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## **"PESNIARY" AND THE HERITAGE DISCOURSES IN BELARUS<sup>2</sup>**

The music of vocal-instrumental ensemble "Pesniary" is recognized in Belarus as a cultural heritage that must be saved and protected. In this paper, the approach of critical heritage studies is used to show, how this meaning of heritage is created, what heritage discourses exist in Belarus and how they constitute different meanings of heritage. The focus of the paper is on the confrontation and interrelation between the authorized, self-authorized and unauthorized heritage discourses. As well, the use of heritage for the constitution of national identity narratives is analyzed. The key points of the preservation and management of heritage in Belarus are the establishment of the heritage continuation and authenticity, exclusion of contradictory interpretations of the heritage, its interrelation to the particular version of the past, and hence the particular identity narrative. One of the main actors in the authorized heritage discourse is the government that puts efforts into recognizing and funding the one version of the heritage that corresponds with the state's cultural policy. Self-authorized and unauthorized heritage discourses use the "Pesniary" heritage to express national components of the collective identity and rejuvenate the past.

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Keywords: critical heritage studies, authorized heritage discourse, "Pesniary", national identity, Belarus.

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## Introduction

In 2015, the influential Internet resource on Belarusian popular music posted the top-100 Chart of Belarusian music of all time (Budkin, 2015). There are 16 compositions of the vocal-instrumental ensemble "Pesniary" (hereafter VIA "Pesniary") in this list, 3 of them are among the top-10. In the same year, a huge debate broke out in Belarus over the tribute album "Re: Pesniary", in which modern Belarusian performers interpreted the songs of the famous VIA. Besides, more than five groups perform the repertoire of the Soviet ensemble under the title "Pesniary" (with minor variations). The music of the Soviet VIA is the cultural heritage of modern Belarus, recognized both by the state and by the alternative music scene. Nevertheless, this heritage is a subject of debate: it is been redefined in a new context, and at the same time resists this redefinition.

This process of redefining can be studied in the framework of critical heritage studies. Critical heritage studies have emerged at the beginning of the XXI century as an analogous approach to the previous view on heritage as something that is exclusively tangible and demands technical expertise to be defined and protected. Critical heritage studies broaden this notion of heritage and scrutinize it as a social, cultural and political construct (Gentry and Smith, 2019, p. 1149–1150). The idea of heritage and past is changing, according to the demands of the present, and this process of meaning-shifting influences constructing of identity, social memory, social hierarchies etc. (Ibid). The comprehensive discussion of this problem unfolds in the work of the founder of Association of Critical Heritage Studies Laurajane Smith under the title "The Uses of Heritage". Smith develops the idea of ever-changing and negotiated in public debates heritage as discourse (Smith, 2006). She proves that heritage is not stable objects with intrinsic value, on the opposite, heritage is a cultural process, which includes a range of practices (social, economic, touristic, and so forth) of meaning and identity making, and is regulated by various discourses that "simultaneously reflect these practices while also constructing them" (Smith, 2006, p. 13). In this paper, I use this notion of heritage and analyze various practices that are connected to heritage in Belarus, and discourses that constitute them. In this analysis, I refer to the sources that highlight these discursive practices: official web-site of the ensemble "Pesniary", newspaper publications about the ensemble, virtual museum, dedicated to the ensemble's creativity, and the last but not the least, songs, music videos, and performance recordings. The key questions are: how the musical activity of "Pesniary" becomes heritage? How authenticity of this heritage is maintained? What identity narratives lie behind the heritage discourses? The main point of the paper is that through heritage practices different communities actualize the same aspects of the past to establish different identity narratives: one of the Belarusian state with Soviet origins and one of Belarus with strong national identity, related to

the times of national revival. However, there are no strict borders between the heritage discourses and concerning the "Pesniary" heritage they are not antagonistic.

