

Living like Giants:

‘League of Legends’ from the screen to the stage

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ABSTRACT

League of Legends has become one of the most popular electronic sports video games of the last few years. With this, the musical practices surrounding it have assumed increasing power and relevance, materializing in configurations that extend beyond the field of online gaming. Along with the possibilities offered by using CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery) technologies on stage, every year video game developer Riot Games opens the World Championships with a musicalized show, designed to formalize the competitive event.

This article contextualizes and reviews the audiovisual opening ceremony of the 2019 World Final through an analysis of its three pieces: *Awaken*, *Giants* and *Phoenix*. The show's role as a warm-up to the main event brings to light a structure akin to the opening of a ritual, with specific objectives, enabling the event to be recast in terms of the extra-ordinary. Music is presented as a binding element, which highlights the importance of the sound in and for the competition.

Finally, the scope of the ritual is enhanced beyond the physical environment in which it takes place thanks to a live broadcast. This allows for the participation of a much larger audience than would fit in the stands of a stadium. In this way, the ritual and its music allow video game fans to witness and experience the event in a delocalized way.

In recent years, the structures derived from the popularization of video game competitions around the world have given rise to dynamics that place music in a central role for the socialization of the ecosystem¹ developed by brands such as Riot Games, Epic Games and Valve Corporation. From playlists on audio platforms to themed contests, the music created to go with these audiovisuals has become part of the fans' universe, just as the characters themselves.

The event organized by Riot Games for the *League of Legends* World Final (Riot Games, 2009) in November 2019, in which the game's characters were reinterpreted as singers on stage, represented the culmination of the production team's creative power and scope. This article therefore proposes to approach the event based on a contextual and musical analysis, which leads to a ritual reading of it. Its presentation as a transgressive show allowed it to extend beyond the live stage in a delocalized way, creating dynamics that draw on both analogue and digital elements.

Since the audiovisual approach addressed in this article cannot be understood without its surrounding components, we must begin by defining its catalysing element – the video game itself – in favour of the new musical and social dynamics that it affords. This will allow us to home in on the specific elements that define the experience and which transcend the content and format of the musical show itself. For this reason, it is essential to highlight the ritual aspect, which is the foundation for creating the social structures underlying the occasion in order to determine the change in participants' social status (Turner, 1997). This is accompanied by an intrinsically musical element in a form not far from Rouget's description (1985) of music as a group socializer. In this context, the ritual can be understood in terms of work by Van Gennep (1960), which would present it as a formalization of the surrounding processes to produce a shift in the recognized social status of the individual or group – in this case, the team that will eventually win the tournament. The historical religious and sacred implications of the term are re-configured here towards a local meaning (Cantón Delgado, 2009), and materialized through icons, objects of veneration, and sonic proposals with the aim of providing structure and imparting the event with validation and transcendence.

'League of Legends': the video game

Since its creation in 2009, and particularly in recent years, *League of Legends* has been one of the most popular video games in the competitive international esports – or electronic sports – arena. In short, *League of Legends* can be defined as a MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena) in which two teams of five players face off on a closed map with the goal of being the first to destroy the enemy's nexus and win the game (Ferrari, 2013). Its online format, which can be accessed for free from a personal computer, allows players to participate

1 The social ecosystem here refers to the set of individuals, practices and environments that interact with each other in an intrinsically interconnected way, moving as a whole and not in isolation (Díez Nicolás, 2016; Hawley, 1986).

in an individual or group game. In its competitive format, there are defined roles both within and outside the game; the players and the avatars they choose are the centre of attention, but the teams behind the scenes include coaches, psychologists, marketing staff, and event organizers, among others, resembling those in traditional sports formats.

As part of the expansion towards a competitive format, titles such as *League of Legends* include ritualized processes which extend to and out from the stage to the stands and, as we will see, to the screens of thousands of fans around the world. Like other video games that have made the leap into the professional arena, *League of Legends* is more than a showdown between two rival teams; it extends into the physical and digital space in the same ways as many musical groups, movies and series in other popular and audiovisual formats, to include elements that step beyond the specific event.

