

# In Search for New and Old Sounds

## Creative Shifts and Musical Mobilities within the Folk Music Movement in 1960s and 1970s Sweden

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Music has the capacity to evoke strong senses of belonging, place and identity. Especially in times of societal change music seems to become an important vehicle for individual and collective action. The new interest in folk music that swept over the Global North in the late 1960s and early 1970s particularly actualises these issues. It was a movement directed towards the revitalisation of local and regional folk music traditions, as well as an interest in folk music from different parts of the world. This article explores the intersections of these approaches. It investigates two musical initiatives where the musicians engaged in different ways with new repertoires, instruments and sound worlds. The first case is a female duo that performs Swedish traditional music from the region of Småland in Sweden, and the second a balalaika orchestra in Sweden, playing traditional music from Russia, Georgia and Ukraine. By adding a lens of mobility to previous research, using the notion of *shifts* coined by ethnologist Owe Ronström, the study follows the creative pathways of the performers engaged in these music groups. It investigates how folk music was enacted in performances and in contemporary discourses by combining analyses of archival material such as scrap books, reviews and recorded interviews with new multi-sited fieldwork. The study shows how the performers' pathways were entangled with shifts in folk music aesthetics, shaping individual and collective stories in their search for authenticities, which point towards transnational belongings and a wish for creating better futures together. Ideas of egalitarianism, anti-commercialism, resistance and counterculture, was constantly brought into play within these musical spaces.

**Keywords:** Folk Music, Shifts, Mobilities, Authenticity, the Alternative Music Movement, Spelmän, Balalaikas, Revival, Tradition.

There is a certain something in Swedish traditional music. Through it you can get people to feel like they belong. [...] It's not really political but still... you discover that there is something there, at home, that also can be worth something. (Guitar player Kenny Håkansson quoted in Goldberg & Rander 1973:5)<sup>1</sup>

Suddenly you like, heard on the radio [...] Indian music, and all sorts of other things, that you didn't know existed. (Multi-instrumentalist Roland Keijser remembers the folk music movement during the late 1960s. Interview 2007).<sup>2</sup>

1. I den svenska spelmansmusiken tycker jag att det finns något. Genom den kan man få folk att känna gemenskap [...] Det är inte direkt politiskt men ändå.... man upptäcker att det finns någonting där hemma som också kan vara värt nåt.

2. Plötsligt liksom hörde man på radion [...] indisk musik och allt möjligt som man inte visste fanns.

The two musical trajectories towards different types of folk music expressed in the musicians' utterances above, make a springboard for this article.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, the folk music movement during the late 1960s and 1970s in Sweden has been closely associated with an increased interest for Swedish traditional music. Attention was given to the local and perceived authentic music, in terms of sensing individual "roots" and collective "homes", often with left-wing political orientation. It formed a radical shift in folk music aesthetics when musicians embraced new forms of repertoires, instruments, and embodied practices (Kjellström et al. 1985, Ramsten 1992, Ronström 2014). One of the most common examples used to illustrate this shift of interest, is a gathering of folk musicians, a so called *spelmansstämma*<sup>4</sup> (*spelman* gathering) in 1975 held in the village Bingsjö in Dalarna in Sweden, where 35 000 visitors had gathered to experience and play traditional music together. At the same event, just a few years earlier, only a hundred people participated (Gudmundson 2019). This increased interest was part of the international folk music revival and globalisation of British and US-American youth culture that swept over the Global North during this period. The student revolts and various protest movements in Scandinavia and in Europe in addition to the anti-war, environmental, civil rights and women's movements in United States further stressed these new left-wing political views and activities. Thus, folk music was ideologically perceived as "the people's music" (Östberg 2002, Björnberg 2013, Arvidsson 2008, 2016, Hyltén-Cavallius 2017, 2021). On the other hand, the actors within these movements in Sweden were not only focused on traditional Swedish music. They also turned towards various international music genres within popular and traditional spheres, in search for new sound worlds, authenticities and senses of belonging (Arvidsson 2008: 198–199, 2010, Thyren 2009: 32, Ronström 2014: 48–49).

## Creative Shifts and Musical Mobilities

This article aims to focus on the intersections of these two approaches, to try to see around the edges of normative narratives and take detours, to let other stories emerge (Law and Mol 2002: 16–17). It investigates and compares two musical initiatives within the folk music movement in late 1960s and early 1970s in Sweden. Through the cases I draw attention to different modes of engagements with new musical geographies, repertoires, instruments, and sound worlds, in order to enhance understanding of contemporary musical interest in the local and the foreign. The first case study explores the practices of a female duo called "Eva and Sabina", engaging with Swedish Traditional Musics. The second case study examines a music collective in the form of a balalaika orchestra in Sweden performing arranged folk music from Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine. By dwelling on the intersections of Swedish and international traditional music forms in my two case studies I will trace and explore the various paths taken by performers in

3. This study is part of the research project *Creative Transitions – Musical flows in 1960s and 1970s Sweden* (2017–2021) conducted at the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research in Stockholm, financed by The Swedish Arts Council and The Swedish National Heritage Board. <https://musikverket.se/artikel/kreativa-forflyttningar/?lang=en>

4. A *spelman* refers to a folk performer who embodies traditional knowledge. The term has special historical connotations in Swedish rural society, during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and associated with self-taught tradition bearer, often male. A *spelmansstämma* may be described as a prototypical example of participatory culture with focus on collective music making. While there are concerts, its main purpose is for people of all ages and skill levels to meet informally and to play/sing and dance together, creating spaces with no clear boundaries between performers and audiences, professionals and amateurs (Eriksson 2017: 20–22).

these musical initiatives, as well as how ideas and values of folk music move and circulate within and between these initiatives and musical spaces. How is folk music used and enacted? Which ideas and values are brought into play within performances and at gatherings? How do the actors involved experience musical transitions and societal changes?

Mobility is an important point of entry into the musical scenes explored in this article. Previous research has often described the 1970s as characterised by shifts or movements – of people, ideas, impulses, and sound worlds – pointed out as important for creativity (Östberg 2002, Kurlansky 2004, Hyltén-Cavallius 2017). I align my thinking here with ethnologist Owe Ronström's conceptualisation of mobility in terms of *shifts*.<sup>5</sup> Ronström uses the concept to illustrate the interconnectedness of transitions of different kinds: how geographical transitions have shifted aesthetic transitions, and how ideological transitions have affected power relations. According to Ronström, shifts are also central in the understanding of revivals as “acts of translations” that actively bring past practices, things, ideas and actions into the present (Ronström 2014: 44). These acts depend on social, temporal, musical and spatial shifts and may occur between the rural and urban, individual and collective, informal or formal, local, regional and international or between various musical geographies. To focus on shifts inevitably draws attention to “the ongoing” and points towards how actors, recourses, values and motives are part of forming a specific mode of cultural production (Ronström 2014:45).

