Listening to Ethnic Identity Online: Digitally Mediated Finno-Ugric Music Traditions in St. Petersburg

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Abstract: What does it mean to listen to an ethnic identity online and what are the digital tools that ethnic minority groups use to become 'the listened-to' within the dominant society? In this article, using the concept of listening as an auditory and non-auditory experience, I explore digitally mediated music traditions of Finno-Ugrians living in St. Petersburg. Based on the ethnography of two case studies—a volunteer-run cultural organization The Centre for the Indigenous Peoples of the St. Petersburg Region and the metal band Second to Sun—this article investigates how Finno-Ugric ethnic identity is manifested through music and digital auditory engagement. I argue that the notion of listening as 'making an effort to hear something' in the context of this article is instrumental in understanding how Finno-Ugric self-expression and knowledge production is achieved in a digital space, specifically a social media platform VKontakte and music streaming services such as Bandcamp.

Keywords: listening, music, auralisation, ethnic identity, Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia, Indigenous peoples

I n December 2017, a digital newspaper reporting on contemporary life in St. Petersburg called Bumaga [Paper] published an extensive sociocultural journalistic investigation called 'Kto zhil v Peterburge do Peterburga' (Chirin and Kudriavtseva 2017). That special feature was dedicated to the Ingrian Finns, an ethnic minority group specific to St. Petersburg and part of the broader Finno-Ugric peoples. The articles described Ingrian Finnish traditions, as well as the significance of their presence to the cultural matrix of the city in contemporary life. According to the editors, the newspaper team had spent five months assembling the responses from twenty-eight interviewees and creating a collection of texts that reveal the history of repression against the Ingrian Finns in the twentieth century, documenting the life of the families who live in St. Petersburg now and investigating the revival of

their culture. Looking at the comments left by followers of the newspaper on its VKontakte[1] page (vk.com/paperpaper_ru), it becomes clear that there is little understanding among the population of St. Petersburg of who Finno-Ugric people are, how they appeared in this territory and the relationship between the Ingrian Finns [ingermanlandskie finny] and the now-outdated term for the same people, *chukhontsy*.[2] The few commenters who were knowledgeable about the history of the region expressed confusion as to why this project is exclusively focused on the Ingrian Finns and not on the other two local Finno-Ugric Indigenous groups—the Izhors and the Votes, and rightly so. What is even less known about these peoples is their sonic history. What are their music traditions and how audible are they in relation to those of Slavs with whom they share the land?

In this article, I draw on approaches from sound studies and use the notion of 'listening' as a sensory practice to explore the musical presence of Finno-Ugric peoples in present-day St. Petersburg as it is shaped through the use of digital media. Being one of the major urban centres of Russia, the city of St. Petersburg is now home to many Finno-Ugrians, including Ingrians,[3] who have been inhabiting the region of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast[4] since long before the Slavic domination. In my analysis, I consider Ingrians—an Indigenous population of the region—as major actors in local revival of Finno-Ugric culture in the city. Based on two case studies—the Centre for the Indigenous Peoples of the St. Petersburg Region [Tsentr korennykh narodov Leningradskoi oblasti] and the metal band Second to Sun—I explore how Finno-Ugric ethnic identity is manifested through music and digital auditory engagement.

Although a new wave of the national movement among Finno-Ugrians in Russia began during the period of perestroika in the late 1980s, the scene of Finno-Ugric music in St. Petersburg is rather small. As Guzel Yusupova observes, '[i]n the absence of a general ethnic policy in Russia, the main actors who articulate and construct minorities' identities are minority leaders who are interested in revitalising their vernacular culture' (2017: 631). It seems particularly true in St. Petersburg, where the revitalisation of Finno-Ugric music culture is almost exclusively taken on by grassroots musicians, since the folklore departments in the St. Petersburg Conservatory and other local universities prioritize their research almost exclusively on the Slavic traditions. In global Indigenous studies, music is often considered to be one the most powerful modes of Indigenous cultural preservation (Dimond et al. 2018; Hilder et al. 2017; Perea and Solis 2019; Robinson 2020; Sonevytsky 2019; Tucker 2013; Woloshyn 2020). The geographical scope of research on contemporary musical practices is

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[1] VKontakte was founded in 2006, two years after the launch of Facebook and considered by some a Russian copy of Facebook due to very similar design, structure and function. One of the differences between these two platforms is the integration of a music player into VKontakte's functionality, which allows users to listen and upload audio files as well as compile them into playlists. Additionally, all official pages and groups on VKontakte have an option to create personalized music playlists.

[2] Until the mid-nineteenth century, *chukhontsy* or *chukhna* was the common Russian name for the Ingrian Finns and the Balto-Finnic peoples.

[3] Ingrians is the name used to refer to three Finno-Ugric groups – the Votes, the Izhors, and the Ingrian Finns, who inhabited the historical territory of Ingria. Ingria (Swedish and German Ingermanland, Finnish Inkeri or Inkerinmaa, Estonian Ingerimaa, Russian Ingermanlandiia) is located on both sides of the Neva river along the southern and eastern shores of the Gulf of Finland, the territory of the present-day St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast.

[4] Leningrad Oblast is a living anachronism of the Soviet era that is used to refer to the Russian region with the capital in St. Petersburg (formerly, the city of Leningrad).

quite large and covers Indigenous musical practices in Australia, New Zealand, North and South Americas, Taiwan and the Northern homeland of Sámi peoples spanning present-day Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway. However, Russian Indigenous musical practices have not been represented in this discourse—while there are numerous studies that analyse the music of Indigenous peoples [korennye narody], they have generally not been linked to the broader issues of global Indigenous experiences.[5]

The case studies presented in this article engage with Finno-Ugric music traditions from two perspectives—local and national. The Centre for Indigenous Peoples is a local volunteer-run organization founded in 2000 with the aim to preserve and develop the culture of Ingrians and other Indigenous Finno-Ugric peoples of the St. Petersburg region. As primary platforms for its digital activities, the Centre utilises its official website (kmn-lo.ru) and the group on VKontakte. Second to Sun is a globally oriented, self-managed band, which, mostly inspired by their bandleader's ethnic background, encapsulates various Russian Finno-Ugric music traditions in metal music. The band makes extensive use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and music streaming platforms such as Bandcamp and Spotify as means of self-promotion and distribution of its music. I argue that the notion of 'listening' in the context of this article is instrumental in understanding how Finno-Ugric self-expression and knowledge production is achieved in a digital space. Drawing on the quality of listening as an act of 'making an effort to hear something' described by Tom Rice (2015: 99), I analyse the methods that the Centre for Indigenous Peoples and Second to Sun use to become 'the listened-to' as an ethnic minority within the dominant society.

As sound studies scholars stress, practices of listening shaped by technologies 'have extended the reach of listening and multiplied its possibilities' and 'generated new bodies of audible sound' (Rice 2015: 102). By creating an ethnography of the Centre for Indigenous Peoples's digital projects, I examine the Centre's strategies for amplifying their Indigenous voices through social media. The focus of my examination is the Centre's group on VKontakte, which functions as a uniting space and serves as a digital archive, where local Finno-Ugric cultural artifacts are collected, displayed and shared. I specifically study the Centre's music projects such as the promotion of Finno-Ugric artists, creation of a music school and animation studio. In my analysis of Second to Sun, I zoom in on the band's album *The First Chapter* and break it down to sonic components to see how Indigenous knowledge of Finno-Ugrians of Russia is mediated through music and how the use of digital streaming platforms enables the band to have more control over its entrepreneur strategies. I also look at Second to Sun's digitally mediated images to demonstrate how the group constructs its bandhood identity and communicates with its fans. To support this analysis, I use the ethnographic data from my personal communication with Second to Sun's bandleader and several of his digitally circulated interviews.

