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## German Longings

### A Dialogue about the Promises and Dangers of National Stereotypes

Melanie Schiller and Jeroen de Kloet

Im zerschnittenen Himmel / Von den Jets zur Übung zerflogen / Hangt sie mit ausgebreiteten Schwingen / Ohne Schlaf, und starren Blicks / In Richtung Trümmer / Hinter ihr die Zukunft aufgeturmt / Steigt sie langsam immer höher / Übersieht letztendlich das ganze / Land Was ist die Befindlichkeit des Landes?

Einsturzende Neubauten, "Die Befindlichkeit des Landes" (2000)

#### Introduction

"What is the state of the country?" wonders Blixa Bargeld. This question may well be more pressing for Germany since 1945 than it is for any other country, as the state of the country continues to be haunted by the specter of the war. And it is this specter, we argue, that equally haunts cultural practices that try to negotiate that state of the country. Germanness is always already entangled with the complicated and torn history of Germany. This chapter tries to engage with the issue of Germanness in popular music from two different personal perspectives, one Dutch, and one German. The quotation with which we open the chapter is clearly selected by the older author of this chapter, Jeroen, as it concerns a band that is part of the sound of the 1980s and of whom he continues to be a quite devoted fan. This band, *Einsturzende Neubauten*, already gestures towards the paradoxical state of Germanness. In its industrial sound, in the declaratory voice of Blixa Bargeld, a listener like Jeroen hears clearly sounds of Germanness, sounds that ironically also hark back to Nazi Germany. In his ears, their industrial sound resonates with the sound of the military, just as the vocal range is reminiscent of the voice of a leader, even when it clearly critiques anything that has to do with state power and the military. It is this double bind – that even a dismissal of Germanness tends to sound just so German – this impossibility of escaping the past, that makes the issue of Germanness so thorny.

This chapter navigates between issues of national identity and stereotyping through the lens of popular music. It explores our fascination for, and struggle with, and at times even longings for, Germanness. This is clearly a thorny issue, as German music faces a similar fate as German cinema, which, as Thomas Elsaesser writes (1996, 13), struggles with the question

What is a nation, what is national cinema, and how can a filmmaker represent either? In the case of Germany since WWII these are, of course, especially difficult questions. After 1945, few countries were obliged to interrogate their geographical or cultural identity as anxiously as the defeated, devastated and divided German Reich.

What is German music, and how do we, as listeners with our specific classed, gendered, aged, and national biographies, negotiate such sounds? What makes something sound German to us, and when and how would that attract us, and when would it push us away? Jeroen explores this question through interrogating his suspicious liking or fondness of stereotypes, Melanie by exploring her mixed feelings when she heard *80 Millionen* from Max Giesinger, while on a trip back to Germany. Indeed, what did *that* song say about the state of the country?

#### Jeroen

It was when I was about the age of ten, in 1977, that my parents took me and my sister to a James Last concert in Arnhem. This was quite an unlikely event; it is the one and only concert I remember my parents taking me to. My father, often suffering from depression, would generally avoid big crowds and closed spaces. My memories of the concert are faint, but I do remember the happy crowd, the singing and dancing along, and the feeling of togetherness that concerts can evoke. Part of the charm of the easy listening music of James Last was, I believe, his Germanness, so close, yet still a bit exotic. He spoke Dutch, but with a funny and charming accent. In a way, he may well have pacified the tense relationship with our close neighbors. I also remember that at the same time, we had family living in Noordwijk, a coastal tourist city in The Netherlands. Over the summer, they would park a car in front of their house, not because they ever used the car, but just to avoid German tourist buses parking there. Such blatant and disturbing forms of anti-German sentiments were slightly frowned upon, but also met with approval from my parents. Looking back, this both surprises and embarrasses me, and it points at a rather strong undercurrent in those years – the 1970s and 1980s – of anti-German sentiments. These were clearly fueled by history classes, in which the story of the invasion of The Netherlands by Germany generally was framed in clear black and white: the Dutch were innocent and tried to resist, the Germans were the bad culprits. While the Second World War would take months to dissect, the subsequent war in Indonesia dare not even have that name, it was called "police actions".

