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Russian-Tajik Singer Manizha Heads to Eurovision

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Manizha Sangin **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Russia has selected Manizha to represent it in this year's Eurovision song contest with her song "Russian Woman."

The Tajikistan-born singer-songwriter will replace punk-rave group Little Big, who were chosen to represent Russia in the 2020 sing-off which was ultimately canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Manizha said her song, written a year ago on International Women's Day, is "about the transformation of a woman's self-awareness over the past few centuries in Russia."

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"The Russian woman has gone an amazing way from the peasant hut to the right to elect and be elected... She was never afraid to resist stereotypes and take responsibility," Manizha said

in an interview after state television's Channel One announced her as Russia's representative.

She said she hoped the song will reflect the generosity and openness that she has seen while living in Russia.

"I would like the world to see our country as I know it: generous, open, bright, unlike anything else," she told TASS.

"Russian Woman" mixes folk-infused sounds and contemporary rap, with an English verse that says "Every Russian woman needs to know / You're strong enough, you're gonna break the wall."

Manizha, born Manizha Sangin, is best-known for her innovative and eclectic music. She is also an outspoken advocate for women, domestic violence victims, refugees and the LGBT community.

Many Russians were upset that 2020's contestants Little Big never got to represent Russia with their song "Uno," which has become the most popular video in Eurovision's history with over 189 million views on YouTube.

The 2021 Eurovision contest will be held in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, from May 18-22 without a live audience to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The song contest has been held annually since 1956 and remains one of the most-watched non-athletic competitions among the 41 countries of the European Broadcasting Union.

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