Õis, or Lasna Hill.”⁹³ Mattiisen juxtaposes the beautiful hills in the original song with these new hills, which have come to represent the enemy in the Estonian struggle for independence.

The song opens with an instrumental introduction that feels simultaneously stable *and* in continuous motion. The bass line is a series of leaps outlining the tonic triad, but because the harmony doesn’t really change, the bass is operating almost like a pedal, creating a sense of stasis before the verse begins. The music is percussive, with staccato chords and continuous backbeat, immediately creating a sense of combativeness. The synthesizer chords, often in pairs of two consecutive chords, recur as a motif throughout the song. Whether intentional or not, the song sounds remarkably similar to Bon Jovi’s “Livin’ On A Prayer” (1986), and even reminiscent of their “You Give Love A Bad Name” (1984).

⁹² Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 240.

⁹³ Ibid.

According to musicologist Robert Walser, Bon Jovi's music (especially "Livin' On A Prayer") is clearly influenced by heavy metal music, but also incorporates elements of rock and pop music, making it palatable to a wide audience.⁹⁴ Walser specifically points to "the emphasis on sustain, intensity, and power" as the distinctly metal aspects of Bon Jovi's music, some of which are reflected in "Go High up Atop the Hills."⁹⁵ The closest relationship is with the bass line, which is similarly active and follows a similar chord progression, one which fosters a sense of constant motion, but without any real direction. The synthesizers, constant percussion, and distorted guitars also have a similar timbre. Linna's loud, effortful vocals also closely mirror Bon Jovi's, imbuing the song with this sense of intense, hard work.

The bass line is very active during the verse, but as the song builds to the chorus, the bass switches to sustained tones, which ascend stepwise, seemingly resolving before leaping down a large interval, as if mimicking the act of "go[ing] high atop the hills" and "shout[ing] it loudly to the valley." Linna's vocal style is noticeably more strained and angry than in the previous song, as if he's taking the chorus text to heart in his performance:

Shout it loudly to the valley / With all your strength. / Shout it loudly
to the valley: / Lasna Hill must stop now! / Shout it loudly to the
valley: / Stop it now!⁹⁶

After each declaration to "Stop it now!," two chords in quick succession quickly kill the music, the ensuing silence echoing the "stop."

⁹⁴ Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 120-121.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁹⁶ Translation from Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 241-2.

In the final verse of the song, Mattiisen characterizes the Russian immigrants as “migrants,” representing the “other” and essentially, the enemy.⁹⁷ The last verse, rather than focusing on the influx of Russians as a government policy (as in the earlier verses, where Russification is discussed in abstract terms, merely as a force “wounding” the “spirit” of Estonians), the text is a more pointed critique of the Russians themselves. “Look, it’s all completely foreign— / Is this really home to you?” interrogates the text, addressing Russians. “Through the dim and drafty streets, / the migrant wanders aimlessly. / Look into his empty eyes, / He doesn’t feel or know or see.” The real danger, it seems, is not that Russians are building drab suburbs or dominating the Estonian economy, but that they lack the same connection to the land that is inherent in all ethnic Estonians. Most expressions of Estonian nationalism are deeply rooted in nature imagery and also describe what it means to be Estonian. While perhaps unnecessary for such a homogenous culture and country, most expressions of Estonian nationalism aren’t exclusionary, and don’t emphasize what makes someone not Estonian, or what excludes them from being Estonian. In this context, “Go High up Atop the Hills” is a departure from other Estonian nationalist music, but perhaps it also indicates the frustration and anger Estonians felt, especially after almost 50 years of Soviet occupation.⁹⁸

Perhaps the most fascinating part of the song is when the percussive, hectic music seems to clear and settle, allowing for a brief choral interlude. With angelic

⁹⁷ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 241.

⁹⁸ Šmidchens also suggests that, in the wake of the successful anti-strip mining campaign in 1987 (with “Not a Single Land is Alone”), Estonians were eager for more musical political activism, so it’s possible Mattiisen envisioned this song as a way to directly protest Russification policy (*The Power of Song*, 240-241).

voices, the Estonian Chamber Choir sings a verse from the original song, “Ilus oled, isamaa” by Karl August Hermann and Mihkel Veske:

Go high up atop the hills, / To the wafting breath of wind. / Gaze
below into the valley / Past the splendor of the flowers.

The text that the choir sings recalls the uplifting, Romantic, nationalist imagery from the 19th-century National Awakening. This choral interlude is interesting for a number of reasons, including the fact that it’s sung by the Estonian Chamber Choir, who were featured only on one track, as opposed to Kiigelaulukuuik, the vocal sextet that sings backup vocals throughout the album.⁹⁹ It’s possible this was merely a logistical decision, since this passage would have required classically trained vocalists. More likely, though, recording a full chamber choir, probably in a hall, rather than a vocal sextet in a studio, provided an effect Mattiisen desired. The interlude emerges as the music slowly dissipates, almost like fog settling to reveal a hilltop. Additionally, the choir sounds as if they’re singing from a distance, almost as if they’re meant to represent the 19th-century National Awakening as an ideal or goal for modern day Estonians, though barely attainable (or tangible) in the context of Soviet control. Because Estonian identity is so closely tied to choral music, having an elite choir sing a nationalist song from the National Awakening as a choral interlude perhaps is intended to offer an echo of the ultimate expression of Estonian culture and identity.

⁹⁹ It is likely that the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir were mistakenly credited as the Estonian Chamber Choir (or Eesti Kammerkoor) on the album, since I can find no evidence of an “Estonian Chamber Choir,” and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir was active at this time. See “Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir,” The Choir, Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, accessed April 22, 2018, <https://www.epcc.ee/en/the-choir>.

The text to this interlude describes the beautiful Estonian hills and valleys; again, an idealized vision of what had become suburban Russian settlements. The brief, or even fleeting nature of the quotation could represent how quickly this ideal Estonian-ness will disappear if the Soviet government continues its intense Russification policy, or how quickly the beautiful countryside will be turned into apartment blocks. Mattiisen seems to be indicating that the very hills referenced in the choral section are the same hills being turned into Russian housing, distorting not only the physical land, but also the Estonian music so closely tied to the land.

The affect of this choral interlude is almost dreamlike in nature, functioning as an escape from the tumultuous, uncertain present described in the rest of the song. Returning to Robert Walser's analysis of Bon Jovi, Walser also describes the way Bon Jovi continually aims for a "transcendent moment" in "Livin' On A Prayer," that is finally achieved during the final iteration of the iconic chorus, the accompanying shift from minor to major, and the half-step modulation.¹⁰⁰ Walser characterizes the effect as allowing the listener to "escape the murk that has contained us since the beginning of the song."¹⁰¹ This context might serve as yet another way to understand the choral interlude in "Go High up Atop the Hills." All of the accompaniment drops out so that just the choir is singing, in major, contrasting with the minor key from the rest of the song, perhaps serving as another "transcendent moment," meant to illustrate a goal achieved, like returning to the independent nation described by the choir. While the "transcendent moment" in "Livin' On A Prayer" sounds totally different and is achieved through different

¹⁰⁰ Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 121.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 122.

musical effects than the moment in “Go High up Atop the Hills,” the two function in similar ways by offering a short taste of the musical sublime. The choral quotation is pure and beautiful, and both describes and represents Estonian nationalism, creating an emotional experience for an Estonian listener. By including the quotation, Mattiisen is underscoring the seriousness of the music by incorporating an example in a more presentational, traditional genre that requires a familiarity with Estonian nationalist sentiment to fully understand.