I wish I could claim that my liking for, or attraction to, Germanness, one that was for sure kindled by James Last, was also related to my mistrust of Dutchness, and its underpinning myths of tolerance, openness and innocence. But I am afraid my doubts about Dutchness, probably as thorny a question as Germanness, came in much later. Instead, short holidays in Germany, German television (*Die Sendung mit der Maus*), living in Nijmegen, close to the border, and the concert of James Last, were all part and parcel of my slowly growing fascination for Germanness. That fascination steadily lingers today. James Last may have even been responsible for my strong affinity with music, but rather soon I of course realized that his music was not the appropriate kind for the young. During my university years, I thus moved towards a liking of the industrial sound of *Einsturzende Neubauten* and the new wave music of Grauzone. Slowly, the negative stereotypes about Germany seemed to evaporate in The Netherlands, but it would be unfair to claim they evaporated all together. For example, when googling the Dutch version of the word Germanophilia, the first hit is telling, it says: "Germanophile, can one use this word again?"

(*Germanofiel, kan dit woord weer?*), gesturing to the sensitivity of expressing a passionate liking for German culture, unlike Anglophilia or Francophilia. How, then, can one like Germany without feelings of guilt?

The question of Germanness is, like all national identities, connected to the issue of stereotypes. Here I am reminded of the work of communication scholar Walter Lippmann from the 1920s. In his 1922 book *Public Opinion* he introduced a seemingly banal observation that I still think is relevant: the diversity of the world is too complex to grasp, hence we need simplifications such as stereotypes. In his words, “For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it. To traverse the world men must have maps of the world” (Lippmann 1922, 4). He referred to the pictures we develop in our heads, and for him, this is where the importance of public opinion comes in, as these pictures can be created, changed and tweaked. Those propagandistic dangers aside, the simplicity of his observations remains appealing: we simply need stereotypes to render the world intelligible.

Whereas Lippmann helps to think the idea of stereotype away from its negative connotation and make it more neutral, Rey Chow moves one step further by unpacking the productive implications of stereotypes. She does so by showing how Jacques Derrida developed his theory of deconstruction through a stereotypical reading of the Chinese language. She writes, “whereas stereotypes are usually regarded pejoratively, as forms of entrapment and victimization of the other, the case of Derrida shows that stereotypes can be enabling: without the cliché of Chinese as an ideographic language, as a writing made up of silent little pictures, the radical epistemic rupture known as deconstruction could perhaps not have come into being in the manner it did” (Chow 2002, 71). Just as Lippmann writes about pictures in our mind, so does Chow point to the importance of visuality. She writes, “although stereotypes are not necessarily visual in the physical sense, the act of stereotyping is always implicated in visuality by virtue of the fact that the other is imagined as and transformed into a (sur)face, a sheer exterior deprived of historical depth” (ibid., 73). We may wonder, however, if such readings are not too ocularcentric, bypassing the importance of the auditory. What do nations *sound* like? And how can we listen to the state of the country? And what is a stereotypical sound for a country? When looking back to my liking of Einstürzende Neubauten, I think I do expect a Germanness in their sound and image. This expectation is related to global hierarchies when it comes to popular music. When I listen to a British or American band, I am not as much looking for traces of Britishness or Americanness, not even in Britpop or Americana. For sounds outside the hegemonic center of popular music production, this demand for locality becomes more pressing (see de Kloet 2010). For my ears and eyes, the Germanness of Einstürzende Neubauten lies in their use of the German language, in the voice of Bargeld, the poetic lyrics, in the roughness and at times marching-like quality of the sound and in their industrial image. All these resonate with my stereotypes about what constitutes Germanness, a country with a poetic yet also harsh language, with a roughness that refuses to be gentrified, and above all, deeply serious about music and about life. Once, during a concert in Paradiso, Bargeld was clearly dissatisfied with the sound engineer, throughout the show, he kept on making angry movements with his arms towards the engineer, movements that, indeed for me, conjured up uncanny resemblances with the Hitler salute. While his anger annoyed me, this resemblance also brought an ironic smile to my face. And this smile says more about me than it does about Bargeld. Indeed, it is this smile that turns stereotypes into something

more problematic than just simplifications – even intellectually productive simplifications. It is a smile that once again freezes Germany back into the Second World War, a smile that smacks of moral superiority, since “we,” the Dutch, were the victims during that period.

