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'TOTALLY BADASS MUSIC' - THE SOVIET NATIONAL ANTHEM AS A COMMUNICATION DESIGN

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Introduction

In the YouTube version of the Soviet national anthem, a recent dialog about the old Soviet Union's national anthem expressed the reflection of a common phenomenon:

Gingabarbarian: "I don't care whether or not communism is a good idea. This is simply the best anthem I've ever heard!"

pullinthelateshift: "I know right, i hate communism but its [the anthem is] totally badass [sic]makes me want to join the red army and kick my own ass" (gingabarbarian & pullinthelateshift, 2013).

The music was so good, that the ideal it expressed could not detract from the emotional response.

To study a national anthems as a design "technology" may seem an odd approach. A national anthem is a mass media event, and a group ritual which is assigned official status by the ruling elite to be *the* sonic representation, with exclusive agency to represent a nation. It is "[m]eticulously constructed, with leaders of the national governments consciously picking and choosing its elements" (Cerulo, 1993, p. 245). However, music seems to lend itself to a cognitive disconnect. Sometimes, the music can be so appealing that it makes the ideology expressed in the lyrics palatable.

In the specific case of Russia's anthemic history, leaders adopted a successive series of national anthems, used them for several years and then, because of political pressures, replaced them. These musical compositions did not exist in isolation, but evolved within the larger context of the genre of worldwide national anthems (Daughtry, 2003), the composition of marches and hymns, and internal and external reactions to previous Russian national anthems. The Stalinist anthem on the YouTube video therefore represents a progression of emotion-invoking musical communication events which culminated in the composition and adaptation of the "Unbreakable Union" in 1943. We can therefore study the composition of the Stalinist "Unbreakable Union" as part of a musical design continuum. We can also use current music theory to explain how a communication event like the Soviet National anthem can elicit emotions apart from, and often despite, choice of lyrics.

The paper will rely upon the work of Mark Aakhus, specifically his 2007 "Communication as design theory", and on the work of Music Theorist Bjorn Vickhoff and his 2008 "Perspective Theory for music perception and emotion" to explain why the anthem of the old Soviet Union would have evocative powers well beyond even Stalin's original intentions. It will also help explain at least, in musical terms, some of the positive reactions of non- Russian, anti-Communist Americans to its melody.

This paper further argues that when studying music, the normative/code model of discourse analysis should be amended to an inferential/strategic model (Jacobs, 1994, p.214). That is, we cannot study a communication event like music based upon assumptions about what the piece hopes to *say* and the *language* it uses to arrive at the meaning, but instead must rely upon empathetic, emotive inferences made by the listener, often on a preconscious level, about the musical event, and the listener's understanding of the intentionality of the music itself.

Tying music theory with Communication as Design theory could have important implications for the study other types of evocative musical events that identify a group, a product, or a point of view.

The study of Music Theory gives us the means by which to bridge the gap between Communication and Music and “transfer something given into something preferred through .. invention” (Aackhus, 2007, p.112). In terms of scholarly studies, if we are able to merge our libraries we can explore a body of work which studies how emotion is communicated through music. In studying National anthems, we begin this process by studying music that is composed to fulfill a very specific and powerful purpose. A National anthem is, after all, a symbol “capable of rallying support for state interests, by evoking emotional expressions of national identification.” (Schatz & Lavine, 2007)

Literature Review

The evocative power of music is staggering. In the YouTube example, The Soviet Union is able to musically rise from its grave to move a couple of random Americans despite their critical judgment of Communism. The bond between the music itself and the emotion it evokes is so strong, that the music trumps the metaphorical value of the piece. It is able to conjure feelings of loyalty that are disconnected with the current assigned meaning of the melody, as the hymn of the present-day Russian Federation, or previous meanings, such as the Stalinist Anthem. This is because despite the symbolism of the piece, the listener feels a sense of empathy to the music itself (Vickhoff, 2009).

