

## Repulsion to Ritual Interpreting Folk Festivals in the Polish Tatras

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Article abstract

Folklore festivals and other presentations of folk music for tourists are frequently interpreted as pale representations of “real” folk music at best, and commercial corruptions at worst. The author at least has been guilty of such interpretations. In this article, he interprets folklore festivals in southern Poland as highly meaningful calendric rituals necessary for the survival of certain ways of life. Folklore festivals replace, sometimes quite deliberately, more commonly recognised calendric rituals formerly enacted to preserve agricultural livelihood. One thing preserved and protected by the folklore festival ritual is the concept of “authentic folk music.” Once the protective ritual is performed, the participants are free to go and engage in other “non-authentic” music activities. The author shows how these notions of authenticity and preservation are negotiated by performers, festival promoters, local musical folklorists, and tourists. Rather than being repulsed by the inevitable changes in “back-region” performance practices for stylised “front-region” staged performances, he views them as meaningful responses to changing social, economic and cultural conditions.

## REPULSION TO RITUAL

### Interpreting Folk Festivals in the Polish Tatras

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I invite you to join me vicariously on a journey to a folk festival that takes place in a village in the Tatra Mountain region of Poland.<sup>1</sup> This region is called *Podhale*, which means “piedmont” or at mountain’s base, and the people of Podhale call themselves *Górale*, after the word *góra*, or mountain. They are mountaineers, and the music and culture I focus on here is defined by the alpine Tatra mountains. Podhale has been developed as a tourist destination since the late nineteenth century to the extent that today tourism is the major regional industry.<sup>2</sup> Part of the development of the region as a tourist destination was the creation of a new performance venue: the folk festival. The goal of this paper is to interpret folk festival stage presentations in two different ways. First I interpret the festival stage shows as stylized events for tourists that contrast sharply with off-stage events that are typically considered more “authentic” and valuable. Second, I argue that the festival stage shows are better understood as modern-day rituals that fulfill some of the same human and social needs met by more universally recognized rituals.

#### **Poronianskie Lato: The “Poronin Summer” Festival 1992**

It is July 1992 and I am making my first journey to Podhale after several years of fascination with the music from this mountain region. In the late

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1. My journeys to and research in Poland for this essay were funded in part by the American Council of Learned Societies, Brown University, the International Research and Exchanges Board, and the Kosciuszko Foundation.
  2. The specific region I am concerned with is called *Skalny Podhale* (Rocky Piedmont), the approximately 30 x 25 kilometer area within sight of the Tatras on the Polish north side.

1980s when researching for the state of Illinois what they called “ethnic and folk art,” I met a group of Górale immigrants who played violin, sang, and danced with an exuberance that fueled my imagination. My desire to better understand Górale and their culture has led me to spend the summer in Kraków studying the Polish language. Later in August I will live for a few weeks in a Podhale village, but I have not yet actually made my way south to the Tatras. Today, Sunday 19 July, I make my first trip into the mountains at the invitation of Aleksandra Szurmiak-Bogucka, a Polish ethnomusicologist with perhaps the most long-standing and active research interest in Górale music (i.e. Szurmiak-Bogucka 1959, 1974, 1991, & Szurmiak-Bogucka & Bogucki 1961). She has published several books and academic articles on Górale music, and she is an almost constant presence at folk festivals in Podhale. Already familiar with her work, I had contacted her at her home in Kraków and requested a meeting. She suggested I meet her in the village of Poronin this weekend where we can both talk about and witness the topic of my interest. I am going to the source of my fascination and I feel a sense of pilgrimage.

A few friends and adventure seekers, two Polish-Americans and one Canadian, join me on my journey. We board a bus and are driven through the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque splendor of Poland’s former royal seat, Kraków, and wind our way south toward a collection of mountain villages. Kraków easily negotiates the distance between the ancient and modern using the physical presence of the town’s splendid architecture as monumental symbols of Poland’s people and statehood. The old royal castle and Renaissance town square have long lost their original functions as the home of the King and as a cloth market, but they are given new life in a process that Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett theorizes as “heritage” (1995). What once drew royal visitors and fine cloth merchants to Kraków is now heritage that attracts tourists and their money to the local economy. Górale in Podhale too negotiate the past and present, but as we will see, here the past is not monumental, but enacted, performed in what I will call music-culture: the sounds, concepts, social interactions, and materials associated with music.

