

THOMAS SOLOMON

# The Play of Colors: Staging Multiculturalism in Norway

*Fargespill* is a series of periodic musical performances in Norway that have been staged from 2004 to the present. Each performance consists of a sequence of musical and dance numbers performed by children and youth from different minority and immigrant groups, many of whom came to Norway as refugees, together with white Norwegian (so-called *etnisk norsk* – “ethnic Norwegian”) children and youth, and accompanied by an instrumental ensemble composed primarily of professional white Norwegian musicians. With recent theorizations of multiculturalism and critical discussions of race and racism in Norway as a background, in this article I describe and analyze *Fargespill* as form of cultural production.<sup>1</sup> I focus in particular on how what I call the “*Fargespill* formula” of combining musical materials from the immigrant and refugee children’s home countries together with Norwegian folk music creates a narrative of domestication and assimilation of cultural others that constitutes an aesthetic analog to the social technique for managing cultural difference known as planned pluralism. I also use Deleuze and Guattari’s twin concepts of *majoritarian/minoritarian* as a tool for interpreting *Fargespill*’s representations and I suggest that, while *Fargespill* represents itself as being a minoritarian mode of representation, it is actually a fully majoritarian mode. While the public face of *Fargespill* is that of children of various immigrant and minority groups, behind the scenes the performances are actually conceptualized, scripted, and extensively stage-managed primarily by majority (white) Norwegian adult arts professionals. Given this tension between the organization of the creative practice behind *Fargespill* and its external representations, I explore the

- 1 Earlier versions of this article have been presented at the eighth meeting of the ICTM Study Group on Music and Minorities in Osaka in July 2014, the seventeenth Nordic Musicological Congress in Aalborg in August 2015, a seminar at Bergen International Migration and Ethnic Relations Unit (IMER) in September 2015, the III UskoMus Symposium “Music and Multiculturalism” in Helsinki in December 2015, and MUSICULT ’16: The 3rd International Music and Cultural Studies Conference in Istanbul in May 2016. The research was also presented in a half-day seminar on *Fargespill* at the 2016 Summer School of the Grieg Research School in Interdisciplinary Music Studies in Bergen, which also included presentations by Ole Hamre and Irene Kinunda from *Fargespill* and by Vibeke Solbue of Bergen University College, followed by a panel discussion with all the presenters, including myself. Thanks to all who commented on this work in those forums, as well as to Randi Gressgård and Eva Fock who read and commented on a nearly complete draft, and to an anonymous reviewer for DMO. While I have not been able to incorporate into this published version all the suggestions for additions or revisions I have received, the many comments have helped me to refine and nuance the argument and to position it in relation to other perspectives not included here.

question of whether Fargespill constitutes a positive contribution to creating a climate for embracing difference in Norway, or whether Fargespill is better understood as a reassuring story white Norwegians tell themselves about multicultural Norway that, at best, naively sidesteps ongoing problems of racism and intolerance toward minorities and immigrants endemic in contemporary Norwegian society and, at worst, provides a kind of smoke screen that provides the Norwegian state (which gives significant funding to Fargespill) with legitimacy while distracting from the state's troubling treatment of child refugees and asylum seekers. I suggest that Fargespill's use of the voices and performing bodies of refugee children to tell its story about a supposed Norwegian multicultural utopia can be seen as especially problematic in the context of the Norwegian state's recent practices regarding the forced return of long-dwelling child asylum seekers to their country of origin.

In this article I approach Fargespill from an outsider's point of view, reading Fargespill's performances as cultural texts and developing a critical perspective on Fargespill's representations. Several other research projects on Fargespill based on ethnographic methods including participant observation and interviews with the project's leaders and participants are currently being carried out by MA and PhD students in fields including music education, music therapy, and psychology; that research is as of this writing just beginning to be published.<sup>2</sup> While the present article does not pretend to present the points of view of those directly involved in Fargespill, I hope it will provide a useful, complementary perspective to work by other researchers that is based on ethnographic methods.

### *The Fargespill concept*

The songs presented in Fargespill's stage shows represent the home countries of the children themselves who participate in the performances and have included, for example, folk and popular music and dance from many nations, mostly in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, including (but not limited to) Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sudan, Palestine, Kurdistan (Iran and Iraq), Afghanistan, Uyghuristan (China), Myanmar (Burma), Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. As this list of countries suggests, many of the children come from countries with active conflict zones or other conditions that have led to a significant outflow of refugees. Songs from the countries the children come from are combined together with songs from Norwegian folk music in often elaborate production numbers with complex musical arrangements and choreographies featuring an eclectic mix ranging from traditional music and dance to contemporary popular cultural expressions such as rapping and hip-hop dancing. While the specific musical numbers used and cast members may change from one performance season to the next, the

2 See for example Hildegunn Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People: Resources, Vulnerability, Creativity," *Fleks: Scandinavian Journal of Intercultural Theory and Practice* 3 (2016), <https://journals.hioa.no/index.php/fleks/article/view/1687>, accessed June 8, 2016.

Fargespill concept remains the same – a representation of ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity in Norway staged through the sounding voices and dancing bodies of the children on stage.