Therefore, when discussing *League of Legends* we cannot simply focus on the idea of a “video game” and its sound, but must go a stage further and pay attention to the elements that surround and complement its audiovisuals. Thus, we must first emphasize the concept of esports and the problems its definition entails.

Beyond the definition suggested early on by Wagner (2006) — according to whom esports refers to organized competitive (video) games — the debate around the essence of the term is still present in both academic and extra-academic settings. *Understanding Esports* (2019), the recent publication edited by Ryan Rogers, reveals a tendency to view this type of competition through the lens of traditional sports, and emphasizes the need to understand the element of person-computer interconnectivity.

However, regardless of the definition taken as reference, it is especially important to observe the dynamics created from the concept itself and around the “competitive video game”. Its transformation into an (e)sport implies, after all, the creation of surrounding structures that range from professional teams and institutions similar to those in traditional sports to derived cultural forms that serve to create a sense of identity or community, as well as being strictly commercial. In this context, the socializing aspects proposed as an adjacent product, such as music, become key within the universe of the video game.

Según los datos de sus desarrolladores en Riot Games, en su décimo aniversario, *League of Legends* contaba con ocho millones de jugadores recurrentes (Takanashi, 2019) y miles de horas de visualización sólo en plataformas de creación de contenido (Gough, 2020). The combination of disciplines involved in creating the competitive events that esports translate into, in their position at the centre of the vortex, facilitates the creation of shows and audiovisual formulas that extend beyond the game itself, as for the opening event of the *League of Legends* World Final in 2019.

According to the data collected by the game’s developers, on its 10th anniversary *League of Legends* had eight million recurrent players (Takanashi, 2019) and thousands of viewed hours on content creation platforms (Gough, 2020). All this in addition to the 2019 World Final prize pool of more than two million dollars, and the tens of millions of viewers who

witnessed the event from their homes (Lolesports Staff, 2019). In these world finals the two teams facing each other belong to different geographical areas, called regions, which have their own competition structure for the video game discipline. To reach the final showdown, participating teams have to go through a series of elimination rounds (Gamepedia, 2020):

- (1) Each region chooses four teams with the highest scores from its own point-based competitions to participate in the so-called
- (2) Play ins, from which the final places are allocated to enter
- (3) The group stage, in which sixteen teams are divided into four groups. The two leaders of each group will advance to
- (4) The knockout stage, in a table format (quarter-final, semi-final and final), in which teams face each other to reach the grand final.

The complex classification system is a sign of the game's popularity. Added to this are different factors including an active community and ramifications for artistic, sporting and participatory activities on a worldwide scale. In this equation, the music has become one of the key elements of the universe created by the brand and a key part of its identity for many of the game's regular viewers and players.

Although it is true that music is used to mark key moments in the gameplay, it does not have a defining role as it may within other genres, such as adventure (Gasselseder, 2013). *League of Legends* has two possible soundtracks, which correspond to an older and a more updated version of the game. While the original is a single linear piece in terms of musical development, the updated version consists of three parts – *early, mid and late* — which are integrated with the events in the game itself as obstacles are overcome².

Even though music underscores each game, players are free to configure the prevalence of the different sounds inserted in the game according to personal preference. For this reason, many players prefer to deactivate the musical options and leave on only those sounds that correspond to in-game actions. To a large extent this happens in favour of introducing alternative music inputs from platforms outside the video game, such as Spotify³.

In recent years, the sound element and audiovisual pieces beyond the gaming platform have become more significant within Riot Games thanks to the company's music team, based in Los Angeles (California). With the growing artistic presence at the developer, the music team started placing special emphasis on creating songs and bands for the brand based on characters from the game itself and which continue to represent it beyond the screen.