After a two-hour bus ride into ever higher and more rugged mountains, we arrive in Poronin near the village park where the festival is already under way. This village contrasts sharply with the cosmopolitan old-Europe feel of Kraków. Instead of gothic masonry arches, the predominant architectural medium is a refined and regionally specific style of log construction [photograph 1]. With the blackening dirt scrubbed off every year or so, the unpainted spruce logs age to a golden color. A fine old log house sits in the center of the



1. Regional style log construction, Villa "Tea." Photograph by T. Cooley.

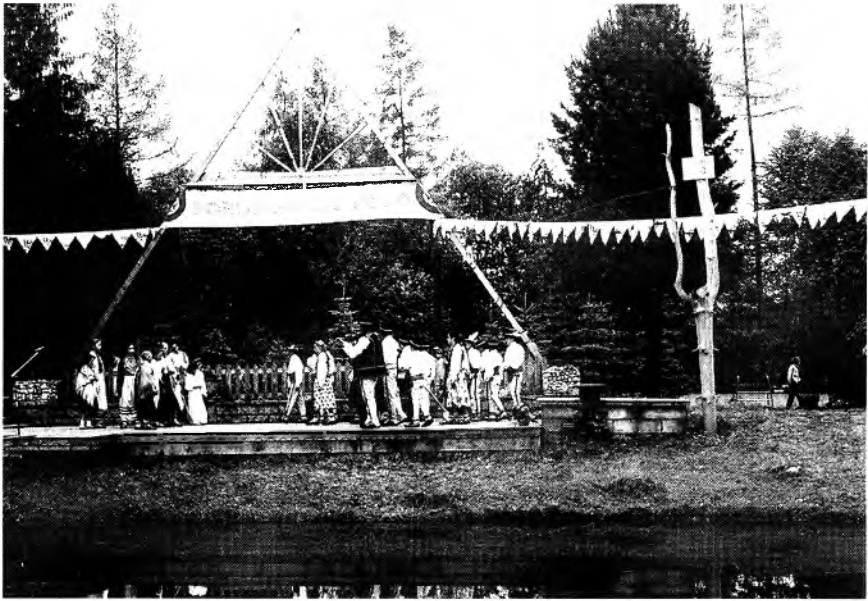
town park, not far from a substantial wooden stage situated opposite rows of low wooden benches. The beautiful log homes fulfill part of my imagined picture of Podhale, but it is the music-culture on the stage that brought me to this corner of Poland. The music is presented on a stage that is raised on the far side of a small still pond opposite the audience benches. The pond acts as a moat, a liquid barrier ensuring separation between the performers and the audience.<sup>3</sup> The backdrop of the stage features a large timber structure in the form of a triangle suggesting the gable of a Górale style house. A banner across this frame proclaims "Poroniańskie Lato" or "Poronin Summer" [photograph 2].

### Stage Shows: Representations of Something Else?

We spend the remainder of the afternoon observing a succession of folkloric song and dance troupes from Podhale and the neighboring regions of Orawa

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3. This separation was violated in 1995 when a group of young men in the song and dance troupe "Skalni" made their entrance by running through the shallow pond from the audience area towards the stage.



2. The Poronin Summer festival stage, 1992. Photograph by Anji Bezeredi.

and Spisz who perform on the wooden stage. The troupes all include live musicians who play through microphones and an inadequate PA system. The dancers and singers direct their performance outward, over the pond and toward us, the audience. I benefit from the wisdom of my new acquaintance and colleague in ethnomusicology, Aleksandra Szurmiak-Bogucka, as she points out details of each performance, explaining what folk traditions are being represented, where each troupe is from, and the basics of Górale song and dance styles. References to an unspecified time in the past, when this or that song, dance, or ritual gesture was the norm, populate both the stage shows and Szurmiak-Bogucka's explanation of the shows. "This is the way it was done back then, over there..." The references are always off stage to another time and place.

And this is how, in 1992, I view the festival performances: they are stylized, pale representations of "true" folk music at best, and commercial corruptions at worst. Though I brought my field recorder, I do not take it out of its bag, nor do I take photographs. The photographs of the festival stage shows used here are taken by Anji Bezeredi, one of my travel mates. She is a photographer by profession, and gladly relieves me of my camera and uses it along with her

own to take color slides and black and white photographs. If one camera is a symbol of her profession, two are all the better. Rather than watching the festival stage shows passively, I too bear a symbol of my profession; I busy myself with my notebook jotting down notes on my observations and conversation with Szurmiak-Bogucka, and I sketch the layout of the site.