In this article I will apply a similar approach to Ronström and explore what kind of creative shifts that are enacted in my two case studies. I will show how the duo “Eva and Sabina” perform temporal and spatial shifts in their musical activities, and how the members of the balalaika orchestra move between times, spaces and geographical places in their music making. The first case very clearly stands for revitalisation of Swedish folk music, while the second points towards more hybrid uses and understandings of past practices of Russian and East European Music. By analysing these two cases, with emphasis on mobilities and shifts, my aim is to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how folk music was used and enacted within these scenes and to highlight intersections with the Swedish alternative music movement.

## Overlapping Practices: The Folk Music Movement and The Alternative Music Movement

The folk music movement during the 1960s and 1970s is a well-researched phenomenon, in terms of new stylistic trends within instrumental Swedish folk music (see for example Kjellström et al. 1985, Ramsten 1992, Kaminsky 2012) and its vocal traditions (Åkesson 2007). Due to previous collectors' work, the new performers had a lot of archival material in the forms of recordings, texts, and transcriptions

5. Ronström's discussion was also central to the theoretical foundation for the larger project (see note 3 above).

to draw on for their revival activities. As indicated above, several main strands are distinguishable in the ways the performers approached the traditional material. Some musicians were directed towards historical informative interpretations in search of “authentic” sounds of old instrumental and vocal repertoires. Others mixed folk tunes within the idioms of pop, rock, or jazz, often in ensembles performed with acoustic and electric instruments (for example bands and artists like Kebnekajse, Merit Hemmingson and Arbeta och Fritid). The new collaborations resulted in a mediatisation of the folk music scene, in the forms of LP albums and performances on the radio and TV (Ronström 2014: 48–49). Thus, the performers moved folk music from its traditional settings at *spelman* gatherings or various national celebrations into dance halls and clubs. Previous research has also examined the traditionalisation processes from the perspectives of the rock and jazz genres (Arvidsson 2005) and the intersections towards the Swedish alternative music movement. This was a network of musicians, artists, voluntary workers, journalists and record companies, that created their own alternative scenes in opposition against the commercial music industries, guided by left-wing political ideas. The multi-layered movement had a broad musical profile and combined rock and jazz crossovers with the revitalisation of various folk music forms from different parts of the world (Fornäs 1993, Eyerman and Jamison 1998, Arvidsson 2008, 2010, 2016, Hyltén-Cavallius 2017, 2021). This area is well-researched in terms of the meanings of crossovers, but to my knowledge there are few studies that engage more profoundly with the interest in musics of other countries. An important exception is ethnologist Alf Arvidsson’s and musician Jörgen Adolfsson’s study of a collective called Ett Minne för Livet (A Memory for Life). The authors discuss central ideas of the collective’s music making and their choices of performing music from different parts of the world (Arvidsson and Adolfsson 2011, 2015, see also Arvidsson 2008: 254–255). I will expand upon these studies and add a lens of mobility, to shed light on the complexities interwoven in the different musical scenes and social spheres.

This article draws both on archival material, such as newspaper articles, reviews and recorded interviews with musicians held at Svenskt visarkiv in Stockholm, and on recently conducted fieldwork in the form of semi-structured in-depth interviews with musicians active within this period (2019–2020). The historical source material will be put in dialogue with the interlocutors’ own ideas, understandings, and memories of the 1970s. I proceed through a set of multi-sited fieldwork examples, moving from the female duo to the balalaika orchestra. None of these empirical examples have been thoroughly examined in previous research, a gap which this article aims to fill. I will investigate the examples as hybrid and shifting enactments in trying to disentangle the multi-faceted trajectories involved. I will hold on to particularity even when indicating scope for broader generalisations.<sup>6</sup>

6. My approach to fieldwork is in line with Barz & Cooley 2008, Law & Mol 2002:16–17 and Hofman 2010:23.



Figure 1a & 1b: Photo of the duo “Eva and Sabina” performing in the TV programme *Girls Who Make Sounds* in SVT 1977.



## Girls Who Make Sounds: “Eva and Sabina”

In 1977, the two young fiddlers Eva Blomquist-Björnberg and Sabina Henriksson participated in a Swedish national TV show called “Girls Who Make Sounds” (*Tjejer som låter*), produced by Mona Sjöström. The TV programme was initiated to bring forward female performers within the genre of Swedish traditional music, highlight their various contributions and new stylistic trends and performance practices. Sjöström described the show in an interview published in one of Sweden’s largest national newspapers, *Dagens Nyheter* (The Daily News):

It feels good to be able to present new faces on TV [...]. My young host of the show is a real *spelman* even if she is not dressed in traditional local dress. There is no romanticism in the shows when it comes to traditional local dress [bygdedräktsromantik], from either *spelmän* or dancers. The dancers come from independent groups that have left the organised folk-dance movement [Ungdomsringarna] and revived older traditions of dance in new and fresh ways.<sup>7</sup>

The duo “Eva and Sabina” were invited to play tunes from Småland, their home region in the south east of Sweden. By that time, the duo was well-known within the folk music communities. They had performed on various stages, both at festivals and *spelman* gatherings, made recordings and participated in radio shows.<sup>8</sup> Before they started to perform the host of the show, Christina Frohm, asked them how they felt about being women and *spelmän* (*Spelman/män* indicates male gender) at the same time, and how they were received within the community. Blomquist-Björnberg answered: “nowadays there is no problem, it’s just fun”, but added that they were occasionally treated like “cute little girls” who happened to know how to play, and stressed that it was important to be taken seriously by others.<sup>9</sup>

7. Det är skönt att kunna presentera nya ansikten i TV [...]. Min unga programledare är en äkta ”spelman”, även om hon inte är klädd i sockendräkt. I programmen finns för övrigt ingen bygdedräktsromantik, varken hos spelmän eller dansare. Dansarna är fria grupper som dragit sig ur ungdomsringarna, och tagit upp de gamla danstraditionerna på ett nytt och fräscht sätt. Interview with Mona Sjöström, by Brita Richter *DN*, 11 December 1977.

8. Their own record *Morfars rock och andra dansbitar från Småland* (*Grandpa’s Rock and Other Dance Tunes from Småland*) 1978, was released by Amigo, an independent record company. They also performed on *Den länge dansen – unga spelmän från Småland och Skåne*, 1976, released by MNW, a record label of the alternative music movement.