Scholarly work has been conducted on the ability of national anthems to evoke emotions from different theoretical frameworks. Several papers (Price, 2007), (Brooke, 2007), (Daughtry, 2003) refer to the metaphoric importance of a particular melody as a national artifact, but do not distinguish them from flags or any other “modern totems” (Cerulo, 1993, p.244) of national identity. From the standpoint of the process of selecting a song to designate as an anthem, this is reasonable, since the elite who anoint the anthems do it to evoke a particular ideology. Nevertheless, the study of the histories and narratives of the 1943 adoption of Soviet Russia’s “Unbreakable Union” anthem help us to understand the musical and political forces at work in its creation. This will, in turn help us to analyze the strategic design at work in its creation and adoption.

Music cannot, in a literal sense, create a metaphor beyond the evocation of an emotion. (Ockelford, 2009). Therefore, in studies that examine anthems from a normative ideal that makes large abstract claims for national unity and associations resulting in a ritual of shared identity, the code employed cannot truly represent the composition of the music, and must refer instead on an interpretation of the lyrics.

Therefore, a general study of the evolution of national anthems is warranted, because as an invented European artefact of the late seventeenth century (Brooke, 2007), we can see how some of the imitative musical patterns in the composition and recognition of these pieces resulted in a national anthem musical code which, without lyrics, is so generic that it fails to reflect anything about the nation of origin. Aaron Ockelford calls these imitative musical patterns *zygons*, and this is the world that will be used in this paper. These generic *zygons* belong not just to the national anthems of Russia, but to the entire genre of national anthems (Daughtry, 2003).

In their study of the Croatian national anthem, Kelen and Pavković assert that “However a tune swells the prideful breast of the national subject, it will be the words accompanying that tell us the most about the identifications and the affection borne by the music in question.” (p. 248). The key here is that because a national anthem follows a very particular zygonic pattern which may serve to identify it as part of a genre, the music rarely expresses anything surprising about the homeland. In fact, further study of the literature on national anthems in general, and the Russian one specifically, reveal a pattern, as expressed in the work of N.A. Soboleva (2009). Russia has had eight changes of anthems since the adoption of the first in the 1830’s. In the case of three of those

anthems, the music is borrowed from another country, once from England and twice from France (Sobolevo, 2009). This speaks to the interchangeability of anthem melodies and their lack of marking for national origin.

The alliance of Britain and Russia to defeat Napoleon brought the melody of the British national anthem to the ears of the Imperial Court in Russia, and Russian lyrics were penned to correspond to the melody in order to create the first anthem. Eventually, the Tsar commissioned a new melody, *God Save the Tsar*, one of Russian origin. This new melody was so captivating it created a sensation, and was met with an oddly similar reaction to the contemporary one the YouTube commentators made about the Soviet national anthem. When the piece was played in Dresden, Germany, the reaction to the Tsar's hymn was thunderous applause and congratulations to and Aleksei Fedorovich L'vov, the composer. One German proclaimed that "we are Russians now!" (Soboleva, 2009, p.76). Composers in Austria and Germany used L'vov's theme in their own works. However, the anthem was not without its critics. Accusations surfaced in Russian papers accusing L'vov of having stolen the melody, one from a German composer or from a Dutch composition (Soboleva, 2009). While these accusations were unfounded, they also indicate that as good as the song was, there was nothing *intrinsically Russian* about the sound of it.

With the collapse of Tsarist Russia, a national anthem entitled "God Save the Tsar" could not stand. Instead, the French Marseilles was re-scored and set to new lyrics, and became the anthem of the Bolsheviks. When Lenin came to power, the Internationale, a Socialist anthem with music written by the French composer Pierre Degeyter gained Lenin's favor and became the *de facto* anthem. (Sobolevo, 2009) Soboleva points out that critics thought the lyrics were "gloomy.. but one can find fault with the music of this 'proletarian hymn'" (p. 81). The tune of the Internationale is, indeed full of zygonic episodes common in uplifting Western European tunes of the day, including the work of Puccini or Gilbert and Sullivan. Under Lenin, The Internationale eventually became completely ingrained into the Soviet landscape. The Internationale, a "borderless" national anthem, rejected the idea of national identity and common notions of patriotism. "All Lenin's nationalising policies were meant to bring the different nations together in a voluntary union, not just one enforced from the centre" (Price, 2007, p.4). Therefore, under Lenin, The Internationale was translated into all the languages of the Soviet Union and chimed from the bells of the Kremlin, and before the rise of Russo-centric nationalism under Stalin, Lenin's policy of regional nationalism favored the acceptance of an anthem with lyrics adapted in many languages, and whose music came from France, far outside the Soviet Union.

