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# Rising Up with "Kalyna": Examining the invitational rhetoric of "Ой у лузі червона калина" as a social media response to the Russian war in Ukraine.

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***Summary:***
*Since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022, "Ой у лузі червона калина" ("Oh, the red viburnum in the meadow") has become a symbol of the Ukrainian people's resistance and unity against the aggressor. When Ukrainian pop-musician Andriy Khlyvnyuk posted his performance of the song on Instagram, multiple social media platforms exploded with numerous mashup versions of the song, all manifesting a symbolic counterargument toward the war narrative of the attacker. Employing invitational rhetoric as our framework, we analyze three video products created within what we call the "Kalyna" movement, one featuring the original performance by Khlyvnyuk along with other Ukrainian celebrities, and two others that stem from Estonia and Georgia. We suggest that, rather than serving as a direct call to arms, the song's renditions reflect the performers' own negotiation of their national selfhood and thus enact support of a nation under assault by celebrating its history and its right to freedom. We conclude that the media content produced in the participatory culture of the "Kalyna" movement all but validates its voluntary participants' perspectives on issues of independence, cultural identity, and human and national values.*

***Keywords:*** "Ой у лузі червона калина," Andriy Khlyvnyuk, war in Ukraine, invitational rhetoric, participatory culture, national identity, YouTube.

## Introduction

This publication, first drafted in March of 2023, is fueled by our deepest sympathy for the Ukrainian people, who are presently suffering *en masse* from an unprovoked, full-scale invasion by neighboring Russia. Recognizing it as an opportunity to speak out against this current, or any other, aggression, the three members of our multidisciplinary and multinational team focus on a lone product of resistance that has played a role in the unification of Ukrainians and has manifested itself as a unique form of rhetorical response to an attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine. The song "Ой у лузі червона калина" ("Oh, the Red Viburnum in the meadow"), henceforth referred to as "Kalyna," is an example of a patriotic song with deep roots in Ukraine's fight for independence. Originally the 1914 anthem of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, long banned but still hibernating in the fabric of Ukraine's culture during the Soviet era, "Kalyna" re-entered the public media domain in Ukraine as a powerful rebuttal to the war that started on February 24th, 2022.

A significant part of the driving force for this re-entry is a series of viral videos shared on social media, initiated by Andriy Khlyvnyuk, a member of the Ukrainian pop band Boombox. On February 27th, 2022, just three days after the beginning of the Russian invasion, Khlyvnyuk posted on Instagram[1] his *a capella* performance of the song at the Sophia Square in Kyiv,

[1] https://www.instagram.com/p/Cae5TydPAxh/

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Ukraine's Capital. On April 2nd, another video followed, with Khlyvnyuk's recording leading a mashup performance of fifteen Ukrainian celebrities.[2] Further, on April 7th, a legendary English rock band Pink Floyd responded on YouTube with their rendition of the song, titled "Hey! Hey! Rise up!" featuring Khlyvnyuk and powerful images of human suffering.[3] Consequently, YouTube has exploded with dozens of versions of the song, serving as a symbolic counterargument against the war narrative of the attacker.

While discussing the rhetorical situation of the international resurgence of "Kalyna," this essay provides an analysis of the original Ukrainian video that started the trend, henceforth referred to as YouTube Video I, as well as two other performances: a rehearsed rendition of the song performed at the Tallinn Song Festival grounds by more than a hundred of Estonian choirs, two choirs from the United States and singers from Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Finland, Sweden, Iran, and Poland[4] (i.e., You Tube Video II),[5] and a live flash mob-like performance in Tbilisi, Georgia, featuring various Georgian artists singing to an audience of street spectators (i.e., You Tube Video III).[6]

Our choice of these three videos, though meant to represent parts of what we call the "Kalyna" movement, does not in any way aim at summarizing the multiplicity of responses to the original Khlyvnyuk performance. Indeed, the world of social media would make such a summary a completely impossible task; to this day, there have been dozens of amateur videos clearly inspired by that of Khlyvnyuk, posted to YouTube alone. Rather, our focus on the three renditions of "Kalyna," produced in three different countries, at various times in 2022, by music artists and those not directly associated with the music industry, invokes a deeply fragmentary and multi-faceted nature of the anti-war movement and points to what Henry Jenkins [2012] would call a participatory culture of engagement, a culture that invites members of various levels of expertise to participate in the creation and dissemination of content. Further, we argue that the song's prominence in present day Ukraine and its transformation from a Riflemen's marching song of the pre-WWI struggle for independence into a series of digital media products, made, shared, or enacted by Ukrainians and, later, non-Ukrainians around the globe, make it far more than an ode to disobedience, call to arms, and struggle in defense of motherland. Rather, it is an example of a rhetorical happening that is less an act of persuasion and more a performative embrace of nationhood in the face of an unprovoked assault on humanity and violence that claimed the lives of thousands of the innocent.

Additionally, we maintain that the stylistic and genre variety of the song's many YouTube-mediated renditions reflects the performers' own negotiation of their national and cultural identity, be it Estonian Song Festival's rootedness in the national awakening, or the historic significance of the Georgian male polyphonic singing. We propose that each of the YouTube videos of "Kalyna" contributes to the invitational rhetoric of the "Kalyna" movement by embodying an "offering" of a treasured piece of the musicians' cultural identity, expressed in their choice of a particular genre, instrumentation, and/or a singing style.

To analyze the intent, performance, and impact of "Kalyna," we adopt the theoretical concept of *invitational rhetoric*, a no-persuasion bound approach to argumentation, or, rather, negotiation, projection, and understanding of identity that was first proposed by Sonja Foss and Kathy Griffin in 1995. As feminist scholars, Foss and Griffin have long expressed concern over the limited power positions and outcomes of persuasive rhetoric of traditional western thought. Therefore, they propose an "alternative rhetoric [….], one guided in the feminist principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination" [2]. A revised, more recent proposal for what Foss and Griffin now label as "a feminist rhetoric" [2020][7] includes six conditions for

[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EV_vT0Vud5Q
[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saEpkcVi1d4
[4] https://www.estoniasingsforukraine.org/about
[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWSMdxAxW3c
[6] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLD_2iY7lCI
[7] In this essay, we use both terms interchangeably.

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negotiation, understanding, and establishing shared ground – not conquering or converting. These conditions include safety, immanent value, freedom of identity, choice, autonomous independence, and order [13], all of which, as we argue throughout this project, are seen in the intent of the "Kalyna" mediated performances.

Moreover, we recognize that, since the beginning of our work on this essay, the war has developed and transformed into a complex mechanism of defense and offense on the part of Ukrainian forces. Still, in our view, the message of unity and rhetoric of non-violence, carried by the song and its many mediated performances, prevails.