“You, until Death” or “Sind surmani”

The third of the *Fatherland* songs, “Sind surmani,” or “You, until Death,” quotes Estonian nationalist poet Lydia Koidula, who was most well known for her poem “Mu isamaa on minu arm,” or “My Fatherland is my Beloved,” which provided the text for Estonia’s national song of the same name.¹⁰² The song also quotes an earlier arrangement by Aleksander Kunileid, a composer from Koidula’s era, who rose to fame with his arrangement of “My Fatherland is my Beloved.”¹⁰³ The song was revised by Estonian conductor Gustav Ernesaks in 1944, and famously sung at song festivals, despite being censored.¹⁰⁴ The song came to serve as an unofficial Estonian anthem during the Soviet occupation. Mattiisen was no doubt aware of the role Koidula’s poetry already played in Estonian nationalism when he chose to quote it.

¹⁰² Ibid., 242.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 81.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 166-167

“You, until Death” is an immediately recognizable departure from the preceding two tracks. The song opens as a soft rock ballad, with sparse instrumentation, recalling songs like Elton John’s “Don’t Let the Sun Go Down on Me” (1974), “Empty Garden (Hey Hey Johnny)” (1982), or even REO Speedwagon’s “Can’t Fight This Feeling” (1984). Musicologist Simon Frith, in describing Elton John’s music, characterizes the rock ballad as having “easy melodic lines,...rising pitch to unleash emotion,...[a] lyrical sense of expansive self-pity” coupled with “rock-based dynamism (in terms of rhythm and amplification).”¹⁰⁵ He goes on to describe John’s vocals as “hesitant,” “introverted,” and “intimate,” which could also describe Linna’s vocal style in “You, until Death.”¹⁰⁶

As Linna enters, singing the first lines of the poem

Until my death I shall hold you / As my beloved one, / My blossoming
Estonian path, / My fragrant fatherland!

The music seems introspective and nostalgic for the time and place the poem evokes.¹⁰⁷ The song follows a predictable form, with each verse, quoted directly from the poem, followed by a refrain where the vocalist asks if national sentiment from the 19th-century National Awakening can still exist in this contemporary context.¹⁰⁸ The refrain ends on a hopeful note, saying “Nowadays, just like back then, / Clover blooms and aspens quake,” drawing on what has remained constant: the country’s natural beauty.

¹⁰⁵ Simon Frith, “Pop Music,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 93.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Translation from Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 242-243.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Before the final verse, the music is energized by the entrance of steadier percussion and electric guitar. The ensemble's sudden growth emphasizes the importance of the final verse. This verse offers a reminder that the 19th-century National Awakening was not without difficulty. Quoting from the original poem:

But yet, in your eyes/ I often find your tears? / To hope, oh My
Estonia, / That times are changing now!

Though the *Fatherland* songs reference the 19th-century National Awakening as an ideal movement, and a goal or example for the current movement for independence, the final verse recalls the pain and suffering Estonians endured before they first became independent in 1919. Again, this final verse is followed by a modern day response:

Can the same words and their tune / Hold us all together? /
Nowadays, just like back then, / What comes from the soul reaches a
soul.

Questioning again the role this 19th-century vision of nationalism can play in the current struggle, the final chorus points to the enduring nationalism in the hearts of the people, and the belief that those who truly believe in an independent Estonia will hear and internalize Koidula's message. The final chorus doesn't end on the tonic, leaving the message open-ended and questioning; only the ensuing months and years will answer the question posed by each iteration of the chorus.¹⁰⁹ The music finally resolves through an instrumental outro, and the song ends.

While Linna is featured in each of the *Five Fatherland Songs*, in this particular song, he's paired with one of the female vocalists from the sextet who echoes his

¹⁰⁹ Both at the time of the premiere (1988) and at the time of the commercial album's release (1990), Estonians had not yet achieved independence, so the questions posed in "You, until Death" were not merely rhetorical.

vocal line starting in the first chorus.¹¹⁰ While not a duet, the relationship between the two voices is more meaningful than just a lead vocalist with backup vocals. Perhaps the female voice, singing only the choruses (“Can these same words, and their tune / Hold us all together?”), is meant to recall Koidula herself. Having written the text to the unofficial national anthem and existing as a prominent female poet among countless men, she’s an intriguing and popular figure in Estonian history. The female vocals, representing Koidula, and Linna’s male vocals, quite clearly representing the contemporary commentary, seem to come together in the chorus, as if both Estonians from the prior nationalist movement and from the current movement are questioning together the possibilities for their nation.

Falling in the middle of the five songs, “You, until Death” is calm and steady, especially when compared to the tracks directly preceding and following it. Throughout the song, there’s a slow, subtle build, marked by slight increases in the ensemble with each verse. The first verse is accompanied by a sparse ensemble essentially playing just the chord changes on the downbeat of each bar, sometimes with little embellishment. The ensemble becomes a bit fuller during the second verse, including the introduction of a simple percussion ostinato. The build is most clear after the second chorus, when the ensemble suddenly swells into a short instrumental break. Lasting just the duration of a verse, a guitar solo improvises on the original melody with full ensemble accompaniment. As the third and final verse begins, this new, fuller ensemble provides a sense of energy and assertiveness, most clearly felt in the pulsating guitar line. The ensemble drops back, returning to the

¹¹⁰ The members of Kiigelaulukuuik featured on the *Fatherland* songs are credited only as “Ensemble Kiigelaulukuuik,” but include 3 female voices and 3 male voices.

earlier minimal texture for the final chorus, almost as if casting doubt on the energetic tone from the final verse. Coupled with the uncertain final cadence, this song isn't meant to be solely uplifting, but instead to call into question the efficacy of their movement.

"Guarding the Fatherland's Beauty" or "Isamaa ilu hoieldes"

The fourth song, "Isamaa ilu hoieldes," or "Guarding the Fatherland's Beauty," quotes another early song by Karl August Hermann, which uses text from Friedrich Kreutzwald's epic nationalist poem, *Kalevipoeg*.¹¹¹ The music, which includes heavy metal electric guitars, is in a completely different style from the other songs. In his monograph on heavy metal music, Robert Walser describes the distorted electric guitar's timbre as "the most important aural sound of heavy metal."¹¹² Additionally, the distorted guitar connotes power, as it has a seemingly "unflagging capacity for emission."¹¹³ The resulting effect is a continuously powerful, inexhaustible sound, which emphasizes the defensive tone of the lyrics and the repetitive, complicated call-and-response verses.

The bass line, which is more active than in other songs, plays slightly off the beat. Paired with ascending flourishes in the electric guitars, this contributes to a sense of roiling, continuous forward motion. The music sounds angrier and more urgent than in other songs, emphasizing the defensive nature of the text. The song

¹¹¹ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 243.

¹¹² Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 41.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 42. Walser mentions that the only other instrument with the same ability is the organ, or its modern-day counterpart, the synthesizer, which plays perhaps an equally (if not more) prominent role as the electric guitar on the *Five Fatherland Songs*.

calls for Estonians to “guard the fatherland’s beauty,” and opens by quoting the first line of the Hermann song: “Guarding the beautiful fatherland, fighting against the enemy,” before chanting “Remember, remember, remember, remember!”¹¹⁴ This opening eventually transforms into a refrain, so Hermann’s music plays a role throughout the song.

The music incorporates the Dorian scale, giving it a distinctly modal sound, reminiscent of medieval or pre-tonal music. Given the heavy metal timbre of the song, these medievalist associations can be understood in the context of medievalist themes in various heavy metal subgenres, like pagan or folk metal, both of which originated in Northern Europe.¹¹⁵ Given the text of the song, originally derived from *Kalevipoeg*, Kreutzwald’s epic poem about an ancient Estonian warrior, it’s clear that, despite the contemporary timbres, the song is intended to evoke a sense of antiquity, connecting the contemporary struggle to a more historical context.