9. *Tjejer som låter*, SVT2, 13 November 1977, 18.30–19.00. SR TV2. Eva and Sabina on TV 1977: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KF9pYAZMpL8> (Last accessed 2 February 2022).



## Tjejer spelar och låter i tre nya musikprogram

Det är kvinnorna som burit traditionerna vidare när det gäller vår gamla, folkliga sång- och musikskatt. Det är de som sjungit vaggsångerna, arbetarvisorna och vallåtarna. Och i dag finns det fler spelmanskvinnor än någonsin, både unga och gamla, i vårt land.

Det är därför folkmusikentusiasten Mona Sjöström gjort sina tre program, som hon rätt och slätt kallar " Tjejer som låter". Och att tjejer är underbara spelmän, kommer vi att få många bevis för. Mona har funnit dem överallt ute i bygderna, underbara musikanter med sådan kunnsighet och utstråling, att männen förstummas och gapar av beundran.

Monas första " Tjejer som låter" sänds i TV 2 på söndagskvällen klockan 18.30. Programledare är Christina Frohm, en ung sörmländstjej med gamla spelmansanor. Från början var hon med i Skäggmanslaget, men grabbarna ville inte ha henne med, därför att hon är tjej!

— Det är skönt att kunna presentera nya ansikten i TV, säger Mona. Min unga programledare är en äkta "spelmann", även om hon inte är klädd i sockendräkt. I programmen finns för övrigt ingen bygde-

dräktsromantik, varken hos spelmän eller dansare. Dansarna är fria grupper, som dragit sig ur Ungdomsringarna, och tagit upp de gamla danstraditionerna på ett nytt och fräscht sätt.

I det första av de tre programmen medverkar tre sådana dansgrupper från Sörmland. Då möter vi också Christina Frohm tillsammans med kompiserna Eva Liljedahl från Blekinge. Från Uppland kommer 14-åringarna Jinder och Cia Gagnefjord. Båda trakterar nyckelharpa. För fiol och sång svarar Eva Blomquist och Sabina Christensen, båda från Småland och 19 år gamla.

Västmanland representeras fint och stämningsfullt av två 19-åringar, Malou Mellink, som spelar blockflöjt och kompas på basfiol av Åsa Eriksson.

Dessutom lovar Mona, att inte ett öga kommer att vara torrt, när en grupp finländska flickor spelar upp på fiol och basorgel.

I fortsättningen skall Norge representeras av en flicka med hardangerfela, Danmark av en tjej som sjunger medeltida ballader, samt Turkiet av en flicka som framför något typiskt från Turkiet.

Från bl a Värmland, Dalarna och Stockholm har Mona häm-



*Mona Sjöström är kvinnan bakom " Tjejer som låter", en ny serie i tre avsnitt där vi får möta musikaliska tjejer från olika delar av landet.*

tat tjejer som låter för de kommande programmen. De skall visa sina färdigheter på spålpipa, mungiga, strålkharpa och mycket annat.

BRITA RICHTER

TV 2 SÖNDAG KL 18.30

Figure 2: Newspaper article, DN, 12 November 1977.

One of the main changes during the folk music movement in 1970s Sweden, was the increased number of women who started to perform music, challenging the idea of the man as main tradition-bearer and *spelmann* (Kjellström et al. 1985, Ramsten 1992). This re-negotiation of the role of the traditional performer becomes especially visible in contemporary discourses and the ongoing discussion since the middle of the 1960s to speak about *spelkvinnor* (women), instead of *spelmän* (men) (Bartels 2020:39). These ideas and changes were interlinked with the developments within the women's rights movement and the increased awareness of issues regarding gender inequalities within Swedish society at large. The topic was also frequently discussed within the scenes of the alternative music movement (Östberg 2002: 75–78, Arvidsson 2008: 342–349). Ethnologist Alf Arvidsson has discussed the potential spaces and positions for women within the male-dominated music scenes in Sweden during the period 1965–1980. He shows that many restrictive gender norms remained in Swedish musical life, despite the raised awareness and increased participation (Arvidsson 2008: 343). Still, few studies have engaged more profoundly with female instrumentalists within Swedish traditional music during this period (with exception for Larsson 2009 and Selander 2012, see also Åkesson 2007 and Bartels 2020).

Henriksson and Blomquist-Björnberg still play together and in 2019 they celebrated 50 years of musicianship. The TV programme piqued my curiosity, and I was interested to know more about their memories,

experiences, and revival activities during the 1970s. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we met online in May 2020 for a conversation about their music making. Looking back, how did they experience being young women eager to play?

## Ways of Knowing Folk Music and Re-Claiming Space

Henriksson and Blomquist-Björnberg were both born and raised in different parts of the small town Norrahammar outside of Jönköping in Sweden. They described their childhood as filled with music and singing, and their parents actively participated in the local folk dance group (*folkdanslag*). Even though the two girls were part of the same music scene, it was not until the age of eleven that they got to know each other through a violin teacher in their music school. Shortly after, the local dance group needed musicians for their performances, and the young women started to play with them. During lower secondary school they got sole responsibility for the dance group's music. In Henriksson and Blomquist-Björnberg's narrations, the older generations were constantly brought forward as important role models and supportive forces, in the form of family members, teachers and fellow musicians. Henriksson emphasised: "they encouraged us to play, so we got the courage to try!" They spoke especially affectionately of an older fiddler, Tage Johansson from Tenhult, that they called their "spelmanspappa" (folk music dad). He introduced them to folk music gatherings and jam sessions in the local area as well as in other parts of the country.<sup>10</sup> Their answers suggest how important sociability and communality became for them in their process of learning traditional

Figure 3: Selfie of Sabina Henriksson and Eva Blomquist-Björnberg at Bengt Löfberg's house in Kimramåla, 1975.



10. Interview with Blomquist-Björnberg and Henriksson, 12 May 2020.

music. The warm welcoming by the older generation of men, evoked affective bonds and senses of belonging.