**I. The history of "Kalyna"**[8]

In the present-day, wartime Kyiv, one can hear "Kalyna" everywhere: in the malls, restaurants and bars, subway, and other public spaces. YouTube Video I is the most popular rendition, but there are other ones in circulation, including a performance by three-year-old Leon from Irpin, the Air Force Orchestra of Ukrainian Armed Forces, and an animated rendering for children. However, the history of "Kalyna" spans over a century and includes several versions drawn from different vernacular sources. Today's "Kalyna" stems from Stepan Charnetskyi's 1914 adaptation of the traditional Ukrainian song "Steep banks spilled over," the last verse of which begins with the text, "Oh, the Red Viburnum in the Meadow." [9,10] According to Charnetskyi [2014], he wrote a new melody to the folksong's text to be used in a production of Vasyl' Pachovskyi's 1911 play, *The Sun of The Ruin*[11] [35]. The play was performed in 1914 in different cities in Western Ukraine, and consequently, the song became popular as a symbol of the national spirit.

As Kozubel [2015] discusses that, at the time, the territory of Ukraine was divided between Austrian-Hungarian and Russian empires. In the 19th century, gradually, the ideas of liberation and independence had been spreading throughout both parts, and eventually, in 1913-1914, inspired by those ideas, the system of paramilitary societies had developed on the territory of Halychyna,[12] and their members became the first Sich Riflemen. The formation of this unit on August 6th, 1914 – originally a unit within the Austrian-Hungarian Army – is seen by historians as the first effort to create the Ukrainian national army. Later in the same year, Hryhori Truch, a *chotar* (a troop leader) of Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (Ukraïnski sichovi stril'tsi /USS) added three new verses to "Oh, the Red Viburnum in the Meadow," and "Kalyna" became a part of the body of songs associated with Ukrainian Sich Riflemen movement. The Riflemen were active in 1914-1920, during a difficult period in Ukrainian history, when its territory was a battleground of WWI, revolutions, and failed attempts to create an independent Ukrainian state. During WWI, Ukrainian Sich Riflemen created unrest on the Russian front, and after the end of the war in 1918, they were first transformed into the Army of West Ukrainian People's Republic, later, the Army of Ukrainian People's Republic, and in 1919, into Ukrainian Galician Army – all while continuously fighting for Ukrainian independence. Their song repertoire, including "Kalyna" as the symbol of free spirit, if not rebellion, was "entered organically to the song repertoire of the rural and urban population in the post-war period" [Kuzmenko 2005: 11].[13]

[8] All translations from Ukrainian and Polish by Iryna Tukova.

[9] https://zaborona.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/rozlylysya-kruti-berezhechky-ukrainian-cossack-song.mp4

[10] Another version is the remake of the folksong "Oh, the red viburnum bloomed over the well." [За волю України. Антологія пісень національно-визвольних змагань / Упорядник Євген Гіщинський.Луцьк: Волинська обласна друкарня, 2002]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMdzsD79FAg

[11] The Ruin (1657–1687) is the period in the 17th century Ukrainian history that resulted in a collapse of the Ukrainian state.

[12] At the time, a Western Ukrainian region of Halychyna (the area surrounding Lviv and Krakow) was a part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

[13] "[...] органічно увійшли до пісенного репертуару сільського та міського населення повоєнного часу."

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Figure 1: Ukrainian Sich Riflemen.[14]

According to Kobryn [2007], in addition to their militaristic role, Ukrainian Sich Riflemen took a conscious effort to engage in cultural and educational activities, including the founding of the first Ukrainian-speaking educational institution in the Russian Empire, and, within their own structure, a formation of two choirs, three brass bands, a string quartet, and a mandolin orchestra [43]. Furthermore, as Kuzmenko [2005] discusses, the Riflemen created their own song repertoire, known as the Riflemen's Songs, "[…] a collection of songs comprising different genres of both folk and professional origin, all sharing the ideology of freedom and independence, and reflecting the heroic stages of national liberation struggle of Ukrainian people during WWI, Ukrainian-Polish war, and Ukrainian anti-Bolshevik war" [11].[15] After 1920, The Riflemen's songs have not disappeared; rather, they continued to exist in different strata of Ukrainian culture between World Wars I and II. Many of the songs were passed over to the repertoire of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army,[16] active in the 1940s-1950s, at the time of the USSR, while being forbidden as everything related to the sentiment of the Ukrainian national liberation [Kuzmenko, 2005: 15, 32]. The rebirth of the interest in the Riflemen's songs, and particularly in "Kalyna," coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the beginning of Ukrainian independence [Pravdiuk, 1991: 31–39].

Examining the score of "Kalyna," one immediately notices a combination of lyrical melodiousness of the first two lines of the verse with the assertiveness of the third line, featuring an iconic, strong gesture of the perfect forth, followed by the direct modulation to the relative major in chorus, further projecting a sense of energy and stamina. Kobryn [2007] traces some elements of the Ukrainian epic and lyric songs, historic Cossacks' marches, old-Galician anthems, and marches of the early 20th century in "Kalyna's" musical and textual content. And it

[14] https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CU%5CK%5CUkrainianSichRiflemen.htm

[15] "[...] це цикл різножанрових українських пісень як літературного, так і народного походження, об'єднаних за ідейно-тематичними ознаками, що відобразили героїчні етапи національно-визвольної боротьби українського народу під час Першої світової (1914–1918), українсько-польської (1918–1919) та українсько-протибільшовицької (1919–1920) воєн."

[16] See Gishchynskyi, Evgen (ed.). *For the will of Ukraine. Anthology of songs of national liberation struggles*. Lutsk: Volyn regional printing house, 2002. [Гіщинський, Євген (упор.). За волю України. Антологія пісень національно-визвольних змагань. Луцьк: Волинська обласна друкарня.]

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is this fluid and effective mix of the rural and urban traditions that promulgated the song's longevity and popularity in Ukraine, and since 2022, all over the world, expressed in the specifics of each rendition in terms of their style, genre, and a performative aspect, thus, contextualizing "Kalyna" within multiplicity of diverse national histories and musical cultures. The many qualities of "Kalyna" as a carrier of Ukrainian history and culture is, without a doubt, one of the reasons the song became an anthem of the Ukrainian resistance following Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

## II. Analysis of Videos

### a) A Preview

In the background of our argument, we discuss two conditions that predate the war that broke out on February 24th, 2022, and thus the release of YouTube Video I:

I) A predominant line of the collective thinking in both Russia and Ukraine in the period leading up to the start of the war was doubt or nonbelief in a possibility of a Russian invasion. Even with the bloodless takeover of the Crimea in 2014 and the partial invasion and control of two provinces in Ukraine's Donbass Region, a full-scale war seemed unfathomable and thus highly unlikely. Even after first reports of Russia amassing substantial quantities of military personnel and equipment in direct proximity to the border of Ukraine and the US President Biden famously admitting to thinking that Russia's President Putin "made up his mind [to invade]," the international community was highly divided on the prospects of a first full-out war since the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, and a first full-out war between two of Europe's largest and most populous countries since the end of World War II. In fact, as late as February 15th, 2022, Maria Zakharova, spokesperson for Russia's Department of State, openly mocked the warnings coming from multiple observers and intelligence communities that a war was imminent. Thus, the invasion that began in the early hours of February 24 *had not come* without a warning yet was a shocking development for most, with people finding themselves utterly unprepared for the reality of city bombardments, displacement or scarce evacuation routes, and news of war-related atrocities.