It is necessary to mention that Laurajane Smith in her work does not only considers heritage as discourse but sets forward a distinction between "authorized heritage discourse" and "unauthorized heritage discourse". This distinction frames the adversarial relationship between institutionalized and state-funded "top-down" heritage and everyday level practices of "bottom-up" heritage, based on civic initiatives and alternative to the dominant discourse comprehensions of the past. The main point is that heritage is what is defined, legitimized, discussed, and practiced as heritage. Researchers Sarah Cohen and Les Roberts have made the next step in developing this idea in their paper that reviews the discourses of popular music heritage in Great Britain. The researchers have added to Smith's categorization the mid-stage of self-authorized heritage (Roberts and Cohen, 2014, p. 243). The recognition of the self-authorized heritage is reliant on the influencers in the industry or community. It is apparent that there are no strict borders between authorized, self-authorized, and unauthorized heritage practices and authors do not try to pigeonhole every heritage object in this scheme. Roberts and Cohen propose to step further than mere "official/unofficial" dichotomy and show how contours of the described by Smith discourses manifest themselves, regarding popular music, which can be both tangible and intangible heritage. At the forefront of the popular music heritage studies should be an examination of the authorizing processes that mark something as a musical heritage; the performativity of heritage objects; interrelation of various heritage discourses with other types of music heritage practices (Roberts and Cohen, 2014, p. 258).

However, the focus of these influential works is on the anglophone areas: Great Britain, Australia, and the USA. The same processes in the post-Soviet space have other contours and contested heritage belongs to different social groups. Meanings and particular practices of heritage, connected to the Soviet past, remain overlooked. In this paper, I use the theoretical framework of critical heritage studies that is usually applied to the Western cases and consider what heritage is used for in the post-Soviet context and what heritage discourses exist and confront each other in modern Belarus, using the case of the vocal-instrumental ensemble "Pesniary".

## **Muliavin's legacy: authorizing "Pesniary"**

As L. Smith mentions, authorized heritage discourse "makes itself real and material", imposing the following interrelated boundaries on heritage: 1) heritage is confined to the past and disconnected from the present-day values 2) heritage is defined by experts (technical or aesthetical), who have the authority to speak for heritage; 3) heritage has innate value, which "works to obscure

the multi-vocality of many heritage values and meanings" (Smith, 2006, p. 12). Therefore, authorized heritage discourse constitutes such heritage practices as conservation and preservation (broadly heritage management), tourism, and visiting (Ibid). This section addresses the process of constructing "Pesniary" as heritage, key points of authorizing heritage discourse, such as authenticity, a continuation of tradition, professionalism, and the ways to extinguish competing narratives of the past.

The 1970s saw the nascence of a new form of the Soviet popular culture, specifically vocal-instrumental ensembles (*vokal'no-instrumental'ny ansambl'*, or VIA). It was an attempt to combine ideologically right Soviet popular culture with the growth of interest among the youth to Western rock music. The most renowned Belarusian vocal-instrumental ensemble "Pesniary" was created in 1969 in Minsk by Vladimir Muliavin. During the 1970s ensemble got beloved throughout all Soviet Union. It was the first Soviet ensemble that had toured in the USA (Krushinskaya, 2004, p.32). The repertoire of "Pesniary" consisted of rock adaptations of traditional Belarusian folk songs and Soviet estrada songs, written by professional songwriters and composers as Ihar Lučanok or Aleksandra Pahmutova. Like many other Soviet ensembles of this time, "Pesniary" was influenced by Western popular music. They referred to the bit-rock and "The Beatles", genres of folk-rock, art-rock, and progressive-rock. Besides that, "Pesniary" actively participated in the ethnographical research into Belarusian folk music, recreated on stage traditional music instruments, song lyrics, and even traditional Belarusian dress (Bubennikova, 2003, p. 116). Moreover, they implemented the lyrics of classical Belarusian poets (J. Kupala, J. Kolas, M. Bahdanovič, etc.) and staged rock-opera by Vladimir Majakovskii's cycle of poems. Hence, the music of the "Pesniary" already had had a strong relation to the national past, when it was "contemporary". Nowadays, the authorized heritage discourse emphasizes this relation to the past to set up the sanctity of the ensemble as a "national treasure".

In 1998, the ensemble split up: Muliavin, head of the ensemble and the main harmonist, remained in the Belarusian State Ensemble (BSE) "Pesniary"; the majority of other members of the band under the guidance of Uladzislaŭ Misievič established collective "Belorusskie Pesniary". After the death of Muliavin in 2003 the BSE split up once again, and the formation "'Pesniary' under the supervision of Lieanid Bartkievič" emerged. All the members of the state ensemble "Pesniary" now are young musicians that never participated in the "canonical" ensemble before 1998. For the time being more than five bands perform VIA's songs under the title "Pesniary". Apparently, this fact causes severe debates and charges for the violation of the copyright. The debates highlight how authorized heritage discourse maintains the authenticity of "Pesniary" heritage.