The duo furthermore described a transformative shift in their music making when they encountered the two fiddlers Bengt Löfberg and Pelle Björnlert from the same region and got invited to their private gatherings and music classes. The characteristic features of Löfberg's and Björnlert's ways of playing have been analysed and identified by Ramsten as guiding stylistics for the new generations of *spelmän*, especially in the southern parts of Sweden (Ramsten 1992: 89–90). By visiting archives in the region Småland, listening to older recordings and interpreting transcriptions, Löfberg and Björnlert revived local repertoires, guided by their own imaginaries of historical authenticities. They searched for tunes from before the 1800s, older than the repertoires performed within the organised *spelman's* movement. It resulted in a new kind of supposedly archaic style, characterised by “sonorous play on multiple strings with drone and almost exaggerated rhythmic marking by ways of stomping” (Ramsten 1992:67, Kaminsky 2012: 31), and the use of re-tuned fiddles.<sup>11</sup> Other features foregrounded were the combination of instrumental pieces with vocal parts and an endless repetition of the tunes, to really “get into the music” to create a sense of timelessness and durability (Ramsten 1992: 89, 115).

All these features are clearly played out in the music performances by the duo “Eva and Sabina”, in addition to the overall trend of playing harmonies in parallel octaves (*grovt och grant*).<sup>12</sup> Blomquist-Björnberg also explained how they deliberately aimed to “evoke that feeling of getting into a transcendental state [...] into another kind of world” through their playing. This approach highlights the revivalists' ideas of folk music as dance music. For many musicians to play with dancers became an ideological marker against the realms of art music. Folk music was perceived to be “brought back” from the presentational performances on stages with ensembles of *spelmän*, to its “original function” on the dance floor, accompanied by one or two players. This idea was historically projected on the pre-industrial society of Sweden (Kaminsky 2012, Eriksson 2017:176). To understand the dance became means to understand the musics and vice versa (see for example Interviews with Stinnerbom 2020 and Edén 2014). Henriksson and Blomquist-Björnberg were inspired by Löfberg and Björnlert to visit archives in search for older tunes to revive, they also stressed that they thought that their playing was “genuine” and “authentic”. Blomquist-Björnberg added: “during that time I had a bit of this view of the old man who sat there and played, you had a very romantic view of how it had been [...] this is how it must have sounded in Småland!”<sup>13</sup> The duo also had close contact with revivalists Leif Stinnerbom and Mats Edén, two *spelmän* in the county of Värmland. Stinnerbom had a similar view:

11. In turn, Löfberg and Björnlert was inspired in their music making by Kalle Almlöf and Anders Roséns record “Västerdalton” (1972), in which they revived tunes from the western parts of Dalarna, Ramsten 1992.
12. See for example the tune “Plira man lagom” that they sang and performed in the TV-show mentioned above.
13. På den tiden hade jag lite grann den här synen på gubben som satt och spelade. Man hade en ganska romantisk bild hur det hade varit [...] så här har det låtit i Småland! Interview with Blomquist-Björnberg, 12 May 2020.



I believe that we had this romantic view of discovering a hermit in the woods in some cabin, who sat there and played exactly the way they might have played 100 years ago, or even more. We had that kind of idea, but we soon woke up from that. [We] understood pretty early on, that folk music is always evolving, and influenced by contemporary times and their trends.<sup>14</sup>

Here, the ideas of “pastness” and “remoteness” creates an historically grounded continuity, “a prerequisite for authenticity” (Ronström 2014:45). It becomes a means to legitimise their revival activities in search for old sounds and their local origins (Åkesson 2007: 49–50, Ramsten 1992:112). A highly elusive and multi-layered concept, authenticity has been a crucial issue within several folk music movements during the twentieth century in Europe. Previous research has shown how multiple authenticities overlap in the revival spaces of the 1960s and 70s, causing emotional controversies between traditionalists and innovators. The former advocated a search for “true” origins and historically informed performances, and the later valued alternative interpretations and the capacity of embodying a “truthful” expression of performance close to the artist’s person and/or persona (Moore 2002, Åkesson 2007, Hagmann and Morrissey 2020:185). Interestingly, the historical orientations are central in the sentiments above, at the same time as all these musicians shared an openness and artistic freedom to re-invent and re-imagine how it might have sounded out of own selective choices. Henriksson and Blomquist-Björnberg recollected an encounter with one of the older men in the *spelman* ensemble:

14. Jag tror vi romantiskt trodde vi skulle hitta nån eremit som suttit där i nåt torp i skogen och spelat exakt som de hade gjort i 100 år bakåt, eller ännu mer. Det fanns ju nån’ sån’ idé, men den väcktes vi ganska fort ur. Vi förstod ganska tidigt att folkmusiken är satt under utveckling och påverkad av sin samtid och sina trender. Interview with Stinnerbom, 22 December 2020.

15. SH: Alltså till en början var vi nya och det var så spännande, sen kom vi in lite mer, fick en sån häftig känsla; vi kan mycket också! Och då stod man där vid någon spelmanstämma, lite längre fram då, [på scenen] och improviserade och hittade på, för det var så roligt att improvisera stämmor och grejor. Och då var det nån farbror som sa till mig efteråt, efter scenframträdandet ”fuska inte så nästa gång”.

EBB: Vi spelade ju inte efter boken ...

SH: Näe, vi spelade inte efter boken. De hade ju noterna, de stod där med 50 *småländska låtar* och olika sådana häften som kom då.

EBB: De hade pluggat in de stämmorna och det stämde inte, och det är klart ...

SH: Vi kom dit och bara spelade som vi kände (skratt) roligt som bara den!

Interview with Blomquist-Björnberg and Henriksson, 12 May 2020.

SH: Well, in the beginning, we were new, and it was so exciting, then when we got into it all a bit more, we got this feeling; we know things too! And, at one of the *spelman*’s gatherings, we stood there, a bit closer to the front [of the stage] and improvised and tried things out, because it was so fun to improvise and so on. And then, one of the older men told me afterwards, after the staged performance: “don’t cheat like that, next time”.

EBB: We didn’t play according to the book ...

SH: No, we didn’t play according to the book. They had sheet music, and stood there with 50 *Tunes from Småland*, and the different booklets.

EBB: And they had memorised all their parts [harmonies] and it didn’t add up, and of course ...