2) Even after the war broke out, Russia's armed forces, though clearly unwelcome welcome on Ukraine's sovereign soil, were not unconditionally demonized, or fought against. Many of those whose towns and villages were being occupied took it to the streets to shame the invaders and demand that they go home, rather than *fight* them. Numerous videos of the period posted on social media featured Ukrainian citizens openly displaying anti-Russia sentiment or individuals *lecturing* Russian commanders or soldiers, calling on basic decency and urging retreat. For example, in Kherson, a city occupied by Russia on the first day of the war, people staged daily protests. Multiple reports emerged of Russia's POWs receiving medical aid in Ukrainian hospitals, with many of the captured recording messages to loved ones in Russia, reassuring them of safety and good care in captivity. Therefore, while from day one, Ukraine put forth its best effort to fend off the invasion, a significant part of the fight was delivered in unconventional ways for a war that has one nation leveling cities and knowingly attacking civilian targets. The Ukrainian response oftentimes looked like a grassroots-like negotiation with/shaming of the unwanted occupier and a treatment that is consistent with an arrival of a very rude, uninvited visitor, rather than an archenemy.

Paying attention to these two conditions is important because of the mere fact that Ukrainians were not ready for a full-scale war and, at the civic or personal levels, did not primarily or significantly focus on preparing for a judgment-day-like fight aimed at enemy extermination. Therefore, at least the initial response of many Ukrainians desperate in their grappling with Russia's brutal arrival was that of pledging allegiance to their country – by ascertaining and declaring their nationality, stating that the uninvited visitors were ruthlessly violating their home, or simply communicating their love of their country (via explaining,

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expressing disbelief, wearing national symbols or clothing, singing, etc.), *not* instantly engaging in violent infighting or sabotage of the invader.

In this sense, a non-violent "lecture" delivered by a common Ukrainian citizen to the occupier's forces flooding the streets of Ukraine's towns and villages during the first day of the invasion,[17] an unknown man playing Ukraine's national anthem on a balcony of an apartment building in Sumy,[18] a musician playing the piano to air raid sirens in Lviv,[19] and the Khlyvnyuk-led performance of "Kalyna" that has now developed into a symbol of Ukrainian resistance are all acts of declaring (belonging to a nation), rather than an explicit call to arms or engaging in a physical fight against the invader.

**b) YouTube Video I: Ukraine**

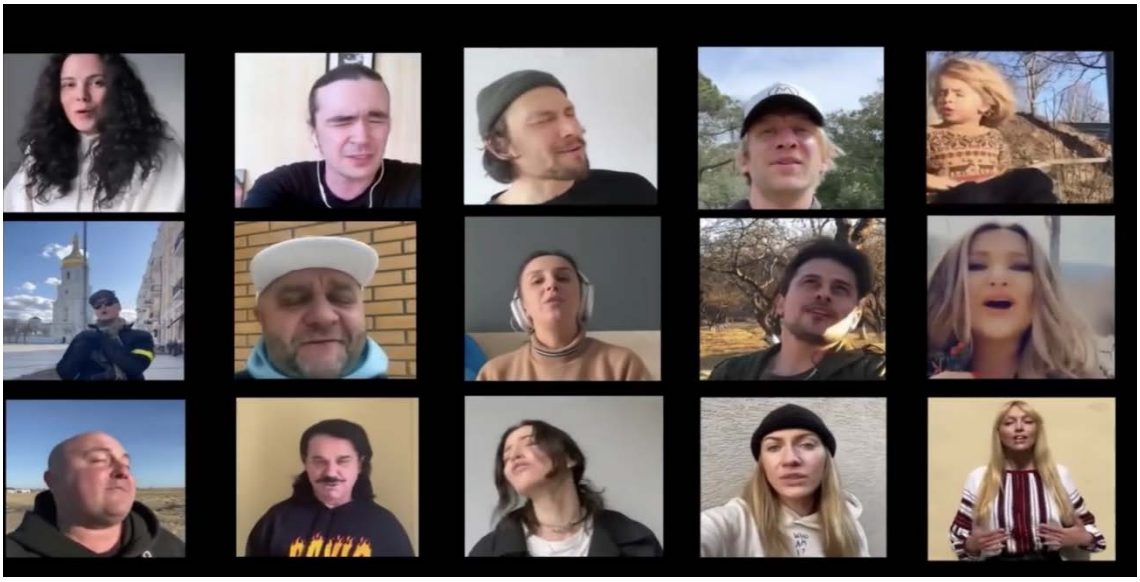

Figure 2: A screenshot of the Khlyvnyuk-led "Ой у лузі червона калина," first shared on YouTube on April 2nd, 2022.

**First row (left to right):** NK (aka as Nastya Kamenski), musician; Epolets, musician; Dmitry Kandai, musician; Ivan Dorn, musician; and Leo, a boy from Irpen, a suburb of Kyiv occupied by Russia's armed forces on the first day of the war.

**Second row:** Andryi Khlyvnyuk, musician; Egor Krutagolov, actor and TV personality; Dzhamala, musician, winner of Eurovision 2012; Hassan Nazar, musician; Natalia Mohylevska, music artist.

**Third row:** Yuriy Trach, actor; Pavlo Dibrov, TV personality; Nadiia Dorofeeva, musical artist; Lesya Nikityuk, TV personality; Olya Polyakova, musical artist.

In our view, the first mashup performance of "Kalyna" on April 2nd, 2022, played a critical role in establishing this format as a YouTube-mediated framework for a purposeful rhetorical happening. We argue that a simple rendition of "Kalyna" heard on this video, performed by the usually polished stars in an unfiltered and unrefined manner, amounts to more than an impassioned serenade to Ukraine that is compared to the beautiful bloom of the viburnum tree, or a call to arms that one may infer from the text. Rather, we argue, it represents an act of ascertaining the national identity of Ukraine as a people, and an act of Ukrainian defiance of

[17] https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8SEvOa2kGTk
[18] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nTuQZsdKho
[19] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3eXnhMJBpg

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Russia's official narrative of Ukraine as a non-country. The following analysis of the visual, textual, and semantic layers of YouTube Video I supports our argument.

First, while Andriy Khlyvnyuk, who appears first in the video, holds a machine rifle, and musician Hassan Nazar wears combat attire, the military theme does not develop beyond these visual markers, with most of the video's imagery featuring civilians and no additional signifiers for war, death, or fighting.