My research on cultural and musical traditions of Finno-Ugrians in St. Petersburg started as a personal exploration of the ethnic roots previously unknown to me. I was born in St. Petersburg to a Slavic father and Finno-Ugric mother in 1988, the same year that the first ethnic organisation of the Ingrian Finns was founded in the city. Retrospectively analysing my

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[5] Because Nordic peoples are generally considered European, and Finno-Ugric peoples are generally phenotypically understood by others to be European, they do not typically garner the same racialization based on appearance as other Indigenous groups—a fact which further complicates their belonging in global Indigenous movements.

school years, I realised that all of my classes in regional history were always Slavic-centred, and none of my music history classes ever included even a mention of the traditional music of local Finno-Ugrians. While this research is an act of social activism through which I can advocate for the aspirations of St. Petersburg dwellers to revive Finno-Ugric musical heritage in the city, the process of working on the project also helped me to unravel and reclaim my own ethnic identity.

1. Indigenous peoples and *korennye narody* in Russia

Before I proceed to my case studies, I want to give a brief overview of Russian Indigenous Studies and address the specificity of the term *korennye narody* as the Russian translation of Indigenous peoples and its use in the post-Soviet context, specifically in reference to Finno-Ugric groups. There are several factors that distinguish the Indigenous Finno-Ugric peoples discussed in this article and those that are discussed in the mainstream North American scholarship—a specific nature of the term *korennye narody* in Russian legislation, the degree of racialisation in relation to the dominant society, their ethnic status throughout the history of the Russian state, the close proximity of their areas of settlement to Slavic and other ethnic groups and the shifting nation-state borders that complicate the belonging of Finno-Ugrians to a particular cultural and social space.

Russian Indigenous Studies as a field is still extremely small relative to the country's large Indigenous population. Existing literature on this topic mostly focuses on research on the Indigenous population of the northern regions, Siberia and the Far East and rarely discusses experience of Indigenous groups in the so-called European part of Russia (Davidov 2017). The majority of recent Russophone and Anglophone publications discuss Indigenous experiences as it relates to language and literature (Chekin 2020; Smola 2020), education (Khanolainen et al. 2020), legal definitions of Indigenous peoples (Sokolovskiy 2007), social politics of Indigenous identity (Donahoe et al. 2008). A few explore Indigenous media as its conceptual framework (Diatchkova 2008; Karanov 2016; Zhozhikov and Zhozhikova 2013).

As some scholars point out, in the Anglophone terminology, the words 'aboriginal', 'autochthonous' and 'indigenous' are synonymous with the Russian term *korennye narody*. However, even though *korennye narody* is often used in the context of Indigenous and International Law Studies, Russified words such as *aborigennyi*, *avtokhtonnyi* and *indigennyi* can be also found in the Russophone academic writings (Garipov 2013: 411). Further, despite the fact that Indigenous peoples around the globe are translated as *korennye narody* in the Russian language, there are significant differences in the legal use of this term within and outside Russia. It needs to be highlighted that up until the mid-1980s, the term *korennye narody* was not present in the Russian legislation for the reason of having a (post)colonial connotation. Instead, the Soviet legislation used the terms *malye narody* (minority peoples) or *malochislennye narody* (small-numbered peoples) to refer to the Indigenous groups inhabiting Russian territory, especially the North, Siberia and the Far East (Sokolovskiy 2008: 59). In post-Soviet Russia, in the late 1990s, *korennye narody* as a term identifying Indigenous groups was added to Russian legislation, albeit with a limited scope. Only the ethnic minority

groups living in the territories of traditional settlement of their ancestors and numbering up to 50,000 people would be qualified as *korennye malochislennye narody* (Indigenous small-numbered peoples). However, such specific quantitative threshold gives an Indigenous status and legal rights only to forty-five groups, leaving out other *korennye narody,* whose population exceeds this number. For example, Khanolainen et al. address this limitation by pointing out that even though the Karelians and the Mari are not legally recognized as *korennye narody* or Indigenous peoples of Russia, 'they maintain a traditional way of life, inhabit remote areas, and identify as distinct autochthonous ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups aspiring to preserve their distinctive identities and traditional territories' (2020: 2). The authors stress that, according to the definition of Indigeneity provided by J. Martinez Cobo in 1986, the Karelians and the Mari should be legally considered as Indigenous in Russian legislation (ibid.).

Among all Finno-Ugric peoples living in Russia, there are only six groups that are listed as Indigenous small-numbered peoples—the Izhors, the Khanty, the Mansi, the Saami, the Veps and the Votes. The rest of Russian Finno-Ugric peoples, such as the Karelians, the Komi, the Mari, the Mordvins and the Udmurts have their own titular nations/autonomous republics[6] without having a status of *korennye narody* or Indigenous peoples in Russian legislation. As Khanolainen et al. point out, Indigenous populations that live in those republics do not have ethnic autonomy or adequate support from the state due to the fact that they are governed by non-Indigenous officials, who 'have no awareness of Indigenous issues in the republics' (2020: 1). Today, Finno-Ugric peoples continue to encounter difficulties in maintaining their traditional way of life, cultural practices, and native languages due to the profound changes that many of them have undergone, and which have been characterised as 'the processes of ethnic erosion' by Shabaev and Zherebtcov (1998: 184). Even though linguistic and cultural reawakening movements have taken place since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Finno-Ugric studies are maintained and developed mainly at the regional rather than the national level, without significant financial support from the state (Tsypanov 2008: 23; Khanolainen et al. 2020: 2).

Despite the fact that most Ingrians have the legal status of *korennye narody* or Indigenous peoples, their population has drastically decreased, and their language and traditions are on the verge of extinction as a result of assimilation and repressions implemented against them in the twentieth century.[7] By that time, the Izhors and the Votes almost fully assimilated into Russian Slavic culture due to their Orthodox faith and began to blend into a more or less homogenous group sharing the same religious and cultural attributes as well as linguistic affinity (Kuznetsova et al. 2015: 154). Aside from the short period in the 1930s, when the publication of books written in the Finnish, Izhorian and Votic languages was promoted, the ethnic distinctness of Ingrian population was drastically affected by the Soviet campaigns of dekulakisation and collectivization when for the first time Ingrians were displaced from their set-

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[6] In the Soviet Union, the status of a titular nation was given to non-Slavic ethnic groups who inhabited their traditional lands of settlement and were considered to be dominating those geographical territories. Those territories were granted the status of autonomous republics.

