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**IBEROVISION, CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL EXCHANGES:  
MUSIC FESTIVALS IN THE 1960s**

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**Abstract:** *The beginning of television broadcasts in Portugal in September 1956 played an important role in the Portuguese musical environment. However, the quick technical advances associated with television would eventually enable the Hertzian connection between Portugal and Spain, which led to the creation of a new space, Iberovisão. In addition to Spain's role as a bridge between Portugal and Eurovision broadcasts, the connection between the two neighbouring countries, which began in 1960, generated a new media space for cultural exchanges, which became visible through two important música ligeira festivals: the Festival da Canção de Benidorm and the Festival Hispano-Portugués de la Cancion del Duero, among other initiatives. The fact that Portugal and Spain lived under dictatorial political regimes leads us to believe that these festivals were, in addition to important cultural experiences associated with music, a form of affirmation of the two dictatorial regimes in an increasingly democratized Western Europe. Proof of this is the Declaration of December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1960 on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples of the United Nations (UN). Based on the analysis of the two mentioned music festivals, I highlight the importance that the technical novelties associated with television, linking Portugal and Spain (Iberovisão), had in the origin and development of the mentioned events, assuming them as spaces of cultural and ideological affirmation in the political context of the 1960s.*

**Keywords:** *Iberovisão, music festivals, música ligeira, dictatorship, television*

**1. INTRODUCTION: TV BROADCAST IN PORTUGAL**

The beginning of television broadcasts in Portugal in September 1956 affected musical activity both inside and outside of the media field (Balle, 2003; Bourdon, 2006; Fisk, 1991). During this period, television programming essentially comprised already existing music, produced (Peterson, 2004) either through music performances in television studios, or by live broadcasts from public concert spaces.

Until the early 1960s, it was not possible to talk about television shows in which musicians who developed their careers in Portugal shared media spaces with musicians from other countries. The first musical experiences (Deaville, 2011) in which this type of participation took place was in two important music festivals: *Festival da Canção Portuguesa* and *Festival Hispano-Portugués de la Cancion del Duero*. The television connection between Portugal and Spain was under study even before the start of television broadcasts in Portugal,

as one can see from a map that came to light during the preparatory study for the installation of television in Portugal in 1955.



Fig.1 Proposal of the map of the television network in the Iberian Peninsula - Usable Frequencies, Television Studies Group (Emissora Nacional de Radiodifusão, 1955).

However, only on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1960 it would become possible to transmit emissions between the two Iberian countries, referred to as

*Iberovisão*. This leads us to believe that this technical possibility (Williams, 2003) seems to have been the starting point for the organization of the two festivals.

## 2. MUSIC FESTIVALS

The first festival referred to above, the *Festival da Canção Portuguesa*, premiered on the night of January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1958 at the Império cinema, in the centre of Lisbon city. The organization was in charge of the Centro de Preparação de Artistas da Rádio, which was structural part of the Emissora Nacional (EN). Although conflicting news items emerge from the printed media of this time, there does not appear to have been any kind of competition. Most probably, its main objective was to make Portuguese composers associated to the *música ligeira* (Moreira, 2010) category known to the general public.

About two and a half years later, on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, the EN and the Secretariado Nacional de Informação (SNI), an important organization in Salazar's dictatorial state, organized the second edition of *Festival da Canção Portuguesa*, this time in the city of Porto. This edition was divided in two parts: the first one dedicated to new authors and the second one to already consecrated ones. This fact reveals that, contrary to what happened in the first edition, the goal was not only to show the most representative composers of the Portuguese *música ligeira*, but also to open up space for emerging lyricists and composers.

The third edition of the *Festival da Canção Portuguesa* took place at the Casino Peninsular da Figueira da Foz in the district of Coimbra in August 1961. As a novelty, it awarded a prize to the winning performer as and it displayed a desire to project itself internationally. This intent on internationalization was revealed by its integration in an exchange with the *Festival Espanhol de la Canción de Benidorm* (Spain), in which Portuguese songs and interpreters, as well as a team of Rádio Clube Português reporters, took part.

This festival edition was broadcasted live on Radiotevisão Portuguesa (RTP) and EN, on August 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 1961, during two simultaneous broadcasts. Given that the Hertzian connection between Portugal and Spain, *Iberovisão*, had been a reality since 1960, it was probable that Rádio Televisão Espanhola (TVE) would also have transmitted it. But this does not seem to have happened. This is even more curious when considering that Ana Maria Parra and José Francis, two winners of the third *Festival de Benidorm*, performed at the Portuguese event. This fact reveals that the desire to internationalize the

*Festival da Canção Portuguesa*, aiming to create new spaces for cultural exchanges, was not corresponded by TVE. However, I have not yet been able to identify why.