Generally, the adaptation of the various national anthems and gives us insight into the musical sameness of *any* national anthem. Daughtry (2003) confirms the idea of Soboleva, and the implied ideas of Kelen and Pavković that the "Nineteenth-century Romantic composers ...can be considered producers of specific musical nationalism, i.e., music in which local folk elements .. are employed to impart the flavor of a particular ethnicity or nation. The majority of the world's national anthems, by contrast, index nationhood .. by adhering to musical conventions established by their European predecessors" (Daughtry, 2003, p.44). In other words, national anthems are a genre unto themselves, and do not, *per se*, express anything about a national identity. Daughtry further points to music theorist Malcolm Boyd's work on anthems in which Boyd identifies two types of anthems: The hymn and the march. Britain's *God Save the King* is the prototype example of the hymnotic anthem, while *La Marseillaises* is the prototype of the march anthem. (2003) As cited earlier in Soboleva (2009), both melodies have been used as anthems in Russia.

The particular historical period reflected in the choice of a national anthem is communicated by the zygonic structure of the music. The *La Marseillaises* is fast-paced and evocative of movement. It is battle-born. In fact, its first lyrics are "Allons enfants de la patrie", 'Let's go, children of the nation', and ends .. "Marchons, marchons q'un sange impur abreuve nos sillons (Halsall, 1997)." Let's march, Let's march so an impure blood can water our furrows.' This style of national anthem often features heads rolling and blood flowing as the children (more often the sons) of the nation rise to do battle with some enemy. For the purposes of studying the design of national

anthems, Daughtry makes an important connection. He says that, unlike flags or other national artefacts, anthems are a collective ritual which re-energizes a nation, and therefore can be seen as a type of technology (Daughtry, 2003).

In 1943, Stalin commissioned a new national anthem. By the time of the composition of the Soviet Hymn in question, the “Unbreakable Union”, Russia’s experience with national anthems had given it some of the most able producers of this *technology* on earth. Stalin, who commissioned the song, wanted a march. What he got is music slower than a march, and the composers intentionally made the melody reflective of a Russian musical style (Sobolevo, 2009). The music is a composition that, when sped up can be marched to, and when slowed down, can be hymnotic, but at the tempo indicated, it is a working song.

Daughtry observes that Stalin realized that soldiers needed something less abstract than some concept of international communism to die for, and so sought to forge a new nationalism, one in which all the Socialist Republics were equal partners, but also one which recognized the historical hegemony of Russia (Daughtry, 2003). This, however would not have been motivation enough to scrap the Internationale. The more compelling argument for changing anthems in the middle of a war is illustrated by Caroline Brooke’s work (2007). In 1943, The Soviet Union needed to win the confidence of its allies, Britain and The United States, and “Churchill had refused to allow it [The Internationale] to be played alongside the national anthems of the other Allied powers” (Brooke, 2007, p.34). The lyrics of the Internationale call for the workers to turn the guns on those who tell soldiers they should die for their country, and denounce the power of God (Kots, A, 1902). However, beyond the need to appease foreign powers, with Hitler’s invasion of Russia, Stalin was in fact telling soldiers they should be prepared to die for their country, and needed an anthem that would serve that cause. The motivation of appeasement of the Allies and the need to rally the people to fight were equally compelling reasons to change the anthem (Brooke, 2007). The shift of point of view, from the Internationale, championing an international union of Socialist Republics to a “friendship of peoples” under the unifying protection of Russia was a signal to the outlying Republics that “that the subjugation of non-Russians to Russian rule had been entirely positive and indeed, largely voluntary. It was — in official propaganda terms at any rate — a union ‘created by the will of the people’” (Brooke, 2007, p. 36).