[7] The number of Ingrian Finns decreased seven times throughout the twentieth century (from 140,000 people in 1917 to 20,000 people in 2005 (Kuznetsova et al. 2015: 145–147)). The Izhor's population dropped over 60 times throughout four decades (from 20,000 people in 1971 to 327 people in 2002 (Kuznetsova et al. 2015: 144)). The Votes almost completely and irrevocably assimilated into the Russian and Izhorian population and only approximately twenty people self-identified as Votians in 2004 (Kuznetsova et al. 2015: 135).

tlements and sent to the Kola Peninsula (Kon'kova and Kokko 2009: 16; Kon'kova 2009a: 96; Kon'kova 2009b: 51). As Olga Kon'kova concludes, the result of those campaigns against Ingrians was total elimination of their cultural pockets (Kon'kova and Kokko 2009: 18). World War II aggravated the plight of the Ingrian people even further. First, the Finnic peoples who lived along the border with Finland, were perceived as a threat and enemy to the Soviet government and about twenty thousand of them were deported to Central Asia (Kon'kova and Kokko 2009: 7). Then, in 1942, a large number of the Ingrians trapped in besieged Leningrad were deported to Siberia through Lake Ladoga (the path also known as the Road of Life) by the Soviet government.[8] In the next year, German occupation authorities deported the rest of Leningrad's Ingrian population to Finland through the Estonian Klooga concentration camp (Kon'kova 2009b: 54; Kurs 1994: 111). In 1944, after the Soviet-Finnish truce, the majority of Ingrians returned to the USSR, but they were almost immediately displaced to different parts of Russia and not allowed to settle in their homeland until after 1954 (Kurs 1994: 112). As a result, a long period of repression against Ingrians groups during the twentieth century left almost no imprints of their presence in the cultural life of St. Petersburg and led to the discontinuation of many of their cultural practices.

Beside the complex history of relocations and legal specificities, another important aspect needs to be addressed in relation to *korennye narody* or Indigenous peoples in the Russian Finno-Ugric context. In comparison to the mainstream use of the term Indigenous peoples in North American scholarship, Finno-Ugric Indigenous peoples discussed in this article occupy an ethnic space where racialisation is very minimal and for many it is almost invisible. Phenotypically, all Finno-Ugrians of the Russian North-West and those living in the Volga region have dominating Caucasian features with very subtle variations in their racial types. Supposedly, this was a result of commixture of Finno-Ugrians with other ethnic groups that significantly deviated their appearance from the proto-Uralic ancestors, who, as most scholars agree, had lived as one community in a scarcely populated territory between the Baltic Sea and Western Siberia on both sides of the Ural Mountains (Fodor 2004: 25; Bakró-Nagy 2012: 113). Such phenotypical similarities of many Finno-Ugric peoples to ethnic Russians and their view as 'white' or 'European', make it even harder for them to be visible and audible as Indigenous.

Even in Russian scholarly discourse on *korennye narody*, those Finno-Ugrians who live in the most remote areas and phenotypically greatly differ from Slavs (the Khanty and the Mansi, for example) are often discussed in the context of the broader concept of Indigenous peoples of the North along with Eskimos, Chukchi and Samoyedic peoples. In this article, instead of segregating them geographically, I talk about all Finno-Ugrians of Russia as Indigenous based on the notion of their common proto-homeland, self-identification as an ethnic-

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[8] The displacement of the Ingrian population by the Soviet government from Leningrad during World War II was commonly referred to as the process of evacuation. However, the members of the organization of the Ingrian Finns, Inkerin Liitto and Olga Konkova specify that such removal of Finnic peoples was nothing less than deportation that resulted in numerous deaths due to hardships of transferring and excessive labour.

ally and linguistically unified Finno-Ugric group (along with Estonians, Finns, Hungarians and Sámi)[9] as well as their involvement in the issues of the global Indigenous community.[10]

2. The Centre for the Indigenous Peoples of the St. Petersburg Region

One of the major developments in the production of Finno-Ugric cultural knowledge in St. Petersburg was the creation of the Centre for Indigenous Peoples—an organization founded by the ethnographer and Ingrian social and cultural activist Olga Kon'kova. The Centre for Indigenous Peoples was established to initiate the cultural revival of Ingrians and other Finno-Ugric peoples inhabiting the St. Petersburg region—the Izhors, the Votes, the Ingrians Finns,[11] the Veps and the Tikhvin Karelians.[12] Even though among all those peoples only the Izhors, the Votes and the Veps are legally listed as 'Indigenous small-numbered peoples,' the founders of the Centre use the term *korennye narody* or Indigenous peoples to identify that all these Finno-Ugric groups can be considered Indigenous in relation to the Slavic population, which began moving to the area after the foundation of St. Petersburg in the eighteenth century.

The online description of the Centre for Indigenous Peoples specifies that the organisation was officially registered in 2009 and all its activities rely on voluntary work (Centre for Indigenous Peoples 2021). The main digital platforms through which the Centre carries out its work are its official website (kmn-lo.ru) and its SNSs accounts such as VKontakte (vk.com/tsentr_korennyh_narodov_lo, see Image 1) and Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/tsentr.korennyh.narodov.lo/). In this article, I am focusing on the ethnography of digital activities of the Centre for Indigenous Peoples primarily in its official group on VKontakte as the features available on this platform, compared to the analogous group on Facebook, allow for a more detailed analysis. The Centre actively uses online platforms for the production of the Finno-Ugric identity and revitalization of the cultural memory of the Indigenous peoples of the St. Petersburg region. Utilising various options available on VKontakte, the Centre created a digital space for the congregation of activists dedicated to the popularisation of local Finno-Ugric culture. One of the central functions of this space is a compilation of an open-access digital archive of various materials of Finno-Ugric cultural heritage and documentation of projects initiated and realised by the Centre.

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[9] Finno-Ugric peoples along with Samoyedic belong to a broader family of Uralic peoples. The Finno-Ugric group is divided into five subgroups: Balto-Finnic, Finnic-Permic, Finnic-Volgaic, Sámi and Ugric. The Balto-Finnic subgroup is constituted by the Estonians, the Finns, the Izhors, the Karelians, the Livonians, the Veps and the Votes; the Finnic-Permic subgroup group consists of the Komi and the Udmurt; the Mari and the Mordvins belong to the Finnic-Volgaic subgroup; the Sami are singled out as a separate subgroup; the Ugric subgroup is formed by the Hungarians, the Khanty and the Mansi.

[10] One of the most apparent instances of such global Indigenous belonging is manifested in the representation of Finno-Ugrians in the United Nations where a native Izhorian Dmitri Harakka was serving in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia sector from 2017 to 2019.

[11] The Ingrian Finns joined the Izhors and the Votes in the seventeenth century when this territory was under the rule of the Swedish Empire. They moved to Ingria from the central part of the Karelian Peninsula called Äyräpää and the province Savo in southcentral Finland (Matley 1979: 2).

[12] Karelians who settled in the vicinity of Tikhvin (the Leningrad Oblast) in the period from 1617 to 1721.