2 The complete piece that accompanies the game, with its different phases, can be found at: League of Music [username] (2014, December 14) *Updated Summoner's Rift - Complete Soundtrack* [YouTube Video] Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iy6YDd5iHB4&t=218s>.

3 An example can be found at: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/09fsTNqM1XoHpR7t43NH6k?si=79CioGbRzCNjhaih-_4og (Fifipli, n.d.).

Riot Music groups: From *Warriors* to *Giants*

Riot Games, the developer behind *League of Legends*, has a department dedicated to creating musical content: Riot Music Group. Their work is frequently intertwined with other audiovisual fields both within and outside the company and this collaboration has spawned the creation of music videos and large-scale live audiovisual shows (*League of Legends*, 2020; Zhang, 2019).

Since 2013, when the group was established with a single composer among its staff, Riot Music has invested in recruitment by expanding the team to fifteen people. The head of the group, Toa Dunn, points out that much of the team's growth has been facilitated by an accumulation of successes resulting from the fact that their output has resonated with fans of the game (Personal communication, T. Dunn, September 4, 2020).

The group started by composing songs to introduce new characters for the game, and the success of the soundtrack soon became obvious when *Get Jinxed* (2013), produced with Norwegian metal group Djerv, proved to be a hit. Just one year after this release, the game's world finals staged a collaboration with Imagine Dragons, whose song *Warriors* (2014) could be considered to have officially kickstarted interest in the audio department at Riot.

I think that when they released Imagine Dragons no one expected Riot to release such a huge song (...) I think there is already an expectation, Riot can't afford not to release a good song, they have shot themselves in the foot in that there are so many expectations [of their songs]. (Personal communication, J. Tejada, *League of Legends* fan, 4 September 2020)

Since then, the ambition of the audiovisual production for each world final has steadily escalated, with the music team beginning to work more closely with those in artistic creation. Thanks to this collaboration between the various audiovisual groups, since 2014 a series of bands created by Riot have themselves become part of the imagery for all the game's fans. The first complementary production based on characters from the video game materialized through the band Pentakill (2014), which Riot Games used to give a musical voice to six *League of Legends* avatars through a heavy metal aesthetic⁴. The most notable songs produced by this group include *Lightbringer* (2014) and *Mortal Reminder* (2017). In 2017, the company began testing the inclusion of CGI technologies on stage at the world finals. On screen, a dragon entered the stadium, landing on the stage with a roar (LoL Esports, 2017) and standing between the musicians and the audience.

4 The avatars or 'champions' that the user can choose to play with have different abilities or 'magic tricks' that differentiate them. Each of these avatars is derived from the so-called lore of the video game in the stories created to contextualize them, which describe their personality and their motivations (Riot Games, 2017).