We begin to perceive a shift in the understood design of Moscow on the part of its outlying republics. Lenin had unified the several republics and had allowed them to maintain autonomy of language and tradition. Stalin insisted upon stanzas extolling his name alongside Lenin’s. Stalin did this in many ways, rewriting the history of tsarist subjugation and mentioning the “greater Russia” as the “welder” of the unbreakable union. (Cunningham, 2004)

Stalin must have had a very specific normative ideal when it came to the choice of the Unbreakable Union anthem. Soboleva alludes to this as he describes the selection process for the new anthem. L’vov’s Tsarist anthem had been hailed as the greatest anthem (Soboleva, 2009) and now as Stalin assembled a force of poets and composers to re-engineer the “technology” of the national identity, one could see the scope of his ambition in the sheer processing of the works, to find another anthem that would be “Conceptually connected with Russia’s first anthem” (p. 86), in other words, better than all the other anthems. The zeal to achieve this goal looked like a musical Manhattan Project. “Over 200 melodies were offered by 170 composers” (Soboleva, p. 87), including Shostakovich and Prokofiev. The result was the melody written by the composer Aleksandrov. Aleksandrov had been a prodigy as a child, and had studied at the same choir school in St. Petersburg where L’vov, the author of the previous Tsarist anthem, had been director. He had also studied under Rimsky-Korsakov and had an “extensive knowledge of Byzantine hymnography and .. [was] .. well versed he was on Orthodox liturgical chants” (Soboleva, 2006, p.91). With his musical pedigree, Aleksandrov was able to introduce a new element into the composition of the Soviet hymn which was unique to the entire genre. In order to establish Russia as the *welder of the Socialist Republics* the “in the sense of the color palette, the anthem’s music should be Russian” (Soboleva, 2006, p.85).

Regardless of ideology or nation, the musical concept of the national anthem had been consistent. It was seen as the expression of a lyrical ideal set to music that is composed within a Western European tradition. However, the fact that Russia alone had used both prototype melodies, the *Marseilles*, and *God Save the Queen*, and had one natively composed anthem that had been widely acclaimed, as well as another that had been internationally popular, in light of Russia's formidable arsenal of talented composers, the "technology" of writing a stirring national anthem was better suited to a legacy of anthem design in Russia than it was to any other nation on earth. In other words, no country was better prepared to write an emotionally moving anthem within the context of the Western European genre of anthem, but which subtly referenced the Russian ethnicity than was the Soviet Union in 1942.

In the studies cited, the authors attempt to explain the evolution of the Russian/Soviet anthems in ethnomusical and historical terms. While they have something to say about the specific melodies related to their Western European Romantic roots, they do not attempt a quantitative study of the particular zygonic episodes of the various anthems.

The definitive approach to a quantifiable study of anthem melodies has been conducted by Karen Cerulo, who discovered that "during periods of high sociopolitical control, elites create and adopt anthems with basic musical codes. As sociopolitical control becomes comparatively weak, elites create and adopt anthems with embellished codes" (Cerulo, 1989, p. 76). Cerulo studies the *Marseilles* and *God Save the Queen* specifically, and measures the "basic musical syntax" (Cerulo, 1993, p.247) of the pieces, and discovers that *God Save the Queen* is relatively free of ornamentation and it "appears fixed, as it utilizes a .. narrow spectrum of musical sounds." (p.248), as opposed to *La Marseilles*' "dense, dynamic" (p.247) sound.

Cerulo relies upon a normative/code interpretation of the music. *Normative* here means the ideal intention of the communication act. In the case of the music of a National anthem, it answers the question, 'What *should* the music communicate?' The communicative means used to reach that normative ideal is called the *code* (Alberts, 1992). In the case of Cerulo's theory, the normative ideal for the British is the maintenance of stability, a feeling of loyalty to the Queen. Power is already centered within the hands of the elite, so the normative goal of the elite is to maintain that power. She thus concludes that the code is a stable, predictable "constancy in the music" (p.248), which is a metaphor for the normative end. *La Marseillaise*, on the other hand, is the hymn of a people challenging the power structure. The normative ideal is: *We (the participants in this anthem) have the power to change things*. Therefore, the code is music which would metaphorically reveal changeable patterns and embellishments.