Image 1. The screenshot of the Centre for Indigenous Peoples' group on Vkontakte.
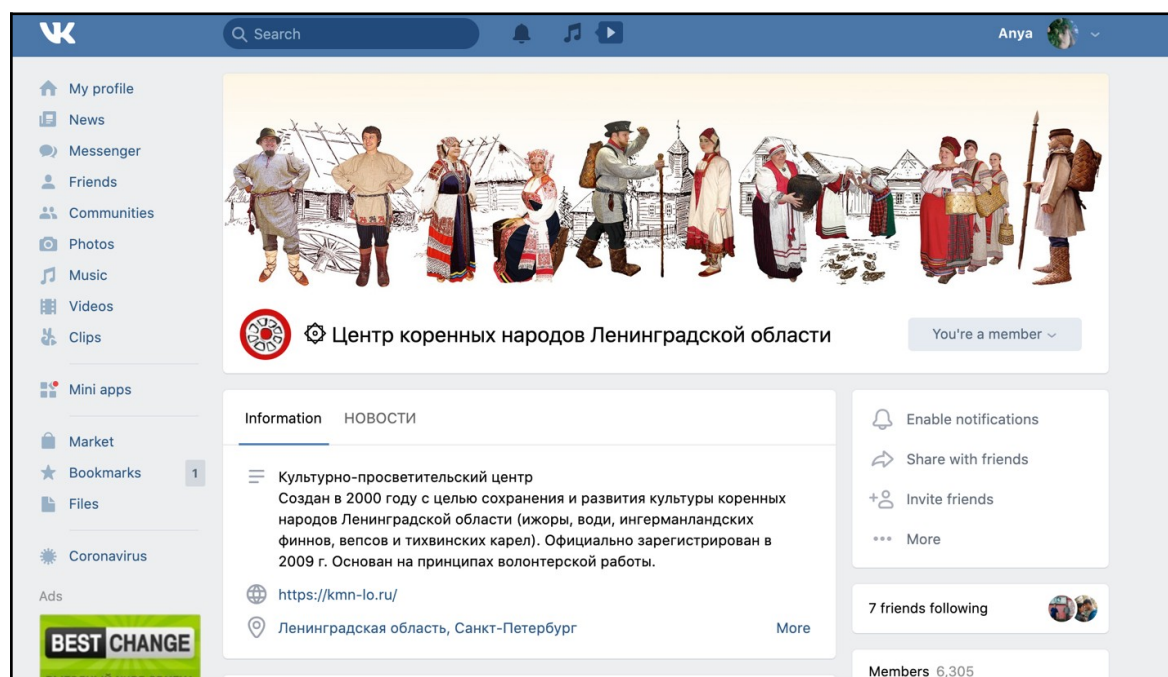

Image description: A white-and-blue page with tabs on the right side, the name and description of the group in Russian in the middle and functional buttons on the right side. On the top, a horizontal banner of the group depicting Finno-Ugric peoples in traditional costumes.

Source: Vkontakte, entered through the author's account.

The Centre's group on VKontakte is an example of one of the global digital communities of Indigenous peoples, which uses the internet as a tool to manifest its 'articulation of alterity' (Hilder 2017: 7). With a total number of 6,305 participants,[13] the group serves as a digital chronicle of all the activities of the Centre where announcements or reports are posted daily. Additionally, the group is used as a platform for posting and reposting information about activities important for the local Finno-Ugric community but not directly related to the Centre's projects. Finally, its group on VKontakte also serves as a space where multiple materials of local Finno-Ugric culture such as electronic versions of books, audio and video recordings of music performances and Indigenous films are collected and shared.

This online group created by the Centre serves as an alternative public space where, despite their phenotypical similarity to Slavic people, Finno-Ugrians can build their Indigenous identity. This aspect of online Indigenous communities has been described by Bronwyn Lumby, who offered a metaphor of putting on a 'cyber-skin' that creates 'possibilities for identity construction among those who are not "visibly" Indigenous' (2010: 69). In contrast to many other Indigenous groups living in the Russian territory, such invisibility of local Finno-Ugrians complicates their ethnic self-determination and public recognition as Indigenous peoples in offline spaces. Along the line with Lumby's metaphor of 'cyber-skin,' I want to highlight the importance for these Finno-Ugrians not only to be visible, but also audible. While the 'cyber-skin' can be put on, what types of auditory attention can be used in order

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[13] Data retrieved on 24 October, 2020.

for them to sound Indigenous? In their offline daily life, there are very little opportunities for these peoples to be sonically Finno-Ugrian. Alternatively, the Centre's online group allows local Finno-Ugrian community to foreground their sonic ethnic identity by conversing in their Indigenous languages, listening to their Indigenous music and creating their digital oral history.

3. The Centre's digital interactive archive

Thomas Hilder stressed the importance of digital communities in maintaining or reviving Indigenous traditions by saying that online spaces 'can support cultural revival and bring about a new sense of holistic multisensorial experience and orality' (2017: 9). Moreover, compared to other types of media, 'the internet provides more freedom to Indigenous people as publishers of their own stories in a space that does not limit participation' (Lumby 2010: 70). SNSs seem to be one of the best options for digitally executed cultural revivals due to their fee-free registration and easy management compared to regular websites. One of the most beneficial features of digital communities on those platforms is that they provide the members with an option of immediate participation allowing them to leave comments and engage in conversations in real time.

Another significant aspect of online communities is their ability to serve as 'digital databases' that help in the process of repatriation or repossession of cultural heritage by serving as a repository for cultural artifacts (Hilder 2017: 8). This idea of a collective digital archive is widely used by various communities on VKontakte, which offers various storage and sharing options for an array of media materials. The media files uploaded and displayed in the Centre for Indigenous Peoples' group serve as a digital archive of repatriated and newly acquired materials of local Finno-Ugric cultural heritage that are downloadable and available for access to the members of this group. The notion of 'online memory', which has an effect of 'dematerialization' of cultural heritage might be considered instrumental in dissemination of Finno-Ugric cultural knowledge among the community (Belk 2013). Since the forced discontinuation of their traditional practices, many Finno-Ugrians, especially those of the younger generations, have to rebuild their families' histories and cultural belonging without having either memories or tangible artifacts that would remind them of the past. Similar to the physically acquired objects, members of the Centre's group develop 'the same feelings of attachment, singularization, fear of loss' to their digital possessions, which helps Finno-Ugrians to reclaim their cultural ownership and develop collective memory (Belk 2013). As a result, the speed of browsing and ability to obtain those cultural artifacts in 'one click' significantly accelerates cultural restoration and allows posters to reach a broader audience without being restricted by geographical remoteness or bureaucratic limitations.

In the study conducted by the local online newspaper Bumaga about the history and present situation of Ingrian Finns in St. Petersburg, Olga Kon'kova shared her experience regarding the process of repatriation of Ingrian heritage initiated by the Centre:

> The people had more memories about the repressions, talked about their experiences, losses, and suffering. The traditional culture was chopped off, and its bearers were almost gone—at least those who remembered home celebrations or what lullabies the mothers

sang to their children … The childhood of our parents coincided with World War II, and, of course, there was no time for keeping traditions. Many tried to hide that they were Ingrian Finns, and even those who were proud of it still lost their traditional way of life. The local collection of Ingrian folklore is dismal. So, we used the Karelian Centre of the Academy of Sciences, because in the 1960s and 70s, they conducted folkloristic research among Ingrian Finns who moved to the territory of Karelia and in Leningrad Oblast. At that time, the language was also studied by Karelian and Estonian scholars. When the question of revival arose, such archived cultural materials helped us a lot, because we managed to restore the costume, games, folklore and traditional food. (Chirin and Kudriavtseva 2017)[14]

The media files posted by the Centre in its VKontakte group range from archival and contemporary audio recordings of traditional local Finno-Ugric songs and fairy tales to video footage of the performances and presentations of the Centre's volunteers and students. The collection of music files includes the recordings of contemporary Finno-Ugric groups like Sattuma,[15] Maavächi[16] and the Centre's own choir Korpi. The moderators of the group also uploaded a few songs from Viljo Tormis's *Forgotten Peoples* cycles [Unustatud rahvad][17] and the archival recordings of famous Ingrian singers such as Ekaterina Aleksandrova (1902–1986) and Oudekki Figurova (1891–1971). The video collection, which contains more than three hundred files, includes the recordings of the performances and rehearsals of the Centre's kantele school,[18] solo performances of the musical director Elena Vedaiko and excerpts from the shows of the traditional puppet theater. The members of the group can also watch the recordings of musical performances of the Centre's Mobile School (classes offered by volunteers in various locations in the St. Petersburg region) and tutorials on the crafting of traditional Ingrian whistles.