However as the afternoon progresses I begin to question my own ethnographic stamina. I grow restless, bored with the endless succession of dancing peasants, with troupe after troupe of brightly costumed youths dancing, singing, playing violins and enacting scenes from a remembered and imagined village past, a past when boys wore elaborately embroidered thick felt pants, and girls wore flowered skirts and sequined bodices. Never mind that young men often did not receive such pants until their wedding day. Never mind that the flashy sequined bodices worn by girls and young women are probably a recent adaptation for stage shows. The stage shows reference “back then” and “back there,” when and where *the* social dance was an elaborately structured suite of esoteric tunes and equally esoteric dance steps, improvised at the will of a single male dancer with the one woman or girl he chose to dance with. All other women, men, girls, and boys are content to watch the flirting couple, commenting in song on the stylized courtship and display of cultural competency unfolding before them. Such skillful and happy peasants! So beautifully dressed! Flashes of red, black, green, and white as they move and spin to the angular sounds of the violinist’s variations on a melodic idea. We tourists understand little as troupe after troupe passes across the stage in a flash of color, song, nostalgia, and smiles. My eyes blur; my mind goes numb. Where am I and what am I experiencing? After all, this is a show for tourists (90% of the audience, Szurmiak-Bogucka estimates), a pale and stylized representation of true, authentic, folklore. I’m a serious ethnomusicologist. I came here to experience and document the real thing, the here and now, not the then and there.

### **Back-Region Music-Culture: The Real Thing?**

My interest is piqued, however, in mid-afternoon when the stage shows pause and Szurmiak-Bogucka invites me and my friends to join her for dinner in the basement of a local boardinghouse. The dinner has been prepared for dignitaries at the festival and I am honored to be included. After all have eaten their fill, vodka and violins emerge, as does my field recorder for the first time today. *This* is exciting, I think. *This* is the real thing. Here I am, sitting around

a dinner table with a group of singing, fiddling Górale — I am with the locals away from the tourists. *Now* I am really in Podhale, the wellspring of a music that has fascinated me for several years. I gain permission to record and I feel like a real ethnomusicologist documenting the real thing. Sure enough, the first piece my dinner companions perform is a genre specific to Podhale called *wierchowa* [mountain peak song] featuring rubato singing with men and women joining in the same octave register, followed by an instrumental version of the same tune. The next two songs are also clearly from the local music-culture of Górale from Podhale, but the fourth tune originates a few kilometers away, across the border in Slovakia. It is a triple meter song, uncommon in the repertoire associated with Górale. Does this border hopping fall within my concept of the “real thing”? The remaining tunes and songs played around the dinner table alternate between local styles, and styles from beyond the region of Podhale. What are we — what am I — to make of this “real thing” that won’t stay put in Podhale, that keeps violating the purity of the repertoire from this well defined folk region?

For the remainder of the afternoon I am inattentive at the festival. The rounds of vodka after dinner do not help my concentration, and the parade of troupes across the stage strike me as anticlimactic and much less relevant than the after-dinner backstage spontaneous music I have just enjoyed. Yes, spontaneous, a word often found in the literature on folk music from the nineteenth century through the twentieth. The troupes on stage appear to retain little spontaneity. My recorder and notebook in my bag, I wander the streets of my first Podhalan village.

With the sort of pendulum swing that characterizes my attitude toward the day’s experiences, my enthusiasm is revived and my recorder is brandished a second time after the festival proper ends. Szurmiak-Bogucka again invites me and my companions to join local dignitaries associated with the festival in the “Culture House” on the festival grounds for what she herself describes as “the real thing” [photographs 3 & 4]. Here Górale musicians and dancers, most of them still in traditional costume having been involved in the festival proper, sing, play violins, and dance. At the encouragement of Szurmiak-Bogucka, I dance a few polkas with an intelligent and attractive young Górale woman, Stanisława Trebunia-Tutka, picked by Szurmiak-Bogucka because of her English language skills. That polkas hold a dubious place among what is generally considered indigenous music of Podhale does not seem to be an issue tonight. The party goes on until the managers of the culture house decide



3. Musicians inside the “Culture House” on the Poronin festival grounds. Photograph by Anji Bezeredi.



4. Józef and Maria Staszal dancing in the “Culture House” after the Poronin festival. Photograph by Anji Bezeredi.



it is time to close up. The real thing — and I get it on tape and film. I'm glad I didn't waste all my tape on that endless tourist stage show.