The name “Fargespill” deserves some explanation. The word *farge* in Norwegian means “color.” *Spill* means “play,” as in to play a game or to act in a theatrical performance. The Norwegian term *fargespill* can translate the concept of “iridescence” from physics, in the sense of luminous colors (like a rainbow) that seem to change when seen from different angles as, for example, light refracted from an oil slick, soap bubble, fish scales or compact disc.<sup>3</sup> But, as its more literal translation “play of colors,” or the more poetic translation “colorplay,” suggests, the word *fargespill* is, in this case, also a kind of pun, evoking a colorful performance, or a performance in which color itself is the primary focus. The term *farge* can also in Norwegian invoke associations with race, as with, for example, the common Norwegian words *hudfarge* (skin color) and *farget* (colored, as in “a colored person”), and can thus in certain contexts be a somewhat loaded word, as discussed by Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad.<sup>4</sup> The name Fargespill plays on all these meanings, suggesting the multicultural nature of the performances as children and youth of different races and ethnic groups (literally, different “colors”) present colorful songs and dances.

While the visible face of Fargespill is the group of children onstage, the creative team behind the performances has, for much of its history, consisted entirely of white Norwegians. The originator of the Fargespill concept, and artistic leader for instrumental music, is Norwegian percussionist and composer Ole Hamre. The co-artistic leader for song is singer Sissel Saue. The project’s choreographer and director of the stage performances up to 2009 was Hilde Sol Erdal. Since 2009, the choreography has been done by Elizabeth Guino-O, a native of the Philippines who has lived in Norway since 1981. In addition to this core creative team, Kjersti Berge serves as producer and project leader. The team behind Fargespill during its first five years, when the concept was first developed and established in the form it continues in today, thus consisted entirely of white Norwegian arts professionals. Though, as I have mentioned, a person of color with a non-Norwegian background is now Fargespill’s choreographer.

The songs that form the basis of the Fargespill performances are carefully chosen. Many of the songs used are collected directly from the children themselves by the project’s co-artistic leader in charge of song, singer Sissel Saue. The musical arrangements are coordinated by co-artistic leader Ole Hamre, who also plays drums and percussion and leads the musical ensemble on stage during the performances. After deciding on the repertory to be used, Saue teaches the songs to the children in group rehearsals, aided sometimes by the children from whom the song was learned

3 *Store norske leksikon*, <http://snl.no/fargespill>, accessed October 21, 2013, Merriam-Webster, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/iridescence>, accessed April 25, 2016.

4 Marianne Gullestad, “Invisible Fences: Egalitarianism, Nationalism and Racism,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* New Series 8 (2002), “Om å være både norsk og ‘farget’” [On being both Norwegian and “colored”], *Nytt norsk tidsskrift* 19 (2002), “Normalising Racial Boundaries: The Norwegian Dispute about the Term *Neger*,” *Social Anthropology* 13 (2005).

and other more experienced members of the troupe. The choreographer works in a similar way, developing dances based on dance movements from the children's native countries and learned from the children themselves. Recruitment of cast members has been primarily from Nygård skole, a primary and secondary school in Bergen where immigrant and refugee children who have newly arrived in the city are placed while they are still learning the Norwegian language. Up to 2014, Nygård skole also provided office space for Fargespill and classrooms for use as rehearsal space; since September 2014 Fargespill has had the use of a house near downtown Bergen for its activities. Before their recruitment to Fargespill, most of the children with an immigrant background have had no formal training in music or experience in performing on a concert stage. As noted already, in the complete cast, the children of immigrant backgrounds are joined by white Norwegian children and youth, some of whom have semi-professional experience as performers, as well as a musical ensemble consisting of professional and semi-professional players, primarily white Norwegians.

### *The Fargespill musical formula*

While the individual pieces that make up a Fargespill performance may take various forms, the typical Fargespill musical number is a medley, combining songs from other countries together with Norwegian folk songs or other elements from traditional Norwegian or Scandinavian music and children's play culture. The different musical sources combined in a single piece often share a common function (for example, lullabies or songs that accompanying children's handclapping games) or a common textual theme or musical elements. A typical example is the number titled "Bane Moni." I discuss here the version used for a music video produced by Fargespill and uploaded to YouTube.<sup>5</sup> The piece starts with a highly rhythmic arrangement of the song "Bane Moni" from Liberia (learned from one of the cast members), said to be about a romance between a boy and a girl. The song begins with two cycles of a cappella call and response between a female soloist and a large group singing in unison. Then the group continues with a couple more repetitions of the main melody over a polyrhythmic percussion arrangement including djembe (a single-headed West African drum), darabuka (Middle Eastern ceramic goblet drum), and other percussion instruments. About thirty seconds into the piece, an abrupt musical break leads to a brief sung dance tune (slåttestev) from Norwegian folk music, "Snåle mi jente," that also refers to romance and marriage, and that lasts about twenty-five seconds. All of the percussion drops out at the start of this section but on the first repetition of the initial strophe, the darabuka returns to accompany the unison singing that is also doubled throughout by an electric guitar using a wah-wah

5 "Fargespill – Bane Moni," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DW-77mFdifE>, accessed June 29, 2016. This approximately three minute video is edited down from a longer stage performance but is representative of how Fargespill pieces are typically arranged. A different version can be heard on the Fargespill CD, *Fargespill*, FS1001 (2011). Both versions include the three source pieces mentioned here with the same basic arrangement.