The verse is call-and-response in form, inviting audience participation. Written in an 8-syllable meter, traditionally associated with Estonian folk music, the song could be interpreted as a modern day reimagining of a folk ritual.¹¹⁶ The participatory elements are unique to this song, not occurring in the other *Fatherland* songs. The call-and-response format invites widespread participation from a large audience, especially because it creates an inclusive environment while offering a

¹¹⁴ Translation from Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 8-10.

¹¹⁵ Deena Weinstein, “Pagan Metal,” in *Pop Pagans: Paganism and Popular Music*, ed. Donna Weston and Andy Bennett (London: Routledge, 2014), 59-60. These two subgenres (pagan and folk metal) are also closely related to Viking metal, another medievalist northern European heavy metal subgenre.

¹¹⁶ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 9, 243.

low-stakes way to join in.¹¹⁷ Yet compared with other participatory call-and-response songs, “Guarding the Fatherland’s Beauty” is not easy to sing along with. The syllabic pattern feels unsettled with the musical accompaniment, the entire song feels propelled forward and unstable, thanks in part to the syncopated bass line and the quick tempo. Also, the Dorian mode generates a pitch collection that the audience might be less familiar with. It is possible that, since the song relies on a traditional syllabic pattern, typical of Estonian folk music, the pattern and tempo wouldn’t necessarily seem as daunting to an Estonian audience as it might to non-Estonian listeners.

“Guarding the Fatherland’s Beauty” is also the only song in the *Five Fatherland Songs* that doesn’t include some sort of instrumental break. Some of the other breaks, like those in “The Most Beautiful Songs” or “Go High up Atop the Hills,” seem to offer an opportunity within the song for reflection or meditation on the song’s text or context. Perhaps in lacking an instrumental break, coupled with the ensemble’s unrelenting forward motion, Mattiisen is not looking to provide space to contemplate. Instead, the response should be more immediate and visceral, perhaps indicated by the quick repetition of each line of each verse; the questions at play in this song are not lofty or philosophical, but tangible and realistic. By inviting audience participation, Mattiisen is encouraging the audience, as they sing about defending their homeland, to believe that they can take a more active role in securing their nation’s future well-being, especially since the circumstances that led

¹¹⁷ On participatory music, see Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 48.

to Soviet occupation (the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) were completely beyond Estonians' control.

The text is also important, since it essentially offers the audience (metaphorical) directions for how to achieve independence. "If you truly trust yourself," the first verse starts, before listing all the other parties to trust ("wise people," "the power of the ancients," or "the sisters and the brothers") "Then you'll get a better life." Similarly, the second and third verses warn the audience of potential pitfalls that could lead to the revolution's failure, including references to the long, brutal history of serfdom native Estonians were subjected to during the Middle Ages.

The text of the final verse of the song doesn't share the same defensive tone. Instead, the text returns to some of the traditional images and motifs from the Romantic nationalist poetry from the 19th century. The text reminds listeners to trust "family farmsteads," "truthful teachings, objective justice," and to embrace the well-known natural surroundings, or "the birch grove of your birthplace / And the swallow-bird in the blue sky." The song ends after the final verse, with the reminder that "Courage will be powerful, / And you'll get a better life." "Guarding the Fatherland's Beauty" is so effective as a participatory call-and-response because it offers an opportunity for the audience to sing together, recalling together a traditional folk style, about what will and will not serve their goal of "a better life," possible only in an independent Estonia. While this song was obviously written with participation in mind, given the call and response form, it isn't actually participatory in the way it exists on the album. The backup singers from Kiigelaulukuuik are the

only ones responding to Linna's calls so that the entire interaction between the two parts is preserved as a high-fidelity recording, instead.¹¹⁸ The album was released in 1990, two years after the songs were premiered. I will discuss the implications of the studio recording later in this paper, but it's worth noting that perhaps the recording of "Guarding the Fatherland's Beauty" is meant to recreate the way it would have sounded with a full audience singing along.

"I am Estonian" or "Eestlane olen ja eestlaseks jään"

The fifth and final *Fatherland* song, "Eestlane olen ja eestlaseks jään," or "I am Estonian," was probably the most popular, becoming for many Estonians an immediately recognizable index for the entire revolution.¹¹⁹ This song, like "Guarding the Fatherland's Beauty" and "Go High up Atop the Hills," draws on an earlier song by Hermann.¹²⁰ The song is like a slow ballad, and the tempo allows Linna to fully pronounce and emphasize each word, as if the figurative weight of the message of the text is taking a physical toll on him. Rather than Simon Frith's characterization of ballad vocals (as "hesitant" and "introverted"), Linna sounds assertive and confident.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Turino, *Music as Social Life*, 67.

¹¹⁹ In *Music as Social Life*, Turino defines "index" as "A sign that comes to stand for something else because sign and object are experienced together, usually repeatedly" (236). In other words, this song recalls the Singing Revolution for many Estonians, as evidenced by a description by Šmidchens (*The Power of Song*, 10).

¹²⁰ Alo Mattiisen, *Mingem Üles Mägedele*, Ensemble In Spe with Ivo Linna, Kiigelaulukuuik, and Estonian Chamber Choir, Melodija Stereo C60 30245005, 1990, LP.

¹²¹ Frith, *Pop Music*, 93. Elton John's 1985 song "Nikita" might serve as a contemporary example that employed similar synthesizers and vocal styles,

It might make more sense to look to rock operas or megamusicals for context when trying to understand “I am Estonian.” In her monograph on megamusicals, the first to be published on the topic, musicologist Jessica Sternfeld describes megamusicals as “serious,” characterizing the music by the typically “broad emotions and generic lyrics.”¹²² Furthermore, Sternfeld goes on to characterize the rock opera as a subgenre of the megamusical, specifically due to the influence of rock music styles and harmonies.¹²³ Taking this definition further to include typical rock music instruments and timbres, “I am Estonian” pairs these musical aspects of rock opera with the lyrical characteristics of megamusicals. In some ways, it makes sense that Mattiisen’s compositions were influenced by rock opera, as the combination of theatrical and operatic styles and contemporary rock music is very much in the vein of prog rock composition. As the *Five Fatherland Songs* were credited with sparking revolution and promoting nationalist sentiments in Estonia, an analogous work in Baltic neighbor Latvia was a rock opera from 1988 called *Lāčplēšis* or *Bearslayer*. This rock opera recounted a “national epic” poem, similar to *Kalevipoeg*, about an ancient Latvian warrior who defeated his enemies with nonviolent tactics.¹²⁴ While “I am Estonian” is a single song, not an entire rock opera, the shared characteristics with rock opera offer a useful perspective to understand this music.¹²⁵

resulting in a reminiscent timbre, but the connections between the two songs are not very strong.

¹²² Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 78.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹²⁴ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 248.