SH: We just showed up and played the way that we felt like (laughter), it was so fun!<sup>15</sup>

The sentiment above clearly articulates how Henriksson and Blomquist-Björnberg challenged the dominant practice of playing from sheet music, often modelled on chamber art music performances within the organised *spelman* ensembles (see Roempke 1980, Ramsten 1992, von Wachenfeldt 2015). Their ways of improvising and more freely interpreting the traditional tunes were perceived as a lack of traditional knowledge, described by the older fiddler in terms of “cheating” (i.e. playing it wrong). It is a vibrant example of how different ways of knowing tradition clashes, and how embodied practices becomes statements on genre’s aesthetics (as discussed in detail in relation to gender issues in Norwegian folk music by Johansson 2013). Eriksson and Lundberg (forthcoming 2022) have argued that the attitudes experienced by the duo enact normative values within the folk music communities as well as make visible restrictions in expressive behaviour assigned to gender roles. To “know your place” and “stay in line” with your fellow musicians, coincides well with the genre’s orientation towards history and the collective (“the people’s music”), downplaying individuality and self-assertion. These are also common ideals associated with appropriate behavioural norms typically associated with women. Indeed, the example highlights how social orders are manifested in genres, their musical patterns, and related activities (Werner 2019:7). I would like to add that Henriksson’s and Blomquist-Björnberg’s sentiments simultaneously negotiate belonging and disaffiliation. They wanted to add something new to their own music and show others that they also had the skills and knowledge to develop the tradition and bring the music forward in time. Simultaneously, they understood how their ways of performing were perceived as crossing the line of accepted behaviour. By balancing on this edge, they managed to create a space of their own within the community.



Figure 4: Sabina Henriksson and Eva Blomquist-Björnberg at Jönköpings marknad, May 24 1974. Photo: Göran Hallqvist

## Local Sensibilities and Transnational Belongings

At the end of our interview, Henriksson started to talk about the importance of a certain kind of awareness in their music making. She referred to the discussions about nationalism that started to grow within the alternative music movement in relation to the increasing interest in Swedish traditional music during the 1970s (Arvidsson 2008:193f). Performers reacted against how nostalgia for a Swedish local past spurred ethno-nationalistic ideas of keeping folk music “pure” and “protected” from international influences (Selander 1974). Henriksson brought up how their music performances both abroad and at home and especially in schools, when they both played and talked about their local music traditions, became means for them to combat racism and xenophobia. She continued:

You need to have a cultural platform to stand on, to be safe and confident, it opens curiosity for other cultures. We are good examples of this. Our interest and specific knowledge about this

very narrow tradition in Småland, in the region of Jönköping, has opened our curiosity for other cultures. There is an awareness here that is very important [...] there is a difference in saying: ‘what we do is the best way’, instead of ‘this is what we have, what do you have?’<sup>16</sup>

Blomquist-Björnberg agreed and added that they were not interested in being protective and secretive referring to nationalistic and conservative tendencies within parts of the *spelman's* movement at that time. Instead, they wanted “to be open and embrace the encounter” with others. To meet as humans, to unify, across borders. I asked them if they felt like this already during the 1970s, and they both answered in the affirmative. Henriksson continued and stressed that folk music was for everyone to join and take part in, no matter their age, religious or political beliefs: “nothing of that is important [...] folk music is about togetherness.”<sup>17</sup> Their way of describing these underpinning values in music making, share striking similarities with many of the groups within the alternative progressive movement (see for example Arvidsson and Adolfsson 2015:155). Playing local Swedish folk music became a route into other musical traditions, transnational worlds, and realities. They both also started to play music within other genres and traditions. Popular music scholar Andy Bennett (2017:2–3) claim that musicians’ understandings of their local music making are often invested in a series of discourses regarding the impact of local cultures on collective identity and creativity. When Henriksson and Blomquist-Björnberg became aware of local traditions they articulated the importance of location and place as well as community. This awareness in turn evoked feelings of solidarity for and curiosity about other cultures. The act of playing induced a sense of belonging and togetherness with a symbolic community of people all over the world. Thus, their local practices were closely connected to notions of cultural flows and exchange, not just within the country Sweden but also outside its borders. As pointed out by Ronström (2014:48–49) the actors within the folk music movement not only directed their interest towards the local and national, they also moved geographically and musically across national borders.

The duo “Eva and Sabina”, was in many ways typical within the organised movement of *spelmän*. Their interest was directed toward the local, authentic traditions of their home region. As young women they claimed and created their own space within the older organisations, while at the same time being part of the counter movements. In the interview with me they clearly stated that their music making was not political at all, in the way many of their fellow musicians engaged with left-wing political organisations. Yet, utterances such as those presented above, point towards transnational values of creating a better world together. Henriksson’s and Blomquist-Björnberg’s alternative music making further accentuates how revival activities may be viewed “as a form of cultural activism that uses elements from the past to legitimate change – change comprising not only reversion to past practices, but innovation”

16. Interview with Henriksson and Blomquist-Björnberg, 12 May 2020.

17. Ingenting är viktigt av de sakerna [...] utan folkmusiken [den] musiken är gemensam. Ibid.

(Hill 2014:393). They also demonstrate curiosity, playfulness, and the desire to experiment, often regarded as typical for the music life of the 1960s and 70s. As eloquently expressed by musicologist Beate Kutschke:

The combination of the ‘cult of concernment’ and mutual interest, on the one hand, with the anti-authoritarian, participatory-democratic impetus of the ‘68ers’ on the other, effected an unusually liberated, creative artistic atmosphere. Musical exchange was stimulated between not only different musical nations and cultures, but also styles and genres (Kutschke 2013:8).

The last aspect mentioned by Kutschke is at the centre of my second case study about *Södra Bergens Balalaikor*. I will dwell on the “creative atmosphere” and especially the interest for other types of folk music, from different parts of the world with focus on Russian and East European music.

## The Orchestra: *Södra Bergens Balalaikor*

The orchestra *Södra Bergens Balalaikor/SBB* (The Balalaikas of the Southern Mountains) started as a beginner’s course in balalaika playing in 1968 in the southern parts of Stockholm, led by musicians Embrik Underdal (b. 1929) and Thomas Lundkvist (b. 1944). The initiative to start the course originally came from the Russian language teacher Mikhail Walden. Walden was Russian and worked at *Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund/ABF* (The Workers’ Educational Association)<sup>18</sup> and had close contacts with *Förbundet Sverige-Sovjetunionen* (Association Sweden–Soviet). ABF’s meeting hall later became the orchestra’s rehearsal space. One year later, in 1969, the orchestra was established as a non-profit and politically independent association with 25–35 members. The members sang and played arranged folk melodies from Russia, Georgia and the Ukraine, and collaborated closely with The International Folk Dance Club in Stockholm.<sup>19</sup>

The orchestral setting was inspired by Vasily Vasilievich Andreyev’s (1861–1918) “The Great Russian Orchestra”<sup>20</sup> which was created in Russia in the second half of the 19th century as an orchestra of modified folk instruments modelled on the 19th-century symphony orchestra.<sup>21</sup> Initially the SBB consisted of 25–30 prim balalaikas and one guitar. It later expanded to include balalaikas in four sizes (prima, secunda, alto, bass, and contrabass), and *domras* in four sizes (piccolo, primo, alto, and tenor), the button accordion *bayan*, the zither *gusli*, as well as percussion such as tambourines, bells and cymbals and wooden spoons, wind instruments such as *zhaleika*, *sopilka*, *breolka* and *rožok* (Booklet, 1970, Lundberg 1978, Lundkvist 2021). In the statutes of the association, the aim of the orchestra was declared: “to spread and contribute to knowledge of folk music and encourage people to play”.<sup>22</sup> In 2019, the ensemble celebrated its 50th anniversary.