### Reflecting on My Reactions

The first person narrative used above is a rhetorical device that I hope resonates with at least some of my readers. My reactions to the experiences I had during my first visit to Podhale were predetermined to a great extent by scholarly and popular interpretations of folk music that tended to focus on in-group activities — in this case, music by Górale for Górale. These in-group performances are similar to Erving Goffman's "back region" events in his early theorizing of presentation in twentieth-century Western life (1956: 66-70), though each situation bears significant unique qualities. For Goffman, "front region" performances are done for an audience, suppressing some aspects of the activity and accenting others. In the "back region," the front region presentations can be directly contradicted, and the actors can act "out of character." At folk festivals in Podhale, however, front region (front stage) and back region (backstage) performances involve Górale performing an aspect of themselves. I believe this is one of the primary qualities of folk festival performances in Podhale and elsewhere. The musicians and dancers are performing a myth about themselves. They are Górale performing ideas about Górale. With these qualifications, I will adapt Goffman's categories of front-region and back-region (hyphen added) in my theorizing of Górale performance.

Front-region displays of culture at folk festivals in Podhale fall into a category variously called "folklorism" (Ceribašić 1998; Lenk 1999; Marošević 1998), "folklorismus" (Bendix 1997: 9, 13), or even "faklore" (Dorson 1976: 28). The intention of such terms is to make a distinction between the authentic or real, and the interpretations of such objects (and they are usually conceived of as objects) for commercial or ideological purposes. In general, this "folklorism" is degraded as not worthy of scholarly attention, or at best not as valuable as in-group, back-region performances.<sup>4</sup> Folklorist Richard Dorson

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4. I believe this remains the case, though significant steps are being made in folklore studies, ethnomusicology, and anthropology to change this — this current issue of *Ethnologies* being an example (see also DeWitt 1999; Bednix 1997). In earlier decades, a few lonely voices called for more attention among social scientists and humanists to front-region tourist performances (MacCannell 1976).

was the most influential promoter of the notion that front-region performances (fakelore) were to be shunned by the serious scholar. My approach to Polish Górale music-culture was influenced by the lingering effects of Dorson's ideas when I first began studying the culture in Chicago where I worked as a public sector ethnomusicologist for the state of Illinois. There my closest colleagues were folklorists, many of whom studied at Indiana University where Dorson had been a professor. I viewed folk festivals as valuable places to collect data, but ultimately as only stylized representations of something more authentic — a fake representation of the real thing. In this way I misprized the front-region in Poronin, while highly prizing the back-region. I do still react in this way to the point that I sometimes find myself experiencing a strong urge to flee a festival site and escape the endless procession of troupes of smiling peasants.

What is it about folk festival stage shows that move me towards repulsion, yet keep drawing me back for more? In the answer to this question lie new insights into folk festivals in present-day Podhale, for it is at the very point of repulsion that I believe one can pivot towards attraction that leads to a type of understanding. As in the case of religious belief systems, at some point one turns towards faith or disbelief in a space so small it can be difficult to tell the difference. Similarly, erotic attraction teeters on such a perilous precipice that the slightest breeze threatens to send one tumbling towards repulsion. The human appetite for food is another area ripe with metaphor. Truffles are a good example of a delicacy that resides in that narrow realm between attraction and repulsion. They are, as described by popular humorist Peter Mayle, "divine, and slightly suspect, like everything that smells really good." ... "A whiff is all you need; to inhale a more concentrated dose is too much and could put you off all thoughts of eating, so heavy and rich-rotten is the smell" (1993: 44). Perhaps it is the same with folklore festivals. Could it be that when one is at the point of hating folk festival stage shows, one is that much closer to realizing their deep attraction and meaning? I believe it is on the thin line that divides hate and love, attraction and repulsion, belief and skepticism, that those things most important to humans dwell. This thin line is also the realm of ritual, a point I will return to below.

### **Searching For Górale Perspectives**

When I fall on the repulsion side of the line, I suspect I am in direct opposition to those Górale who go through all the effort to put on these tourist

shows. To understand why other people engage in any aspect of a music-culture, one must return to that nebulous area between attraction and repulsion and seek the perspective of others. This is exactly what I did in the years following my first journey to Podhale, by formally and informally interviewing Górale actively engaged in festival productions and in the song and dance troupes that perform at folk festivals. I worked with troupe leaders, juvenile and adult troupe members, and festival organizers over the course of some eighteen months in Poland from 1992 to 2000, and through continued correspondence to the present. Though their perspectives on front-region performances are not uniform, two themes emerge as constant: preservation (Górale must learn and perform Górale music in order to preserve it), and identity (Górale music is about Górale identity).