The legacy of V. Muliavin as the exceptionally talented musician that in fact founded modern Belarusian music becomes a seminal point for the authorized heritage discourse. Heritage practitioners refer to the legacy of V. Muliavin to establish authenticity of the ensemble and continuation of its history, construct an undeniable aesthetic value of the ensemble's artworks, as well as endow former members with expertise. For instance, the most authentic ensemble that owns the copyright for the title is the BSE "Pesniary", even though members of other bands under this name were the singers of the Soviet VIA. The continuation between Soviet "Pesniary" and the BSE "Pesniary" has roots in the fact that Muliavin was a member of both of these collectives. This narrative can be traced on the official web site of the state ensemble<sup>4</sup>. Besides sections with the showcases of the BSE performances and news, there is a section named "History of the Ensemble". It presents the history of the VIA through the biography of Vladimir Muliavin. Paragraphs under the headings such as "Motto of V.G. Muliavin", "Merits", "Achievements", "It started in the 1963", and finally "The outstanding Pesniar" contain some trivia about the ensemble creative life, but mainly it focuses on the personality of Muliavin, his talent and vital influence as a composer and singer. The emphasis is placed on the importance of the "Pesniary" and Muliavin himself for the national musical traditions, the adaptation of Belarusian literature in songs, and on the various state prizes and awards that Muliavin acquired for his work. For example, the paragraph "Motto of V.G. Muliavin" ends with the following quote: "For this [his dedication to work] the people loved their Pesniar, and the governments of different countries have distinguished him" (*Istoriya vokal'no instrumental'nogo ansamblya PESNYARY*, no date)<sup>5</sup>. The last paragraph of the whole section states that "By order of the President of Belarus A.G. Lukashenko in 2003 the measures were implemented by government to immortalize the memory of People's Artist of USSR and Belarus V.G. Muliavin" (*Ibid*)<sup>6</sup>. The recognition of Muliavin by the state (and states) becomes the central argument for approval of the value of his work and, therefore, the work of the state ensemble "Pesniary".

The continuation of the ensemble's history is maintained through an attempt to define who is a "true" member of "Pesniary" and who is not. In the paragraph under the heading "The Outstanding Pesniar," several former members of "Pesniary" are listed as people who Vladimir Muliavin named

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<sup>4</sup> Available at: <https://pesnyary.by>. The web-site was created in 2007 and has no references to the authorship of all represented information, besides the links to the Official Web-Site of the President of the Republic of Belarus and Official Web-site of the Ministry of Culture.

<sup>5</sup> As original quote: "За это народ любил своего Песняра, а правительства разных стран отмечали его заслуги." (*Istoriya vokal'no instrumental'nogo ansamblya PESNYARY*, no date)

<sup>6</sup> As original quote: "По распоряжению Президента Беларуси А. Г. Лукашенко в 2003 г. правительством были проведены меры по увековечению памяти народного артиста СССР и Беларуси В. Г. Мулявина." (*Istoriya vokal'no instrumental'nogo ansamblya PESNYARY*, no date)

as "true Pesniary"<sup>7</sup>. Musicians of the band "Belorusskie Pesniary", among them Uladzislaŭ Misievič, also a member of the Soviet VIA since the beginning, are not mentioned in this list. Seemly, because "Belorusskie Pesniary" emerged as a result of the same conflict in 1998 that led to the establishment of the BSE "Pesniary". There is no reference to this schism on the official web site of the BSE. Heritage of "Pesniary" presented as an obvious undistorted continuation of tradition, founded by Muliavin, without any additional voices that contest this version of heritage. The copyright nails this main narrative down. The section "Official Information" contains eight scanned documents alongside the text of the Russian Chamber for Patent Disputes decision that prove that the trademark "Pesniary" in Europe, Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine belongs only to the BSE "Pesniary". In light of this, one might conclude that authorized heritage discourse involves the unique authoritative figure, references to the recognition by the state, and legal measures to consolidate fractured heritage narratives and establish its significance and consistency.