The collection of media-files in the Centre's group on VKontakte also has the Documents section, which contains downloadable files about the history, culture and languages of the local Finno-Ugric peoples. One of the most recently uploaded materials is a digitised book of Votic traditional songs *Vaada Laule* (Vorob'eva 2007). The book is a collection of poetry of the Votic songs with Russian translations and illustrations inspired by ancient symbols and patterns which accompany each song. More conventional features like photo albums, event pages and links to other groups on VKontakte and pages related to the Centre for Indigenous Peoples are also available.

One of the most technologically enabled projects of the Centre is the Indigenous animation film studio Koukku-Joukko. The studio has produced thirteen short-animated films based on Finno-Ugric folklore which are also included in the video collection of the Centre's

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[14] Translated from the Russian language. All translations by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

[15] Sattuma is a neo-folk group from the Republic of Karelia. It is a family band that was founded in Petrozavodsk in 2003 that plays both traditional music and their own tunes composed in a style of Karelian, Ingrian and Finnish musical traditions with a rock-folk flavour.

[16] Maavächi is a folk group from St. Petersburg which plays nineteenth-twentieth century traditional instrumental dance music of Ingria, Karelia, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Scotland, Brittany and Hungary. The band also performs Votic traditional music. Its name is translated from the Votic language as 'bestiarium'.

[17] *Forgotten Peoples* is a collection of six cycles of a cappella choral music by Estonian composer Veljo Tormis (1930–2017). This composition was written between 1970–1989 and set to the music and languages of the Livonians, Karelians, Ingrians and Veps.

[18] The kantele is a plucked-string zither of Balto-Finnic peoples.

group on VKontakte. Most of the films are fairy tales based on Ingrian mythology and narrated in their respective native languages with English subtitles. All films are also available as separate files in Russian. The first film produced by Koukku-Joukko was a two-minute cartoon *Tulen Synty* [Birth of Fire], created using plasticine puppet animation. The story is based on the ancient Izhorian song of the same name recorded in the Soikkola peninsula in 1881–1883 and reproduced by the group Korpi (Centre for Indigenous Peoples 2014). Koukku-Joukko also produced similar cartoons based on traditional songs of the Ingrian Finns, the Veps and the Votes, which are created with music soundtracks by Elena Vedaiko with her group Korela and the Votic group Maavächi.

The legitimacy and impact of ethnic digital spaces are emphasized by Indigenous scholars who assert that SNSs help to build communities 'generated by real bodies' and not just provide 'a disembodied space or an imagined social sphere that has no real substance as a community' (Lumby 2010: 69). Based on my observations of activities in the group, the Centre for Indigenous Peoples provides a digital platform for people of various ethnicities to listen—an action that, as considered by sound studies scholars, enables communication (Rice 2015: 101). Here, the act of listening is occurring between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members as well as among Finno-Ugrians, who can freely communicate, exchange information and establish a sense of ethnic and cultural belonging.

4. Second to Sun: De-Slavicisation of Russian metal

Vladimir Lehtinen, the bandleader of Second to Sun, is a young Finno-Ugrian raised in post-Soviet Russia who, like many people of his background, struggled to recover his ethnic identity and to find his place within Russia's Slavic-dominated cultural environment. In his adolescence, Vladimir started learning the history and languages of the Indigenous Finno-Ugric peoples and devoted ten years to social activism. Vladimir had also listened to Scandinavian metal music from an early age and eventually decided to express his attachment to Finno-Ugric culture through music by founding a band which has become one of the most internationally successful metal bands from Russia.[19]

Based in St. Petersburg, the band Second to Sun currently consists of four members: Gleb and Maks Sysoevs on vocals and bass guitar respectively, the drummer Theodor Borowski, and the guitarist, founder, and bandleader Vladimir Lehtinen (brothers Gleb and Max, originally from a Siberian town Krasnoyarsk, are also simultaneously the bandleaders of ULTAR, a post-black metal band thematically built on the mythology of Lovecraft). Formed in 2012, Second to Sun finds its main sources of musical inspiration in Scandinavian black metal bands like Immortal and Emperor and American heavy metal band Pantera. Second to Sun refrains from the attachment to any particular subgenre of metal music and often experiments with its sound. Thus, the folksonomy[20] the band uses on various SNSs is quite diverse: metal, black metal, blackened, blackgaze, extreme metal, groove metal, heavy metal, melodic black metal, post-black metal.

[19] In November 2019, Spotify's playlist Black & Dark Metal featured Second to Sun's track 'Devil' on the first place among tracks by such established bands like Immortal, Mgła, Mayhem, and Alcest.
[20] A user-generated system of classifying and organizing online content into different categories using hashtags.

The bandleader Vladimir Lehtinen, who works also as a producer, sound engineer and promoter of various music bands, is the ideological mastermind of Second to Sun, whose Finno-Ugric roots inspired some of the sonic and aesthetic choices of the band's albums. As the public representative of Second to Sun, Vladimir emphasises the problematic cultural status of Finno-Ugric ethnic groups in the Russian society and his cultural belonging:

> I grew up in the Volgograd region. In school, I felt like a stranger. My paternal grandfather barely spoke about his childhood, but he studied Finnish language and for me it was unclear why he needed that in the Volgograd region. Later, I learned that he was a Finn from Vyborg. I also have a blood of the Finnic-Volgaic peoples: the Mordvins, Mari and possibly Udmurts. But this was not customary to talk about our roots. (Ermakov 2019)

Vladimir states that his closeness to Finno-Ugric mentality and language has continued to develop as he started learning about his family's history. He began learning Finno-Ugric languages at Petrozavodsk State University in Karelia, which fostered his desire to encapsulate the culture of these peoples in music. When asked about his predilection for Finno-Ugric cultural heritage over Slavic, Vladimir responds that he considers Slavic culture to be alien to his mindset:

> I have been familiar with Finnish mythology since childhood, it is dear to me. It is gloomy, heavy and straightforward, honest and touching, it corresponds to the music and character of our band members. While the Slavic theme is completely different. You can easily see it by comparing folk metal bands from Ukraine to Finnish bands, for example. (Lehtinen 2017)

The Finno-Ugric element is engraved in Second to Sun's music and visual art in a number of forms, starting with the name of the band and encompassing the use of traditional musical instruments of Finno-Ugrians such as the jouhikko and the krez[21] in the tracks of its album *First Chapter*. For the band's logo, Vladimir decided to use the octagram, an eight-pointed star that is widely used in traditional ornaments and flags among Finno-Ugric peoples. In various cultures, says Vladimir, an octagram represents the planet Venus which is the second planet from the Sun—a fact which led to the choice of the band's name. The sonic integration of traditional Finno-Ugric musical instruments; promotion of Indigenous Finno-Ugric artists; and the creation of lyrics that auralise Finno-Ugric history and mythology—all of these things contribute to the dissemination of Indigenous knowledge among the global audience of metal music.