¹²⁵ It’s entirely possible that Mattiisen was very familiar with rock operas when he wrote “I am Estonian,” further legitimizing how appropriate it is to analyze the song

The song opens with expansive synthesizer chords interspersed with melodic embellishment, making for a stately but static entrance, before the instrumentation is scaled back until only Linna and accompaniment remain. The verse is almost somber:

A thousand times over and again, / A thousand years of rising, not a final flight; / To renounce your own nation / Is like selling yourself into slavery.¹²⁶

While singing about how long Estonians have existed under various occupations, Linna's vocals are calm and measured, not angry, with an almost weary, wistful quality. The slightest instrumental build into the chorus seems to imbue the entire song with more energy, as a full chorus declares

I am and I'll stay Estonian; I was created Estonian. / Proud and good to be Estonian, free like our forefathers. / Yes: free like our forefathers.

in a rock opera context. Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, one of the first rock operas, was extremely popular in the Soviet Union in the 1980s and was known to have influenced and inspired Soviet musicians. Ramet describes after *Jesus Christ Superstar* was banned in the Soviet Union, groups would stage their own productions, the first being in the Baltic States, in Vilnius, Lithuania ("The Soviet Rock Scene," 183-84). Cushman, discussing the ethnographic interviews he conducted among members of the former Soviet underground rock scene, remarked that "it is difficult to find a musician who does not know [*Jesus Christ Superstar's*] lyrics by heart" (*Notes from Underground*, 43). Grabarchuk mentions that the rock opera's appeal was that it was western and Christian, making it "doubly dangerous" (Grabarchuk, "Close to the Edge"). Finally, musicologist Peter Schmelz, in his chapter about music, politics, and the ANS synthesizer, quotes an interview with Soviet electronic music composer Eduard Artem'yev and Russian musicologist Margarita Katunyan: "Webber's opera [*sic*] *Jesus Christ Superstar* demonstrated how one could decide eternal themes on the basis of a democratic language appealing to the masses, not to the intellect but to the heart. I saw that rock musicians were capable of solving large-scale musical problems." See Schmelz, "From Scriabin to Pink Floyd: The ANS Synthesizer and the Politics of Soviet Music between Thaw and Stagnation," in *Sound Commitments: Avant-garde Music and the Sixties*, ed. Robert Adlington, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 267.

¹²⁶ Translation from Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 10.

The music is simple and the harmony is straightforward, marked by a series of suspensions that infuse the simple chord progression with a sense of poignancy. With such an unembellished chorus, the power of singing such defiant and confident statements about what it means to be Estonian is amplified. The slow and simple music also makes it easier for listeners to join in and sing along, even if the song isn't intended to be explicitly participatory.

The instrumental section in this song is more subdued than in the other four songs, where the instrumental breaks have been an opportunity for active, virtuosic instrumental solos. In "I am Estonian," the instrumental break is just another iteration of the chorus melody, but instead of vocalists, the instruments mimic the sound of humming. In attempting to emulate vocalization, perhaps Mattiisen is hoping to emphasize the connection between what it means to be Estonian and the important role vocal music plays. While not necessarily offering the same, characteristically prog rock backdrop for contemplation (like the instrumental section in "The Most Beautiful Songs"), this instrumental break is striking in how different it is. Because it merely repeats the chorus, but without any words, perhaps it provides a space for reflection, but confined to the ideas presented in the song. It's possible that Mattiisen intended the section to be a sentimental moment for reflection on being Estonian and Estonian pride, as suggested by the lyrics. This would allow individuals to feel a more personal connection to the song, the song's nationalist themes, and the movement itself.

Live Performance

If the final three *Fatherland* songs (“You, until Death,” “Guarding the Fatherland’s Beauty,” and “I Am Estonian”) may seem musically simpler than the first two (“The Most Beautiful Songs” and “Go High up Atop the Hills”), this was possibly by design. All five songs were originally written for live performance, in front of massive audiences, at Tartu Music Days 1988.¹²⁷ Throughout 1988, a series of large festivals were held in Tallinn at the song festival grounds with the intention of uniting the various political factions pursuing independence.¹²⁸ At one of these festivals, Eestimaa Laul 1988, held on September 11th, 1988, a wide array of artists performed, including Ivo Linna with his band Rock Hotel, former punk band front man Urmas Alender, this time on acoustic guitar, and a mass choir that performed a collection of popular traditional choral works before an audience of 300,000 Estonians.¹²⁹ The performances were interspersed with speakers from some of the different political parties, including the Estonian Heritage Society and Popular Front of Estonia.¹³⁰

Towards the end of the festival, In Spe, Kiigelaulukuuik, and Mattiisen all took the stage before introducing Ivo Linna. While most musical performances were limited to one song or piece, Mattiisen, Linna and In Spe performed the last three *Fatherland* songs in succession. Video of the event shows the crowd singing and swaying along enthusiastically, especially with “Guarding the Fatherland’s Beauty”

¹²⁷ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 239.

¹²⁸ Waren, “Theories of the Singing Revolution,” 446.

¹²⁹ “Eestimaa Laul 1988,” video, 2:54:54; Clemens, *Baltic Independence and Russian Empire*, 111.

¹³⁰ Johnston and Aarelaid-Tart, “Generations, Microcohorts, and Long-Term Mobilization,” 690.

and “I Am Estonian.”¹³¹ Though it’s possible Mattiisen didn’t anticipate the *Fatherland* songs’ success, the simple melodies and hummable vocal lines certainly lend themselves to singing by large choir. For example, because “I Am Estonian” is sung at a slow tempo, with attention given to each word, a massive group could easily sing along, regardless of musical ability. Similarly, given the predictable, simple form in both “I Am Estonian” and “You, until Death,” it would have been easy for audience members to join in and drop out at will. “Guarding the Fatherland’s Beauty,” with its call-and-response form, was designed and composed for large group participation. Perhaps one of the most moving moments from Eestimaa Laul 1988 was during “I Am Estonian;” where there would have been an instrumental break, Mattiisen instead began directing the massive crowd to sing the refrain, *a capella*.¹³² This type of mass participation was made feasible by the easily sung vocal line and slow tempo.

Since all five of the songs were earlier premiered at Tartu Music Days in May 1988, “The Most Beautiful Songs” and “Go High up Atop the Hills” were performed live at some point, though not at Eestimaa Laul 1988. It’s unclear if these two songs weren’t performed at Eestimaa Laul 1988 because they elicited a less enthusiastic audience response, being more complicated and offering fewer opportunities for participation, or if Mattiisen purposefully composed some of the *Fatherland* songs to

¹³¹ “Eestimaa Laul 1988,” video, 2:17:22. After the songs’ initial success following their premiere in May 1988, they were performed widely that summer. By Eestimaa Laul 1988, which took place in September, the audience would have likely heard the songs before. However, even if they didn’t already know the songs, “Guarding the Fatherland’s Beauty” and “I am Estonian” are simple and repetitive enough that audience members still could have joined in.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 2:31:48.

be participatory nationalist anthems and some to be presentational songs, where the band used the song to speak to or inform the audience. In the form in which they appear on the album, “The Most Beautiful Songs” and “Go High up Atop the Hills” are full of imagery, quotations, and musical material to be analyzed and exist fully in the same prog rock vein in which Mattiisen first rose to fame. These two songs don’t transfer well to a live performance. The logistics alone of including a choir for the choral interlude in “Go High up Atop the Hills” would have made performance of the songs in their album form nearly impossible.

Because Mattiisen borrows from so many musical styles, genres, and practices, ethnomusicologist and genre theorist Fabian Holt would probably characterize the *Fatherland* songs as “music between genres.”¹³³ While the *Fatherland* songs are clearly rooted in prog rock traditions, it may seem surprising that 300,000 Estonians would all sing along with music from a genre that is, by design, not particularly accessible.¹³⁴ When discussing live performances of the *Fatherland* songs, it makes more sense to think about songs separately from their prog rock context. Even Holm-Hudson’s framework of “prog-lite,” which offers a useful perspective for listening to and analyzing the *Fatherland* songs, doesn’t offer enough of a framework for understanding the songs in live performance and their utility in the revolution.

¹³³ Fabian Holt, *Genre in Popular Music* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 180.