Second, only the first verse of the song is performed (repeated three times to a growing number of singers), with the following being the exact translation of the lyrics:

*Ой у лузі червона калина похилилася,*
*Чогось наша славна Україна зажурилася.*
*А ми тую червону калину підіймемо,*
*А ми нашу славну Україну, гей-гей, розвеселимо!*
*А ми тую червону калину підіймемо,*
*А ми нашу славну Україну, гей-гей, розвеселимо!*

*Oh, in the meadow a red kalyna has bent down low,*
*For some reason, our glorious Ukraine is in sorrow.*
*And we'll take that red kalyna and we will raise it up,*
*And, hey-hey, we shall cheer up our glorious Ukraine!*
*And we'll take that red kalyna and we will raise it up,*
*And, hey-hey, we shall cheer up our glorious Ukraine!*

Thus, the emphasized message, though unequivocally to protect Ukraine, is to cheer Ukraine up, and not to march against the enemy. The full version of the song, however, especially the third verse, contains a far more direct reference to the former (see below), which the video, in all its patriotic drive, does not include.

*Марширують наші добровольці у кривавий тан,*
*Визволяти братів-українців з московських кайдан.*
*А ми наших братів-українців визволимо,*
*А ми нашу славну Україну, гей-гей, розвеселимо!*
*А ми наших братів-українців визволимо,*
*А ми нашу славну Україну, гей-гей, розвеселимо!*

*Marching forward, our fellow volunteers, into a bloody fray,*
*To free our brother Ukrainians from Moscow shackles.*
*And we will liberate our brother Ukrainians,*
*And we will cheer our glorious Ukraine up, hey-hey!*
*And we will liberate our brother Ukrainians,*
*And we will cheer our glorious Ukraine up, hey-hey!*

Further, "Kalyna" does not appear as directed at an audience of those fighting on the front lines, and who are being drafted or voluntarily enlisting for service. Though, admittedly, its patriotic message, the urgency, and the timing of delivery do have encouragement of fighting for Ukraine as its message, it may be viewed as substantially different from a similar song, "Arise, Great Country" ["Vstavai, strana ogromnaia"] that drove the resistance of the Soviet People during the Nazi invasion of the USSR in 1941-1944 and is still widely associated with the Soviet Union's victory in World War II. The clear message of "Arise, Great Country" is to "engage in mortal combat with the enemy; give the fight all you have." However, the summary of the selected verses in the Khlyvnyuk-led video of "Kalyna" is far less war-like or suggestive of

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mortal combat: “We are Ukrainians; we are a glorious and independent nation, and we are here to defend, support, or otherwise *cheer up* our country.” This distinction is important as one of the premises of this war is President Putin’s declaration of Ukraine as a country that had not existed.

**c) YouTube Video II: Estonia**

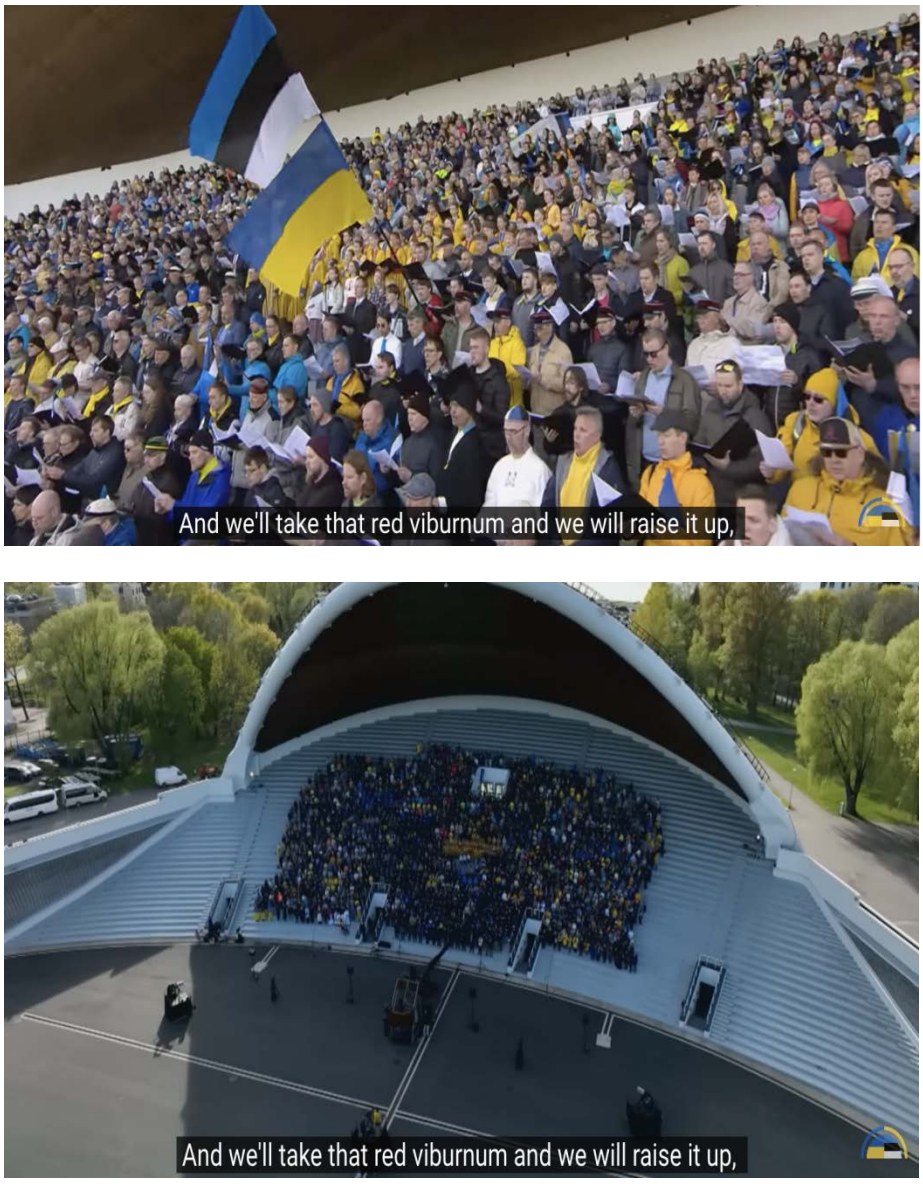


Figure 3: Screenshots of the Estonian performance of “Ой у лузі червона калина,” shared on YouTube on May 23rd, 2022.