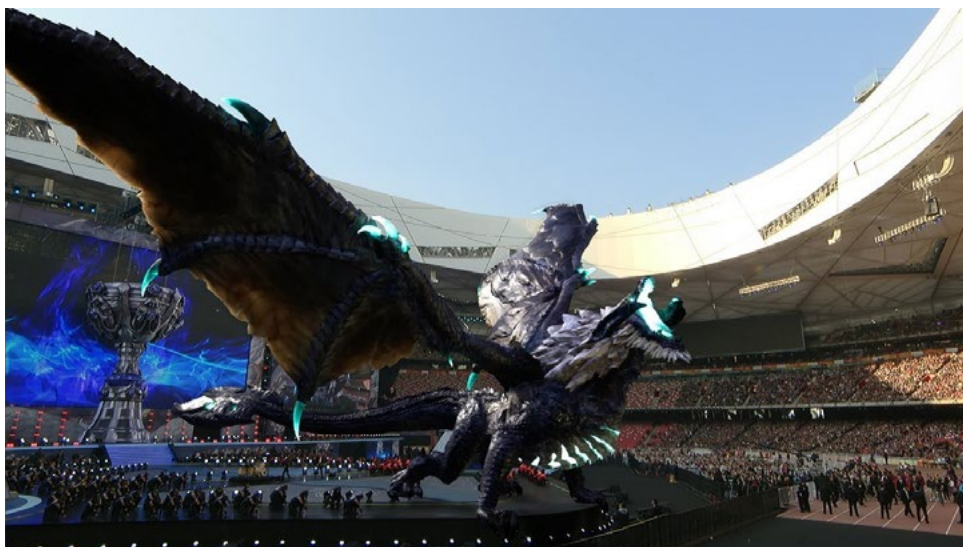


Figure 1. CGI dragon on stage at the 2017 opening ceremony (LoL Esports, 2017, 10'04")

Shortly after, as K-Pop was becoming popular across Europe and America (Oh, 2013), the group KD/A came into the public eye, inspired, once again, by characters from the video game itself. KD/A has four virtual female members backed by four real-life singers⁵. Furthermore, their debut song and music video, *Pop-stars*, was the central song at the opening ceremony of the *League of Legends* World Final in 2018.

During this year's spectacle, the live stage show was combined with the audiovisual production projected onto screens in such a way that those attending the opening could see both the physical singers on stage and the superimposed virtual *League of Legends* stars on the screens at the same time. Those viewing the event from home were able to witness the combined CGI and human show directly from their computers or televisions.

⁵ The avatars or 'champions' that the user can choose to play with have different abilities or 'magic tricks' that differentiate them. Each of these avatars is derived from the so-called lore of the video game in the stories created to contextualize them, which describe their personality and their motivations (Riot Games, 2017).



Figure 2. K/DA at the 2018 opening ceremony (Riot Games, n.d.)

In 2019, the band True Damage, created specifically for these world finals, came onto the scene, based on the personification of avatars suggested for the band and artists representing fans' different backgrounds. To this end, the band included celebrities such as Becky G, representing the Spanish-speaking community; singer Keke Palmer; American rapper Thutmose; DJ Duckwrth and South Korean rapper Soyeon. On this occasion, all the components of the show could be watched live on stage as well as through streaming platforms, thanks to the construction of a holographic projection system that used the extra screens at the venue as part of the production design (Stark, 2018; Webster, 2019).

The 2019 World Final: 'League of Legends' on stage

The audiovisuals presented at the *League of Legends* World Finals in 2019 introduced what to this day can be understood as the culmination of the musical spectacle – in a field in which, despite everything, the element of sound is apparently complementary. On 10th November 2019, at AccorHotels Arena in Paris, more than twenty thousand fans, media and participants, got ready to witness the showdown between Spanish team G2 Esports and Chinese club FunPlus Phoenix. Although the results did not satisfy the European attendees, G2 being rapidly defeated, the event was crowned as the esports event with the most live viewers to date (Redacción eSports, 2019).

Pre-game events were set up to create an atmosphere of anticipation for the attendees and all those accessing the event virtually from home. The show's audiovisual presentation, and the fact that fans had been given a preview of the show's content, meant that from the release of *Phoenix* (Sauzin, 2019) expectations were raised both for the matches and their preceding elements, something which could be understood in terms of preliminality (Turner, 1997).

From the opening of the dragon entering the stage, which was done with augmented reality (...) we had two things: first, high expectations about the opening, but at the same time we were a bit afraid that we wouldn't be able to enjoy the visual part, which in this case was augmented reality. But we were almost looking forward to the opening more than the matches because the game, well, it's alright and I wish it had been five games, but we were so hyped. (Personal communication, J. Tejada, September 3, 2020)

Those at Riot Music suggested bringing the music videos produced so far onto the stage and creating a show that appealed to the imagination and the idea of magic (League of Legends, 2020). To make this work, the creative team had to include specialists from various fields. Along with support from brands such as Axe and Louis Vuitton, this collaboration made it possible to bring characters' abilities to life on stage, as well as facilitating audience participation.