Song and dance troupes developed in the early part of the twentieth century primarily for the purpose of teaching young people the local music-culture, and for performing at the newly established tourist festivals. The troupes increased in number after the second World War with the financial and ideological support of the communist government. Since the fall of communist hegemony in Poland in 1989, that support has waned, but some Górale believe there is a resurgence of interest in Górale music-culture, and more and more children are learning to play and dance (see Cooley 1999a: 154-195 for a more complete history of troupes in Podhale). Józef Piton, the leader of an influential troupe in Zakopane, believes that troupes provide a necessary context for children to learn Górale culture, since the social and economic changes of the last century have eliminated more traditional contexts (interview 30 January 1995). For example, few boys today tend sheep in the high mountains, a common place to learn to play the violin, according to older Górale musicians. Józef Staszal, who together with his wife Maria leads two children's troupes, told me that if he and others did not teach, the music and dance would die (interview 24 January 1995). My conversations with some of the children in his troupes confirmed that most learned to dance in the troupe, not at home as was the case with earlier generations. These children also expressed the need to take care of and preserve the traditions (interviews with Joanna Kasowska, Lucina Wolska, Janina Czuberna, 10 August 1995).

Notions about music and identity are expressed in more subtle language, but are evident nonetheless. Krzysztof Trebunia-Tutka, an influential younger musician from an important regional music family, explains that he likes Górale music because it is his own. He makes specific claims for personal possession of a music tradition based both on his family lineage and on the geographic

location of his family heritage in Podhale. Playing music from other regions, according to Krzysztof, is just copying (interview 20 November 1994). Richard Gaska, the director of a very popular troupe made up primarily of students from Podhale while they study at the university or an institute in Kraków, says the goals of the troupe are first, local patriotism, and second, patriotism for the entire nation. The director for most of the 1990s of the largest folklore festival in Podhale, Elżbieta Chodurska, told me that the goals of that festival are to show people how Górale in Podhale live, and then for Górale to see how others live.<sup>5</sup> She wants the people of Podhale to attain the same standard of living as people in western Europe, but not at the risk of losing their cultural uniqueness (interview 20 July 1995). Identity, therefore, is expressed in terms of both geographic and cultural difference. Music-culture is presented as a symbol of both geography and of what makes individuals from this geographic enclave unique.

Noting that music is linked to ideas about identity by the people who create it is not a new idea; it is central to many ethnomusicologists' current work. A review of the most recent issues of leading ethnomusicology journals reveals identity and music as a ubiquitous topic (e.g. for ethnic identity, see Gibson & Dunbar-Hall 2000; Reyes 1999; for national identity, see Austerlitz 2000; Guy 1999; Marošević 1998; Remes 1999; Scruggs 1999; Sugarman 1999). We have not, however, fully explored the function of folklore festival performances and how issues of identity are negotiated in that context (see Bendix 1989; Ceribašić 1998). Key to my understanding of music, identity, and tourist festivals is interpreting the festivals as a relatively new form of ritual.

### **Festival as Modern Ritual of Regional Identity**

"Ritual" is used in two fundamental ways by social scientists. First, a ritual is a stylized symbolic representation of objects, beliefs, or truths of special significance to a group (see Connerton 1989: 44; Durkheim 1915; Lukes 1975: 291). These items of significance are usually in the realm of the

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5. Elsewhere I have detailed how this international festival in Podhale tends to highlight regional Górale identity. In fact, the international quality of the festival makes the careful representation of a regional Polish identity all the more urgent (Cooley 1999b). Polish literature on the topic focuses more generally on regionalism and tourism (i.e. Jazowska-Gumulska 1994; Paryski 1991; Warszzyńska 1991).

unknowable and what I will call “super-rational,” by which I mean concepts about which rational thought does not lead to conclusive results, but which are not necessarily irrational. Often beliefs in the super-rational realm are simply taken-for-granted or require so-called “leaps of faith.” This is the essence of religion in which faith supplements reason, and religious objects, beliefs, and truths are reaffirmed by the faithful with ritual, for example. Below I explain why the politics of large group identity are super-rational. The second way social scientists use the term ritual is in distinction from entertainment. What distinguishes rituals is that they are transformative or effective; a participant or participants are transformed, or a group’s relationship to nature or other groups is transformed and a means of living is preserved (see MacAloon 1984: 250; Pertierra 1987: 199-200; Schechner 1983: 131-158; Turner 1984: 21). For example, at a wedding, two individuals are transformed from single folks into married folks. Many agricultural societies perform rituals to ensure successful crops, and pastoral societies have rituals to ensure the fertility of their herds. Rituals and entertainment are not exclusive of one another. Schechner proposed a continuum spanning the space between two motivations for performances: efficacy (a quality of ritual) and entertainment (a quality of theater) (1983: 137-38). Like most performances, the tourist folk festivals in Podhale contain elements of both ritual and theater.