The Estonian performance took place on May 22nd, 2022, at the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds. According to Brüggemann and Kasekamp [2014], since 1869, “Estonian song festivals were a powerful ritual of political mobilization” that culminated in 1980s during National Awakening, where the festival became the means of the “liberation through singing from Soviet domination” [259]. Three song festivals in 1988 constitute the heart of Estonia’s Singing Revolution […], and as Waren [2012] indicates, at the last one, on Sept 11th, 1988, over 300,000 Estonians (which is over 20% of the country’s population) participated [445]. Shortly after, in 1989, “Estonia participated in the Baltic Way – a 375-mile-long human chain from Tallinn, through Riga, Latvia, to Vilnius, Lithuania. The song “Ärgake Baltimaad” (“Wake Up Baltic Countries”) was written and performed in Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian and was sung by

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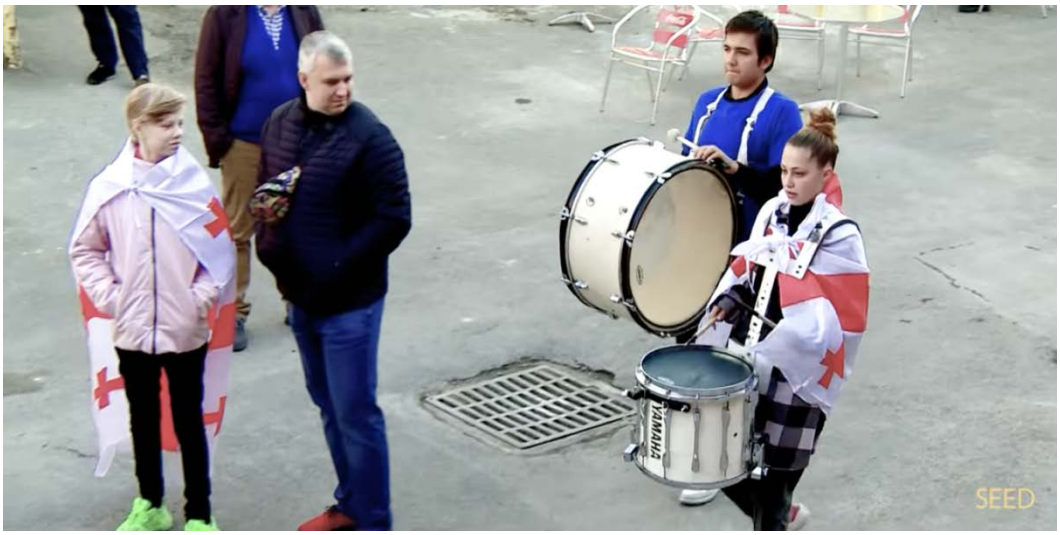
thousands of participants holding hands across the three countries" [ibid.], demonstrating the unity of the three Baltic republics in their call for national independence. Warren emphasizes what he refers to as "the protective effect" of the crowd participating in the Singing Revolution, reminding us that, "When the Soviet tanks entered Tallinn, the nonviolent yet active presence of the crowd protected the television tower from assault. Singing united the crowd in active resistance" [447]. It is not surprising that in 2003, due to the historical, cultural, and political significance of the Baltic Song Festivals, UNESCO declared them a part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

Estonian "Kalyna" has a typical for the Estonian song festivals homorhythmic texture, which is necessitated, according to Puderbaugh [2008], "by the choir's size, numbering in the tens of thousands, and the acoustical dilemma posed by open-air performance" [32]. This rendition of Kalyna, sung in a typically Baltic reserved, serious, as if internalized manner, intimates sympathy, solidarity, and reflection. One could speculate that, as a small country that gained independence from Tsarists Russia in early 20$^{th}$ century only to lose it to the Soviet Union twenty years later, Estonia probably cannot help but contemplate its political future co-existing with their next-door neighbor. As stated on the Estonian choral performance's website, "Singing is one of Estonia's symbols for freedom; now they dedicate this song to Ukraine's fight for freedom."[20] In other words, by this performance, thousands of singers offer Ukrainians a piece of their national and "mobilizing" [Waren, ibid.] identity that has served them well as a weapon of resistance and independence.

**d) YouTube Video III: Georgia**




[20] https://www.estoniasingsforukraine.org/about

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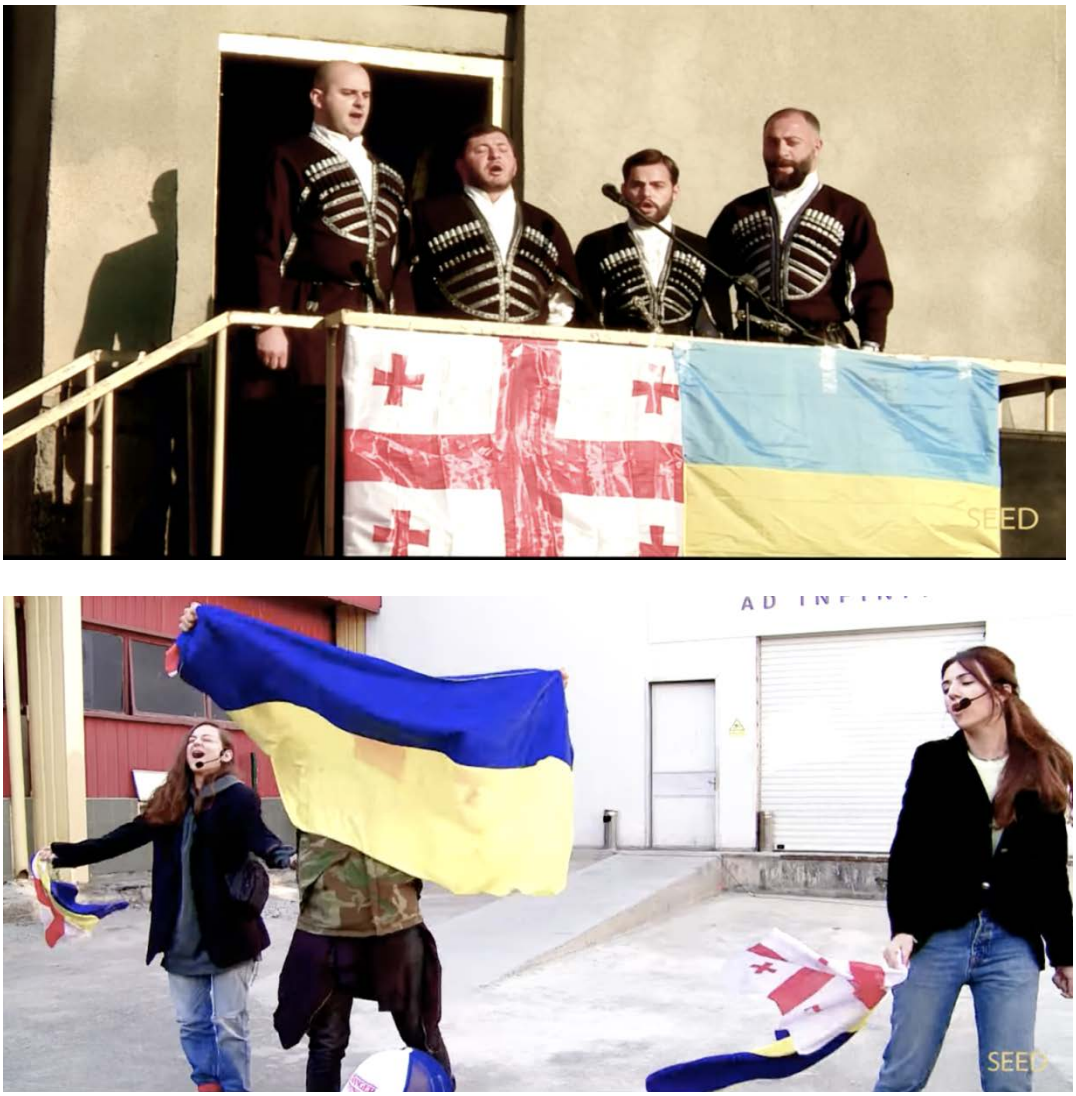


Figure 4: Screenshots of the Georgian performance of "Ой у лузі червона калина," shared on YouTube on December 27th, 2022.

