

= Austria in the Eurovision Song Contest 2014 =

Austria participated in the Eurovision Song Contest 2014 with the song " Rise Like a Phoenix " , written by Charlie Mason , Joey Patulka , Ali Zuckowski and Julian Maas . The song was performed by Conchita Wurst , the drag stage persona of Tom Neuwirth , who had risen to fame after taking part in an Austrian talent show in 2011 and attempting to represent Austria at the Eurovision Song Contest 2012 . In September 2013 the Austrian broadcaster Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF) announced that they had internally selected Wurst to compete at the 2014 contest in Copenhagen , Denmark , with her song presented to the public in March 2014 .

After a promotional tour of several European countries , Austria was seen as one of the countries most likely to qualify for the grand final . In the second of the Eurovision semi @-@ finals " Rise Like a Phoenix " came first of the 15 participating countries , securing its place among the 26 other countries in the final . In Austria 's forty @-@ seventh Eurovision appearance on 10 May , " Rise Like a Phoenix " became the sixty @-@ second song to win the Eurovision Song Contest , receiving a total of 290 points and full marks from thirteen countries . This was Austria 's second win in the contest , having previously won in 1966 .

After the show , the song went on to chart in several European countries , reaching number one in Austria and the UK Indie Chart , as well as reaching the top 10 in a further 10 countries . Wurst 's appearance in the contest brought about both criticism and praise : by some of the more socially conservative sections of European society her victory in the contest was condemned as a promotion of LGBT rights ; conversely the international attention received by Wurst 's victory firmly established her among the LGBT community , leading her to take an active role in promoting tolerance and respect , and resulted in several invites to perform at several European pride events , as well as performances at the European Parliament and United Nations Office at Vienna .

= = Background = =

Prior to the 2014 contest , Austria had participated in the Eurovision Song Contest forty @-@ six times since its first entry in 1957 , winning it in 1966 with the song " Merci , Chérie " performed by Udo Jürgens . Following the introduction of semi @-@ finals for the 2004 contest , Austria had featured in only two finals . Austria 's least successful result has been last place , which they have achieved on eight occasions , most recently in the 2012 contest . Austria has also received nul points on three occasions ; in 1962 , 1988 and 1991 .

The Austrian national broadcaster , Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF) , broadcasts the event within Austria and organises the selection process for the nation 's entry . From 2011 to 2013 , ORF had set up national finals with several artists to choose both the song and performer to compete at Eurovision for Austria , with both the public and a panel of jury members involved in the selection . For the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest , ORF held an internal selection to choose the artist and song to represent Austria at the contest . This method had last been used by ORF in 2007 .

= = Before Eurovision = =

= = = Selection procedure = = =

ORF confirmed their intentions to participate at the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest on 6 September 2013 . On 10 September 2013 , the broadcaster announced that they had internally selected Conchita Wurst to represent Austria in Copenhagen . Wurst is the drag stage persona of Tom Neuwirth , who in 2007 finished second in the third season of Austrian talent show Starmania , behind the 2011 Austrian entry Nadine Beiler . Neuwirth went on to join the boy band Jetzt Anders ! along with other contestants from Starmania in 2007 , which disbanded later that year . Following this , Neuwirth , who uses masculine pronouns when referring to himself but feminine pronouns to describe Wurst , went on to developed his new drag persona and appeared on ORF 's talent show

Die große Chance (" The Big Opportunity ") as Wurst in 2011 , achieving sixth place . Wurst went on to compete in the Austrian selection for the Eurovision Song Contest 2012 with the song " That 's What I Am " , qualifying for the super final and finishing second with 49 percent of the public vote .

ORF confirmed in October 2013 that the song to be performed by Wurst at the contest would also be chosen internally . On 18 March 2014 at a ORF press conference in Vienna , the song " Rise Like a Phoenix " was announced as the Austrian entry for the contest . The song was written by Charlie Mason , Joey Patulka , Ali Zuckowski and Julian Maas . Wurst 's first live performance of the song was on 22 March 2014 , during an episode of Dancing Stars , the Austrian version of international franchise Dancing with the Stars .

As part of the contest 's graphic design , special postcards were commissioned by the Danish host broadcaster DR to introduce each of the participating countries before the acts took to the stage . For the 2014 contest the contestants were asked to take a photo of their country 's flag , made in a creative way . Austria 's postcard was the first to be filmed by DR , and was shot at the Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna featuring Wurst and her stylist Tamara Mascara creating the Austrian flag out of 70 baroque @-@ style dresses .

In the run @-@ up to the contest , Wurst asked her fans to take part in a campaign called " Knit for Tolerance " , in which they would wear knitted beards in a display of tolerance and respect , also promising that she would take all beards that she received with her to Copenhagen .

= = = Selection controversy = = =

The selection of Wurst caused some controversy in Austria and the rest of Europe . A Facebook group which amassed approximately 38 @,@ 000 members protested the decision by the publicly funded broadcaster ORF , to internally select the country 's Eurovision act without a public vote . In an interview with Austrian newspaper Kurier , Wurst defended her internal selection by ORF , noting that the broadcaster had the sole responsibility of making decisions regarding the contest and that the 2007 internal selection of Eric Papilaya received no backlash from the Austrian public . Wurst also claimed that the criticism from the group surpassed protest against her as the selected artist and instead " displayed homophobic statements and discrimination " , and she vowed to " continue fighting against discrimination " in response to the Facebook group .