[The organizers distributed] a bracelet [provided by Axe] that lit up in one colour or another depending on the song (...) When I looked around anywhere in the stadium, I saw a whole part of the audience lit up in that colour, it was so well done. (Personal communication, A. Crueira, *League of Legends* fan, September 4, 2020)

One of the key elements in providing a unified experience was the choice of characters and their entry on stage. As for previous bands created by Riot, the members of True Damage represented specific avatars, selected to fit into the show and the chosen musical genre, which in this case was a crossover between hip hop and pop.

We want to stay true to the core truth of who that character is in *League of Legends*, because we are reimagining them in a whole new way, a modern way (...) This is before we think of musicians or vocalists, this is just like who do we think for *League of Legends* could be that band, and once we do that, and we figure out, ok, Ekko is the rapper, Qiyana, she has some flows too, but she also can sing, and then there's Senna, who can really pipe, and then we start writing that song, we start producing that song, and we often we do a demo of the song. And then we figure out, based on their personality, who could be a good rapper, and that's when we found Duckwrth and those guys. (Personal communication, T. Dunn, September 4, 2020)

The characterization of the avatars through their musical alter ego added to the visual element provided by the holograms – representing the avatars' most identifiable image – was a key element for the creation of an indirect intersubjective complicity among the viewers as far as the scenic development was concerned.



Figure 3. True Damage and holographic effects (Riot Games, n.d.)

Along with the musical element as the basis of the performance, and as stated by Judith Becker in reference to ritual events with a shared focus of attention, “Groups of people who are focused on a common event and who share a common history of that event, act, react, and to some extent think in concert, without sacrificing their bounded personal identities” (2010, p. 145). In this way, during the event the public and delocalized viewers merged into one.

The opening ceremony through its tonal and thematic development

The opening ceremony began with a fade to black. The production design was rooted in the use of holographic projections, 360-degree screens and a combination of pop, hip hop, electronic and orchestral styles, which raised cheers from the attendees as the finalists entered the stage (League of Legends, 2019b).

The musical structure of the performance, the backbone of the show, consisted of three consecutive songs: *Awaken*, *Giants* and *Phoenix*, each building on the literary, musical and visual development to create a connected narrative⁶.

The three pieces exhibit a tonal relationship to a large extent based on hip hop-style dynamics, including chromatisms and vocal inflections that provide modulations of small intervals. The inclusion of rapped parts is essential for the progressive tonal build-up from beginning to end, from *A minor* to *B ♭ minor* and through various relative and secondary tonalities.

⁶ The staging can be found at League of Legends [username] (2019, November 10) Opening Ceremony Presented by Mastercard | 2019 World Championship Finals. [YouTube Video] Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QDWbKnrRcc&t=516s>.

1. Awaken
A minor
Correlations A-C and A-F
First rap: B-D(-F)
Second rap: F-C
2. Giants
Transition: F-C#
D \flat Major (= enharmony of C#)
Third rap: F to G (F# VII)
Transition: F#-F
3. Phoenix
B \flat minor

Table 1. Tonal development of the opening show.

The first two songs are the most intricately interconnected, since *Phoenix* is presented as a slightly separate piece, albeit in a related tonality. The show begins with *Awaken* in *A minor*, while *Giants* is mostly anchored in *D \flat major*. This interconnection is introduced from a common reference in *F* – the keynote that connects the entire sonic production. Rapped sections act as a link between the first and second pieces and appear as small fragments within the latter. The creation of small bridges also shifts the tonality from minor to major, providing *Giants* with the luminosity and strength that makes it the standout song of the show.