Interpreting tourist folk festival shows as ritual is appropriate and offers new understanding of Górale music-culture in several ways. First, though countless weddings and other life cycle rituals are enacted on stage at folk festivals, this is not where the transformative power of these performances lie. No one believes, for example, that the couple married on the folk festival stage is actually married at that moment. The stage folklore tourist show does, however, transform the relationship of Górale to the newly international audience that attends festival shows. Folklore tourist shows help ensure the continued way of life in Podhale no longer based on agriculture and shepherding, but instead on tourism. Festival performances also create and maintain aspects of Górale identity threatened by this new economic arrangement that places a people, formerly described as being isolated, now in an increasingly international, multicultural environment. Festivals are places where, according to Ceribašič, groups can ritually legitimize and fix identities, even if only temporarily (1998: 42). Folk festivals in Podhale are rituals about the new social, political, and economic environment in which Górale now find themselves.

Second, interpreting folk festivals as ritual helps one understand the position of Górale music in the context of all the other music that is performed and consumed in present-day Podhale, including Western pop, classical, disco, etc. Folk festivals not only ritually ensure Górale cultural identity, they preserve the sartorial, gestural, musical, and choreographic symbols of that identity — the music-culture. By periodically performing Górale music-culture, they (re)create and preserve it until the next performance, once ritually preserved before the very audience that threatens to obliterate Górale culture by absorbing it. Górale are free to go into the world and behave as Górale or non-Górale as they please. And this is exactly what they do. For example, at a large folk festival in Zakopane, the tourist center of Podhale, each evening after the official festival stage is vacated, the festival performers congregate at a hall owned by the local “Podhalan Association” [*Związek Podhalan*], a sponsor of the festival. Here the former smiling peasants don street clothes, or stay in their regional costumes, and dance the night away to an eclectic mix of canned disco, technopop and pick-up bands — a wild mash of identities and traditions in a corporal, musical, sartorial enactment of a new multicultural identity so studiously avoided on the front-region festival stage.

Third, interpreting folk festivals in Podhale as ritual provides a frame for understanding some of the changes traditional societies are experiencing in Europe. Folk festivals in Europe and in Podhale specifically emerged in response to the threat posed by large-scale social and economic changes to traditional lifeways, and what Benedict Anderson calls “cultural systems” and “taken-for-granted frames of reference” (1991/1983: 12). In other words, traditional systems of belief and social organization, with their inherent areas of the unknowable and the super-rational, were being transformed and replaced. As this happened, new rituals were established to help legitimize the new and emerging systems. The rise of folklore studies and later folk festivals is related directly to nationalism as theorized by Benedict Anderson. As he notes, the weakening of existing cultural systems (religions and dynasties) during the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century gave rise to new systems, especially the idea of nation. Nation-states and nationalisms emerged in the late eighteenth century, but only increased in global significance by the turn of the twenty-first century. Like the cultural systems they replaced, nation and nationalism are not concepts easily defined. While politically powerful, philosophically they are practically incoherent (Anderson 1991: 5). Nationalism is super-rational. As musicologist Michael Beckerman expresses it, how can a shepherd in Poland have more in common with a nobleman in Kraków than with another

shepherd in Slovakia just a few kilometers away across a national border? (personal communication). Am I somehow more spiritually and intellectually akin to a fellow countryman here in the United States, regardless of interests, than I am to other folklorists and ethnomusicologists across the border in Canada? This is what nationalism would have us believe. In this environment of the superrational, folk festivals provide an arena where old systems of social order are reinterpreted within new systems.