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[21] *Jouhikko* is a Karelo-Finnish bowed lyre. *Krez* is a type of zither of the Udmurt peoples.

Image 2. A screenshot of Second to Sun's profile pictures on VKontakte (2 March, 2019) depicting Second to Sun and the wooden sculpture 'Crucified Shiva' by the Udmurt post-modern artist Anfim Khanykov.
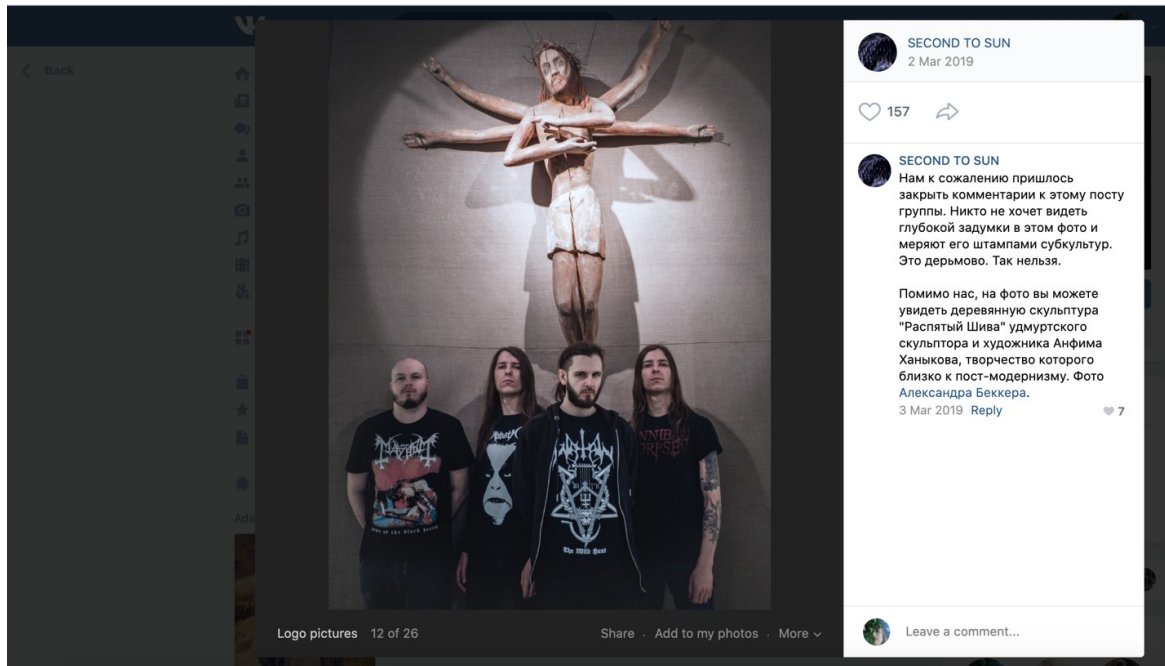

Image description: Black and white page capturing a color photo on the left, a commentary by Second to Sun in Russian and 157 'likes' for the photo on the right. In the photo, there are four musicians at the front wearing t-shirts with metal prints and a statue of a crucified Shiva with six hands attached to the wall behind. The statue is illuminated by a circular spotlight.

Source: Second to Sun's VKontakte page (https://vk.com/secondtosunofficial).

Metal culture around the world often follows a common trajectory. Initially, the global language for metal was English, but today, musicians tend to sing in their native languages. To deliver the meaning of the songs to international listeners, metal bands provide translations of their texts in English, while remaining loyal to domestic audiences who appreciate the sound of the native tongue. For metalheads, metal is 'serious music that endorses a particular set of values' which is 'the opposite of light entertainment' (Wallach et al. 2011: 27). It helps the artists build 'alternative cultural identities to those offered or projected by the cultural traditions, nationalisms and religious movements that are influential in the locales where the music takes root' (Wallach et al. 2011: 23). One such instance is the global inspiration of the Indigenous cultures that found a response in the work of some metal bands. In 1996, the Brazilian metal band Sepultura released the album *Roots*, an homage to the traditional culture of Brazil's marginalized Indigenous population where they mixed metal sonic texture with native musical instruments. This album laid the groundwork for a number of future Indigenous metal groups, including Second to Sun, who highlights the inspiration they received from Sepultura.

On a regional level, Second to Sun is the only band that plays heavy metal with specifically Russian Finno-Ugric orientation. As Vladimir says, the cultural matrix of Finno-Ugric peoples of the region certainly exists, but those music groups play mostly at folk festivals for

small audiences. In contrast, metal music tends to attract a much larger fan base. Further-more, as Vladimir points out, some local Finno-Ugric groups who do play metal aesthetically represent rather 'Slavic culture with a northern Viking colour' (Shatilova 2019). For ex-ample, the local Vepsian singer Marja Üldine, who also performs in the traditional genre of folk singing, has been involved in the scene of heavy metal music since 2003. However, styl-istically, Üldine's music is inclined to Viking metal with only textual references to some his-torical moments of Finno-Ugric peoples from the North-West of Russia.

5. Auralising Finno-Ugric ethnic identity in Russia

Despite the ethnic flavour of the band's music, Second to Sun does not identify its music with folk metal because the band members consider this genre a parody on a particular cul-tural tradition without deep penetration in its history and heritage. According to Vladimir Le-htinen, the ethnic elements present in Second to Sun's music do not aim to simulate or recre-ate traditions from the past in the modern world. Instead, the band adapts traditional culture to the standards of modernity which use the cultural heritage of various Finno-Ugric peoples as a basis for creativity (Lehtinen 2015). Among all albums of the band, *The First Chapter* is the most significant in conveying the idea of Finno-Ugricness in Second to Sun's artistic aes-thetic. Analysing the sonic content of this album, I trace how Finno-Ugric ethnicity is aural-ised through metal music and disseminated online.

   The First Chapter was first released as an instrumental album in 2015. However, in 2017, Vladimir decided to enrich the sound by adding vocals. The significance of this album as an act of Indigenous activism is demonstrated in the usage of traditional Finno-Ugric musical instruments, field recordings from Finno-Ugric sonic sites and historically informed themes of the songs. Each song on the album is dedicated to a different Finno-Ugric group with its unique story. To provide the global audience with the context, detailed descriptions of the historical and cultural background of the songs are translated to the English language and ac-company each track on the albums' Bandcamp page. Through this album, the listener is in-troduced to Mari pagan culture, Udmurtian dark magic rituals, Mordovian mythology, Khanty and Mansi shamanistic practices, historical events related to the Russian oppression of Udmurt people in Imperial Russia and repressions of Karelians during the Soviet era.

   'Spirit of Kusoto' is the opening song dedicated to pagan rituals of the Mari, which take place in the sacred woods called Kusoto. The historical context of the song cannot be fully comprehended from the lyrics alone, so an additional explanatory description is provided for each track on the album. For 'Spirit of Kusoto', Vladimir writes a dreadful story capturing the mystical spirit of Kusoto: 'Cutting trees, as well as gathering mushrooms or berries or even simply walking inside the grove without a dire need is strictly forbidden for fear of curse, hex or even death. Few people know much about Kusoto, fewer who dare venture in-side for obtaining this knowledge, ever return' (Second to Sun 2017). Musically, the esoteric atmosphere is created in the intro that opens with sounds of the woods and an electronically processed sample of Mari's folk song 'Sun Rises'. To create an authentic sonic immersion into the depth of Kusoto, Vladimir uses a field recording which he collected in the forests of the Republic of Mari El. By integrating a traditional song of the Mari and original field

recording, Vladimir constructs an aural signifier of the Mari culture intertwining it in the texture of metal riffs and vocals.