pedal. The music then shifts back to the intense polyrhythmic groove of the Liberian song that started the piece and the group sings the single strophe of that song over and over. As the groove continues, a solo singer enters with "Gjendines bådnlåt," a traditional Norwegian lullaby, made famous through its collection and arrangement as a solo piano piece by Edvard Grieg.<sup>6</sup> The melodically slow-moving lullaby, sung legato in Norwegian in *bel canto* style by a Norwegian soprano, constitutes a sort of free-floating layer above the complex layers of the ostinatos of vocal and percussion. The lullaby continues until about two and one half minutes into the piece; this section featuring the Norwegian lullaby layered over African-style polyrhythms is thus the longest in the piece. Notes prepared by Fargespill on the piece suggest that the lullaby is appropriate to the unifying theme of this arrangement, since a baby, and thus lullaby-singing, are the common result of a love affair.<sup>7</sup> After the lullaby ends, the Liberian song continues for about twenty-five seconds until fading out at the end of the piece. The different parts of the arrangement of this piece are presented in schematic form in Table 1.

0'00"	"Bane Moni," solo voice + group in unison, polyrhythmic percussion comes in on repetition of strophe	Liberian song about a young couple in love
0'29"	Abrupt stop, begin "Snåle mi jente," group in unison, <i>darabuka</i> accompanies	Norwegian traditional sung dance tune ( <i>slåttestev</i> ), subject is also romance
0'55"	Return to "Bane Moni," complex layers of polyrhythm in percussion	
1'09"	"Gjendines bådnlåt," <i>bel canto</i> solo, layered over continuous polyrhythmic "Bane Moni" voice and percussion ostinatos	Traditional Norwegian lullaby, made famous by Edward Grieg's piano arrangement
2'30"	"Bane Moni" main strophe repeated until end	
2'56"	End of piece	

Table 1: Fargespill arrangement of "Bane Moni"

More could be said about the costuming (for example the grass skirts worn by some of the female performers of African origin) and the rather exoticist choreography in Fargespill's video for "Bane Mori" but for the purposes of this article I have focused on the musical aspect. Most of the pieces in Fargespill follow this "formula" of combining Norwegian folk music together with musical materials from the countries the

6 "Gjendines bådnlåt," in Grieg's *Norske folkeviser* op 66, after a lullaby sung by Gjendine Slaalien. For a musicological study of this lullaby, see Sarah Catherine Nagell, "Gjendines bådnlåt: Analysis and Interpretation from a Performer's Perspective," (MA thesis, Telemark University College, 2012).

7 Notes on track 1 in the booklet accompanying the Fargespill CD, page 2.

children with an immigrant background represent, though there are some variations within this format in particular pieces.<sup>8</sup>

### *Growth of Fargespill in Norway and beyond*

From its beginnings as a cultural initiative in the city of Bergen, Fargespill has gained increasing national attention within Norway, leading to performances in other cities such as Oslo and Trondheim. It has been promoted on television, especially the government-operated Norwegian national broadcaster NRK that has reported on Fargespill and broadcast performances by it on several occasions. Fargespill has been extensively covered by the Norwegian press, with major newspapers running feature stories on it and giving consistently glowing reviews of its performances.<sup>9</sup>

Fargespill has won a number of prizes at the local, regional, and national levels,<sup>10</sup> and is frequently presented and discussed at seminars and conferences on multiculturalism, where it is promoted as a shining example of Norwegian practices of multicultural inclusion. The profile of Fargespill has thus risen significantly since it debuted in 2004. In addition to a regular place in the Bergen International Festival (Festspillene) in May over several years, Fargespill performed for the Norwegian king and queen at the king's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in 2007 and for Burmese democracy activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi when she visited Norway in June 2012, to give just two examples of high-profile performances. Fargespill has received some attention outside of Norway, for example in the form of a TEDx talk in English.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to funding from ticket sales and private donors, the Fargespill project has been the receiver of varying, but over time generally increasing, support from the Norwegian state at the local and national levels. In 2013, for example, Fargespill had lines in the budgets of Bergen municipality (amounting that year to 948,000 Norwegian Crowns, approximately 121,400 Euros at the exchange rate at that time), Hordaland

8 The piece called "Muniras dans," for example, incorporates melodies from a Uyghur song with newly composed Norwegian-language lyrics, together with the Swedish folk song (also well-known in Norway) "Jeg gikk meg ut i lunden grønn." See track 10 on the Fargespill CD and the television performance "NRK TV – Førkveld – 30.11.2011," <http://tv.nrk.no/serie/foerkveld/dvfk18113011/30-11-2011>, accessed June 29, 2016.

9 See for example Linn Gjerstad, "Hele verden i Bergen" [The whole world in Bergen], *Bergensavisen*, November 17, 2008, 24–25, Anne Huso, "Full fargefest" [Full colorfest], *Bergensavisen*, May 28, 2003, 26, Jan H. Landro, "Ny seier for Fargespillerne" [New triumph for the Fargespill troupe], *Bergens tidende*, May 28, 2013, and Einar Engelstad, "Fargerikt festfyrverkeri på mange språk" [Colorful fest-fireworks in many languages], *Bergens tidene*, November 15, 2015, <http://www.bt.no/kultur/konsert/Fargerikt-festfyrverkeri-pa-mange-sprak-3482468.html>, accessed April 25, 2016. The Fargespill website includes a page with a list of media stories with links to external websites, including reviews and news stories about the prizes it has won. "Pressearkiv," <http://fargespill.no/pressearkiv>, accessed April 28, 2016.