The study of folklore, including folk music, was developed in service to nationalism. Johann Gottfried Herder (1774-1839) desired to discover the essence of the German nation in the folk poetry of German peasants. A century later Béla Bartók undertook a similar quest for the essence of the Hungarian nation (meaning ethnic Hungarians). In the later half of the twentieth century, folklore studies were still overtly used to support national ideologies in Europe and elsewhere (see Austerlitz 2000: 186 for discussion of a Finnish example). Working in the fields of folklore and ethnomusicology today, at the dawn of a new century, I hear the resonances of this quest for essences, or for authenticity, as Regina Bendix has suggested (1997). Issues of essence and authenticity are most clearly present at folklore festivals, the type of festivals celebrating a new awareness of regional and national folk and folklore that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Extreme examples include the state managed folkloric song and dance troupes and national festivals favored by communist states after World War II. Lending credence to the claim that these festivals are best interpreted as new rituals, some state managed festivals were directly intended to replace earlier calendar and agricultural rituals with new rituals confirming the authority of the State (for an example from communist Poland, see Dąbrowska 1995: 66).

Tourist folklore festivals in the Polish Tatra Mountain region are related to the new context for presenting folk music and dance created by national and regional festivals in Europe, though the earliest festivals came relatively late to Podhale during the period between the two World Wars. This was a crucial moment for Poland as it emerged at the end of the first World War as a new nation-state after over a century of partition between Russia, Prussia and Austria. Folk music was used deliberately to help reconstruct a sense of Polishness based on a collection of distinct regions (Brozek 1985: 19; Cooley & Spottswood 1997; Wyrwal 1977: 316-17). The earliest festival in the Tatra region celebrated regionalism, as the name suggested: *Święto Gór* (Mountain Celebration) first held in Zakopane in 1935. The event was supported by

local government and regional organizations to promote the southern Polish mountain regions.

In 1945 after World War II, Poland became a communist nation under the influence of the Soviet Union. One hallmark of the communist era was folklore festivals typically designed to promote the ideology of a unified national “folk,” contrasting with the regional emphasis during the interwar period. The first large-scale national folk festival in Poland was in 1949 (Noll 1986: 653). Efforts to transform Górale song and dance troupes into stylized folkloric presenters were not successful, but the idea of large festivals celebrating regional identity and by extension national identity, did have a significant impact in Podhale. The most prominent example is *Jesień Tatrzańska* (Tatra Autumn), a festival established in 1962 in Zakopane, the primary tourist destination town in Podhale. Though the name was changed to *Międzynarodowy Festiwal Folkloru Ziemi Górskich* [International Festival of Mountain Folklore] in 1968, the large, week-long festival remains a seasonal marker revolving around the concept of place (mountains), and as I have argued elsewhere, the ritually enacted identity of Górale in an “international” context (Cooley 1999b). This festival and others, including the similarly seasonally marked Poronin Summer festival introduced at the beginning of this essay, have survived the end of communism in Poland with the corresponding end of ultimately government sponsorship of the festivals. Now these festivals rely even more on tourists and the tourist industry for financial support.

### Turning From Repulsion To Attraction

Both the front- and back-region performances I experienced my first day in Podhale back in 1992 were the “real thing.” The reality in Podhale in the past may have been calendrical rituals to ensure crops, and wedding rituals to help a young couple in their prosperity and fertility (at least this is what front-region presentations suggest), but today the reality is tourism. Therefore, in order to understand Górale music-culture today, I return to the very quality of tourist festivals that at first repulsed me — the formalized, stylized presentations of folklorism — to find what it is about festivals that make them interesting as modern human activity. Ultimately, it is formalization and stylization that make rituals recognizable as such. Likewise, the stylized manner in these front-region performances of referencing large ideologies: identity (us, not them), place (region and village, not stage), and time (back then, not now) is consistent with other more traditionally recognized rituals. The staged presentation



weekend after weekend, year after year of music and dance once (presumably) found in the fields, in the villages, in the log homes has resulted in new rules, new performance conventions, new arenas of musical meaning. The front-region festival shows of the 1990s reference earlier festival performances as much as they reference anything back-region. As Richard Schechner has noted, “rituals disguise themselves as restorations of actual events when, in fact, they are restorations of earlier rituals” (1982: 46). The classic example is the ritual of communion in the Christian mass. The priests and congregation reenact the last supper, but the gestures, clothing and setting are not intended to replicate the dining habits of Jews of 2000 years ago. In a similar way, the stylized representation on stage of a courtship dance is not supposed to be about actual courtship; it is instead the symbolic representation of courtship as practiced by a particular people (Górale), in a particular place (Podhale). The symbolic stylization of courtship for stage production denies the very qualities that make the original courting ritual functional. The dance is no longer done before the watchful eyes of family and neighbors (in-group) who evaluate the compatibility of potential mates, but before a group of strangers (the audience) who have no stake in the future lives of the dancing individuals.