¹³⁴ While prog rock was performed in arenas, the genre’s intellectualism and emphasis on introspective listening stand out as the two biggest obstacles to accessible, participatory arena rock-style performances.

However, borrowing one of Holt's theories on genre formation, namely that "[g]enre boundaries are contingent upon the social spaces in which they emerge and upon cultural practice, not just musical practice," might help us understand how these songs functioned in live performance.¹³⁵ In determining the social space the *Fatherland* songs emerged from, the most important space would undoubtedly be the large performance venues and massive audiences (as mentioned earlier, at least three of the *Five Fatherland Songs* were obviously written for a crowd). In his monograph on punk and arena rock, musicologist Steve Waksman describes Elias Canetti's theory on "the crowd." Waksman, summarizing Canetti, claims that "[Canetti] suggests that the crowd is the cultural location in which the individual feels most powerfully connected to the collective, to the point where he gives up some of the boundaries that define his individuality."¹³⁶ Describing the crowd as having a "sense of unified action," Waksman continues by explaining that such a crowd is "a potential threat to social order, for an assembled crowd of particular force may choose to live by its own rules rather than those governing the society at large."¹³⁷

Waksman also describes a similar theory by journalist Ellen Willis as extending Canetti's theory of "'crowds and power' to 'crowds and freedom'."¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Holt, *Genre in Popular Music*, 14. Because genre exists to create listener or audience expectations for music, by analyzing the *Five Fatherland Songs* in the context of genre formation, we can better understand the expectations for these particular songs and how those expectations shaped the way the songs functioned in live performance.

¹³⁶ Steve Waksman, *This Ain't The Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2009), 23.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

Willis argues, as quoted by Waksman, that “the power of rock ‘n’ roll as a musical and social force has always been intimately connected with the paradoxical possibilities of mass freedom or collective individuality.”¹³⁹ Willis’ notion of “collective individuality” is more relevant to defining the social space from which the *Fatherland* songs genre emerged. For example, in this particular performance of “I am Estonian” at Eestimaa Laul 1988, 300,000 people sang together, in unison (as the collective), about their individual identities (that they also all have in common). In other words, “the crowd” is such an effective social space for the *Fatherland* genre because it offers a space where individuals are unified and therefore amplified. In doing so, they shed other aspects of their identities that don’t unite them and allow their identities in common bring them together.

When identifying cultural practices from which the *Five Fatherland Songs* emerged, of course Estonia’s tradition of communal singing is the most obvious. Estonians’ emphasis on singing national songs also fosters an environment where individuals would recognize the 19th-century nationalist compositions and poetry that Mattiisen incorporates into each of the *Fatherland* songs. The tradition of mass singing festivals also created a precedent for “the crowd” to exist in a musical setting. As mentioned earlier, prior to the *Fatherland* songs’ premiere, the Estonian popular music scene had already encouraged a cultural practice of experimentalism and openness to other musical styles, only further emphasized by Melodiya Estonia’s support for groups like In Spe.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 24.

Finally, the third part of Holt's equation for designating genre, musical practice, relates to the way Mattiisen blends classic components of prog rock with aspects of other popular music. As discussed previously, some of the popular music practices Mattiisen incorporates include Europop-style vocal harmonies; hard rock bass-lines; intense, sustained guitars; "moments of transcendence"; and elements of folk metal.¹⁴⁰ He also composed songs in distinct popular styles, like soft-rock ballads and rock operas. Accompanying these popular music moments are all of the ways Mattiisen still writes in a prog rock idiom. By including opening and closing tracks to create a concept album and incorporating quotations from traditional choral repertoire, Mattiisen is writing in the same vein as prog rock groups like Yes and Genesis, who made recordings almost two decades earlier.

Returning to Holt's assertion that genre is formed by "social space," "cultural practice," and "musical practice," the *Fatherland* songs are certainly an example of music written for a specific place and culture. Furthermore, the *Fatherland* songs are so effective, not only because they are a unique product of a distinctly Estonian space and culture, but also because Mattiisen was so familiar with the nuances of the Estonian crowd and musical culture. He was able to expertly integrate musical practices to play to the strengths of both.

¹⁴⁰ Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 120-122.



Figure 4. Ilmar Kruusamäe, *Alo Mattiisen*, photographic painting, 1998.

Courtesy of Jõgeva Music School, Jõgeva, Estonia.

The Concept Album: Mingem Üles Mägedele (1990)

The album itself deserves interpretation and analysis. Released in 1990, two years after the live premiere of the *Fatherland* songs, the album could serve as a souvenir of the exciting summer when the songs were first performed. Perhaps more importantly, the album is evidence of the intense period of national awakening and mobilization in 1988. If this concept album is essentially a reproduction in the studio of the live performances of the *Five Fatherland Songs* throughout 1988, then we can understand the album as an attempt to capture the sounds of the Singing Revolution, making it possible to listen to them in a different time and place.¹⁴¹ This idea is underscored by the album's short liner note by Estonian composer Peeter Vähi, included in Estonian and English, where he explains how the album should be

¹⁴¹ Musicologist Mark Katz defines these qualities of recorded music as “portability” and “repeatability.” See Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music, revised edition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 17-18, 29.

understood. “It is relatively hard for a non-Estonian to understand the meaning of the present record,” writes Vähi, “If you neither understand the lyrics, recognize the citations of earlier music, now [*sic*] know the background, these pieces may seem to be pop songs that have come out a bit too late for their time.”¹⁴² Vähi asserts that these songs exist best when understood in the context of their initial release and performance. He goes on to explain the basic background of the Singing Revolution, before closing with a thought about the role the album plays. “The music of Alo Mattiisen really is like a document that has fixed the continuity of self-consciousness; it is a whole blend of the venerable works of Estonian classics and the present day.”¹⁴³ Verifying Šmidchens’ theory about the *Five Fatherland Songs* (that they create a “musical bridge” between the 19th-century National Awakening and the 1988 struggle for independence), Vähi is writing in 1990 about the success of these songs without yet knowing the success of the revolution.¹⁴⁴ Estonia didn’t achieve independence until 1991; this album documents the unique and powerful way music and nationalism came together to energize and unite the people, perhaps especially in the event that the revolution was unsuccessful.

¹⁴² Peeter Vähi, liner notes to *Mingem Üles Mägedele*, Alo Mattiisen, Melodija C6030245005, LP, 1990. Note that the liner notes include the typo “now know the background,” rather than “nor know the background.”

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Šmidchens, *The Power of Song*, 239.



Figure 5. The front and back cover of the 1990 studio release of *Mingem Üles Mägede*. Note the portraits on the back cover: in addition to images of Mattiisen and Leesment, there are also portraits of the 19th-century poets and composers Mattiisen quotes. By placing their images alongside their 19th-century counterparts, the cover artist is suggesting that Mattiisen and Leesment are among the next generation of Estonian nationalist composers. (Mattiisen, Alo. *Mingem Üles Mägede*. Ivo Linna, In Spe, Kiigelaulukuuk. Melodija C6030245005, 1990, LP.)

Viewing this album as an attempt to document the moment when, in the summer of 1988, all of Estonia seemed to unite, helps us understand and interpret the first and last tracks on the album. The opening track, titled “Suvi 1988,” or “Summer 1988,” is a short instrumental opening followed by a spoken word recitation. The track is credited to Alo Mattiisen and Heinz Valk, the Estonian activist and journalist who originally coined the term “Singing Revolution,” in 1988.¹⁴⁵ A tame horn fanfare seems to announce the beginning of Valk’s recitation, which serves almost as a prelude to the rest of the album. Valk is likely reciting his essay, “Laulev Revolutsioon,” published June 17th, 1988, where he first describes the unfolding events as a “singing revolution.”¹⁴⁶ As he finishes the essay, sublime strings and synthesizers continually resolve in the background, in a style similar to

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 244.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Without access to the original text, it’s impossible to know with certainty if Valk is quoting “Laulev Revolutsioon,” but there are certain phrases in his recitation that also appeared in the original essay.

famous Estonian composer Arvo Pärt's tintinnabuli. As he finishes, the ensemble swells into a huge anthemic climax, as if announcing the beginning of the *Fatherland* songs.