It is this feeling of irony that brings me to a second band, Rammstein. First, a musical disclaimer, being so much invested in *Einstürzende Neubauten*, I have never truly liked Rammstein that much, they always struck me as a more commercial, more superficial and more banal version of “real” industrial music. But their confrontational aesthetics amuse me, and in their deliberate and quite grotesque play with Germanness they clearly do something very different. In their amplification of stereotypes of Germanness, in sound, aesthetics and lyrics, they mobilize large doses of irony, for example in the song “Pussy” (2009).

Germany!  
Germany!  
You've got a pussy  
I've got a dick  
So what's the problem?  
Let's do it quick

The pleasure of such ironic negotiations of Germanness resonated well with my Germanophilia, so I started to like the band a bit more. That the band has been followed by controversies since their inception in 1994 comes as no surprise, and one may wonder if the public announcement by the guitarist Richard Kruspe of his left-wing political leanings is of much help here. I started to question my own liking a bit more when we discussed Rammstein in class, somewhere around 2006 in Amsterdam. Then and there, Melanie challenged me. “Even if you may read it as ironic, who says everybody does? What if the far right embraces this music?” Unwanted uses of popular music are not unique, it was to the dismay of Bruce Springsteen that the Republicans used his “Born in the USA,” just as it seems highly unlikely that the band Survivor will be pleased to hear that the Dutch far right politician Geert Wilders uses their “Eye of the Tiger” for his stage performances. But, Melanie would argue, Rammstein’s case is of a different order, as they deliberately appropriate a Third Reich aesthetics into their sound and image. This, indeed, brings back questions of intentionality of the author on the table, questions that for a long time have been deemed inappropriate, and in their slipstream, questions of power and responsibility.

Melanie’s words not only cast doubt upon the pleasure I derive from stereotypes about Germany, they also point to the potential danger and misuse of these stereotypes. It is in particular in the alignment of stereotypes with irony that we can observe a potential and rather toxic danger. In *Irony’s Edge*, Linda Hutcheon argues that irony always involves a complex negotiation between the sender, the audience and the specific context. Irony is dangerous, as Hutcheon claims: “I think there are *always* going to be potential problems with *any* use of irony [ . . . ] With irony, you move out of the realm of the true and false and into the realm of the felicitous and infelicitous” (1992, 14). What may be ironic to some can well be deadly serious for others. It is this ambivalence of meaning that might make irony a poor tool for the negotiation of Germanness in popular music. Whereas in the case of the serious and critical band *Einstürzende Neubauten*, the double bind I observed is closely connected to my own stereotypes and prejudices vis-à-vis Germany, the case of Rammstein proves more disconcerting, as they clearly and deliberately gesture towards a far-right imagination.<sup>1</sup>

In short, while my longing for Germanness is bound to stay forever, I have become more cautious about its underpinnings. I mistrust by now ironic references to a brutal past, I question my own use of stereotypes about Germany, just as I consider stereotypes less productive than I did before. I have also started, slowly and hesitantly, to realize how this longing is entangled with Dutchness. This entanglement can in my eyes also be connected to Freud's idea of the narcissism of the minor differences – it is especially when we are almost alike that we tend to articulate an allegedly profound difference, a practice not alien to academic disciplines. Minor as they may be, they allow me to fall back into the same old trap, and poke fun at my co-author, who now takes over the baton, and will no doubt do so in a much more rigorous, scholarly and serious, in other words, *German way*.