10 For example, Fargespill received Bergen municipality's prize for equality, inclusion and diversity [Bergen kommunes pris for likestilling, inkludering og mangfold] for the year 2015. "Fargespill fikk mangfoldsprisen," <https://www.bergen.kommune.no/aktuelt/sistenytt/article-133440>, accessed February 1, 2016.

11 "TEDxNHH - Ole Hamre - 25 nations on one stage: The potential of diversity and the beauty of unity?" (talk originally delivered on September 28, 2011 at Norges Handelshøyskole), <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxNHH-Ole-Hamre-25-nations-on>, accessed June 29, 2016.



County (406,000 NOK in 2013, 52,000 EUR), and the Norwegian national state budget (500,000 NOK in 2013, 64,000 EUR).<sup>12</sup> Together these made up 38% of Fargespill's total budget for that year.<sup>13</sup> As one newspaper headline put it when reporting on Fargespill's inclusion in the Norwegian national state budget for 2013, "Hele Norge betaler for Fargespill" (All of Norway pays for Fargespill).<sup>14</sup> After two years of not being funded at the national level, in 2016 Fargespill was allocated 2 million Norwegian Crowns in the Norwegian state budget (ca. 215,000 Euros at the time of the announcement in late May 2016), a significant increase in public funding.<sup>15</sup> This high level of state support has meant that Fargespill has, in effect, become a semi-official state multicultural ensemble in Norway, in fact if not in name. While ticket sales and private donations continue to make up a significant part of Fargespill's income, the amount of state support it receives means that it can no longer really be considered to be independent.

The *Fargespill* "brand" has recently expanded from live performances to include a commercially released CD and songbooks designed to be used in multicultural music education.<sup>16</sup> Fargespill has also become a franchise; the primary organization based in the city of Bergen has begun licensing its name and the concept to groups in other Norwegian cities who wish to stage similar performances under the Fargespill name. The concept has also recently been licensed to performing troupes in three cities in Sweden, such that one can say that Fargespill has become an international (or at least pan-Scandinavian) phenomenon.

### *Fargespill, multiculturalism, and the majoritarian*

For trying to understand and interpret Fargespill, some useful tools I have found include recent theorizations of multiculturalism, and the concepts of *majoritarian* and *minoritarian* developed by Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

Fargespill instantiates what Norwegian sociologist Randi Gressgård, in her 2010 book *Multicultural Dialogue*, calls "a 'soft' version of multiculturalism," in which "cultural diversity is seen as a positive factor only to the extent that it promotes the prevailing values and does not challenge the established institutions and the shared values embodied in those institutions."<sup>17</sup> Fargespill can also be understood in terms of

12 "Inne på Statsbudsjettet!" [In the state budget!], <http://www.fargespill.no/fargespill-pa-statsbudsjettet>, accessed November 4, 2013. This page has since been deleted after the Fargespill website was redesigned and reorganized.

13 Private e-mail from Kjersti Berge, June 24, 2016.

14 John Lindebotten, "Hele Norge betaler for Fargespill" [All of Norway pays for Fargespill], *Bergens tidene*, October 30, 2012, <http://www.bt.no/bergenpuls/Hele-Norge-betaler-for-Fargespill-2788276.html>, accessed June 29, 2016.

15 Robert Nedrejord, "Fargespill inn på statsbudsjettet" [Fargespill into the state budget], *Bergens tidene*, May 30, 2016, <http://fargespill.no/article/statsbudsjettet>, accessed June 2, 2016.

16 The Fargespill book has been published in Norwegian and English editions; the official English name for the project is "Kaleidoscope." *Fargespill* (Bergen: Fargespill, 2011), *Kaleidoscope* (Bergen: Fargespill, 2012).

17 Randi Gressgård, *Multicultural Dialogue: Dilemmas, Paradoxes, Conflicts* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), xi.

what Gressgård describes as “liberal-democratic ‘planned pluralism,’” a technique for “managing cultural difference.”<sup>18</sup> Summarizing Swedish researcher Aleksandra Ålund’s definition,<sup>19</sup> Gressgård describes planned pluralism as “a technocratic, effective, rational and scientifically controlled form of integration of immigrants. The plurality is culturalised into a multiplicity of cultural distinctions, while at the same time being ethnocentrically linked to the prevailing standards of normality.”<sup>20</sup>

Planned pluralism thus results in a situation in which “the ‘others’ are assimilated but, at the same time, are depicted as culturally distinct and hierarchically subordinated to ‘us.’”<sup>21</sup> I argue that a kind of stage-managed “planned pluralism” is, in Fargespill, aestheticized and musically enacted through the staging of minority children singing alternately *both* Norwegian folk songs (often in local Norwegian dialects) – thus showing that they are properly assimilated to Norway and Norwegian culture – *and* songs from “their own” distinct and colorful cultures, which instantiate their cultural distinctiveness in a non-threatening way.