18. ABF is an educational section of the Swedish Labour Movement. It was founded by the Swedish Social Democratic Party and conducts seminars, study circles and classes and study circles, concerning languages and music. See <https://www.abf.se/> (Last accessed 3 May 2020).

19. The orchestra released three LPs in the 1970s: *Södra Bergens Balalaikor* (1971), 1973 (1973) and *Skiva* (1978), all on the record label MNW.

20. Today named “The Andreyev State Academic Russian Orchestra”.

21. The orchestra got very famous in the beginning of the 20th century and toured in Europe and America, and visited Malmö, Sweden in 1914 (Ronström 1979). The conceptualisation of the balalaika orchestra was also adopted by the Soviet establishment as something proletarian and closely connected to nationalistic ideas.

22. Att sprida och ge kännedom om folkmusik och uppmuntra människor till eget musicerande, Ronström 1978.





Figure 5: Booklet SBB 1970

What kind of creative shifts might be traceable in the orchestra's practices and music making? How was folk music used and enacted? And how might we better understand the members' interest for the "other" and "foreign" music? In the following, I will analyse some examples of how the orchestra and their music were perceived in contemporary reviews. The voices from the journalists will lead us towards how the members themselves expressed the central values of their music making.

23. Balalajkorna är ungefär trettio. Det är folk i alla åldrar och med skiftande yrken. Åtta nationaliteter är representerade. Men de flesta är svenskar. Alla är amatörer. Många hade aldrig spelat något instrument alls förrän de läste en liten annons i DN förra våren om en balalajakurs på södra bergen. Det finns folk i Sverige här som tror på en utveckling av vårt musikliv i riktning mot Södra Bergens Balalaikor. Att orkestrarna och musiken kommer att bli en slags mötesplats för alla slags människor. Att den hårda professionalismen och de svarta frackarna ersätts av något mänskligare och vackrare. Södra Bergens Balalaikor är vanliga människor som spelar folkmusik för att de tycker om den. De har vackra brokiga kläder på sig. Musiken är vacker. Den är vemodig och romantisk. Alla som lyssnar tycker om den. Rasmusson, DN, 15 June 1969.

### "An Atmosphere of Kindness"

There are around thirty balalaikas. They are people of all ages, and with different occupations. Eight nationalities are represented. But most of them are Swedes. All are amateurs [...] There are people in Sweden who believe in a progress of our music life in direction towards *Södra Bergens Balalaikor*. That the orchestras and the music will become a kind of meeting place for all kinds of people. That the harsh professionalism and the black tailcoats will be replaced by something more human and beautiful. *Södra Bergens Balalaikor* are ordinary people that play folk music because they like it. They have beautiful colorful clothes on. The music is beautiful. It's sad and romantic. Everyone who listen like it.<sup>23</sup>





The quotation above is from an article about the balalaika orchestra by the music critic Ludvig Rasmusson, published in *DN* in June 1969. The multivocal epigraph highlights interesting aspects of the alternative discourses that folk music became entangled with in late 1960s and early-70s Sweden. Inspired by left-wing political orientations, folk music of the lower classes was perceived as an important aspect of national history and defined as politically progressive in and of itself under the term “the people’s music” (Ling 1979:26–27, Björnberg 2013:151–52, Arvidsson 2016:768). Rasmusson enacts a similarly romantic sentiment, understanding the orchestra as reflecting the social world and embodying future utopian musical realities. The orchestra became a vehicle for bringing people together across nations, generations, and different parts of society.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the quotation clearly stresses amateurship and participatory practices of music as something for everyone to take part in, experience and perform. This chimes with the central values of the contemporary alternative music movement known for their parole: *Spela Själv* (Play it Yourself, Hyltén-Cavallius 2017:68). This “democratisation of culture” contrasted with the professional and conservative world of “art music”. The way the music critic uses the colours of clothing to demonstrate the different values under negotiation within the two genres are striking; the black coats endorse strict or harsh values in contrast to the plethora of colours ascribed to the orchestra in making the music flourish and becoming more “human”. It forms a certain “ordering” of worth to emerge (see Law & Mol 2002:5–13).

Figure 6: SSB performing at Farsta Gård in the beginning of the 1970’s, in Stockholm. Photo: <https://sodrabergen.wordpress.com/historik/>

24. This way of conceptualising the orchestra through the metaphor of a society in miniature has been common in previous research of orchestras. However, this perspective has today been replaced by a view of orchestras as active social and musical agents. See Ramnarine 2011: 329–332 and Ramnarine 2017:2, for further discussions on the topic.

Indeed, these utterances are closely linked to ongoing cultural debates in 1960s Sweden, especially regarding the content of music education and types of pedagogies used in schools and colleges. The dominant position of art music within the curriculum was questioned as well as the emphasis on sheet music and reproductive learning practices. Critics advocated other genres such as jazz, pop and folk music to be included in the teacher training programmes, where spontaneity, improvisation and ensemble practices were brought forward as central (Arvidsson 2008: 56–59, 311–312).

In the material surveyed for this article, this narrative of the orchestra recurs many times in concert reviews of the orchestra's performances during the 1970s (1968–1980). Their performances are often associated with a sense of freedom and humbleness creating an “atmosphere of kindness” in opposition to the commercialised international music that “dominates the repertoire of our stages” (Lovén 26 April 1971). In the words of journalist Arne Norlin, echoing the quotation from Rasmusson above: “There they meet – as a group of ordinary people, who have replaced electronics, harsh professionalism or black tailcoats with enjoyable togetherness and beautiful music, that they like themselves.”<sup>25</sup> Norlin furthermore underlines how the “amateurs” in the orchestra even play better than the Russians themselves (Norlin, *Aftonbladet*, 12 March 1973).