### Melanie

The struggle over Germanness as described by Jeroen is by no means exclusive to the “outsider” of German identity. The ambiguities and longings, and Jeroen's simultaneous fascination with, and feelings of guilt in pleasurable encounters with (stereotypical and ironic articulations of), Germanness, mark an interesting counterpoint for my own reflections on German identity in pop.

Since I was born and raised in Germany but moved to Amsterdam to study Media and Cultural Studies at the age of 20, I have been living “abroad” for almost half my life now. Since my graduate studies I have been researching German national identity and popular music, which has in fact been a truly international experience for me. I have been dwelling between different countries, sometimes continents, but always between bureaucratic systems and cultural contexts, cities, universities, workplaces, and homes. Always accompanied by what I have learned to be a typically German question: What is German identity? This question, and its link with popular music, has been central to my academic development since I wrote my Master's thesis in Amsterdam under the supervision of Jeroen in the summer of 2006 – when I missed the so-called “Sommermarchen” of the FIFA World Cup taking place in Germany that year. Through the media I saw Germans celebrating the national team, but really mostly themselves. Looking in from the outside, the nation seemed to be in a staggering state of re-defining its identity, embracing national pride and confidence, all with the excuse of supporting “Die Mannschaft.” Meanwhile, in Amsterdam, I wrote my thesis about the latest wave of musical re-definitions of Germanness in the early 2000s – about songs by MIA, and Paul van Dyk and Peter Heppner who stressed the rhetoric of Germany having an “identity problem” (Wagner 2014) – something “we” should finally relax about, relaxing about Germany's past, the Holocaust, the incessant guilt. I wondered who this “we” was and whether I belonged to it. On the other hand, bands like Tocotronic, Muff Potter and Knarf Rellom opposed such celebrations of nationalism in songs like “Aber hier Leben, nein danke” (2005), “Arme kleine Deutsche” (2005), and through the publication of a collection of critical-theory-inspired heavy “German” intellectual texts, accompanied by music that was published as the *I can't relax in Deutschland* compilation (2005). This collection of German-critical songs, steeped in irony and self-distance, celebrated national self-pity rather than pride. The music played with German stereotypes (“Achtung!” (Raubershöhle 2005), “Zis is ze heavy heavy no-Deutschland sound!” (Knarf Rellom 2005)) and the texts in the accompanying book were heavily “Adornian” in its critique, Jeroen – the self-proclaimed Germanophile – loved it, because it was so “German”<sup>1</sup>. I was confused.

The longing for a German identity, negotiations, celebrations and contestations of Germanness in popular music have been around for decades, and in fact, have been pivotal for (self-)images of the nation, as I researched my subsequent dissertation project (Schiller 2018). One important signifier for Germany's incessant struggle with its past, the nation's loss of self-evidence, and its longing for identity in popular music, is language, as Blixa Bargeld explains:

There has always been a problem with German music, about singing in our own language. For countries that did not have this interruption of the Third Reich, such as France and Italy, it is quite natural for bands to sing in French and Italian. I have learned to construct music around the German language, which is not capable of rock 'n' roll inflections, learned how the music has to be different to accommodate the language.

(Stubbs 2014, 416)

Each year on May 5th, The Netherlands celebrate Liberation Day (Bevrijdingsdag) to mark the end of the occupation by Nazi Germany during the Second World War – a welcome day off from work, but also always a reminder of my own Germanness. Having lived in the Netherlands for almost 20 years, this day unfailingly feels a little uncomfortable, and I know from German colleagues and students that they inadvertently share my sense of unease. In 2016, I therefore decided to visit my parents in Germany that day. On the train ride I listened to the latest official German Top 30 (out of academic curiosity, of course), until I reached chart position 21: Max Giesinger's song “80 Millionen.” The song has haunted me ever since. It does not haunt me because of its catchy hook or its “earwormyness”, nor because I particularly like or dislike it. Rather, I see the song as performing an affirmative national identification that not only represents banal nationalism as described by Michael Billig (1995), but that also exemplifies the state of “naturalness” the nation has gained (again) in Germany. A “natural” state that is highly problematic when keeping in mind the nation's past, and considering the contemporary political situation of the Cologne New Year's Eve events (2015/2016) and its media aftermath marked by xenophobia,<sup>2</sup> weekly PEGIDA marches against “the ‘islamisation’ of the Occident” in Dresden, the right-wing populist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and Holocaust deniers represented in state parliaments and the Bundestag. What does “80 Millionen” have to do with this and why does it strike me as dangerous?