However, current theorists would argue that the emotional stimulation in music cannot be semiotic in nature. MRI scans reveal that musical arousal can be pre-attentive and are more readily accounted for by phenomenological explanations (Vickoff, 2008). Furthermore, the normative/code approach cannot fully explain every variation in individual reaction to *God Save the Queen*. What if, for instance, a listener falls in love with the melody of *God Save the Queen* and adopts it for his own national anthem? In the case of *God Save the Queen*, the lyrics have been adapted to many different songs, including the US's own *My Country 'Tis of Thee*. The song is therefore transformed into an anti-monarchist song, "From every mountainside, let freedom ring", ends the first verse of the US version of the song. If we can alter the lyrics, and thereby create a change in the normative goal of the piece, can we really say that the normative/code model can apply? On the other hand, is the example advanced at the beginning of this paper, one in which an anthem elicits loyalty, even in the enemies of the system it represents, proof that the normative/code model works? A study of the evolution of a particular communication theory might better explain a variation in individual response.

Communication as Design Theory

Until the late twentieth century, the study of language and the study of communication were "not happily married" (Jacobs, 1994, p.213). Theorist Scott Jacobs' idea was to use discourse

analysis to intervene in that unhappy marriage and bring about reconciliation. The concept of discourse analysis had previously been viewed as a “normative/code model” (Jacobs, 1994, p. 214) linking discourse to linguistic analysis. Jacobs was suggesting a shift to an “inferential/strategic” (Jacobs, 1994, p.214) model. Jacobs observed that while linguistic analysis is concerned with what people say, this does not tell the whole story. Humans also decide what *not* to say. Meaning is implied. For example, in Guatemala, if I see my friend, I say “/kyuβo/?” This literally means, “what was there?” And even for non-local native Spanish speakers, I might not understand that the normative expectation for such a question. /kyuβo/ implies that I know that the speaker is asking about my current condition, and is expecting an answer that describes how I am feeling. Furthermore, if all is well, I am expected to answer, “/kyay/?”, literally, “what is there?” By returning the expected output, I am implying that I am fine, and that I want to know how my co-communicant is. If the co-communicant does not answer, it is assumed that both communicants’ condition is fine.

In Guatemala, the meaningful silence of the communicants is understood in a way that cannot be described by linguistic analysis, because nothing was said. And that same silence, processed by speakers of the same language but lacking a common local culture, does not parse. It needs to be explained.

In this example, we can see the inferential/strategic forces of common culture at work. In a given slice of time, omission and silence is an effective communicative strategy. This is a direct affront to the concept of “one form, one meaning”, and it challenges the linguist’s notion that “the most efficient communicative instrument is one in which there is a one-to-one correspondence between the signaling units and the things signaled.” (Contini-Morava, 1995. p.8)

The *meaningful unit* in this case, is the choice *not* to speak, which, barring cases of pathological talkativeness, constitutes the most common “signaling unit” of the human condition. Even more efficient than a one-to-one correspondence between signaling units and the things signaled, is the signaling units, so ingrained upon a particular culture, that no exchange of signaling units is necessary to transmit the “thing signalled”.

Jacobs’s main point was that “language use is multifunctional..”[it] “reflects the ways in which individuals manage multiple goals..” (Jacobs, 1994, p. 220) He explains that the organization of language use indicates that communicants constantly revise strategies based upon personal, cultural (Jacobs says “ritual”) norms, coherence norms, what the communicant deems as “understood”, including what the speaker assumes about the co-communicant’s linguistic competence (Jacobs, 1994). In this way, we can explain in communicative terms why a grown man might speak differently to a child than he does with his colleagues, or the assumptions about language a professor makes when speaking to a class of freshmen versus graduate students. These are phenomena that linguistic analysis does not always address.

Jacob’s work focuses on argumentation. From his work in 2007 with Sally Jackson on the *Derailments of argumentation* (Jacobs and Jackson, 2007) back to his early collaboration with Jackson on *The Structure of conversational argument* (Cited in Jacobs, 1989), Jacobs formulates a hypothesis based upon the idea that intentionally designed communication systems “can be read quite easily as a design proposal”(Jacobs and Jackson, 2007, p.122), in the particular case discussed in the article, “a proposed system for conducting discussion aimed at assuring reasonableness in the search for resolution of disagreement.”

This is the foundation upon which Mark Aakhus advances a broader theory of Communication as Design. In formal systems, such as courtroom and arbitration environments studied by Jacobs and Jackson, individuals are not working *from scratch* to design new systems of communication to achieve some ideal goal. Instead, communicants are *educated*, often through formalized training, but also to exposure to situations in which the expected output is either successfully achieved or it is not.