Throughout the album, the musical reference to the Finno-Ugric culture is mostly achieved by either sampling or rearranging traditional songs and featuring the sound of traditional musical instruments, which is a common feature among many metal musicians around the globe (Wallach et al. 2011: 10). 'Land of the Fearless Bird' is a song dedicated to the Karelian victims of political repressions of the 1930s; they were described by Karelian politician and historical educator Ivan Chukhin in his book *Karelia 37: Ideology and Practice of Terror* (1999). The chorus of the song is a metal transformation of the Karelian folksong 'Kylä Vuotti Uutta Kuuta' [The Village Awaits the New Moon].[22] The main guitar riff is a slower version of Karelian rune 'Vaka Vanha Väinämöinen',[23] which describes the creation of the first kantele by the Finnish demigod Väinämöinen. To enhance the sonic experience of Karelian musical heritage, the track employs the recording of amplified Karelo-Finnish traditional instruments—the kantele and the jouhikko.

The message of the album is delivered by musical listening that in this case is not only an individual experience but also a communal practice. As it is characterized by Tom Rice, musical listening makes a person 'involved, consciously or otherwise, in wider processes and communities of musical consumption, interpretation, circulation, and production' (2015: 102). By auralising Finno-Ugric cultural knowledge through its music, Second to Sun reaches a large audience of metalheads and introduces them to those peoples and their traditions by means of auditory engagement.

6. Musician as a businessman: platformisation of musical production

Much of the current writing in Software Studies, Political Economy of Culture and Business Studies focuses on the concept of platformisation of cultural production (Hesmondhalg et al. 2019) as one of the main themes in the discourse in media studies. Nieborg and Poell suggest that 'platformization can be defined as the penetration of economic, governmental, and infrastructural extensions of digital platforms into the web and app ecosystems, fundamentally affecting the operations of the cultural industries' (2018: 4276). In the last few decades, digital audio distribution platforms such as SoundCloud, Bandcamp, Spotify and others became important sources of music streaming and radically affected the music industry by transferring recorded music into online forms. Some scholars particularly emphasise SoundCloud and Bandcamp as platforms that have been widely associated with 'alternative' and 'independent' cultures of popular music and perceived by musicians and audiences as having a potential to 'achieve democratization of the cultural industries' (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2019: 2, 4).

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[22] 'Kylä Vuotti Uutta Kuuta' is a famous Karelian traditional song introduced to the international audience by Värttinä, a well-known 'world-beat' music group from Finland.

[23] The song is an excerpt of the song under the number forty in *The Kalevala*, the Finnish epic published by Elias Lönnrot in the nineteenth century.

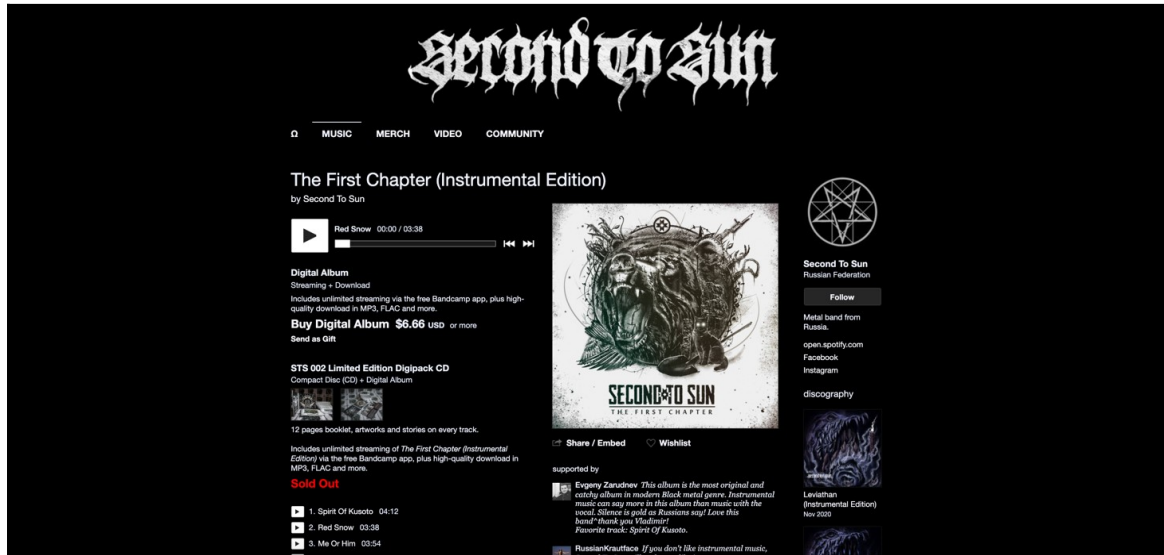**Image 3.** A screenshot from Second to Sun's album *First Chapter* on Bandcamp.

Image Description: A page with a black background. It includes a signature title of the band on the top of the page and three vertical sections below: the name of the album, embedded player with a song, the price of the album and three titles of the songs from the album; in the centre, there is a cover page of the album depicting a roaring bear and an excerpt of the user's comment in a very small font; a very brief description of the band is on the right.

Source: Bandcamp (https://secondtosun.bandcamp.com/album/the-first-chapter-2).

Image 4. A screenshot from Second to Sun's merchandise page on Bandcamp.
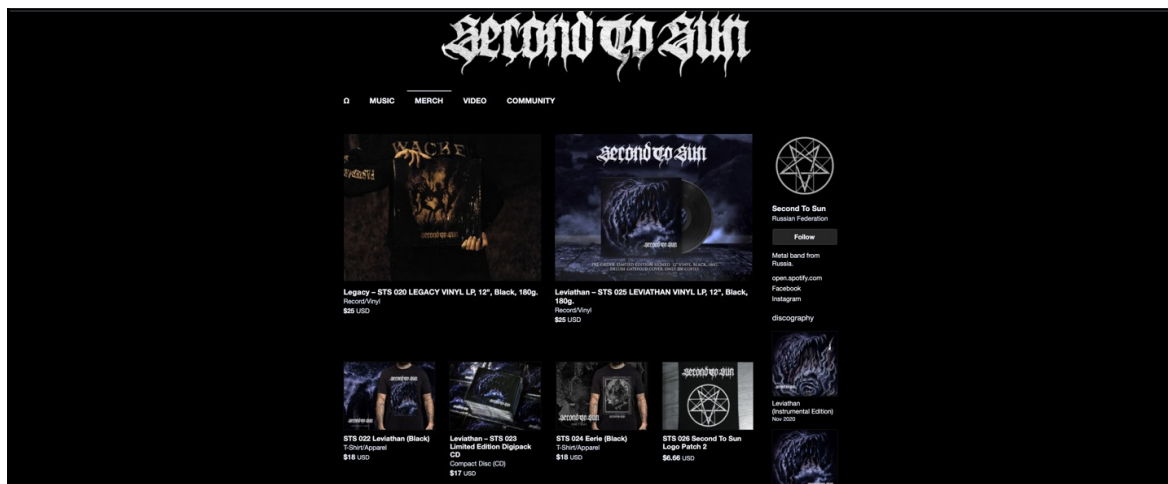

Image Description: A page with a black background. It includes the signature title of the band on the top of the page and six images of band merchandise: CDs and t-shirts. On the right side of the page there are the band's logo, its social media platforms and the cover image of one of the albums from the band's discography.