Max Giesinger is a popular singer (and collaborative songwriter) who participated in the first season of the casting show “The Voice of Germany” in 2012. He did not win but has been successful with the release of two albums and has scored several hit singles. Giesinger is seen as representative of a new genre (or wave, or generation) of successful pop musicians singing in German; often softly crooned pop songs with catchy singer/songwriter melodies. Artists like Tim Bendzko, Andreas Bourani, Clueso and Max Giesinger are sometimes called German Pop-Poets (Groß 2017), or their music “Befindlichkeitspop” (Lange 2017) (roughly translated as sensibility-pop), since the lyrics often deal with issues like friendship, flirting, relationships, but also loneliness, escapism and sometimes mild(!) social criticism and self-reflection. Whereas German-language pop in the early 2000s, regardless of its critical or affirmative stance, caused fierce national debates about Germanness, these so-called Pop-Poets do not. Music by Giesinger et al. is questioned for its authenticity,<sup>3</sup> and critics struggle with the genre-categorization (is it pop or is it *Schlager*?). What is *not* discussed this time around, however, is their relationship to the question of Germanness.

"80 Millionen" does not strike me as a particularly outstanding love song. The lyrics begin by locating the protagonist as a small-town boy and quantifying the chances of finding love and meeting "The One" by one-in-80-million. The 80 million refer unambiguously to the size of the nation-state of Germany, with Berlin as its capital (almost four million inhabitants, as the song points out). The bridge highlights an inaccessible, but shared, history: "We've come so far, we've seen so much; so much has happened that we don't understand" (translation). The protagonist has found love, unlikely as it is, his girl has found him – one of 80 million. The chorus "One of 80 million" is repeated several times, it is the main hook and message of the song. The implicit, yet pervasive, identification as an individual is unambiguously German. The nation functions as the main identity-marker, and as the only thinkable frame of reference for finding love and happiness. "80 Millionen" does not ask "who are we?" anymore. It self-evidently assumes that the individual is defined by its belonging to the German national collective. It does *not* acknowledge a problematic state, it does *not* ask questions anymore, and no one seems upset.

In 2017, the AfD (unsurprisingly) embraced the song and played it at local rallies for the national parliament elections (Krohn 2017). Giesinger reacted with displeasure, disapproved and forbade its use. Thinking of himself as apolitical, he explains: "I am not at all an expert in politics, and I would never assume the right to write a song about [politics]" (translation)<sup>4</sup> – whereas I, on the other hand, understand "80 Millionen" as *highly* political in its explicit "apoliticalness." I am in no way accusing Giesinger (or any of the other "Pop-Poets" for that matter)<sup>5</sup> of xenophobia or nationalism, nor am I criticizing the use of German lyrics in pop. I do, however, see "80 Millionen" as a symptom of how far the nation has become naturalized, unquestioned, taken for granted and filled with pride. Germany has quietly moved from "relaxing" about the Second World War to electing Holocaust deniers into state parliaments and the Bundestag.<sup>6</sup> Since the rise of the AfD and the PEGIDA movement, Germany – like many others in Europe – is undergoing a rise of exclusionary populism, including a strong instrumentalization of fear and anxiety with a xenophobic, racist, and anti-Semitic orientation and a revisionist perspective on German history, including anti-EU attitudes. Clearly the national past of fascism that has been haunting the nation seems closer than ever, and the ghost of nationalism is returning. Er ist wieder da! (Look who's back!)<sup>17</sup>

### Conclusion

While still being seduced by the pleasures of stereotypes, over the years, also due to the critical interventions of Melanie, Jeroen has come to be more cautious about such pleasures, and more sensitive towards their violence, either symbolic or real. And he has come to realize how his Germanophilia is profoundly entangled with his Dutchness. Stereotyping Germanness as "exotic Other" may be an indicator for his own complicated relationship with Dutch identity. Melanie has been amused by this shifting position of her former teacher. But both are troubled, as in the decade that has passed the changes taking place in both Germany and Europe at large have not made it easier to embrace the nation as our primal point of identification.