The Fargespill formula of combining songs from other countries with Norwegian folk music in a single musical arrangement, as illustrated in the “Bane Moni” example I discussed above, works to enact a particular idea of multicultural integration in Norway. In these arrangements, the presence of Norwegian folk music acts as a constant, a baseline, and an unmarked default category – a “prevailing standard of normality,” in Gressgård’s words – that is always there, and against which all the other musical materials are implicitly contrasted. The constantly changing musical materials from the other countries are marked as sonically different (even exotic) in relation to the Norwegian material, both in terms of their musical elements (scales, rhythms, vocal timbre, etc.) and their languages (with the exception of some songs in which newly composed texts in Norwegian are substituted for the texts in the original languages). “The Norwegian” as a category remains constant, and various others (African, Middle Eastern, Asian) become tokens that are interchangeable with each other – a “multiplicity of cultural distinctions,” as Gressgård puts it – as they in quick succession fill in the slot reserved for the category “other.” The cultural specificity of a song from Somalia, a Kurdish rhythm, a Tamil dance, etc. is lost, since their purpose within the format is simply to be the “other” to the default category of “the Norwegian.” The foreign sonic materials, along with the bodies of the children themselves, are thus domesticated and incorporated into the consistent framework, enacting in performance their assimilation.

The sequence of pieces in the live performances of Fargespill also enacts the ongoing domestication and assimilation of diverse others in relation to the fixed category and content of “the Norwegian.” Fargespill thus uses musical means to stage, through the voices and bodies of children of immigrant backgrounds, the internal other within Norway in an aesthetic translation of “planned pluralism,” in the sense that Fargespill

18 Gressgård, *Multicultural Dialogue*, 10.

19 Aleksandra Ålund, “Immigrant Culture as an Obstacle to ‘Partnership,’” in *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism*, ed. Aleksandra Ålund and Carl-Ulrik Schierup (Aldershot: Avebury, 1991).

20 Gressgård, *Multicultural Dialogue*, 11.

21 Gressgård, *Multicultural Dialogue*, xv.



represents the children and their respective cultures as both assimilated (through the minority children's ability to sing traditional Norwegian songs in Norwegian) and as hierarchically subordinated to the majority culture (through placing the "exotic" musical materials in the marked category and through the format of juxtaposing those "exotic" musical materials with Norwegian folk music). The hierarchy is confirmed through the *interchangeability* of different specific cultures – Somalian, Kurdish, Uyghur, and so on – in relation to Norwegian culture as the constant, invariable, stable presence.

A closely related theoretical angle for approaching and interpreting Fargespill is the now well-known twin concepts of *majoritarian* and *minoritarian* discussed by Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*.<sup>22</sup> Deleuze and Guattari develop these concepts in their discussion of what they call major and minor languages and literatures. Deleuze and Guattari write

The opposition between minority and majority is not simply quantitative. Majority implies a constant, of expression or content, serving as a standard measure by which to evaluate it ... Majority assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around. It assumes the standard measure, not the other way around ... A determination different from that of the constant will therefore be considered minoritarian, by nature and regardless of number, in other words, a subsystem or an outsystem.<sup>23</sup>

In Deleuze and Guattari's thinking, the majoritarian is thus "a constant and homogeneous system" while minorities are "subsystems."<sup>24</sup> Later in the book, returning to these concepts, Deleuze and Guattari write, "minorities are not necessarily defined by the smallness of their numbers but rather ... by the gap that separates them from this or that axiom constituting a redundant majority."<sup>25</sup>

The ideas of Deleuze and Guattari are complex and subtle, and it can be useful to refer to texts that provide an exegesis of their thinking. Ronald Bogue explains that:

Majorities and minorities are not determined by sheer numbers. The group of Western white male adults may represent a relatively small sample of the world's population; nevertheless, that group functions as the majority, and those outside that group are members of various minorities. Nor are minorities defined by fixed identities or characteristics. Instead, majorities and minorities are mutually determined *through their positions in power relations*, and thus *through their function* rather than their possession of some defining trait, whether statistical, religious, ethnic, racial or biological.<sup>26</sup>

22 Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Bloomsbury, 2013, originally published in French in 1980).

23 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 122–123.

24 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 123.

25 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 546.

26 Ronald Bogue, "The Minor," in *Giles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. Charles J. Stivale (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 13 (emphasis added).

Claire Colebrook further explains that: "A majority always presents itself, not as a specific group or contingent assemblage, but as representative of man or humanity in general"<sup>27</sup> and "[a] majoritarian mode ... presents the opposition as already given and based on a privileged and original term."<sup>28</sup> The *majority* is thus the default, unmarked category, while the minority is marked through difference in relation to the majority, and majoritarian modes instantiate this hierarchy by naturalizing the majority as the privileged instance (the unmarked category) and the minority as both *outside* the majority and incorporated *into* it through its placement in a subordinate position in a hierarchy in relation to the majority.<sup>29</sup>

Fargespill functions as a majoritarian mode in that it confirms "the Norwegian" as the "standard measure by which to evaluate" and thus gives it the power to determine what belongs to it and what does not. "The Norwegian" is, within Fargespill, the "constant and homogeneous system," instantiating the "redundant majority" while also creating and bracketing as a separate category that which is not "redundant" – in this case cultural expressions (language, music, dance) from the countries that the children with an immigrant background come from. That which is different within this system is "defined by the gap between" it and the majority, and that gap is both confirmed and bridged in the narrative of assimilation which the Fargespill performances enact. Fargespill represents itself, through its placement of children with an immigrant background front and center, as being minoritarian but is actually a fully majoritarian mode; the terms of the representation are already determined beforehand while the agency of the children is reduced to playing out a script assigned to them. The diverse cultures represented onstage in Fargespill are thus not minorities in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari define them, since the terms of their presence and participation are subject to and determined by the majoritarian.