Apparently, these orderings of “harshness” and “softness” in the vocabulary of value are closely tied up with tropes of authenticities. The Russian and East European Folk Music is perceived by the journalists as something “old”, “real”, “true”, “original” and “genuine” where the “historical roots” of the music is put forward in a “timeless” manner (see Ronström 2014:46–47). It is interesting to note the striking similarities with how the Swedish traditional music was described by Henriksson, Blomquist-Björnborg and Stinnerbom. The two approaches towards authenticity previously brought forward in this article, clearly co-mingle in the reviews. The orientation towards history is present at the same time as the journalists describe “sincerity in expression” in the performances. Ethnomusicologist Lea Hagmann and linguist Franz Andres Morrissey have introduced an analytical model to better understand these overlapping practices, by drawing on philosopher Dennis Dutton's dichotomy; “nominal authenticity”, which refers to a tune as an artefact (sheet music or archival recording), as a point and place of origin, and “expressive authenticity” which concerns the individual performer's interpretations during performance (Dutton 2003). Hagmann and Morrissey have introduced a third perspective, “experiential authenticity”, with emphasis on the audience as authenticators (see also Moore 2002). They in turn build on ethnologist Regina Bendix “quality of experience” (Bendix 1997:13–14), and what ethnologist Ronström has named “the authenticity of the consumer” (Ronström 2014:47, Hagmann and Morrissey 2020:185–188). This third experiential perspective is especially relevant, since several

25. Där träffades de – som ett gäng vanliga människor som ersatt elektronik, hård professionalism eller svarta frackar med trevlig gemenskap och vacker musik som de själva tycker om. Norlin, *Aftonbladet*, 12 March 1973.





reviews speak of how it is impossible not to be moved by the music or emotionally caught up in the performance, as expressed in the following example by journalist Martin Dyfverman:

It's a fascinating experience to sit in front of the orchestra of 35 men (and women) and to be overwhelmed by an ancient, traditional/popular, Russian music-culture. [The music] is at least as good as the most commercial simple music performed at the discotheques today. But it has so much more of real origin and unmasked feeling in every musical fibre [...] catching rhythm, exuberant joy, and deeper sadness – it is the music of the balalaikas. Do not miss it.<sup>26</sup>

The sentiment opens for a range of affective tones and sensory fragments. Claims of authenticity are grounded in Dyfverman's own listening experience. The performance evoked both joy and melancholy for the critic. Authenticity here then, as described by Ronström, "is the experience, the taste or the emotion. What is true is what feels true [...]" (Ronström 2014:47). The SBB's musical performances clearly had a strong effect on its audiences. If the journalists embraced these values of the orchestra and their Russian folk music, how did the members themselves experience their participation and playing? What kind of musical collective was the orchestra fostering?

Figure 7: Embrik Underdal and Thomas Lundkvist are playing together 1967. Photo: Peter Ekberg Peltz

26. Det är en fascinerande upplevelse att sätta sig framför 35 manna (och kvinno-) orkestern och låta sig översköljjas av en urgammal, folklig, rysk musik-kultur. Den svänger minst lika bra som det mest kommersiellt enkla på storstadens diskotek idag. Men har så mycket mer av äkta ursprung och oförfalskad känsla ut i minsta musikhuv [..] Smittande rytm, sprittande glädje och djupare vemod - det är Balalajkornas musik. Missa den inte. Dyfverman, *Norr-tälje tidning*, 18 May 1973.



## Being Together: The Orchestra as an Alternative Society

The ways the orchestra operated and described themselves in contemporary sources show striking similarities with many of the ideas that circulated within the network of journalists, demonstrated above. Emphasis was placed on participation, communality and how folk music should be music for everyone to take part in and perform. The balalaika was put forward as an instrument especially well-suited for beginners, and that it sounded better according to the principle of “the more the merrier.” The orchestra had no director; instead, the members took turns to lead each instrumental section. The performance venues were carefully selected from the criteria that “it felt [morally] right” for the members to perform there (see for example Lundkvist 1969:46, and see Arvidsson 2016, Hyllén-Cavallius 2017). No individual payments were handed out for the concerts; instead, all money was spent on repairing or buying instruments, travels or tours, or other collective needs within the orchestra. At each rehearsal, the orchestra had meetings when they discussed questions of how to best structure their work. If disagreements occurred, all issues were solved by voting. Everyone was invited to participate, regardless of age, gender, background, or occupation (Ronström 1978). In the words of Underdal:

It is important for us to play unpretentious music. The simplicity is beneficial for us in two ways. Anyone can join our group and play with us. And the music is easy to understand for different kinds of people, and all ages. Since, we do not have any sympathy for the commercial music in our country, we choose to play folk music. And the only such that express pure human feelings.<sup>27</sup>

Again, the commercial music is associated with harsh values and superficiality, while folk music is perceived to evoke “authentic” and “pure” human feelings (a prevalent idea at this time and further discussed by Arvidsson 2008:388, 399). Both Underdal and Lundkvist also expressed strong ideas of the orchestra as a society, and even as a family (Lundkvist 1978). In their own descriptions of the ensemble, each individual member and their occupations and age (the orchestra had members aged twelve to 70) are carefully accounted for, enacting the importance of diversity. Underdal also stressed the positive aspects of the many couples and siblings in the orchestra. According to him, it facilitated rehearsals, administrative work and made the orchestra “more human” (Underdal 1978). One recurring topic of discussion within the orchestra was how to handle members who did not practice enough, or played badly, since no one could be excluded according to the statutes (see for example Protocol 7 June 1978). In an interview in 2019, Lundkvist clarified to me that he was strongly against excluding people due to lack of musical skills, instead he explained that those people had other competences important for the orchestra’s inner dynamics: “How you do things, how you live, how you arrange transports, how you fix

27. Det är viktigt för oss att spela en enkel musik. Enkelheten gagnar oss på två sätt. Vem som helst kan ansluta sig till vår grupp kan spela musiken med oss. Och musiken är lätt att förstå för olika människor och alla åldersgrupper. Eftersom vi inte har någon sympati för den kommersiellt inriktade livet i vårt land, så väljer vi folkmusik. Och bara den som uttrycker rena mänskliga känslor. Embrik Underdal, quoted in the film *Life in Swedish* (1974).

things, how you are nice to each other, and other important things about being human.”<sup>28</sup>

It is important to highlight how the orchestra involved many individuals, with their own agencies, voices, and ideals. Certainly, not everyone in the orchestra shared all of Lundkvist’s and Underdal’s ideas and values about making music together. For instance, a group of participants with higher musical skills even left the orchestra around 1977 and started their own ensemble, with focus on professional playing. However, many of Lundkvist’s and Underdal’s values were inherent in the ways the orchestra worked. The members’ embodied practices and actions point towards certain cultural agendas and underpinning values. As demonstrated above, many of these were under negotiation within the alternative music movement – grounded in a humanistic view of how diversity, in society, may result in building a better world together (as argued by Arvidsson and Adolffsson 2015:155).