Unlike the rich tradition of self-stereotyping and irony in German popular music – ranging from Kraftwerk performing all the German stereotypes that were expected of them, DAF sounding like a Hitler speech or Rammstein's appropriations of Nazi imagery and sounds, a song like "80 Millionen" lacks such reflexivity. It does not invite a reading as "typically German"

from the outside, indeed, Jeroen then also had no reaction to it, even though he started listening to the song while writing this chapter. Nor does it produce and inner-national conflict of identification. Precisely its "ungermannness" as *not* being explicitly self-referential makes Melanie wonder: maybe stereotypes and irony can be good after all, at least sometimes. In its lyrics as well as its mellow sound, "80 Millionen" produces *togetherness* and national belonging instead of alienation and strangeness – a message all too willingly embraced by the far-right. Simultaneously, Jeroen has come to be more critical towards the tropes of stereotypes and irony for their ambiguity and dangers of infelicitous appropriation by the far-right. In both of these approaches, Germany remains an ontologically slippery category that cannot escape its haunting past.

It seems as if we have reached a higher level of confusion, but also of alertness, sometimes we can embrace the stereotypes, be they ironic or not. It brings fun to our friendship, just like our shared love for popular music – and poplar music studies – does. But while articulating them, we cannot simply embrace them, as stereotypes are far from innocent. In particular in a Europe in which the far-right is so much on the rise. To return to our opening quote of Blixa Bargeld, today, it is not only anymore about the state of the country, but more so, the state of Europe and the world at large. Allow us to close with a statement alluding to the quality of music, something often frowned upon in popular music studies.<sup>8</sup> To interrogate the state of the world at large, as well as of Germany and The Netherlands, we continue to need Blixa Bargeld, Tocotronic and Knarf Rellom, we need them far more urgently now than we need either Max Giesinger or Paul van Dyk. Sorry Max, sorry Paul.

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### Notes

- 1 It is important to note that Rammstein was a band from former East Germany, and Einstürzende Neubauten came from Berlin – both not quite typical of West Germany. This may well have influenced their sound and aesthetics.
- 2 In the wake of sexual assaults by – allegedly – migrants during the 2015 New Year's Eve celebrations in Cologne, reputable news sources, both liberal and conservative, published numerous reports about migrant crimes, often accompanied by sexual stereotypes and images of white women's bodies defiled by black hands and racist tropes about criminal foreigners, "asylum abuse," and refugees as a resource burden. Found their way into major media outlets (Kleist 2017, 3).
- 3 In his widely popular television program *NeoMagazin Royal*, satirist Jan Bohmermann criticized the so-called Pop-Poets for producing "seelenlose Kommerzkracke" (soulless commercial crap) and received much attention for it (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPfu2xDJyVs>).
- 4 "Ich bin überhaupt kein Politcrack und würde mir nicht anmaßen, darüber einen Song zu schreiben," Giesinger in interview with *Osnabrücker Zeitung* (Kracht 2018).
- 5 Andreas Bourani's song "Auf Uns" (2014) was similarly appropriated by the right-wing NPD. Bourani's song shares the celebration of togetherness and belonging, an implied shared past that has been overcome as collective, and looking ahead toward an eternal future of fireworks as immortal "us." "Denkt an die Tage die hinter uns liegen. Wie lang' wir Freude und Tränen schon teilen" (Think of those days that lie behind us, how long we have been sharing joy and tears). Bourani's song is less explicitly nationally coded, yet also invites a reading as national narrative.