Muliavin's legacy is used to set a standard of professionalism. His figure exemplifies outstanding composing and performing skills. The demand for meeting the same skill level and expertise from those, who endeavor to redefine this heritage, excludes other voices from the authorized heritage discourse. The tribute album "Re: Pesniary" was issued in 2014 to the 45th anniversary of the "Pesniary" with the support of music web-magazine "Tuzin.fm", its producer Siarhiej Budkin, and civic initiative "Budźma bielarusami". As Siarhiej Budkin put it, the main point of the tribute album was the re-thinking of "Pesniary's" music and fitting into the new, up-to-date musical context (Klimaŭ, A. and Trafilaŭ, S., 2014). The only requirement for invited musicians was that the choice of the songs to cover was limited to the songs in the Belarusian language. The rest was left at the whim of the musicians. Both the art director of the BSE "Pesniary" Viačaslaŭ Šarapaŭ and composer of the majority of the original VIA's hits Ihar Lučanok approved the idea of the tribute album; Viačaslaŭ Šarapaŭ expressed his hope for "fresh or interesting musical solutions of classical repertoire"(Budkin, 2014). However, composer Aleh Molčan prohibited the cover of the song "Malitva" ("The Pray") and issued a lawsuit to Siarhiej Budkin and the band "Naka", which performed it without copyright (*Kompozitor Oleg Molchan sobirayetsya podavat' v sud na organizatora proyekta 'Re:Pesnyary' Budkina*, 2014). On the behalf of Aleh Molchan, his wife Iryna Vidova (a musician herself) stated that one of the reasons to prohibit the cover was "low level of performance and lack of professionalism"<sup>8</sup>(Vidova, 2014).

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<sup>7</sup> Probably, that paragraph is based on Muliavin's interview to journalist and art historian Boris Krepak soon after the split of the ensemble (Krepak, 2004, p. 30).

<sup>8</sup> As original quote: "проект «Ре: Песняры» выполнен на низком музыкальном и профессиональном уровне" (Vidova, 2014).

Researcher of Belarusian culture Maksim Zhbakov analyzed this case as part of the whole pattern of the cultural administration in Belarus, where "any step away from the standard is still considered 'desecration of Holy places'." (Zhbakov, 2014, p.178).

The fact of the collaboration with Muliavin endows his colleagues with the rights to authorize the new versions of heritage. The reaction of the former band members on the tribute album "Re: Pesniary" provides an example. Before the release of the album, journalists from the newspaper "Kul'tura" asked former members of "Pesniary" to evaluate the pre-release of the tribute album (Klimaŭ, A. and Trafilaŭ, S., 2014). The musicians acted as experts and evaluated the aesthetical value of the cover songs. For the most part, they liked the album, but also criticized the lack of professionalism. The reasoning behind judgments about the aesthetical value of the tribute album refers to the high standard of the performing, set by "Pesniary" and by V. Muliavin in particular. The former member of "Pesniary" Uladzimir Tkačenka<sup>9</sup> expressed his opinion about the prohibited "Malitva" the following way: "The true one is the song that was sung by Vladimir Muliavin. Neither choral nor any other performance is not even close to his level"<sup>10</sup> (Ibid). Another quote of this musician provides expert view on the value of music as heritage: "the song "Ty mnie viasnoju prysnilasia" is not just a heritage of the ensemble: it is one of the most beautiful vocal compositions, which was outstandingly performed by "Pesniary". Wonderful in its melody song is the part of national music culture (because existence of such artworks is the measure of culture), and it can be reworked beautifully. But it demands musical training, certain singing voice..."<sup>11</sup>(Ibid). Experts accepted the very concept of reworking the heritage, but in their opinion, the reworking still must correspond with the professional musical approach of the original ensemble. However, not all members of the "Pesniary" had a professional musical education, in memoirs of the VIA's members famous vocalists (Bartkievič and Kašaparaŭ) are described as "natural talents", "rough diamonds" (Krushinskaya, 2004, Misevich, 2018). There is another clue about the changes in the comprehension of "Pesniary" as an unattainably skillful collective that cannot be challenged by amateurs: in 1998, Muliavin and Kašaparaŭ performed together with the band "Neuro Dubel" the punk version of the song "Vologda", one of the ensemble's greatest hits (*Niejra Dziubieĺ. Rok-karanacyja 1998*, 2011). Despite the intentionally low performance level and punk spirited irony, it seems that Pesniary enjoyed this alternative view on their work. Therefore,

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<sup>9</sup> He played guitar and violin in the ensemble from 1975 to 1985.