Aakhus carries Communication as Design outside the realm of argumentation and studies how the application of “techniques, devices and procedures .. shape the possibilities of

communication.” (Aakhus, 2007, p.112) These may not emerge, like Helen, fully formed, clothed and grown, from the head of the theorist, but are based upon tweaks to previous designs which may contain some flaw. Perhaps this flaw can simply be that the prevailing design does not quite adequately express the individuality of its user, one of the primary goals of “individuality, individual identity, voice and agency” (Johnstone, 2000).

In fact, the primary “design flaw” in the romantic- classic dialectic can be seen as the evolution of the desire to dismiss conformity to a prescribed design, because the choice of a particular communication design itself can help individuate a communicant. This paper, for instance, is intentionally written in the third person, and its author, because he is still in a primal state of discovering the nuances of design in a scholarly work, dares not challenge the classical prescriptions of the design, lest it lead further from the idealized expectations linked to this paper’s normative outcomes. By and by, as he learns to trace the intricacies and arabesques of the scholarly work, he may discover that his romanticized view of expected outcome is not met by the classical design. At that point, he will begin to tweak his writing to include self-referential text, perhaps at first in a thinly disguised third person format, but eventually in the full-blown first person.

The previous paragraph can easily be read from an inferential/strategic (Alberts, 1992) design point of view .

Aakhus, and his scholarly offshoots have concentrated on studying the application of new technologies to communication design. Designers of new technology may not be as experienced with communication theory as they are with invention. Consequently, they will create technology which anticipates communicative outcomes very different from those which are envisioned by their users. In 2006, Aakhus bridged the theoretical gap between Communication as Design in the study of argumentation, and the study of emerging technologies. (Moor & Aakhus, 2006) Aakhus endeavored to tie “Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) and argumentation theory” (Moor & Aakhus, 2006, p.93) to how “activities are coordinated through language.” (p. 93-94) Moor and Aakhus discovered that the difference between classical models of argumentation and the restrictions of technology’s capacity, circa 2006, created a need for a “co-evolution of argumentation routines”.(Moor & Aakhus, 2006, p.96)

The cognitive leap from argumentation to broader topics opens Communication as Design to the study of applied technology. Certainly, it has most often been used in this context. Moor and Aakhus’ 2006 work has generated seventy-four cites, nearly all focused upon theories of collaboration on the internet. Aakhus’ more general 2007 article, which does not specifically mention argumentation, covers a wide range of large group communication, from openings of 911 calls to the drafting of constitutional amendments. (“Google scholar search”, 2014)

Of all these citations, only one study appears which deals with design from the point of view of an artistic endeavor. Even here, the article does not specifically speak about the creative process, but of the design applied by creative artists, commercial artists and clients to visual projects (Piché, 2012)

No reading of Aakhus’ 2007 paper would exclude the study of the communicative strategies of music from an application of the Communication as Design theory. In many ways, the study of music parallels the evolution of communication as it relates to the invention and use of technology and its impact upon the evolution of theory. (Juslin & Laukka, 2003)

Aakhus and his predecessors propose an inferential/strategic design model would best explain the co-evolution of public reaction and performance of an anthem. By *Inferential*, we mean that the listener interprets the music based upon phenomenological factors such as physical positioning in relationship to the music, compassion toward the music event as the emotional expression of other, sense of place, and sense of belonging to a group ritual (Vickhoff, 2009), and by *strategic* we mean how the listener understands the intentions of the composer/performer. In a communication event, such as a conversation, communication is an interplay between normative/code and inferential/strategic episodes. A communicant has an intended meaning and employs a code to impart that meaning. The co-communicant interprets not just the code, but the

motivation of the speech act and responds accordingly. If the perception of the communicant is that the communication act has not met the normative goal, the communicant alters the design of the communication based not only on normative goals, but on the interpretation of the inferential/strategic implications of the response. In his 2007 paper on Communication as Design, Aakhus suggests that the formulating of discourse strategies is central to communication itself. That is to say, when we are communicating, we are acting as naive theorists, forming hypotheses about the way our messages are being received, and assessing the success or failure of those strategies to help us to *tweak* our design.