The type of disjuncture between a courtship ritual and a stylized representation of the courtship ritual for a front-region stage performance ritual is not uncommon in other rituals. Though my research suggests that Górale do try to replicate certain aspects of the village rituals they enact on stage, festival stage shows have taken on a life of their own that requires an abstracting of the symbolic content from back-region rituals for the relatively new front-region rituals on stage. This is how a wedding, that traditionally in Podhale takes places over three days, can be presented in 30 to 40 minutes on a festival stage. The rituals are not “deritualized” as Sant Cassia has suggested about rituals elsewhere in Europe (2000: 294), but restaged for a new purpose. Formalized, stylized symbolic abstractions of objects, historical acts, ideas, etc. are another quality of rituals. Weddings enacted as stage shows are rife with such symbolic abstractions: bread, salt, and greenery to symbolize fertility and plenty, for example. Górale today abstract their own heritage into distinct symbolic markers of Góraleness — of identity — and perform or enact these symbols on stage before tourists in a deliberate ritual to ensure their place in today’s world. In this way, the tourist festival ritual joins other rituals used by people to symbolically represent what is important to them and to influence their environment to ensure their continued well-being.

The significance of this new type of ritual was made ever more clear to me during the summer of 2000 when I had the pleasure of returning to Podhale and visiting many of the individuals that I met on that first trip in 1992 described at the beginning of this article. Over the eight intervening years, many of the individuals I met in 1992 became my primary collaborators, especially the Staszel family including Józef and Maria, who are pictured dancing in photograph 4, their son Pawel, and Stanisława Trebunia-Tutka, who is now married to Pawel. This year Stanisława received her Ph.D. in ethnography, and she served on the jury of the International Festival of Mountain Folklore in Zakopane mentioned above. Maria and Józef still lead several children's song and dance troupes, and Maria is the president of the local branch of the Podhalian Association [*Związek Podhalań*], a fraternal organization for Górale with branches all over the world. If not typical, the Staszels are a model modern Górale family embodying some of the conflicts negotiated on festival stages: when speaking, they switch between literary Polish and their local dialect at will; Józef and Pawel are virtuoso violinists in the regional style, and all four are expert singers and dancers; yet all are highly educated with graduate degrees including two Ph.D.s (Pawel has a Ph.D. in physics) and they all have traveled extensively outside of Poland. Each of these four individuals has many options open to them regarding the clothes they wear, the language they speak, the place they live, and the music they take part in. Each regularly chooses to participate in front-region and back-region productions of Górale music-culture. To understand these individuals as musical individuals and as members of Podhale's Górale community, I must try to make sense of their music activity as a whole.

My weeks this past summer in Podhale exemplify this necessity. I happened to be there during the First World Assembly of Polish Górale [*I Światowego Zjazdu Górali Polskich*], a major celebration lasting most of a week with representatives from many of the Podhalian Association branches from around the world. A few days after that anniversary concluded, the Zakopane folklore festival began. Both Maria and Józef were deeply involved in the organization of the First World Assembly of Polish Górale. As a juror for the Zakopane festival, Stanisława had official responsibilities at that week-long event. Because of these two separate front-region cultural events, my weeks in Podhale were an unusually intense mix of living and working around the house, and running off to different elaborate public ceremonies. Around the Staszel house, one of the activities I was able to help with was raking hay, for the hay needed to be stored in Józef's small barn to feed his goats through the winter. All activities

from private raking to public ritual were marked by music. While raking hay, Józef, Pawel, and I sang Górale songs; we and others sang around tables after eating; at every World Assembly event and Zakopane festival event, groups of young and old Górale wore their costumes, played music, sang, and when appropriate, danced.

I still enjoy the spontaneous singing, dancing, and playing that take place in the back-regions of Podhale life, but they are part of a larger context of music-culture that also includes front-region stage shows before tourists, critical jurors, and Górale looking for new ways to represent their version of Góraleness. Singing with a rake in hand or around a dinner table is no more “real” than the stylized stage shows. These stage shows do reference former and current back-region music contexts, but they are more than representations of something else; they are new rituals that offer new understanding of Górale music-culture in the changing socio-political and economic context of present-day Podhale. At front-region stage shows, I still grow restless, but I am no longer repulsed. Instead, I now recognize that front-region stage shows are modern rituals that must be included in any attempt to understand what motivates the Szaszels and other Górale in Podhale today.

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