- 6 Wolfgang Gedeon (German right-wing author, politician of the AfD and acknowledged Holocaust denier) has been deputy of the Baden-Württemberg state parliament since March, 2016
- 7 In the autumn of 2015, the film *Er ist wieder da* (Look Who's Back) (Wendt 2015) was a major success in Germany and the Netherlands based on a satirical novel, this self-referential "Hitler comedy" stages the return of "The Führer," and showcases the broad acceptance of his persona and ideology in contemporary German society
- 8 But here we are in good company, see the opening of Simon Frith's *Performance Rites* (1996) in which he refers to a discussion he had at the doorstep of Johan Fornas's house over The Pet Shop Boys

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### Discography

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- Einsturzende Neubauten "Die Befindlichkeit des Landes" In *Silence is Sexy*, CD, Potomak, 2000
- Giesinger, Max "80 Millionen" In *Der Junge der Rennt* BMG, 2016a, CD Album
- Rammstein "Pussy" In *Liebe ist für alle da*, CD, Universal Music, 2009
- Rauberhohle Feat. Saalschutz "Achtung" In *I can't relax in Deutschland*, Unterm Durchschnitt, 2005, CD Sampler and Book
- Rello, Knarf "Arme kleine Deutsche" In *I can't relax in Deutschland*, Unterm Durchschnitt, 2005, CD Sampler and Book
- Various Artists *I can't relax in Deutschland*. Unterm Durchschnitt, 2005, CD Sampler and Book

### Filmography

- Wendt, David (director) *Er ist wieder da* Constantin Film, 2015

## Also "Made in Germany"

Helene Fischer's song "Atemlos" (Breathless) entered the German charts in 2013 peaking at third place in 2014. Staying in the charts for 116 weeks, she went on to receive one of her numerous *Echos* – in this case in the category "Hit of the year" in 2015. In addition to helping rejuvenate *Schlager* by drawing on EDM and contemporary pop elements (and thus opening it up to a younger audience) her hardworking image and nearly scandal-free career has also helped her become a German media darling.

What makes Fischer special is not only that she is one of numerous commercially successful female artists singing in German. She also has an immigrant background, being a so-called ethnic German who as a child emigrated from the (former) Soviet Union to Germany. Her background points to a less visible German immigration movement than for example the so-called Italian and Turkish *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) who came to Germany in the 1950s and 60s to alleviate labor shortages in their new host country. This can also be seen in how Fischer is marketed: while her background is no secret it is not actively used in her promotion so that her modernized version of *Schlager* is generally considered to be "German."

Fischer's personal background also highlights the fact that Germany is an immigration country. In 2015 there were 8,652 million registered foreign citizens residing in Germany. This is about 10.5 percent of the total population of 82,176 million (Statistisches Bundesamt 2017, 29). But that does not necessarily mean that all the people who live in Germany and all the music they produce in this country are considered to be "German."

The post-Soviet music scene in Germany is also what David-Emil Wickström's chapter examines. Exploring the cultural intermediaries, he shows how different genres of post-Soviet popular music have been marketed to both a non-Russian speaking majority audience and a Russian-speaking audience. Focusing on the latter he argues that, while post-Soviet immigrants are not a homogenous group, the cultural intermediaries draw on certain artists as a common generational denominator in order to bring a critical mass to the concerts. Thus, the intermediaries also fulfill a homogenizing function within the post-Soviet community in Germany.

While Wickström examines foreign music in Germany that a German majority population probably does not know, hip hop and rap are quite present. In his chapter, Thomas Solomon writes about rap that is "made in Germany," but is usually not considered to be "German." Discussing the emergence of Turkish hip hop both in Germany and in Turkey Solomon demonstrates (as does the interview with Kutlu Yurtseven in a later section of this book) that rap and hip hop have also from the very beginning been the music of the diverse minorities living in Germany. This is also something Schutte picks up on when he writes that hip hop's "lyrics convey minority narratives