In *A minor*, *Awaken* demonstrates melodic and harmonic correlations between A-C and A-F quite consistently, allowing the transition towards the first rap to be sustained in *F*. Even so, the first rapped section is introduced through a B-D interval of third, which gives a new meaning to the note common to all three pieces, while predicting a shift in the thematic centre. Once in *F*, the leap to *C* occurs organically, thus linking the theme again with the first piece (A-C). It is only at the end of the rapped section when a jump towards a tritone is played to *C #*, creating, on the one hand, an enharmonic with *D \flat* which gives way to *Giants* and, on the other, a break with more predictable sonorities.

The second section with rap is followed by Keke Palmer and Becky G. The Latin singer's lines include one that directly appeals to the *League of Legends*' Spanish-speaking community: “*Nadie nos puede parar*” (No one can stop us) (*League of Legends*, 2019b, 03'05”), in the same way that Soyeon's rap in her native language appeals to the Korean community.

With the entry of the third and final rap in transition to the main key, the *F* linking the previous sections is transposed to *G*, providing another ascending harmonic step with *F #* as its seventh degree. To return to the main key of the theme, however, this same seventh must descend to *D \flat major*'s third. This is made possible through the vocal production of the highest note of the fragment (*F \natural*), as well as by the sense of “return” granted by the semitonal descent.

From here, the pause and entry of Phoenix in $B\flat$ minor is organic, presenting the audience with a climax not only resulting from the evolution from A to $B\flat$ minor, but also from wrapping things up using the only song familiar to the audience.

I couldn't stay seated, honestly; I ran downstairs to the fences to sing *Phoenix*. Because, of course, we didn't know *Giants*, but with *Phoenix* I went downstairs to scream and the truth is [it was] incredible. I felt like a kid. (Personal communication, D. Fraile, *League of Legends fan*, September 3, 2020)

Of particular importance during this last song is the unveiling of the trophy: truly the worshipped icon of the event. This is accompanied by a strings solo, with sustained notes and an insistent rhythm on the timpani. A progressive increase in intensity emerges through the superposition of instrumental layers, the introduction of an ascending melody and a classic stop plus a syncopated (re-)entry of the voice, which leads back to the chorus for the last time, accompanied by a visual explosion. It is at this moment that the finalists are revealed on stage.

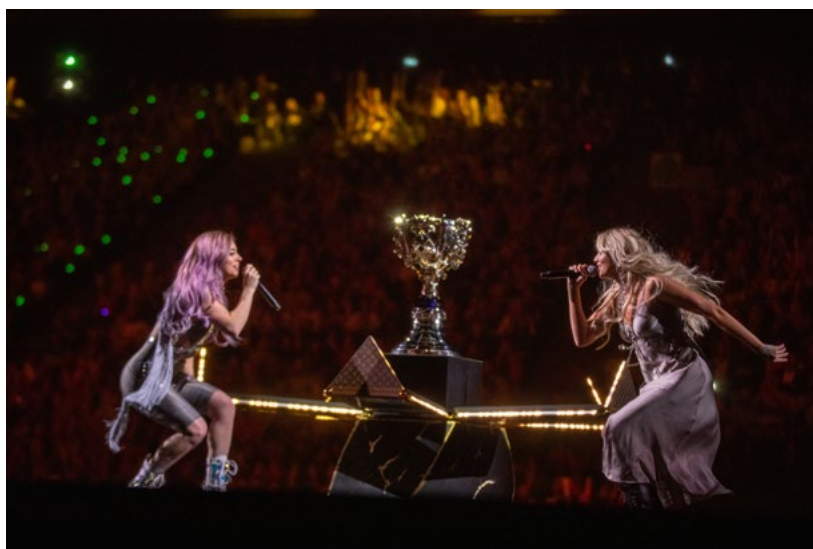


Figure 4. Unveiling the cup during *Phoenix* (Riot Games, n.d.)

Thus, beyond the tonal aspects as such, the thematic link between the three pieces is essential. They appear based on an orchestration combined with electronic elements, a pronounced reverb on the voices, strategically introduced choruses and sustained sung vowels that serve as *bourdons*. These resources are evident from the start of the performance of *Awaken*, which has an ominous character supported by long choral notes and recurring motifs and which is only broken by dramatic silences combined with spectacular scenic resources.