Source: Bandcamp (https://secondtosun.bandcamp.com/merch).

Such a notion of platformisation as an alternative way of conducting business in the global music industry is directly related to the methods used by Second to Sun in promoting their music within and outside Russia.

Second to Sun uses and depends on Bandcamp as the main source for distributing its singles and albums (Lehtinen 2019a). Compared to SoundCloud, which is characterised by its 'de-emphasizing of performer identity', Bandcamp is regarded as an online platform where bands can create their own 'little spaces' (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2019: 3, 7). As noted by one practitioner 'when you go on a Bandcamp page, you can concentrate on what it is more. If it's a release, an album or EP or whatever, it feels more conceptually there, in the closest way possible I think to a physical release' (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2019: 7) Thus, Second to Sun's page on Bandcamp not only has a full range of musical products available for online listening and purchasing, but also information about the group, discography, press releases of singles or albums as well as, in some cases, texts of the songs, which, combined with visual art of the releases, simulate liner notes of more traditional CDs (see Images 3 and 4).

The accessibility for worldwide audiences undoubtedly makes Bandcamp a better alternative for distributing musical products for autonomous musicians, particularly those from Russia. Since the Russian music industry is quite deficient in cultural export, the promotion of music outside the country is the biggest challenge for indie musicians. Thus, with the emergence of audio streaming and distribution platforms, artists have acquired a new mechanism for self-promotion that allows them to expand their audience and act on a global level. Moreover, digital platforms present a fundamentally different range of possibilities for independent production and Indigenous music making compared to cultural preservation and dissemination in physical space. It gives the musicians more autonomy without being restricted by bureaucratic procedures and entanglements that often appear when working with major music labels or relying on self-promotion by means of concert tours.

In a YouTube interview on promotion strategies for bands, Vladimir Lehtinen discusses different marketing strategies with resources available on the internet (Lehtinen 2019b). His main argument builds on the notion that independent artists today function not only as music creators but should equally be engaged in the interaction with their audience to accumulate a loyal fan base, a strategy that has been observed in relation to many music makers worldwide (Jones 2011: 448) In this section, I look at Second to Sun's digitally mediated images and representations as an extension of the musicians' physical bodies and persona, modified versions adapted to models of self-promotion in the contemporary independent music industry.

Vladimir distinguishes four types of audiences—'cold', 'warm', 'hot' and 'fan base' that range from viewers/listeners who have only heard something about the band to those who have judgments regarding one's music and later feel confident enough to support the band by giving virtual likes and comments (warm and hot). Only after the previous steps are taken does the viewer/listener becomes a fan who regularly goes to concerts and buys new releases. Creating a solid fan base, says Vladimir, requires musical artists to maintain constant interaction with the audience by providing content for current or potential followers on various SNSs. Those materials vary from album and single releases, videos, footage from concerts and announcements to photos or videos from rehearsals, tutorials or vlogs, and shots of the

band's members, the strategy that is used by many bands 'to keep the fans interested during a time of low activity' (Bogdanovic 2016: 437).

The public image of the band on SNSs is one important element in an overall marketing strategy. Not only do musicians have to follow certain professional standards established by the global community of digitally present bands, but also, as in the case of Second to Sun, adapt their public image to local audiences (Bogdanovic 2016: 436). And that image might be significantly different from the one oriented towards foreign fans. Vladimir acknowledges the distinctness of Russian audiences, including fellow musicians from other bands, saying in one of his interviews that 'if your personality is positive and light the audience does not take you seriously' (Lehtinen 2018). Thus, he is forced to construct an image of 'the evil clown like one from the horror movie *It*' (ibid.). For instance, on Second to Sun's official group on VKontakte, Vladimir demonstratively blocks comments to certain posts if he is dissatisfied with the reaction of the followers. Often, he adds didactic remarks like the one related to the change of the band's profile picture with the statue of the 'Crucified Shiva' depicted on Image 2: 'Unfortunately, we had to close the comments to this post. Nobody wants to see the deep meaning in this photo and measures it with subculture clichés. This is crap. You cannot do it that way'. Similarly, on his personal page, Vladimir writes a review on the Russian translation of Dayal Patterson's book *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult* (2013*)* in which he sarcastically refers to the immaturity of audiences from Russia and other former Soviet countries who still speculate whether 'black metal is written by a lonely Satanist in a cave' or if 'there is any musical component in black metal'.[24] However, such harshness, indeed, does not impede followers from liking such posts with comments full of praise.

In contrast, the digital image of Second to Sun on non-Russian platforms such as Instagram and Facebook is non-aggressive and more restrained in the amount of the content posted. Both their domestic and English language SNSs comply with what Danijela Bogdanovic calls 'the etiquette of professionalism adopted by working (touring, gigging) bands' keeping out private-life information and focusing on the construction of the bandhood identity (2016: 436). Second to Sun's Facebook and Instagram profiles lack the overfamiliarity with fans that is characteristic of their presence on VKontakte. For example, Second to Sun changes its profile picture on VKontakte several times a year or even every month, announcing new releases and tour dates, while its Facebook image might stay unchanged for a whole year. The same picture with recognisable faces of the band's members is used for Second to Sun's Bandcamp profile, and in doing so, the musicians are creating a more 'recognizable brand', which is accepted as common practice for the music groups worldwide (Bogdanovic 2016: 436). The followers' activity of leaving comments on Facebook is also significantly lower, although the number of likes remains in the same range.

7. Conclusion

In this article, I explored various modes of listening as it relates to the manifestation of Finno-Ugric ethnic identity in digital spaces in the context of post-Soviet Russia. The revival of Finno-Ugric culture in St. Petersburg indicates the aspiration of some residents of the city

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[24] Post by Vladimir Lehtinen on Second to Sun's OP on VKontakte, 15 January, 2019.

to be heard as ethnically distinct from the dominant Slavic culture. Amplifying its voice by the means of the internet, the Centre for Indigenous Peoples uses its digital space on VKontakte to build a community where local Finno-Ugrians can be listened-to as Indigenous peoples and maintain a feeling of cultural and ethnic belonging. One of the tools that the internet is providing them is the opportunity to create an online memory for the current and future generations of Finno-Ugrians, whose families were deprived of their culture and ethnic self-expression in Soviet Russia. Other forms of auditory attention explored in the article are musical listening and auralisation of Finno-Ugric cultural knowledge that are used by the metal band Second to Sun. Their album *First Chapter* encapsulates the history and culture of Finno-Ugric peoples in metal music and introduces it to a global audience of metalheads. As one of the most popular metal bands from Russia, Second to Sun behaves on social media platforms as a modified version of its physical self by establishing closer contact with the audience through direct communication and a carefully constructed image of the band tailored to either domestic or international listeners. Moreover, a contemporary democratised music industry allows Second to Sun to have more control over its musical content, reach a broader listenership by disseminating its music on streaming platforms and avoid interactions with major music labels. These two case studies direct our attention towards practices of online listening as an auditory and non-auditory engagement as well as the formation of identities of those who want to be listened-to through digitised sound and digitised voices.

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