<sup>10</sup> As original quote: "Сапраўдная — гэта тая песня, якую праспяваў Уладзімір Мулявін. Ні харавое, ні якое-небудзь іншае яе выкананне на сёння нават не дасягнула ягонага ўзроўню" (Klimaw, A. and Trafilaw, S., 2014)

<sup>11</sup> As original quote: "Песня "Ты мне вясною прыснілася" — гэта не проста спадчына ансамбля: гэта адзін з найпрыгажэйшых беларускіх вакальных твораў, выбітным выканаўцам якога сталі "Песняры". Цудоўная па мелодыцы песня, частка нацыянальнай музычнай культуры (бо калі ёсць такія работы — гэта паказчык культуры), і яе можна было прыгожа перапрацаваць. Але яна патрабуе музычнай падрыхтоўкі, пэўных вакальных даных..." (Ibid).

the professionalism, defined and constructed in time by aesthetical experts, becomes a boundary that separates authorized and unauthorized heritage. In the authorizing heritage discourse, the feature of professionalism serves both as a criterion of exclusion and as proof of the aesthetical value that must be protected.

## **"Pesniary" and the Soviet past**

The aesthetical value of "Pesniary" music and its meaning as heritage takes roots in the connection of heritage to the past. The authorized heritage discourse provides a linkage between present Belarus and its Soviet past. Considering national identity, the authorized heritage discourse sets forward that "Pesniary" is the foundation of the Belarusian culture that was born from the alliance of Soviet culture and traditions of the Belarusian peasants. As it was mentioned above, the gist of "Pesniary" music is the combination of the folk motives with rock style orchestrations, adding Soviet estrada decorum, coined in the state philharmonics. The painstaking ethnographic work of artists was praised both in Soviet times and in present. As Maria Paula Survilla states, the preservation and popularization of the Belarusian language by "Pesniary" were seminal during the period of its decline due to the urbanization and Soviet language policy in 1970-80s<sup>12</sup> (Survilla, 2003, p. 193). Nevertheless, captured in the authorized heritage discourse connection to the tradition of Belarusian folk music in combination with immense professionalism actually contradicts the main creative idea of "Pesniary". The VIA risked and tried various creative experiments, adapting Belarusian literature and folklore to contemporary music approaches, for instance, art-rock or progressive rock. Their approach was innovative. Nowadays the official ensemble adapts Belarusian literature and folklore to the VIA sounding as if it was the 1970s. The new records of the BSE "Pesniary" consist partly of new songs, partly of exact copies of the classic "Pesniary" repertoire with the new singers. The constant constructing of the "pastness" of heritage can be traced not only in music but also in visuals that arrange the album covers. Album cover for "Raspaviadałnaja" depicts the Belarusian hurdy-gurdy<sup>13</sup> with the pictures of the Niasvizh castle on it. Both the hurdy-gurdy and the Niasvizh castle are the embodied symbols of Belarusian cultural heritage: Niasvizh castle is one of the few objects in Belarus that listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Some other album covers use associations with the folk music such as ornaments or national dress ("Spadčyna", "Ščaslivasc"), some are similar to the covers for the different VIAs

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<sup>12</sup> More about the history of the Belarusian language in this context: (Zaprudski, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Other names: wheel fiddle, organistrum. A stringed instrument with a wheel and a keyboard, commonly used in Eastern Slavic folk music. "Pesniary" used it in their folk songs too.

vinyl discs by Soviet record label "Melodiia" ("Khmel' molodoj", "Prysviačennie majstru")<sup>14</sup>. "Pesniary" as an object of heritage has a value not as a self-contained phenomenon, but as one of the many symbolical markers of state-approved Belarusian identity, alongside lakes and fields, peasants' traditions, storks, partisans, and Bialovezha Forest.