Thanks to this progression, the audience is ready, the players are ready, and the cup waits to be lifted high. The three songs ascend chromatically until they culminate in a piece familiar to most attendees, creating what could be considered a sonic development capable of generating specific states of consciousness within a defined cultural context (Clarke, 2005). In other words, by associating a chromatic ascent with the staging and presentation of a recognizable piece of music at the end of the process, the audience is placed on the edge of the limen, in a moment just before crossing the threshold – the before and after that the grand final represents.

Ritual, transgression, and reception of the event

After reviewing the musical journey, diverse elements related to the preparation of the event can be indicated and a debate held around the musical and social elements.

The production design and the recurring nature of the event since the first *League of Legends* World Final in 2011 brings it closer to other contexts studied in fields related to musical performance (Löbert, 2012; Moberg, 2012). Establishing conventions and focuses of attention in terms of the ordinary and the extra-ordinary appeals to a ritual reading that can be extrapolated to religious terms if referring to the work of musicologists such as Hutson (1999) and St John (2007). As outlined by Robin Sylvan, this sacred or extra-ordinary sense is granted in as far as the phenomena developed through the prism of popular music never allude to “religion in the sense of a traditional form grounded in a stable cultural context, expressing some essential defining quality” (2002, p. 4), but to a form of generalized subculture embedded within postmodernity.

The same concept has been underscored by various authors in reference to events that are closer to the case study format presented here, such as the American Super Bowl (Cottingham, 2012). The parallelism did not escape the attention of some attendees of the event in Paris:

I think that in recent years (...) Riot has always tried to establish that differentiation, or to get closer to big traditional sports events such as the SuperBowl, the Champions League Final, the All Stars... which have pretty impressive performances. Even Becky G herself told us [in the interview by Movistar] that these performances were even more important than the SuperBowl ones, or so she said. (Personal communication, P. Municio, *League of Legends* fan and reporter at Movistar, September 4, 2019)

In the social phenomenon and identity reaffirmation represented by the creation of a face-to-face final set around a main stage and which expands beyond the screen, we find elements such as those defined by Sylvan almost twenty years ago in *Traces of the Spirit* (2002). Among them are three fundamental pillars:

(1) ritual activity and collective ceremony with specific practical experiences; (2) a vision of the world that makes sense for these experiences and which transforms them into daily life issues; and (3) the creation of a cultural identity, a social structure, and a sense of belonging to a community.

If we break down these elements, we can find parallels ranging from veneration of icons – represented by the finalists and the cup and hyped up by the sonic input – to the distribution of the audience around a main point of reference, both in extra-ordinary terms, reaffirming the definition of the ritual context according to the points above:

When the Louis Vuitton box [in which the trophy was kept] opened up, I remember that I ran upstairs and told Juanjo (...); I took his arm and said, “the cup is opening! the box is opening!”. I had goosebumps, crying... Oh right then I was in a cloud, and him too because he’s been playing since Season 1, so just imagine. (Personal communication, D. Fraile, *League of Legends fan*, September 3, 2020).

The aspects of identity creation and a sense of community that sit alongside this concept are rooted in the emotions the music directly appeals to, as originally conceived by the developers of the event (Webster, 2019). We therefore not only find a *musicking* of the social event in ritual terms (Small, 1999), but also a pre-designed structure alluding to the construction of a sonic progression based on an understanding of the audience’s cognition, which furthermore relates to elements built on an intersubjective cultural basis and a common point of focus (Clarke, 2005).