According to *Perception-Action theory*, advanced by psychologists James and Eleanor Gibson, the purpose of perception is to take action, and that action is always to navigate in a given environment, in order to change perception, the better to navigate a given environment, the better to gain perception, the better to navigate a given environment. This is what Gibson called an *action-perception loop* (Hurley, 2001). Communication as Design theory is analogous to an action-perception loop. In a communication environment, the purpose of communication is to take action, that is, to communicate in order to change our perception about the communication, tweak our hypothesis, in order to navigate within that communication environment, so that we may communicate in order to change our perception about the communication, the better to navigate a communication environment. If one substituted the word “perception” with “design”, and “action” with “communication”, one might even consider Communication as Design theory the *Perception-Action loop theory of communication*.

Bjorn Vickhoff's *The Perspective theory for music perception and emotion*.

According to Bjorn Vickhoff's theory, In the case of musical perception, the action-perception loop works by attaching auditory perception to the physical search for the source of the sound, which triggers the brain to turn toward the sound, and the muscles anticipate either moving toward a beckoning sound, or moving away from a frightening one. This, when we are listening to music, MRIs show that our brains are anticipating musical events and triggering neurons associated with movement.

As we grow, Vickhoff claims, we learn to associate sound and structure and that in turn modifies our perception, and the actions we perform based upon those associations. One could speculate that these actions may have universal implications based upon human behavior. Quiet behavior may indicate the idea of taking *small actions* that compel a person, for instance, to fall to her knees; actions that imply that the source of the perceived sound is small. The call to action, the threat on the horizon signals a physical rising, a *moving towards* something, because the sound is perceived as distant.

Auditory perception is pre-attentive (Vickhoff, 2008), that is, unlike language, it triggers reactions before we process the meaning of those reactions. However, we also learn to locate the source of sounds and process our reactions, until not only do we understand, but in the case of musicians, we are able to manipulate sound to evoke reactions. We intentionally use imitation to create musical events (Ockelford, 2009) capable of evoking pre-attentive responses in our listeners.

Vickhoff's brilliant thesis gives rise to a theory which he calls *Perspective theory for music perception and emotion* (Vickhoff, 2008). Vickhoff posits that the evocation of emotion in music is not predicated upon culture-based metaphorical connections between sound symbols and meanings, and therefore cannot be conceptualized as a *language*. As universal as musical evocation is across culture (Balkwill & Thompson, 1999), Vickhoff doesn't see musical arousal as phylogenetic, per se, even if he does cite studies linking neurons that trigger physical activity to listening, both intentionally, and unintentionally, to music. He concludes, based upon neurological evidence, that on a pre-attentive level, “we process music as if it was an expressive person, or as if it was a

landscape; that we use circuits originally “designed” for the perception of the other and the landscape, and that these processes generate emotions.” (p.270).

Vickhoff relates our emotional reaction to music with several centers of cerebral activity, and connects the source processing domains (phylogenetic brain function) to source domain: processing music. He speaks of four perspectives that correspond to different regions of the brain:

1) The Egocentric Perspective: We orient ourselves physically in relationship to the musical source.

2) The Dyadic perspective: “Through implicit imitation the observer copies the movement of the other to her own body or adds complementary action.” (p. 268) The imitation and anticipation of the movement of the other not only teaches how to behave, but it teaches us how to anticipate and defend ourselves in a struggle against an adversary. Vickoff’s studies show that the activity of *mirror neurons* are especially active in a musical event. The possibility that we both anticipate and imitate the actions and emotions of the performer/composer reflects the fact that our brain is structured to not just feel the feelings and perform the actions with others, but to anticipate both the feelings and the emotions.

3) Allocentric perspective: The processing of place, rules and sequences, corresponding to three separate parts of the brain. Here is where we figure out how to get home after getting lost, and how we develop a sense of how a phrase in a song is supposed to end. The violation of these rules stimulates emotions. It is where we notice the stray note produced by the amateur violinist as “painful”, or applaud in the wrong place when we think a song is over.

4) Tribal principle: Finally, our mirror neurons are triggered when we are part of some group action, and the joint action is re-enforced my memory creating ritual. “This process allows us to implicitly understand the goal of an interacting group and tells us how to contribute” (271). Vickhoff specifically mentions standing and singing of the national anthem at a sporting event as being one of those shared rituals, and in this case, “music is connected to a collective understanding” (p271) thereby fulfilling our desire to imitate and to contribute.