Norwegian ethnomusicologist Sunniva Hovde reads the majoritarian-minoritarian distinction to mean that the majoritarian is the position that defines the terms of the discourse and sets the premises – the categories, scripts, and modes of representation – that guide social life, and which all members of a society must relate to.<sup>30</sup> In quite literal terms, the white Norwegian creators of Fargespill set the premises for the Fargespill show. Much of the musical material does indeed come from the immigrant children participants, but once it is collected from them it is reworked and inserted into a narrative about multiculturalism in Norway, the premises of which are determined and implemented by the show's creative team.

27 Claire Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze* (Crows Nest, Australia: Allen&Unwin, 2002), 63.

28 Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 2002), 104.

29 Deleuze and Guattari's ideas about the relationship between the majoritarian and the minoritarian also resonate with Stuart Hall's discussion of how the global is "the self-presentation of the dominant particular ... a way in which the dominant particular localizes and naturalizes itself and associates with a variety of other minorities." Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 67.

30 Sunniva Skjøstad Hovde, *Global musicking: Om innvandring og den farlige forskjelligheten* [Global musicking: On immigration and the dangerous difference] (PhD diss., Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2012).

The “story” about multiculturalism in Norway that Fargespill tells is consistent with what Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad refers to as “narratives about Norway as a homogeneous, tolerant, anti-racist, and peace-loving society.”<sup>31</sup> In an article published in English in 2004, the same year that Fargespill debuted in Bergen, Gullestad elaborates:

Majority Norwegians see themselves as *victims* of Danish colonialism and Nazi-German occupation, and not as being influenced by an unacknowledged racist culture. According to popular self-images, Norway is innocent in relation to colonialism. The inhabitants supported the civil rights movement in the US, as well as the ANC in South Africa. Norway has played an important role in peace negotiations in various regions such as the Middle East, Guatemala, Sri Lanka and Columbia. Moreover, Norway is among those nations in the world that spends the most money per capita on development aid to the Third World. So, when minority people complain of local racism, the innocent national self-image and the associated collective memory are at stake ... “Immigrant” representations of Norway which do not underwrite majority hegemony are still few and far between in the Norwegian public realm.<sup>32</sup>

Such narratives about Norway may be considered, in the terms used by Deleuze and Guattari, as a majoritarian determination that naturalizes and cements the hierarchical structure that places white Norwegians (“*etnisk norsk*”) on top while simultaneously denying that there is a hierarchical structure at all.

Fargespill clearly functions as a majoritarian mode of representation, in the sense that it instantiates a construction of Norway’s internal others in a way that confirms a majority Norwegian self-image of being a country that treats its minorities well. Staging the performance by placing children and youth with immigrant backgrounds literally on stage together with white Norwegian children and youth also contributes to creating the appearance of assimilated immigrant children happily playing together with white Norwegian children – staging Norway as a multicultural paradise or utopia, represented through the trope of innocence embodied in the staged image of children at play.

I should also say at least a few words on the use of Norwegian folk music and folk culture more generally as Fargespill’s chosen primary vehicle for the representation of Norwegian culture. I do not have the knowledge of Norwegian folk music in either its historical or contemporary forms to be able to discuss comprehensively its place within the performative construction of Norwegian identity in the early twenty-first century.<sup>33</sup> But the critical analytical framework I am working within does provide a useful angle for interpretation. The strategic use of Norwegian folk music and folk culture

31 Gullestad, “Invisible Fences,” 59.

32 Marianne Gullestad, “Blind Slaves of our Prejudices: Debating ‘Culture’ and ‘Race’ in Norway,” *Ethnos* 69 (2004): 182.

33 For a theoretical discussion of the emergence of the concept of folk music as a category within the historical context of national romanticism, with special reference to Norway, see Jan Peter Blom, “Hva er folkemusikk?” [What is folk music?], in *Fanittullen: Innføring i norsk og samisk folkemusikk*, ed. Bjørn Aksdal and Sven Nyhus (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1993).

in Fargespill's performances allows for a kind of "mirroring" between Norwegian folk music and the musics of the immigrant children it is juxtaposed with.