This identity narrative conceals the inheritance of Belarus to the BSSR. This connection reveals itself in the nostalgic attunement that "Pesniary" music has nowadays. For many people, it is first and foremost Soviet VIA and then Belarusian national treasure. The TV-Channel "Nostalgia" streams the concerts of "Pesniary" (both the BSE and the Soviet ensemble) (*Pesnyary - Live na telekanale 'Nostal'giya' (2017)*, 2017). YouTube comments section under every video recording of the original "Pesniary" performance is full of nostalgia and longing for the lost Soviet culture and time of the commentator's youth when musicians were more professional and sincere than any contemporary artist. The visitors of the ensemble's concerts are mostly people in their 60s. The mode of this nostalgia unfolds in the estrada open-air festival "Slavic Bazaar" in Vitebsk. "Slavic Bazaar" is the largest state-funded music festival in Belarus. It is framed as a festival of Slavic culture, one of the day topics is "Day of the Union State of Russia and Belarus" (*Muzey | O festivale | XXIX Mezhdunarodnyy festival' iskusstv «Slavyanskiy bazar v Vitebske»*, no date). The BSE "Pesniary" along with the Russian estrada artists such as Philipp Kirkorov or Alla Pugacheva performs on every "Slavic bazaar". The BSE "Pesniary" even celebrated there the 50th anniversary of the ensemble (*Slavyanskiy bazar v Vitebske - 2019. Soyuznoye gosudarstvo. Pesnyaram - 50 (Belarus' 1, 12.07.2019)*, 2019). Kevin Platt analyses the same processes in the case of Latvian "New Wave" festival as Soviet retro that "describes the revival or continuation of traditions that appear never to have been lost, rather than the quixotic overcoming of the deleterious effects of time and the total disjuncture of collapse associated with post-socialist nostalgia" (Platt, 2013, p. 464). The same way "Pesniary" as heritage object is authorized and used as the way to connect Belarussiannes to Soviet origins.

## Redefining "Pesniary"

The analysis in the previous section shows how heritage becomes heritage and how other versions of the past are excluded from the authorizing discourse. Nevertheless, these dissenting versions do not extinct, on the opposite, marginal narratives turn into the mainstream and traverse

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<sup>14</sup> For comparison: the album cover for "Khmel' molodoj" (The BSE "Pesniary", 2015) and the album cover for "Ty – moja ljubov'" (VIA "Siabry", 1980).

into the field of political confrontation. This section focuses on the heritage practices that initiate dialogue with the past and keep the heritage current.

The tribute album "Re:Pesniary" aims to actualize "Pesniary" by bringing them into the present. It turns into account the same aspects of heritage as authorized heritage discourse, but with the opposite goal of changing its nostalgic meaning and finding resonance with the actual comprehensions of the past. As was said, the main idea of the tribute was to open up the "Pesniary" heritage to the contemporary musical influences and to draw the attention of the younger generations of the Belarusians. In that regard, the rap duo "SP Kava & Angst" makes the curious step towards dialogue by song "Dumali" ("We were thinking"). The track is not a cover version of the existing "Pesniary" song but the original composition that samples "Malitva". Conceptually, "Dumali" is a letter from the descendants to Muliavin and one of the most influential Belarusian poets Janka Kupala, whose poem was put to music in the "Malitva". Therefore, the song is in fact a dialogue of the present musicians with the authoritative figure of the past that represents the heritage itself in the authorized heritage discourse. As the authors stated, this letter is "about our times, about how we live and who we are" (*SP Kava i Angst: «Branzaviénnie škodzić!» (aŭdyjoprem'jera!)*, 2014)<sup>15</sup>. The main idea of the artists was to represent their generation that has "a lot of opportunities and ways of existence, and, of course, the pray for Belarus as the key" (*Ibid*)<sup>16</sup>. The lyrics of the song include not only references to the "Malitva" by Janka Kupala but also reminiscences from contemporary Belarusian rock music, for instance, the band "N.R.M." and singer-songwriter Zmicier Vajciuškievič. Hence, this might be seen as an attempt to rejuvenate the heritage of the "Pesniary" and bring it into line with the living musicians that are already hieratic, but at the same time are not confined to the past. Besides that, the song is overtly political in its narration about the 90s – the short period of transition from the Soviet Union to Lukashenko's dictatorship with the competition of two national identities: "We were thinking in the nineties: 'It's not all that simple, how long is this independence?' / and firstly we were quiet as a mouse – what if something happens? / <...> / While some were thinking how to turn chains into the barbed wire, / others were thinking: no need to rush, because it is nice at least to have a full belly / Some named others fools, while those were searching for the ways of redemption" (*Ibid*)<sup>17</sup>. Sample from the

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<sup>15</sup> As original quote: "Ліст пра час, у якім мы жывем, чым мы жывем і пра тое, якія мы самі" (*SP Kava i Angst: «Branzaviénnie škodzić!» (aŭdyjoprem'jera!)*, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> As original quote: "вялікая колькасць магчымасцяў і спосабаў існавання і, вядома, у якасці ключа — малітва за будучыню Беларусі." (*Ibid*).