The presence of a phenomenon that starts from transversal values creates feelings of belonging through the experience of shared time, an intersubjective agreement of the suggested meanings in the music, and the ability to find oneself reflected in others, making the link with pre-existing social structures obvious (Born, 2012). The audiovisual proposal works, in this case – and as Partridge points out in reference to DeNora (2000) – as a prosthetic technology that allows its creators “to manipulate, to enable and to constrain people” (2014, p. 51). This influence over the emotional state of participants in the event thus helps create a temporary affective bond between them. The experience that is created establishes an environment temporarily defined in terms of “extra-ordinariness”, transforming the stadium into a temple in which to project a unique experience, and which expands to the homes of all virtual attendees.

It is very exciting to be on site, but I think that the people who see it via streaming experience it in a different way, and visually speaking I think it’s even better. (...) [At the event there were] lots of people screaming in unison with their glowing bracelets, etc., and that already gives a lot of emotion to the situation. But, on the other hand, I think people at home were able to appreciate

the show much better (Personal communication, M. Mac-Swiney, Communications Manager at Riot Games Spain, 10 September 2020)

The presence of electronically processed percussion in combination with and in contrast to orchestral elements added a transgressive element that, together with the urban/hip hop style choice, quickly grabbed the audience's attention. This can be read in terms of social anthropology if interpreted as "a form of experience that breaks the boundaries of the everyday" (Kahn-Harris and Moberg, 2012, p. 90). The music presented by Riot shows a convergence of the classic and the urban, of analogue and electronic, placing the show within an intermediate field that breaks down the barriers of what has gone before. This, according to Kahn-Harris and Moberg (2012), would be similar to transcendence in its challenge towards the existing belief systems, boundaries and power relationships in the world, which are there implicitly.

Although popular music is associated with transcendence of the ordinary, it is almost inevitably interconnected with a transgressive element both from aesthetic and conceptual perspectives. The opening show, with True Damage at its centre, also crosses diverse spatial boundaries through its placement within a ritualized context. On the one hand, the limitations of what belongs *inside/outside* the game are blurred, thus providing an extraordinary experience for regular players, who were able to see *League of Legends* champions in the flesh onstage through the representation of their alter egos. On the other hand, the event was able to be delocalized through its audiovisual components, which gave it the power to extend beyond a predefined physical space, always mediated by music.

Thanks to broadcasting the event online and its ability to reach into rooms in every corner of the world, we may speak, for the first time, of musically defined rituals that not only create a face-to-face ritual context but that surpass it and make it accessible for e-attendees — or electronic attendees. In this case, with the introduction of holographic technologies that did not depend on tertiary sources, unlike previous versions of the event, a parallel experience was created for live and virtual attendees.

Conclusions

Since the first musical shows created by Riot Music for the *League of Legends* live final, the presence and influence of the musical element has evolved from within the universe of the brand itself. From the first pieces related to the game's MOBA characters, with *Get Jinxed* (2013), to the creation of audiovisual shows in which the video game champions are the main performers, sound has taken on an increasingly central role, both for its capacity as a socializer for the community and due to the participation of the professionals and amateurs who revolve around it.

With the development of CGI technologies, which the show creators began to introduce in 2017, Riot Games has managed to raise the level of expectation regarding the opening (al-

most) to that of the events involving the video game itself. In their last event to date, in 2019⁷, the organizers managed to bring together physical and delocalized attendees within a single audiovisual experience which, although distinctive to those who witnessed it live, helped lay the foundations for future formats adapted to digitized contexts.

The ritual aspect created by elements such as the recurring nature of the event, the creation of roles and venerated icons, was intertwined in the show's transgressive musical development, which provided a transcendental experience for its viewers. From the construction of a musical discourse based on a progressive semitonal ascent in the tonality of the pieces to the introduction of an urban genre that collided with other more traditional elements, both pop and orchestral, the event was one of its organizers' greatest achievements to date in audiovisual terms.

Just a few weeks before the opening of the World Final in 2020, a year defined by the current health situation, we can only wonder whether the ritualized format will be given the final push towards becoming a completely delocalized event, hand in hand with music that will socialize and bring it together.

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⁷ The original article was written prior to the 2020 World Final in China.

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