The Georgian "Kalyna" video memorializes an event that took place in Tbilisi on December 27th, 2022. This well-produced, emotionally charged happening manifests unity and solidarity with Ukraine through its multi-faceted and collaborative nature. It features various Georgian musicians, known for their work in different genres and music traditions, joining in the song, one by one, contributing with their voices and styles of the performance to an overall fabric of this powerful musical event. In our view, the following two musical components of the performance are especially significant: the marching drumline entrance, and the Georgian polyphonic male singing.

The drumline is a semantically loaded element: for the Ukrainian audience, it may evoke the militaristic Ukrainian Riflemen history of "Kalyna", simultaneously pointing to the wartime reality of the present with its metaphorical persisting drumbeat. For Georgians, however, the same drumbeat may additionally trigger memories of the bloody wars of 1992-1993, 1993-1994, and 2008, in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both of which are now occupied by Russia.

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The second component of the performance, the famed Georgian polyphonic singing, traditionally executed by male participants,[21] is an iconic communal activity, which, according to Tsitsishvili [2006], "has been used as a cultural marker in a variety of situations and at various levels of national and gender discourse" [456-457]. Tsitsishvili explores how this traditional genre was used during Soviet times both to represent the vernacular culture of the masses, and by the Georgian patriots and scholars to illuminate the sophistication of this musical art form to emphasize the difference between Georgian national identity from that of "Soviet people" [457]. Nowadays, as Knight [2019] observes, "Whenever Georgians hear vocal polyphony, semantic snowballing leads them mentally back to their previous encounters with the style, and many of these indexical associations will inevitably be freighted with sentiments of patriotism, national pride, and cultural distinctiveness" [130]. In 2001, UNESCO recognized the Georgian vocal polyphony as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, obliging the Georgian government to invest in the preservation of this historic tradition. It is important to mention because, as Ninoshvili [2010] discusses, "The movement to reinvigorate traditional Georgian polyphonic song, like revival movements elsewhere, has been organized around notions of shared identity and guided by a need to hold the nation together in the face of internal, ethnic-irredentist threats and the increasing diffusion of Georgian citizens throughout the world" [3].

Thus, both the drumline and the polyphonic singing segments of the Georgian "Kalyna" performance externally reinforce the "to hold nation together" [ibid.] message, already embedded in the song's semantics through its long history of functioning as an instrument of patriotic resistance.

## III. The "Kalyna" movement as an embodiment of the Participatory Culture

To this day, "Kalyna" has not been in any way endorsed by the Ukrainian government or performed at any major functions of the army or state. Therefore, all three performances discussed in this essay are voluntary products of those who responded to the original Khlyvnyuk recording. As such, all three are a product of participatory culture, as defined and conceptualized by Jenkins [2009, 2019], and feature the following elements:

**a) Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement.**

The Khlyvnyuk-led performance of "Kalyna" is clearly unrehearsed and hastily assembled with it pursuing an intent other than that of an artistically polished performance (or music video); some of those participating are not singers, but rather actors and TV or media personalities. While intentionally put together, the Georgian video was conceptualized as happening, allowing for imperfections and unpredictability of a street performance. By contrast, the Estonian mega-choral performance is meticulously prepared and rehearsed, while including both professional and amateur choirs as well as other singers from within and outside of Estonia. In both Estonian and Georgian cases, however, the rhetorical situation of the performance invites any form or level of participation – from very active singing, to joining in the parts that now seem familiar, or easy to perform, to simply standing, waiting Ukrainian flags and rejoicing in the collective outpouring of support for a country under assault.

**b) Strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others.**

All three videos are shared via YouTube; their access is open, and it is not directly monetized. Any additional interpretations of "Kalyna" are encouraged, with many of them eagerly shared in the comments for each video.

**c) Some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices.**

[21] A discussion of the Georgian traditional gender system, as it pertains to polyphonic singing, is beyond the scope of this paper.

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Andriy Khlyvnyuk may be considered a mentor as he may be credited with the current revival of the song. Moreover, in YouTube Video I he is initiating the first stanza in a call-and-response format. However, each new media product, be it a solo performance on camera, an assemblage piece like that in Georgia, or a carefully rehearsed rendition, places their "makers" in a position of a mentor, a producer of media content who learns from their predecessors, yet who offers their own way of spreading the same message.

**d) Members believe that their contributions matter.**

YouTube Video I sends a message that resilience can be expressed in many ways; its membership suggests that people from various walks of life can participate, and the many following "Kalyna" YouTube videos further emphasize this idea.

**e) Members feel some degree of social connection with one another.**

This is, perhaps, the most solid foundation of those forming the participatory culture of the video: the social connection is underwritten by the shared concern over the fate of the motherland and a need to resist injustice and violence.

Furthermore, Jenkins [2012][22] offers six provisions/ideas to analyze the content that is produced within a participatory culture:

**– Content is transmedia.** Transmedia stands for a combination of multiple modes and types of media in communicating a message; it can also be viewed as types of media that can easily travel across platforms. Pertaining to the three videos, those include: the actual performance of "Kalyna" by multiple people, singing solo but forming a chorus by multiple videos assembled into one digital product; the musical characteristics; and the non-verbal, visual cues, such as one of the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv in the background of Andriy Khlyvnyuk, the traditional Ukrainian clothing worn by some performers (e.g., Olya Polyakova in YouTube Video I) and many non-performers (e.g. audience members in YouTube Video II) , or the toddler antics delivered by the young Leo at the end of YouTube Video I);

**– Content is participatory.** Jenkins explains, "people are engaged in grassroots ways with the content of media" [ibid., 10:54:00]. In a way, the three performances – and videos through which they are shared with the world – authorize production of similar videos or recycling of content of the original video. The content encourages and validates participation. A movement like "Kalyna" could have been a result of a government-led propaganda campaign. This video, however, is not. It is emphatically a product of voluntary participation of those who chose to take part in it;

**Content is remixable.** The approach to the original mashup (i.e.,YouTube Video I) was retained in numerous similar videos that followed the Khlyvnyuk-led mashup; any of the digital content of the original video was open for re-use in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes. Some subsequent products, including YouVideos II and III, deviated from the original mashup format, yet all featured the same sections of the song, similar symbolism, and similar hype;

**– Content is spreadable.** This is related to the spreadable circulation of the videos — not to be confused with viral circulation – enabled by audiences/consumers choosing to respond to the war and support Ukraine; what would normally be considered as entertainment content gets a different meaning, given the specifics of the rhetorical situation);

**– Content is global.** The original video, as well many of those of that followed, generated responses/support from around the globe; the Estonian and the Georgian performances are only two in a still growing list of examples); and

**– Content may be increasingly independent** (With the Khlyvnyuk-led mashup, this stands for the performers' ability to appeal directly to the audience, bypassing structures of control and traditional mechanisms of content production and distribution).