Conclusion

So, what in the Stalin’s 1943 Soviet national anthem could be so compelling that modern Americans could fall under its spell? Part of the answer lies in the juxtaposition of Bjorn Vickoff’s Perspective theory for music perception and emotion and Mark Aakhus’s Communication as Design theory.

Here are the relevant facts:

1. Russia/Soviet Union had utilized four previous national anthems prior to the creation of the “Unbreakable Union” Hymn of 1943 (Slobolevo, 2009)

2. Two of those anthems were direct borrowings from the prototype national anthems, the *La Marseillaise* march style of anthem and the *God Save the King* hymn-style anthems. (Daughtry, 2003)

3. If we consider music composition a communication event (Silbermann & Stewart 1963) “capable of transmitting intended emotional expression”, then according to Aakhus, because “design is a natural fact about communication” (Aakhus 2007:113), any musical composition will be subject to a process of design, and any modification of the communication event will attempt to bring the construction of the code closer to the normative model. Russia had four successful melodies prior to Stalin’s anthem. Part of the normative code, in fact part of the design of a Russian national anthem, had to include a global positive response to conform to the expected normative goals.

4. 200 separate anthems were composed and submitted for approval. (Slobokov 2009) Through a winnowing process, these were narrowed down, reworked and re-engineered. If a National anthem is truly a “technology” (Daughtry 2003) then the Soviet Union dedicated the maximum resources to perfecting this technology.

5. The sameness of all national anthems (Daughtry 2003) was apparent to the Russian Composers who understood how they could reference these similarities while still including elements of a Russian *color palette* to communicate the idea of a unifying Russian tradition.

6. In this way, the Soviet Hymn was comprised of Zygonic patterns of successful musical events in the previous anthems, combined with Zygonic patterns borrowed from Orthodox hymns (Soboleva 2009)

In light of these events, we must assume that the design of the melody of the Russian National anthem was successfully able to approximate the Russian normative goal of “best” as expressed in the genre of Western European National anthems.

In terms of the ears of the American listeners, we will examine the YouTube reaction based upon a Communication as Design criterion. These listeners, being somewhat versed in the Zygonic patterns of several national anthems, and therefore anticipating the normative design of “best” as applied to the genre of national anthems concluded that the design “tweak” represented “simply the best anthem” (gingabarbarian & pullinthelateshift 2013).

The normative ideal was not metaphorical. The design of the Soviet anthem as a representation of Communist ideals failed. The anthem was only able to communicate musicality, and that musicality trumped metaphor.

The reason why musicality trumps metaphor in a national anthem relates to the way music communicates emotionality. From a phenomenological perspective, Vickhoff argues that musical arousal is pre-attentive and evocative on a preconscious level. The zygonic structure of the music aroused an egocentric physiological reaction. The contour of the music triggered a reaction to stand and scan the horizon, conforming to the internationally understood custom of standing solemnly for a national anthem.

The repetition of verse and chorus within predictable anthemic structures borrowed from prototype anthems allowed the listeners to correctly anticipate the movement of the piece, triggering an empathy to the music and the musicians that was manifest physically through the firing of mirror neurons. The syntax of the piece was simple enough that the listeners did not experience any allocentric disconnect, that is ‘get lost’ in the complexity of the melody. Finally, with these conditions fulfilled, the sense of physical attention, empathy in the triggering of mirror neurons, and the sense of not being lost in the musical event, the listeners found themselves able to pre-consciously ‘understand the goal of [the] interacting group’ and thus were able to achieve a sense of participating in the ‘tribal ritual’ of listening to the Soviet anthem.

Such Music-based theory can carry powerful implications for communication theorists. If Vickhoff’s theory is correct, then music can be intentionally designed to sell an idea or product in subversive, preconscious ways. In the study, the YouTube listeners were aware of the disconnect between political philosophy and musical evocativeness, but perhaps this is not always the case. In any case, the case of the Soviet National anthem indicates that by starting with design prototypes and working towards some qualitative goal, an enterprising marketing person may just be able to sell saltwater to a freshwater fish, as the saying goes, or even sell communism to the capitalists.

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