Equally fascinating is the way the album closes. After "I am Estonian," an *a capella* vocal group begins to harmonize before Linna enters with a slow, closing song. The music seems stylistically like a lullaby, with hushed voices and a gentle melody, and vaguely recalls "All Through the Night," a traditional Welsh lullaby. The lullaby seems an appropriate note to part on, since the *Fatherland* songs were so popular during the impromptu nighttime song festivals in 1988. The gentle peace is soon broken though, with intermittent declarations, before returning to the lullaby texture from earlier. The entire song is *a capella*, before seamlessly transitioning into a sparse instrumental section, which like a hocket, involves three voices playing simple rhythms and melodies, interlocking with one another. Finally, the full ensemble joins in, playing the same lullaby melody from before. The music sounds like the build at the end of "Summer 1988," as if bookending the album with these large instrumental sections. After a brief return to the hocket-style section from earlier (though this time including the flute), the music slowly winds down until only the keyboard remains. The slow, subtle, fade-out ending may be a commentary on the unfinished nature of the revolution at the time of the album's release, or a reflection of Estonian fears that the energy and mobilization from 1988 might eventually fade with no real results. It does seem especially poignant, though, that the last instrument sounding as the album closes is the keyboard, which is Mattiisen's instrument. It's as if he's holding on to the music, the album, and the

Fatherland songs, until the very last possible second. Listening today, this interpretation is especially poignant, given that Mattiisen died at age 35 in 1996, not even five years into Estonia's new era as an independent nation.



Figure 6. Alo Mattiisen's piano and composition manuscripts, memorialized in the classroom where he first took music lessons at Jõgeva Music School, 2011. Photo by Aivar Mihkelson. Courtesy of Jõgeva Music School, Jõgeva, Estonia.

Conclusion

Alo Mattiisen was a beloved composer, a successful musician, and an effective activist who had a genius for bringing people together. His *Five Fatherland Songs* fostered an environment of Estonian unity, promoting Estonian nationalist sentiment while also encouraging Estonians to unite as one movement with one goal. On a more practical level, though, collaboration was at the heart of each of Mattiisen's musical projects. He organized artists from around the country to perform and produce an activist, musical collaboration to protest strip-mining. Similarly, he brought Estonian poet Jüri Leesement, rock star Ivo Linna, and numerous contemporary artists together with beloved 19th-century Estonian

composers and poets to write and perform the *Five Fatherland Songs*. Mattiisen even stepped in to lead In Spe when Erkki-Sven Tüür left the group.

In writing the *Five Fatherland Songs*, Mattiisen managed to incorporate elements of each prominent 1980s Estonian popular music genre, like 80s-style pop music, 70s-style hard rock, and prog rock. He goes beyond these genres to include traditional choral styles, aspects of folk music, and heavy metal. In representing all different musical styles, tastes, and genres in his collection of songs, he's ensuring that there's a particular musical moment for each member of the audience to identify with. Additionally, in drawing so heavily from popular musical styles, he's writing in an already established musical tradition, making each of his songs feel instantly familiar. And he's writing intensely national music that describes lofty and Romantic nationalist ideals, but in an accessible, popular style.

Given the Estonian song festival and mass choir singing tradition, Mattiisen likely wrote the *Five Fatherland Songs* anticipating a large audience. In writing arena rock anthems, he's ensured that the *Fatherland* songs do live on as part of these large-scale Estonian music festivals and political meetings. Furthermore, by including these popular, well-known songs in political meetings like Eestimaa Laul 1988, the music offers an opportunity for hundreds of thousands of Estonians to sing together about their national pride, either inspired by or despite the speaker. As evidenced by the name of the large political meeting (Eestimaa Laul translates roughly to Estonia Sings), members of the Singing Revolution engaged in the important unifying role music played, especially the *Fatherland* songs.

Even today, Estonians recognize Mattiisen's important contributions to the Singing Revolution. The country is dotted with large and small monuments to him and his music. For example, the classroom where he first learned to play the piano at the Jõgeva Music School, in Jõgeva, Estonia is now a memorial to him, featuring his composition manuscripts and his personal piano.¹⁴⁷ Perhaps the most appropriate memorial, though, is the way the *Five Fatherland Songs* are still widely performed today. Different *Fatherland* songs are programmed at song festivals every year, including the national *Laulupidu* festival at the song festival grounds in Tallinn. Massive choirs perform Mattiisen's music alongside pieces by the 19th-century composers he borrowed from while writing the *Fatherland* songs.¹⁴⁸ Estonians still use the *Five Fatherland Songs* to celebrate their culture and identity, thirty years after the songs were premiered.

In analyzing music, nationalism, and politics, Mattiisen's *Five Fatherland Songs* offer a revelatory case study. The *Fatherland* songs represent a large, organized group effort to create and perform songs that presented ideas about Estonian nationalism. Often in discussing music and revolution, we tend to describe music as a disembodied, personified force, with magical abilities to make the world a better place. The Singing Revolution, for example, is often minimized to an impossible scenario where Estonians sang themselves free. Realistically, it isn't

¹⁴⁷ Merike Katt, director of Jõgeva Music School, email to author, April 26, 2018.

¹⁴⁸ For examples of contemporary performances of Alo Mattiisen's work, see "Alo Mattiisen, 'Sind surmani' / Laulupidu 2014," Aarne Saluveer, director, video, 11:55, July 6, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PADZOsmdpS4>; see also "Alo Mattiisen 'Isamaa ilu hoieldes,'" Valter Soosalu, director, Ivo Linna, Robert Linna, Indra-Mirrell Zeinet, and Joosep Toomeste, soloists, video, 5:37, July 2, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qalDIQsOSg>.

possible for music alone to change political borders or regimes. However, that doesn't mean that music doesn't play a powerful role in political revolution. Alo Mattiisen's musical contributions to the Estonian Singing Revolution exemplify the way music itself may be powerless, but in the hands of an individual (like Mattiisen), it can be used to motivate and unify people towards a greater goal. Music acts as a component of revolution only when coupled with humans who make a conscious effort to engage music's unifying ability. The power of the Singing Revolution lies not with the compositions and performers that characterized the movement, but with the way Estonians consciously came together through music to construct that revolution.

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Appendix A: Suggested Listening

Because none of these recordings were commercially released in the United States, please see below for listening options.

Typewriter Concerto in D Major, composed by Alo Mattiisen:

“In Spe: S/T (Estonia/USSR, 1985) [Full Album].” In Spe. Video, 43:37. September 10, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUn2_tLKBHE&t=18s.

or

In Spe. *Typewriter Concerto in D Major*. Musea 4118, 2009, Spotify. Originally released in 1985.

“Ei ole ükski ükski maa,” or “Not a Single Land is Alone,” composed by Alo Mattiisen:

“Ei ole ükski ükski maa.” Alo Mattiisen and various artists. Video, 5:35. January 30, 2007. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r75WMX1Wfgk>.

Mingem Üles Mägedele, composed by Alo Mattiisen:

“Alo Mattiisen – Mingem Üles Mägedele [1990 LP].” Alo Mattiisen and various artists. Video, 33:14. December 28, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9UtHCCRPKs&t=7s>.