## IV. YouTube Videos I, II, and III in light of Feminist/Invitational Rhetoric

[22] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAffkJpYnPI&t=100s

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The participatory culture and the analysis of content intended for or inferred from the Khlyvnyuk-led mashup of "Kalyna" allows us to theorize this performance in light of feminist rhetoric (not to be confused with essentializing the performance as inherently or intentionally feminine). Feminist rhetoric focuses on prioritizing difference over quantity, appreciating nuance, and recognizing the value of voice. Aa a school of humanistic foundations and methodologies, it provides an alternative lens for interpreting the world, if not contrasts itself with the traditional Aristotelian, persuasion-seeking idea of argument. Be it Haraway's cyborgean denial of boundaries [1991], Anzaldua's [1987, 2022] embrace of the multiplicity of the mestiza/borderline identity, Butler's [2004] gender fluidity, or negotiation of race and power [hooks, 2015; Benjamin, 2020], feminist rhetoric sets one on a quest for expansion of the norms and variants of the truth, rather than protection of the status quo and further normalization of the existing order of things.

Incidentally, persuasion can be seen as a vehicle for such normalization and, thus, a conductor of nothing less than violence. Gearhart [2020] argues that western thought is a tradition of "conquest and conversion" [4]. "We have been practicing conquer-and-convert for centuries, struggling for survival in a self- perpetuating system of violence and power conflicts," Gearhart argues [9]. She paints such a model of communication as "weak" and "yielding" [ibid.] and as "the *intention* to change another," as an "act of violence" [4]. "In the conquest model we invade or violate" [ibid.], Gerhart sees similar underwriting in any persuasive intent to convert or defeat the audience. Such criticism of persuasion-bound rhetoric encourages a quest for alternative argumentative models and further validates nonviolent (or not strictly persuasive) rhetorical intents such as those that apply to the Khvylnyuk-led performance, the other two videos we focus on in this project, and the myriad of similar video products that formed what we see as a "Kalyna" movement.

By the same token, while arguing that traditional rhetorical theory is subject to conventional bias, Foss and Griffin [1995, 2020] propose an "alternative rhetoric [….], one guided in the feminist principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination" [1995:2]. When Foss and Griffin [1995] analyze manifestations of invitational rhetoric, they discuss several ways in which "the offering form" of invitational rhetorical action may be delivered. Such a form may be verbal (i.e., a choice of a word) or non-verbal (e.g., clothing an individual wears, places they inhabit, or other rhetorical/symbolic choices by the rhetor). Pertaining to the videos we discuss in this piece, much of the "argument" is carried by non-verbal cues as all three *visualize* support for Ukraine, not just sing it out loud. Another type of the offering form is re-sourcement, defined as "response to a rhetor made according to framework, assumptions, or principles other than those suggested in the precipitating message" [9]. A notable example of re-sourcement as an invitational rhetorical offering form that Foss and Griffin provide is that of a chant by women arrested in the Livermore Weapons lab as response to imminent violence that seemed unavoidable [ibid]. Any conversation whereby an interlocutor attempts to divert from direct confrontation with the other speaker(s), especially if such a confrontation may lead to violence, may serve as an example of re-sourcement. While the three videos that we focus on in this project are not devoid of the direct call for resistance, their rhetorical spectrum is dominated by the demonstration of solidarity with and the confession of affection for a nation in peril, rather than a call to arms or a direct condemnation of the aggressor.

As a product of feminist rhetoric, "Kalyna" displays all three types of the offering forms (i.e., verbal, non-verbal, and re-sourcement):

1) As a means of verbal expression, the song offers a simple message of allegiance and support of a beloved country, literally calling on Ukraine to be cheered up.
2) The song's lyrics directly reference the imagery of blooming kalyna (viburnum) that Ukraine is compared to. Avoiding (or limiting) the display or military, much less war-related, imagery, YouTube Video I is a digression into the beautiful, the peaceful, and the homey.

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3) The re-sourcement offering form is seen in what is expected as an action. All performers' direct call is to support Ukraine. This may and should be interpreted as a call to defend the country against the enemy. However, this message is delivered indirectly — by calling on those in Ukraine to unite, to ascertain their nationhood, and to render the dangerous rhetoric of Ukraine as a state that never existed (as suggested by Russia's President Putin in his televised address on Russian TV, hours before the invasion) as a false, malicious, and not grounded in the cultural and hypostatical heritage of the Ukrainian people.

Finally, while discussing the application of their alternative rhetorical model, Foss and Griffin [2020] name six conditions that a rhetor should meet:

**1) Safety** is defined as "a sense of security for others, rooted in their knowledge that the rhetor will make no attempt to hurt, degrade, or belittle [the audience]" [13]. In all three YouTube Videos, no such hurting, belittling, or degrading takes place, even with the growing awareness of the general public in and outside of Ukraine of the mass casualties that the war has been producing, with one side, Russia, clearly acting as an aggressor. But, among the three videos discussed above, the Estonian rendition of "Kalyna" (YouTube Video II), embodies the rhetorical condition of safety, as theorized by Foss and Griffin, the best.

Through the year of 1988, Estonian Singing Revolution had grown from several thousands to hundreds of thousands of participants, epitomizing the "safety in numbers" aspect of a political or social movement, thus protecting the members of the group from being singled out and/or persecuted. Simultaneously, as Zunes [2009] emphasizes, "[T]here was also a strong commitment to nonviolent methods, even in the face of serious provocation" [5]. A non-violent, choral-singing-based force of resistance could only threaten those outside of the group by the strength of the participants' spirit and their convictions, expressed through the choral performance medium. Thus, the Estonian "Kalyna" performance re-enacts the Singing Revolution's condition of safety within a group of thousands by infusing the solid and historically effective Estonian framework with the present-day, "burning" Ukrainian content;

**2) Immanent value**, which "requires the rhetor's perception of others as worthy and enactment of this perception through [their] rhetoric" [Foss & Griffin, 2020: 13]. The afore-discussed strategy of not attacking or belittling the invading force is an integral part of the "Kalyna" performance led by Khlyvnyuk. At the time of the release of YouTube Video I, many in Ukraine were still hoping for/appealing to the civility, if not common sense, on the part of the general population of Russia. More than a year and a half into the war, such hopes or appeals are very hard to find as the conflict rages on.

Through adopting their unique cultural markers in the renditions of "Kalyna," both Estonian and Georgian performances express acceptance, appreciation, and respectful treatment of other people's cultural heritage. Moreover, these renditions of the song aim to empower Ukrainians through representing the history of Estonian and Georgian own struggles to protect their nations through musical culture. When discussing Estonian history, Zunes [2009] points out that, "One of the remarkable strategic dimensions of the Estonian nonviolent independence movement was its emphasis on culture. Music – primarily the country's rich choral tradition – played a vital role in producing a sense of unity, defiance, and hope" [4]. And for Georgia, according to Kuzmich [2010], it is polyphonic singing – a folk tradition that "curiously ceases at Georgia's borders" that has played a significant role in unification of the original seventeen provinces that constitute contemporary Georgia [149)];

**3) Freedom of identity**, which is expressed when audience members "feel that the rhetor is not attempting to cast them in any particular role; they feel free to choose who they are" [Foss and Griffin, 2020: 13]. The fifteen people in YouTube Video I enact their own Ukrainian-ness and allegiance to Ukraine. The audience members are thereby invited to follow suit and to rise as a nation. This invitation is not forceful or suggestive of any singular perspective.