The second festival to which I made reference above assumed different denominations in Portugal: *Festival da Canção Luso-Espanhol* or *Festival Hispano-Português*, but its official name was *Festival Hispano-Português de la Canción del Duero*. The desire for an international image is evident from its first edition, which took place in the bullring of Aranda de Duero on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 1960. This fact emerges from the festival's poster in which it is designated as the first *Festival Hispano-Português*, but it is even more evident from the billboard placed in Aranda de Duero at the time of its creation, which is the first *Festival Internacional de la Canción del Duero*. Concerning the Portuguese representation in Aranda del Duero, four songs appear to have been presented in a competition which awarded prizes to both their authors and interpreters.

The festival's second edition, which took place between September 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 1961, was organized by the Town Hall of Aranda de Duero in collaboration with Radio Peninsular (Madrid) as well as Rádio Clube Português (Lisbon and Porto). This edition was recorded by TVE and the 'exchange plans' anticipated the emission of the recording by RTP. However, I have not been able to find an explanation for this, since in the analysis of RTP's television screens there is no reference whatsoever to the festival in 1961. During this edition, a total of 20 songs were performed, of which 15 were composed by Spanish authors and 5 by Portuguese authors, *O Douro Canta*, with lyrics of Artur Ribeiro and music of Fernando de Carvalho, was the best classified song representing Portugal, obtaining a final sixth place.

In 1962, at the third edition of *Festival Hispano-Português de la Canción del Duero*, held between September 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, twenty songs of which eight were by Portuguese authors were performed. The Portuguese artists which performed in Aranda de Duero marked their presence at TVE's studios in Madrid on September 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 1962, that is, the day before and the day after the festival, respectively. This is revealing with regard to the importance of television for greater visibility of interpreters, authors and the event itself.

However, as had happened in previous editions, RTP did not broadcast the third *Festival Hispano-Português de la Canción del Duero* either live or recorded, unlike its Spanish counterpart which made the live broadcast available. The only live transmission of the festival in Portugal was

through radio by Rádio Clube Português in the program *Meia-Noite*. Therefore, we can conclude that the knowledge in Portugal of what was the third *Festival Hispano-Portugués de la Canción del Duero* came about through the written press, the radio and the awareness of the representative songs of Portugal that were published by DECCA in two phonograms.

Although it is not possible to affirm with clarity why such a situation would have existed, it is important to note that the news dedicated to the festival's fourth edition, which took place in 1963, is very scarce. The only known references are included in a small section called *Ondas*, in the magazine *Radio e Televisão* (RTV), making it possible to know that the event took place between August 30<sup>th</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup> and that Portugal was represented by eight songs. In the six lines retrieved from the magazine, it is also stated that Eurovision was expected to broadcast the final, referring to September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1963. However, from the analysis of the programming grids, one may assume that this transmission did not occur, either via Eurovision or by RTP.

The absence of television broadcasts in Portugal associated with the absence of news and the fact that no commercial recording of the songs of the Portuguese authors is known, seems to evidence a departure from the Portuguese media regarding the festival in 1963. It should be noted that the origin of different festivals in emerging tourism areas may have been related to the dissemination of new holiday destinations. This indeed appears to have been the main reason for the effort of establishing an international projection for the festival, namely through the relation between the two countries of the Iberian Peninsula. But it surely will not have been the only one.

In the news item "Temos de manter o intercâmbio Artístico com Portugal" [We have to maintain our artistic exchange with Portugal], the director of Rede Espanhola de Emissores do Movimento, Aníbal Arias de Ruiz, states:

We live in a busy, difficult and rather complicated time. Countries that are truly authentic friends should remain united and confident. The song can and is a strong bond of friendship that strengthens the union. (RTV, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1961)

For Arias de Ruiz, song was an important element in the affirmation of the Iberian Peninsula, in an appeal for enduring friendship between the two countries, made in a particularly important moment. Portugal and Spain were the only two countries in Western Europe under dictatorial political rule. This fact was widely criticized by the

other European governments, in the case of Portugal because it had started the Guerra do Ultramar in 1961. That was the year following the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to the Colonial Countries and Peoples of the United Nations, signed on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1960 (Meneses, 2009).

On August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1961, in the news item "Benidorm ficou a ser a capital da canção" [Benidorm has become the capital of song], one states that "until dethroned by another city, Benidorm will be the capital of song of this Europe that is very caught up in its extreme west..." (RTV). However, this very Europe actually consisted of two Europes: a democratic one and a dictatorial one.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, one can conclude that the technological possibility of linking between RTP and TVE, *Iberovisão*, will not have been used in the realization of the analyzed festivals, either live or recorded, although these were transmitted by the television channels of each country and albeit this desire has been referred to at different times. That being said, the technical possibility will have resided in the internationalization aspect of the two competitions. One can equally conclude that there was a desire to affirm the *canção ligeira* in the Iberian musical environment, with economic interests associated to tourism as well as to the political affirmation of the Iberian Peninsula.

However, it is curious to note that although there were two major music festivals due to the presence of the main voices in each of the countries, both at the level of the composers and the performers, which gave them great visibility, none of them was simultaneously broadcasted on television in the two countries. I have not yet been able to find an explanation for this fact.

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