<sup>17</sup> As original quote: "Думалі ў дзевяностыя: «Ня так усё проста, колькі той незалежнасці?!» / найперш съціхлі як мышы — толькі б чаго ня выйшла... / Пакуль адны думалі ланцугі пераплавіць на дрот калючы / іншыя думалі: ня трэба сьпяшацца, бо есці ад пуза было б не залішне / Адны называлі другіх дурнямі, тыя — шукалі шляхоў да збавення..." (*Ibid*).

"Pesniary" song follows the line "promise anything but silence" and in this way serves as a promise to the posterity. Therefore, this track on the tribute album provides a new sense of heritage and uses it to establish the identity of the first post-Soviet generation of the Belarusians. The attempt to enter into a dialogue with heritage and unauthorized it exposes itself in the promo video for the tribute album that uses the described above track "Dumali" as a background sound. The video represents the same symbolical markers of the Belarussianness as in the authorized heritage discourse: lakes and fields, ruins of the castle, pagan fest Kupal'e, girls in the folk white-and-red dress, and so on. However, the main characters of the video are the musicians that took part in the tribute: they create anachronistic space, inserting themselves in the landscape of heritage and erasing the connotative meaning of "pastness" that these images usually have in anticipation with heritage.

The tribute album "Re: Pesniary" is an example of the self-authorized heritage. This type of heritage is legitimized and validated by the media and music industry. Self-authorized discourse has common features with authorized discourse in its endeavor to establish a succession of the contemporary musicians to "Pesniary" and concern with the protection of heritage. One of its functions is the consolidation of the alternative Belarusian rock scene. The participants of the tribute are both young musicians that in 2014 were on the advent of their careers and already well-known in local circles artists. The press-releases about the tribute framed those musicians as a new generation of Belarusian music («*Budźma bielarusami!*» «*Re:Pesniary*»: *žyvaja prem'jera*, no date; Budkin, 2014). The tie between "Pesniary" and the new generation of Belarusian musicians is the innovative features of "Pesniary" artworks, the experimental nature of their music transfers to "inheritors". The most popular at the time Russian-singing artists of Belarusian origins (i.e. Maks Korž or rap duo "LSP") do not belong to this generation, as well as rock veterans from the late 80s and 90s (i.e. the already mentioned bands "N.R.M." and "Neuro Dubel"). Therefore, "Re: Pesniary" uses heritage to form a representation of local music culture with an emphasis on its experimental character and a national component. This can be connected with the emerging in the middle of the 2010s trend for casual consumption of national popular culture and widening interest to Belarusian language, literature, and music in particular (Zhbankov, 2014, pp. 175–176). Another function of "Re: Pesniary" is the protection of heritage from oblivion: the project producer Siarhiej Budkin and the participants repeated the idea that nowadays the Belarusians did not know their music and its history, that's why it was necessary to rejuvenate "Pesniary" heritage. Thereby the self-authorized discourse concerns the same issues as the authorized heritage discourse but confronts it in the methods of preservation. If the authorized heritage discourse constitutes heritage as something that must be protected from desecration, the competing discourse sees the necessity to popularize heritage and make it accessible.