In YouTube Video II, The Estonia Sings for Ukraine Joint Choir, performing "Kalyna," comprises both musicians and non-musicians alike, from all over Estonia and several other countries from different continents, revoking the heritage of the Singing Revolution that

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developed in "a full-scale political force which included members from all levels of Estonian society [that included] "[r]ock stars, legislators, teachers, students, workers, and academics […]" [Waren, 2012: 447]. In YouTube Video III, a polyphonic singing of "Kalyna" within a "flash-mob"-like happening, featuring Georgian musicians representing different musical genres, invites each Georgian spectator to reflect on their own identity as a citizen of a country comprising seventeen original regions unified by one unique singing tradition, and as a citizen of the world. On the other hand, from an outsider perspective, seeing Georgian male vocal ensemble, wearing traditional costume and singing a stanza of the Ukrainian song in the three-part counterpoint that is difficult to describe using Western analytical tools, may encourage others to allow themselves to break any artificial borders and self-imposed boundaries;

**4) Choice**, which enables audience members to "make whatever choices seem appropriate to them" [Foss and Griffin 2020: 13]. Emphatically, the call of YouTube Video I is not to go into battle. Rather, it is to respond to the tragedy in ways possible. In the weeks that followed, some of those who appeared in the "Kalyna" performance led by Khlyvnyuk exercised their own *choices* of supporting their country by embarking on tours to raise funds in support of the armed forces (e.g., Polyakova), blogging (e.g., Dorofeeva), or volunteering in nursing homes, orphanages, and refugee shelters (e.g., Mohylevska).

The Estonian "Kalyna" performance is an example of the freedom of choice that each participant exercised by becoming a part of the Estonia Sings for Ukraine Joint Choir, made up of a hundred of Estonian choirs, two choirs from the United States, and singers from Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Finland, Sweden, Iran and Poland.[23] All these people chose to dedicate their time, and for many, to travel thousands of miles to take a stand against the war by singing in a massive choir of thousands;

**5) Autonomous independence** is conveyed when "the […] rhetor recognizes that [they] and the others are inevitably linked, and [...] seek[...] to maintain connection with others through care and respect. […] 'Best choices' are seen as right for individuals, at a given time, based on their own ability to make those decisions" [Foss and Griffin, 2020: 13]. The electronic access to all three videos of "Kalyna" is accessible by Ukrainians and Russians alike; along with Ukrainians, the message is directed at the Russian audience. At the time of release of YouTube Video I, a frequent message from those in Ukrainian showbusiness to their Russian counterparts/colleagues/friends was "Do not be silent." Needless to say, in a militarized society of Russia, where, to this day, the current war is to be referred to as "special military operation," no standard choice of displaying support to Ukraine can be expected.

Musically, the renditions of "Kalyna" discussed above may be viewed as a combination of interconnected, but diverse, genre-based identities, intimately connected with each country's history, both past and present. In the Georgian case, the flash-mob style of their version of "Kalyna" incorporates multiple musical styles and genres that represent distinctive identities within one culture. In Estonia Sings for Ukraine Joint Choir's video, the mere number of the performers, representing different layers of the Estonian society, standing and singing next to participants from other countries, including Ukraine, sends an incredibly powerful message of diversity within unity; and

**6) Order**, which is a need for "rhetoric [to] provide a means for individuals to order the world so that it seems coherent and makes sense to them" [ibid., 14].

The performances analyzed in this piece are a quest for order, temporarily shattered and seemingly hard to reestablish. The self-identification of those belting out the lyrics is as cathartic (to them and others) as it is order-inducing. For both Estonian and Georgian "Kalyna", the order connotes a sense of belonging to and expressing one's own cultural heritage. The musical arrangement of the Ukrainian song – a more "ascetic," homorhythmic style of the Estonian rendition, and a three-part, harmonically fluid traditional polyphony of the Georgian version – are structured according to the specifications of each style. We suggest, the musical structure (or

[23] https://www.estoniasingsforukraine.org/about

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"order") metaphorically represents the traditional or "normal" order of things constituting a multifaceted life of a nation. Order stands for display of difference: difference by national origin and cultural heritage, difference by nonacceptance of violence as a way forward, and difference in the means of communicating, arguing, or enacting own stories and own ideas of freedom.

## Conclusion

Relying on the theoretical foundations of invitational rhetoric and participatory culture, discussed in this essay, we maintain that the YouTube "Kalyna" movement directly engages the invitational feminist rhetorical practices, aiming at creating external conditions of safety, value, and freedom and emphasizing negotiation, projection, and understanding of identity over direct calls for action. In many ways, "Kalyna" is a proclamation, reminder, or manifestation of the very existence of Ukraine as a sovereign state and its rich history and culture (the point which is now contested by the Russian leadership), and an ode to the country needing encouragement and support, rather than a direct call to fight the aggressor. Just like the three authors of this essay, each representing a different academic nook, those performing the song, producing the videos, and sharing the content on YouTube shape a culture of media users, one that welcomes others and is easy to join, and one that is easy to contribute to.

The three products of the "Kalyna" movement we have chosen to focus on all contribute to the song's global digital spread, resulting in an overwhelming multinational anti-war stance. Ukrainian, Estonian, and Georgian performances of "Kalyna" discussed in this essay engage the most treasured cultural markers of their respective nations as an "offering," joining in one rhetorical discourse of a media-embodied uprising, representing, quoting DeLaure [2020], "an alternative view of power, one that privileges the less visible grassroots community organizing tradition" [108]. Moreover, as Carey [2020] argues, "musicians and genres of music are used as rhetorically effective modes of resistance in political and social climates[...] to break down barriers culturally and reveal systems of power" [iii]. All three videos, however, display specific original features in terms of their technological makeup, performative style, or musical genre, thus, placing "Kalyna" within a multiplicity of diverse user cultures, and encouraging further participation, interpretation, and dissemination.

Discussing the issues of ethnic, national, and cultural identity, Lidsgog [2017] considers music as "a space and practice that binds group members together, so that they understand themselves as belonging to each other and [...] having a specific task or mission to accomplish" [24]. We suggest that, owing to its invitational rhetorical foundation and its participatory culture, the "Kalyna" movement demonstrates a possibility to extend and transform this conceptual framework beyond any one cultural context to a powerful multi- and inter-cultural rhetorical mechanism. There is a lot of promise in this movement for consolidating a global effort of supporting Ukraine's quest for liberty and democracy.

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Included: 4 Figures

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