Appendix B: Timeline of Events

early 1800s – Estonian National Awakening begins

1869 – First Estonian song festival
 “You, until Death” by Aleksander Kunileid
 Text by Lydia Koidula

1873 – “Go High up Atop the Hills” by Karl August Hermann

1880 – “The Most Beautiful Songs” by Friedrich August Saebelmann
 “Guarding the Fatherland’s Beauty” by Karl August Hermann

1919 – First independent Estonian nation

1939 – Estonia is secretly ceded to USSR as part of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

1944 – “My Fatherland is my Beloved” by Gustav Ernesaks

1985 – *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* policies introduced
 Alo Mattisen joins In Spe
Typewriter Concerto in D Major released by In Spe

1987 – “Not a Single Land is Alone” and Virumaa strip mining protests

1988 – Five Fatherland Songs premiere at Tartu Music Days
 Eestimaa Laul 1988 festival
Bearslayer, Latvian nationalist rock opera

1990 – studio release of Five Fatherland Songs, *Mingem Üles Mägedele*

1991 – Estonia declares independence (August 20, 1991)
 Soviet Union dissolves (December 26, 1991)

Appendix C: Text and Translations of the *Five Fatherland Songs*

The Most Beautiful Songs (Kaunimad laulud)

English:

*I give to you the most beautiful songs,
Loved by my ancestors, dear homeland!
My heart beats strongly in my chest
When I sing to you, fatherland!*

The most beautiful songs remained unsung,
Lost in endless slogans and pledges and flags.
The most beautiful wishes were not fulfilled,
Lost in harmful senselessness and rubles and sloth.

The longed-for dream, held for eternity,
Torn by winds from all sides,
Something suddenly moved in the bosom—
Did this form come from inside?

The most beautiful songs are still unsung,
And alienation is still undefeated.
The torches that have never yet burned
Now all must ignite at both ends.

I give to you the most beautiful songs,
The most beautiful songs.

The most beautiful speeches remained unheard,
Lost in stupid explanations, accusations, and obfuscations.
The most beautiful melodies remained unplayed,
Lost in low scoldings, sorrows, and senselessness.

Whoever begged for freedom from above,
Feeble and pathetic is he.
Whoever quenched thirst, unmindful of danger,
Clears stones from the road!

The most beautiful songs are still unsung,
And alienation is still undefeated.
The torches that have never yet burned
Now all must ignite at both ends.

Estonian:

*Kaunimad laulud pühendan sull',
vanematest armastatud kallis kodumaa!
Võimsasti tuksub süda siis mul,
kui sulle laulan, mu isamaa!*

Kaunimad laulud
laulmata jäid
loosungite, lippude, lubaduste lõputus reas.
Kaunimad soovid
täitmata jäid
rahulolu, rublade ja rumaluste rikutud reas.

Kaua siin tuultele avatud õues
oodatud igavest und,
midagi äkki end liigutas põues -
oli see seesmine sund?

Veel laulmata on kaunimad laulud
ja võõrastav veel võitmata.
Nüüd süütama peab kahest otsast pիրrud,
mis siamaani on läitmata.

Kaunimad laulud pühendan sull',
kaunimad laulud.

Kaunimad kõned
kuulmata jäid
selgituste, süüdistuste, saladuste sõgedas reas.
Kaunimad viisid
võitmata jäid
manitsuste, murede ja mõttetuste madalas reas.

Priiust kes kõrgemalt kerjata lootis,
vilets ja väeti on see.
Keeldude kiuste kes januseid jootis,
kividest puhas tal tee!

Veel laulmata on kaunimad laulud
ja võõrastav veel võitmata.
Nüüd süütama peab kahest otsast pիրrud,
mis siamaani on läitmata.

Go High up Atop the Hills (Mingem üles mägedele)

English:

*Go high up atop the hills,
Musta, Õis, or Lasna Hill,
Gaze down on the people's spirit
Through the mute and foreign power.
See there how the heart is aching,
Wickedness has seized the hand!*

*Shout it loudly to the valley
With all your strength.
Shout it loudly to the valley:
Lasna Hill must stop now!
Shout it loudly to the valley:
Stop it now!*

Look, the people's wounded spirit
Does not heal, there is no cure.
Any medicine that comes now
Will arrive much too late.
Cliff-top city, like an ulcer,
Endless, far as eyes can see.
Let's all shout down to the valley
With all our strength.

Let's all shout down to the valley:
Lasna Hill must stop now!
Let's all shout down to the valley:
Lasna Hill must stop now!

*Go high up atop the hills,
To the wafting breath of wind.
Gaze below into the valley
Past the splendor of the flowers.*

Look, it's all completely foreign—
Is this really home to you?
Through the dim and drafty streets
the migrant wanders aimlessly.
Look into his empty eyes,
He doesn't feel or know or see.
Let's all shout down to the valley
With all our strength:

Let's all shout down to the valley:
 Lasna Hill must stop now!
 Let's all shout down to the valley:
 Stop it now!
 Stop it now!
 Lasna Hill.

Estonian:
Minge üles mägedelle,
 Musta-, Öis- või Lasnamäe,
 vaat'ke alla rahva hinge
 läbi tumma võõra väe.

Vaat'ke, kuidas hing on haige,
 kurjus haaranud on käe,
 ja siis hüüdke alla orgu
 kõigest väest:

Ja siis hüüdke alla orgu:
 "Peatage Lasnamäe!"
Ja siis hüüdke alla orgu:
 "Peatage...!"

Vaat'ke, haavad rahva hinges
 ikka veel ei parane,
 ükski abinõu ei ole
 enam liiga varane.
 Linn kui paise paesel pinnal -
 sellel lõppu silm ei näe.
 Hüüdkem kõik nüüd alla orgu
 kõigest väest:

Hüüdkem kõik nüüd alla orgu:
 "Peatage Lasnamäe!"
 Hüüdkem kõik nüüd alla orgu:
 "Peatage...!"

Minge üles mägedelle,
tuule õrna õhule.
Vaat'ke alla oru põhja
üle lillehiilguse.

Vaat'ke, kõik on võhivõõras -
 kas on see siis kodukant?
 Tänavate tõmbetuules
 hulgub sihitult migrant.

Vaat'ke, tal on silmis tühjus,
ta ei tunne, tea, ei näe.
Hüüdkem kõik nüüd alla orgu
kõigest väest:

Hüüdkem kõik nüüd alla orgu:
"Peatage Lasnamäe!"
Hüüdkem kõik nüüd alla orgu:
"Peatage...!"

Lasnamäe...

You, until Death (Sind surmani)

English:

*Until my death I shall hold you
As my beloved one.
My blossoming Estonian path,
My fragrant fatherland!*

*Oh land, how tenderly you carry
Your children on your arms,
You give them bread and shelter,
And a final resting place!*

Can these same words, and their tune
Hold us all together?
Nowadays, just like back then,
Clover blooms and aspens quake.

*But yet, in your eyes
I often find your tear?
To hope, oh My Estonia,
That times are changing now!*

Just the same words, and their tune,
These persistent signs,
Just as simply as back then,
Clover blooms and aspens quake.

*So pious are your sons,
How brave and strong they are!
Your daughters are like flowers,
So beautiful, they bloom!*

Can the same words and their tune
Hold us all together?
Nowadays, just like back then,
What comes from the soul, reaches a soul.