The unauthorized heritage discourse does not necessarily challenge its authorized rival. The virtual museum of "Pesniary" provides an example of heritage practice that is close to the authorized discourse, but relies only on the own enthusiasm of practitioner and validation from the side of the fan community. Even though this practice has obvious "bottom-up" nature, it shares with the authorized heritage discourse the view of heritage as something in need of protection and only remote contemplation. The virtual museum of "Pesniary" is a web site, created by an enthusiast Dmitrii Terekhin, that represents a comprehensive collection of all kind of information, connected to the ensemble creative life<sup>18</sup>. It spans from 1969 to 2002 and does not take into account the fate of the ensemble after Muliavin's death. The former members of the "Pesniary" and fan community are the main sources of the information, including the chronology of live performances and changes in the ensemble's lineup. The section "Library" contains scans of newspapers with the publications about "Pesniary", fans' creativity, articles and interviews with ensemble members, and even scans of posters from different years and places, all collected and sent by fans. The virtual museum differs from the common fan forum: the only place for the discussion is the guestbook as in real-life museums. The introduction to the guestbook states, "I [the creator of the museum] reserve the right to delete any post that is, in my opinion, intolerable, disrespectful or that does not correspond with my vision of the proper cultural level of the virtual museum. Visitors that attempt on any exhibited object with ill thoughts expressed in words would be prohibited forever" (Terekhin, D., no date)<sup>19</sup>. The discussion of the former VIA's members and their current musical projects is also prohibited. The museum collection omits all information about copyright conflicts and debates about authenticity. In this case, heritage is separated from the present day: virtual museum focuses exceptionally on its cultural and aesthetical value of "Pesniary". It does not establish any explicit identity narrative, providing space for all fans to save memorabilia and learn more about favorite VIA.

## Conclusion

This paper reviews modes of existence of musical heritage in contemporary Belarus and identity narratives that underlie authorized, self-authorized and unauthorized heritage discourses. The heritage practices that one might ascribe to the authorized heritage discourse represent heritage as unproblematic, construct a coherent narrative about its history and involve expert judgments and

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<sup>18</sup> Available at: [vma-pesnyary.com](http://vma-pesnyary.com)

<sup>19</sup> As original quote: Я, в свою очередь, оставляю за собой право удалять любые сообщения, являющиеся, на мой взгляд, недопустимыми, неуважительными или не соответствующими моему понятию о должном культурном уровне посетителей виртуального музея. Для посетителей, попытавшихся осуществить покушение (нездоровыми мыслями, выраженными словами) на любые экспонаты музея вход будет закрыт навсегда. (Terekhin, D., no date)

legal measures to support its significance and to justify the demand to protect the heritage. The authorized heritage discourse refers to the legacy of Vladimir Muliavin to exclude contradictory versions of heritage and explain why "Pesniary" is the Belarusian cultural heritage. Identity narrative behind the authorized heritage discourse ties together the contemporary independent Republic of Belarus and its Soviet predecessor. Heritage practices that make "Pesniary" into the symbolical marker of a state version of Belarusianness include intended actualization of nostalgic components in performances and reproduction of "pastness" in songs and visuals. On the opposite, the main aim of the self-authorized and unauthorized heritage discourse is to avoid nostalgia and rejuvenate the heritage, making it accessible and entering into a dialogue with it. Nevertheless, the borders between discourses are vague, because they share the same concern with the protection of heritage and use this heritage to establish identity narrative. This identity narrative in the self-authorized heritage discourse represents independent Belarus that inherits the national culture of the beginning of the XXth century. This narrative corresponds with the recent trend for the revival of popular national culture. There are heritage practices that are based on the fans community: a collection of information related to "Pesniary" and maintenance of its aesthetical significance with the exclusion of contradictory views on the heritage.

The process of redefining the heritage of "Pesniary" is by no means finished. It will provoke more discussions, regarding its role during the recent protests after the Belarusian presidential election that broke out in summer 2020. For example, the staff members of the State Philharmonic performed the alternative state anthem "Pahonia" to express their disagreement with police brutality and to demonstrate solidarity with the detained Belarusians. They performed on the steps to the Philharmonic that is the main workplace of Muliavin and is situated on the boulevard named after him. Originally, "Pahonia" is not a "Pesniary" song: in 1993, Muliavin recorded his version of the anthem, initially written at the beginning of the XXth century by Mikalaj Ščahloŭ-Kulikovič. "Pesniary" version has never been performed during the philharmonic interventions. Even though, subversive use of "Pahonia" anthem makes it possible to reassess "Pesniary" version and find its contiguity with the alternative to the state symbolics. Additional link from the musical flashmob to the "Pesniary" heritage comes out from the meaning of the place of the first performance, which is clearly anticipated with "Pesniary" heritage. The existence of Muliavin's version of the anthem opens up this heritage to a new redefinition, but its features are still forming.

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