Norwegian folk music works within Fargespill as an authentic marker of Norwegian-ness, grounding it in an imagined pre-industrial, rural past. But at the same time, Norwegian folk music constitutes a kind of internally generated "other" that provides an immediate context for understanding the externally originating otherness of the musics of the countries the immigrant children come from. Norwegian folk music, as an internal cultural other, constitutes a marked category or subset within the overall unmarked category of Norwegian culture. Through this markedness, the sheer sonic difference of Norwegian folk music, manifested in musical parameters such as vocal timbre, tonality, and unique rhythmic characteristics, not to mention the marked linguistic aspect of the dialect used in many of the song texts, thus embodies a kind of Norwegian-ness that, in structural terms, "mirrors" the exotic sounds of the musical materials from the countries of origin of the immigrant children. Gressgård points to the role of this kind of "mirroring" in the enabling of the recognition of "others," and I borrow that idea of "mirroring" here, albeit knowingly with the risk of taking one element of her complex argument out of its context. Summarizing philosopher Hans Herbert Kögler's discussion of critical hermeneutics after Gadamer and Foucault,<sup>34</sup> Gressgård explains that: "When the 'others' are reduced to a mirror image of 'us,' they do not pose a threat to the coherent unity of our own understanding of being."<sup>35</sup> Gressgård further paraphrases Kögler on the point that "we recognize the 'others' as rational subjects to the degree that they are rational in the way that we are ourselves."<sup>36</sup> Gressgård describes this as a characteristic of "dialogic pseudo-openness," through which "understanding the 'others' becomes a circular process, imprisoned within one's own horizon of meaning."<sup>37</sup> Norwegian folk music, with its exotic sounds and association with a pre-modern rural past, is displaced enough in time to become "folkloric" and culturally marked as other, while still being recognizably authentically Norwegian and thus assimilable to a narrative of Norwegian-ness. It thus serves to provide a "mirror" (in the sense that Kögler and Gressgård describe) for the musical expressions of the foreign "others," providing a ground on which to understand and, ultimately, assimilate them and their music into the logic of existing categories. At the same time, within the context of Fargespill, Norwegian folk music also mediates *between* those others and contemporary ("modern") Norwegian-ness in a way that keeps the externally originating music and culture at a safe cultural distance. By setting up equivalencies between Norwegian folk music, with its pre-modern associations, and the music of the cultures of the immigrant children, Fargespill also suggests that the cultures of the immigrant children themselves are in some essential way outside the sphere of the modern.

34 Hans Herbert Kögler, *The Power of Dialogue: Critical Hermeneutics after Gadamer and Foucault*, trans. Paul Hendrickson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

35 Gressgård, *Multicultural Dialogue*, 110.

36 Gressgård, *Multicultural Dialogue*, 109.

37 Gressgård, *Multicultural Dialogue*, 109.

This sonic “mirroring” has a visual correlate as well in Fargespill’s performances. Many of the immigrant children wear (representations of) “traditional” costumes from their home countries. Interspersed with them onstage, a number of the young Norwegians in the cast (mostly girls) wear the *bunad*, the Norwegian national folk dress. Here, the equivalency between Norwegian folk culture as pre-modern and the cultures of the children is made manifest in the colorful moving bodies of the children themselves.<sup>38</sup>

*Fargespill, child refugees, and the Norwegian state*

Fargespill’s representation of happily assimilated, singing and dancing children of immigrant background contrasts with the Norwegian state’s recent treatment of many child refugees and asylum seekers. In the last several years there have been a large number of cases in Norway involving the forced return of child asylum seekers together with their families to their countries of origin after their asylum application was turned down. In many of these cases, because it took the Norwegian state many years to reach its final decision and begin deportation procedures, the children had become thoroughly Norwegianized in language and culture and well-integrated into their local communities. In the most egregious of these cases, involving children who were born in Norway after their parents came as refugees, or children who had left their home countries as infants, the Norwegian state forcibly returned children to countries to which they had little connection.<sup>39</sup> In the context of the significant financial support provided by the Norwegian state to Fargespill, and given my analysis above, one can ask: Does Fargespill represent a dissenting voice within the Norwegian public sphere, providing a space for the agency of refugee children and advocating for their rights? Or does it, even if unwittingly and with the best of intentions, provide a sort of cover for the Norwegian state to carry out its exclusionary policies?

For most of its history, Fargespill has stayed resolutely out of politics. When serving as spokesman for Fargespill, artistic leader Ole Hamre has repeatedly stated that Fargespill is an *artistic* project, not a social one. Such statements strategically, if perhaps somewhat naïvely, serve to rhetorically insulate the Fargespill project from its political implications. Given its dependence on child refugees and minor age asylum seekers in Norway for its concept and very existence, it is perhaps inevitable that Fargespill would eventually come up against hard and cold facts on the ground that

38 For a discussion of the cultural politics of the Norwegian folk costume *bunad*, see Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Traditionalism and Neoliberalism: The Norwegian Folk Dress in the 21st Century,” in *Properties of Culture—Culture as Property: Pathways to Reform in Post-Soviet Siberia*, ed. Erich Kasten (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2004).

39 For an overview of child asylum seekers deported from Norway during 2014, see “Asylbarna Norge sendte ut” [The asylum-seeker children Norway deported], *Bergens tidene*, December 18, 2014, <http://www.bt.no/spesial/asylbarna/#/>, accessed June 29, 2016. According to statistics from the Norwegian police cited in this article, a total of 543 asylum-seeking children were deported from Norway between January and October 2014; seventy-six of these had been in Norway at least four years or longer; eight of them had been born in Norway.