Estonian:

*Sind surmani küll tahan
ma kalliks pidada,
mu õitsev Eesti rada,
mu lõhnav isamaa!*

*Kuis maa, nii hellalt hoiad
sa lapsi käte pääl,
neil annad leiba, katet,
sa viimast aset veel.*

Samad sõnad, sama viis
kas meid hoida saavad,
sama moodi nagu siis
õitseb ristik ja värisevad haavad.

*Kuid siiski veel leian
su silmist pisaraid.
Mu Eestimaa, oh looda,
ehk nüüd need ajad muutuvad.*

Samad sõnad, sama viis,
sama tõrksad tähed,
sama lihtsalt nagu siis
õitseb ristik ja värisevad haavad

*Kuis on su pojad vagad,
nii vaprad, tugevad,
su tütreid nagu lilled,
nad õitsvad nägusad!*

Samad sõnad, sama viis,
kas meid hoida saavad,
sama moodi nagu siis
mis hingest tulnud hinge läheb.

Guarding the Fatherland's Beauty (Isamaa ilu hoieldes)

English:

*Guarding the beautiful fatherland, fighting against the enemy:
Remember, remember, remember, remember!*

If you truly trust yourself (If you truly trust yourself),
And the wisdom of wise people (and the wisdom of wise people),
And the shoulders of strong people (and the shoulders of strong people),
And the power of the ancients (and the power of the ancients),
And the quickness of the young men (and the quickness of the young men),
And the sisters and the brothers (and the sisters and the brothers),
And above all, trust yourself (and above all, trust yourself):
Then you'll get a better life (then you'll get a better life).

*Guarding the beautiful fatherland, fighting against the enemy:
Remember, remember, remember, remember!*

If you trust the wolf's slick stories (If you trust the wolf's slick stories),
If you fear the hounds' mad howling (If you fear the hounds' mad howling),
If you listen to the landlord's cursing (If you listen to the landlord's cursing),
If you trust the servants' snitching (If you trust the servants' snitching),
And the glutton's greed for more (and the glutton's greed for more),
And the views of the vile person (and the views of the vile person),
And the scolding of the senseless (and the scolding of the senseless),
Then you won't get anything.

*Guarding the beautiful fatherland, fighting against the enemy:
Remember, remember, remember, remember!*

If you sink into false stories (If you sink into false stories),
If you drown yourself in dreams (If you drown yourself in dreams),
Grovel when you're given orders (grovel when you're given orders),
Bow down low before the ruble (bow down low before the ruble),
You'll get lice between the legs (you'll get lice between the legs),
You'll get hives inside your heart (you'll get hives inside your heart),
Sores on your skull, bones in your belly (sores on your skull, bones in your belly):
Then you'll go to hell.

*Guarding the beautiful fatherland, fighting against the enemy:
Remember, remember, remember, remember!*

If you truly trust yourself (If you truly trust yourself),
Then you'll truly trust the people (then you'll truly trust the people),
Family farmstead, worldly wisdom (family farmstead, worldly wisdom),

Truthful teachings, objective justice (truthful teachings, objective justice),
 And the birch grove of your birthplace (and the birch grove of your birthplace),
 And the swallow-bird in the blue sky (and the swallow-bird in the blue sky):
 Courage will be powerful,
 And you'll get a better life.

Estonian:

*Isamaa ilu hoieldes, Vaenlase vastu võideldes:
 Pane tähele, pane tähele, pane tähele, pane tähele!*

Kui sina usud endaasse (Kui sina usud endaasse)
 Arukate arvamisse (Arukate arvamisse)
 Tugevate turjadesse (Tugevate turjadesse)
 Vanemate vägevusse (Vanemate vägevusse)
 Noorte meeste nobedusse (Noorte meeste nobedusse)
 Õdedesse, vendadesse (Õdedesse, vendadesse)
 Enne kõike endaasse (Enne kõike endaasse)
 Siis saad põlve parema.

*Isamaa ilu hoieldes, Vaenlase vastu võideldes:
 Pane tähele, pane tähele, pane tähele, pane tähele!*

Kui sina usud hundi juttu (Kui sina usud hundi juttu)
 Kardad koerte klähvimisi (Kardad koerte klähvimisi)
 Kuulad sakste sajatusi (Kuulad sakste sajatusi)
 Kannupoiste kaebamisi (Kannupoiste kaebamisi)
 Saamameeste salvamisi (Saamameeste salvamisi)
 Madalate manitsusi (Madalate manitsusi)
 Sõgedate sõitlemisi (Sõgedate sõitlemisi)
 Siis ei saa sa midagi.

*Isamaa ilu hoieldes, Vaenlase vastu võideldes:
 Pane tähele, pane tähele, pane tähele, pane tähele!*

Kui sina vajud valedesse (Kui sina vajud valedesse)
 Upakile unedesse (Upakile unedesse)
 Kāpakile käsu alla (Kāpakile käsu alla)
 Röötsakile rubla alla (Röötsakile rubla alla)
 Siis saad kirbud kubemesse (Siis saad kirbud kubemesse)
 Sügelised südamesse (Sügelised südamesse)
 Päised pähe, kondid kõhtu (Päised pähe, kondid kõhtu)
 Siis sa lähed põrgusse

*Isamaa ilu hoieldes, Vaenlase vastu võideldes:
 Pane tähele, pane tähele, pane tähele, pane tähele!*

Kui sina usud endaasse (Kui sina usud endaasse)
Siis sina usud rahvaasse (Siis sina usud rahvaasse)
Taludesse tarkusesse (Taludesse tarkusesse)
Õpetusse, õigusesse (Õpetusse, õigusesse)
Kodukoha kaasikusse (Kodukoha kaasikusse)
Pilvepiiril pääsukesse (Pilvepiiril pääsukesse)
Siis saad vaimu vägeva,
Siis saad põlve parema.

I am Estonian (Eestlane olen ja eestlaseks jään)

English:

A thousand times over and again,
A thousand years of rising, not a final flight;
To renounce your own nation
Is like selling yourself into slavery.

I am and I'll stay Estonian; I was created Estonian.
Proud and good to be Estonian, free like our forefathers.
Yes: free like our forefathers.

A thousand people's questions thundering,
Sacred soil, free sea, native farmsteads.
A thousand times one thousand people there
Hold the sacred flame alive defiantly.

I am and I'll stay Estonian; I was created Estonian.
Proud and good to be Estonian, free like our forefathers.
Yes: Just like our free forefathers, just like those courageous men.

I am and I'll stay Estonian; I was created Estonian.
Proud and good to be Estonian, free like our forefathers.
Yes: Just like our free forefathers, just like those courageous men.

Estonian:

Tuhat korda kas või alata,
Tuhat aastat tõusu, mitte luigelend.
Oma rahvust maha salata
Sama ränk on nagu orjaks müüa end.

Eestlane olen ja eestlaseks jään, kui mind eestlaseks loodi.
Eestlane olla on uhke ja hää, vabalt vaarisa moodi.
Jah, just nõnda, vabalt vaarisa moodi.

Tuhat kõuehäälsel küsijat:

Vaba meri. Põlistalud. Püha muld.
Tuhat korda tuhat püsijat
Kõige kiuste elus hoiab püha tuld.

Eestlane olen ja eestlaseks jään, kui mind eestlaseks loodi.
Eestlane olla on uhke ja hää, vabalt vaarisa moodi.
Jah: just nõnda, vabalt vaarisa moodi, nende mehiste meeste moodi.

Eestlane olen ja eestlaseks jään, kui mind eestlaseks loodi.
 Eestlane olla on uhke ja hää, vabalt vaarisa moodi.
 Jah: just nõnda, vabalt vaarisa moodi, nende mehiste meeste moodi.

Appendix C Sources

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