## Creative Shifts in Time, Place and Space: Negotiating Otherness and Authenticities in Order to Belong

In this article, I have shown how folk music was used and enacted in multiple ways by performers within the folk music movement in Sweden during the 1960s and 1970s. By following a set of creative shifts, the two case studies demonstrate interesting similarities and intersections as well as striking differences in the musical activities and mobilities they represent.

The duo Sabina Henriksson and Eva Blomquist-Björnberg mainly embodied spatial and temporal creative shifts in their music making. In terms of temporality, they re-introduced and restored older, local Swedish fiddle tunes and alternative performance practices, and moved the music spatially through performances and media, from local rural contexts to the urban music scenes. In their musical translations of cultural expressions from the past, they found inspiration and encouragement within the older organisations of *spelmän* while their interpretations simultaneously challenged the very same institutions and the prevalent norms of playing. In this sense, their revival activities work well in line with how performers of Swedish traditional tunes have been described in previous research (Ramsten 1992, Ronström 2014:47–49, Kaminsky 2012:53). Along their musical pathways, they encountered struggles over the “right” and “wrong” ways of embodying Swedish folk music and its traditions, where contested notions of authenticities were constantly brought into play. Despite – and perhaps also due to – their “otherness” in being young female *spelmän*, they managed to create a space of their own within a male-dominated music scene, forging new musical histories to emerge.

28. Hur man gör, hur man lever, hur man fixar transporter, hur man lagar saker, hur man är trevlig mot varandra, allt annat mänskligt som behövs. Interview with Lundkvist, 27 May 2019.

At first sight, the orchestra *Södra Bergens Balalaikor* might be perceived as very different from the *spelman* duo “Eva and Sabina.” Instead of Swedish traditional fiddle tunes, the members of the orchestra turned towards the Russian instrument balalaika and performed orchestral arrangements of folk melodies and songs from Eastern Europe. In their search for older sounds from another geographical region and time, great emphasis was placed on playfulness and imagination in their interpretations of the traditional material. The SBB performed a foreign repertoire in a Swedish context largely unfamiliar with that repertoire. Therefore, they had more interpretative freedom since nobody in the Swedish community were really able to tell whether they played “right or wrong”. Even when they performed in a Russian context, their interpretative freedom was protected by their “otherness”, with Russian and East European audiences likely not regarding them as a “genuine” Russian orchestra. The same level of “experiential authenticity” (Hagmann and Morrissey 2020:186) was not expected of them as the Swedish performers and audiences expected of “Eva and Sabina.” The orchestra mainly performed an older repertoire, from one or two generations back, seldom heard at the contemporary stages in Russia or Eastern Europe at that time (Interviews 2019–2020). These observations also elucidate how the orchestra’s geographical shifts have aesthetic implications for how the music was performed as well as received by the public in the different countries. I would suggest by being placed in the space of the “other” – in between fixed categories – it gave the orchestra the opportunity to move between different cultural contexts and geographical locations. The 1960s and 70s was also a period when the interest in “the other” was highly valued within the musical life and industry in Europe, which further strengthened the SBB’s position within such musical scenes in Sweden (Kutschke 2013 and see also Eriksson’s forthcoming study of SBB’s transnational connections 2022). Despite the orchestra’s commitment to a foreign repertoire, their values and affective engagements with folk music have many similarities with how “Eva and Sabina” related to their local Swedish traditions.

Indeed, my two case studies both highlight this interest in, and fascination for, “the other.” Henriksson and Blomquist-Björnberg turned towards an historical other “at home”, in the form of the Swedish pre-industrial society, and evoked views of the authentic *spelman* in line with Romantic nationalism. The SBB instead turned to a cultural and geographic other far away, in their longing and curiosity for a Russian sound world. Within these gatherings both “nominal” and “expressive” authenticities were brought into play; nominal in terms of establishing the artefacts’ origins and histories from certain places (both sheet music and recordings) and “expressive authenticity”, in making the music “their own”, in a “sincere” manner, adding their own interpretations and imaginaries. Furthermore, the level of “experiential authenticity” was especially brought forward in the discourses surrounding the SBB by Swedish journalists in Sweden. The evaluative vocabulary used to describe the Russian and East European Folk music in contemporary reviews, in turn shows striking similarities with the discourses of

Swedish folk music, as: “old”, “genuine”, “timeless”, “authentic” “truthful”, and “real”, grounded in the listeners own experiences and feelings. This is especially interesting if compared to how the members in the orchestra described their ways of approaching the traditional material, not always searching for historical accuracy or exact imitations (Interviews with Lundkvist, Wigelius, Fors and Johansson 2019–2020).

It was establishing these authenticities that enabled journalists and performers to place folk music in contrast to the commercial music industry and art music realms. I would suggest that the SBB fostered a retro-acoustic sound scape, performing on acoustic instruments in city spaces, which furthermore stresses their actions as counterculture. As shown in the article these values worked well in line with central ideas that circulated within the alternative music movement. The SBB was also depicted in contemporary media as embodying an alternative future utopian society, embracing diversity, participatory practices, and egalitarianism, guided by moral ideas of “kindness” and “humbleness” in being human. One possible explanation for the vast similarities in the reviews, could be that the Swedish journalists shared the same values and ideas that were under negotiation in the orchestra.

## Being in Movement

Needless to say, the “glue” that held these initiatives together was the fascination and love for folk music and its vocal and instrumental traditions. In their basic mode of cultural production, they show that music has the capacity to generate strong senses of place, belonging and communality – to bridge and mediate between people across time and space. Music also became a vehicle for collective and individual action. The duo “Eva and Sabina” and the SBB both perceived folk music as a national ethnic configuration while at the same time evoking transnationality and “togetherness” with people all over the world.<sup>29</sup> These orientations point towards how the actors within these musical spaces through their individual local knowledges and sensibilities, contributed to the counter culture by telling particular stories about collective meanings, in the processes of preserving and performing traditions as well as carrying them forward in time. I call for more studies of the engagement with musics from other parts of the world during 1960s and 70s in Sweden. There are still other stories to be told and to be discovered out there.

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29. This double meaning of folk music has been further discussed by ethnologist Sverker Hyltén-Cavallius in his studies of the alternative music movement in Sweden and how it has since the 1990s been reinvigorated through the transnational circulation of re-issues (Hyltén-Cavallius 2021:174–175).



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