would force it to enter the arena of political debates about the Norwegian state's treatment of child refugees. A turning point came in August 2014, when thirteen-year old Aves Sadek, who had lived in Norway for about four and one half years, was awakened in the middle of the night at his home in Ytre Arna outside Bergen by Norwegian police and, together with the rest of his family (including two brothers also of minor age), deported to Pakistan. Aves had been a participant in Fargespill for several years, having performed onstage with the troupe many times. The creative team behind Fargespill were clearly moved by this development, which hit so close to home, affecting one of the very children whom they had worked closely with. Artistic leader Ole Hamre, together with coordinator and co-producer Frøydis Moberg, wrote an impassioned opinion column (*kronikk* in Norwegian) that was published in the Bergen newspaper *Bergens tidende* on August 27, 2014, signing it with their names as members of the Fargespill organization (Stiftelsen Fargespill).<sup>40</sup> They noted the irony that just three months before he was deported, Aves had stood on the main stage of the opera house in Oslo in a Fargespill show that formed part of the official program for the 200-year anniversary celebration of the Norwegian constitution. The Fargespill troupe, including Aves, had sung the Norwegian national anthem "Ja, vi elsker dette landet" [Yes, we love this country] as part of the show. Hamre and Moberg's editorial column moved deftly between the specific case of Aves and the larger context of the Norwegian state's treatment of child asylum seekers.<sup>41</sup>

*Conclusions: The play of colors, in black and white*

In her discussion of what she calls "the racialization of difference" and the growing "ethnification of national identity" in Norway around the turn of the millennium, Gullestad notes that:

Many Norwegians now turn to the simultaneous production of differences and call for sameness. In many contexts the ideal of imagined sameness produces a solution (demands for sameness) to a problem it has itself contributed to creating. It is as though an outsider must be created, in order for the internal sameness, unity, and sense of belonging to be confirmed ... "Immigrants" are asked to "become Norwegian," at the same time as it is tacitly assumed that this is

40 Frøydis Moberg and Ole Hamre, "Ja, vi elsker?" [Yes, we love?], *Bergens tidende*, August 27, 2014, <http://www.bt.no/mening/kronikk/Ja-vi-elsker-3184067.html>, accessed August 27, 2014.

41 A similar development affected the Fargespill troupe in the city of Kristiansand in January 2015, when a 16-year old participant was detained together with his family and deported to Afghanistan. PhD student in psychology Hildegunn Schuff, who is doing research on Fargespill in Kristiansand, wrote an editorial column with a similar impassioned tone to that of Moberg and Hamre, published in the newspaper *Fædrelandsvennen* and reproduced also in various other places online. Hildegunn Marie Tønnessen Schuff, "Barnas beste – bare når det passer oss?" [The best for the children – only when it's convenient for us?], *Fædrelandsvennen*, <http://www.fvn.no/mening/synspunkt/Barnas-beste--bare-nar-det-passer-oss-2783676.html> (accessible only with a subscription), accessed June 8, 2016, republished with open access at <http://www.abup.no/barnas-beste-bare-nar-det-passer-oss>, accessed June 8, 2016.



something they can never really achieve. "They" are often criticized without much corresponding consideration of "our" knowledge or "their" traditions, or "our" ability and willingness to reflect critically upon "our" own. "We" ("Norwegians") are thus considered more advanced and hierarchically superior to "them" ("Muslims," "Pakistanis," "Vietnamese," "Tamils," "our new countrymen from other cultures," and so on).<sup>42</sup>

I have argued that *Fargespill* musically reproduces what Gullestad calls the "simultaneous production of differences and call for sameness." The immigrant children in the *Fargespill* shows demonstrate that they have "become Norwegian," in that they can, firstly, sing Norwegian songs in the Norwegian language and, secondly, participate in a representation of multiculturalism in Norway on Norwegian terms. At the same time, their status as "other" is reaffirmed through their performance of "their own" (non-Norwegian) traditions.

*Fargespill* has within Norway been universally acclaimed. In my survey of reviews and feature stories in the Norwegian media, I have yet to find a negative review or commentary. It is clear that the story *Fargespill* tells about multiculturalism and the integration of immigrants in Norway appeals to many majority Norwegians. At best, one might argue that *Fargespill* is a naïve but harmless spectacle, and one could argue that it is a positive contribution to creating a climate for embracing cultural difference in Norway. Such an argument is, however, contained within the logic of multiculturalism I have critiqued here, and so is ultimately self-serving. At worst, *Fargespill* can be seen as a cynical manipulation that uses the voices and bodies of children to tell a story that, while reassuring for majority white Norwegians, grossly misrepresents the reality for, and experiences of, people of non-white, non-European immigrant background in Norway, sidestepping ongoing problems of racism and intolerance toward minorities and immigrants endemic in contemporary Norwegian society while providing a smoke screen that distracts from the Norwegian state's problematic treatment of child refugees and asylum seekers. In this sense, while *Fargespill* stages what appears to be a musical dialogue between Norwegian culture and the cultures of the children who participate in it, it has more in common with Gressgård's claim that, quite often, "multicultural dialogue is in fact a monologue."<sup>43</sup> To paraphrase postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak, *Fargespill*'s way of using the moving bodies and sounding voices of refugee and minority children to stage a majoritarian narrative about multicultural Norway suggests the ironic question, "Can the subaltern sing?" *Fargespill* may indeed be colorful, but its colors paint over issues that, frankly, have a lot to do with Norwegian ideologies regarding black and white.

42 Gullestad, "Invisible Fences," 59.

43 Gressgård, *Multicultural Dialogue*, 11.