Wurst 's selection for Eurovision also sparked outrage outside of Austria ; in Belarus , a petition by more than 2 @,@ 000 people petitioned the Belarusian Ministry of Information to prevent the contest from being broadcast in the country , claiming it to being " a hotbed of sodomy " and an attempt by European liberals to impose Western values on Belarus and Russia . A similar petition of more than 15 @,@ 000 signatures was also received by the Russian Ministry of Communications and Mass Media from the " All @-@ Russian parenting group " , claiming that Wurst " leads the lifestyle inapplicable [sic] for Russians " Wurst also received criticism from the Armenian representative , Aram Mp3 , who claimed that her lifestyle was " not natural " and that she should " eventually decide whether she is a woman or a man " . Aram MP3 later apologised and insisted his statements were " a joke " .

In response to petitions in Russia , Belarus and Ukraine asking for Wurst to be removed from the competition , some of the other 2014 participants gave Wurst their support . Ireland 's representative Kasey Smith , said that " everyone should be allowed in " to Eurovision and that she " totally disagree [s] with what they are doing . It 's homophobia . "

= = = Promotion = = =

Before her appearance at the contest , Wurst went on a promotional tour , performing in several European countries . Prior to her song selection , Wurst appeared at a Eurovision fan event in Vienna in October 2013 held by the Austrian branch of OGAE , an international organisation of Eurovision fan clubs across Europe and beyond , where she shared the stage with Anne @-@ Marie David , the 1973 Eurovision winner . On 28 March Wurst appeared at the 2014 Euroschlager Party , held by OGAE Spain , in Madrid . On 29 March 2014 , Wurst was a guest at the " Eurovision

Pre @-@ Party Riga " in Latvia , appearing alongside Poland 's 2014 representatives Donatan & Cleo and Latvia 's 2013 representatives PeR . Wurst was also one of 26 acts from the 2014 contest to perform during the 2014 Eurovision in Concert , the largest gathering of Eurovision artists outside of Eurovision itself , held in the Melkweg , a popular music venue in Amsterdam , the Netherlands on 5 April 2014 . This was followed by an appearance at the London Preview Party alongside 15 other participating entries from 2014 , held at the Café de Paris nightclub in London on 13 April . Wurst also took part in several interviews and performances on Irish , Belgian and Dutch television networks .

= = At Eurovision = =

According to Eurovision rules , all nations with the exceptions of the host country and the " Big 5 " (France , Germany , Italy , Spain and the United Kingdom) are required to qualify from one of two semi @-@ finals in order to compete for the final ; the top ten countries from each semi @-@ final progress to the final . The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) split up the competing countries into six different pots based on voting patterns from previous contests , with countries with favourable voting histories put into the same pot . On 20 January 2014 , a special allocation draw was held which placed each country into one of the two semi @-@ finals , as well as which half of the show they would perform in . Austria was placed into the second semi @-@ final , to be held on 8 May 2014 , and was scheduled to perform in the first half of the show .

Once all the competing songs for the 2014 contest had been released , the running order for the semi @-@ finals was decided by the shows ' producers rather than through another draw , so that similar songs were not placed next to each other . Austria was set to perform in position 6 , following the entry from Poland and before the entry from Lithuania . All three shows were broadcast on ORF eins , with commentary by Andi Knoll . The Austrian spokesperson , who announced the Austrian votes during the final , was Kati Bellowitsch .

= = = Semi @-@ final = = =

Wurst took part in technical rehearsals on 30 April and 3 May , followed by dress rehearsals on 7 and 8 May . This included the jury final where professional juries of each country , responsible for 50 percent of each country 's vote , watched and voted on the competing entries .

The stage show featured Wurst in a cream @-@ covered mermaid @-@ like dress standing on a pedestal in the middle of the stage . The stage appeared dark at the beginning of the song with minimal lighting , before the lighting rose towards the beginning of the first chorus . At the start of the song , the camera appeared at the back of the arena before swooping into centre stage to a close @-@ up of Wurst , followed by it flying off again at the beginning of the chorus . The background LED screens featured at the first chorus flaming rain , followed by flames in the shape of wings , in reference to the phoenix in the title of the song . Pyrotechnic flames also featured at the finale of the song . Wind machines were also used to effect during the performance .

At the end of the show , it was announced that Austria had finished in the top 10 and thus qualifying for the grand final ; it was the last qualifying country to be announced by the show 's hosts , Pilou Asbæk and Nikolaj Koppel . It was later revealed that Austria had won the semi @-@ final , receiving a total of 169 points .

= = = Final = = =

Shortly after the second semi @-@ final , a winner 's press conference was held for the ten qualifying countries . As part of this press conference , the qualifying artists took part in a draw to determine which half of the grand final they would subsequently participate in . This draw was done in the order the countries were announced during the semi @-@ final . Austria was drawn to compete in the first half . Following this draw , the shows ' producers decided upon the running order of the final , as they had done for the semi @-@ finals . Austria was subsequently placed to perform

in position 11 , following the entry from Greece and before the entry from Germany . On the day of the grand final , Austria was considered by bookmakers to be the second most likely to win the competition , placed only behind the entry from Sweden .

Wurst once again took part in dress rehearsals on 9 and 10 May before the final , including the jury final where the professional juries casted their final votes before the live show . Wurst performed a repeat of her semi @-@ final performance during the final on 10 May . After a slow start , Austria eventually took the lead in the voting and won the competition with 290 points , beating the Netherlands and Sweden into second and third places respectively . Austria received 12 points , the maximum number of points a country can give to another country , from thirteen countries . The broadcast was watched by an average 1 @.@ 3 million people in Austria , receiving a 54 @.@ 4 percent market share .

===== Marcel Bezençon Awards =====

The Marcel Bezençon Awards , first awarded during the 2002 contest , are awards honouring the best competing songs in the final each year . Named after the creator of the annual contest , Marcel Bezençon , the awards are divided into 3 categories : the Press Award , given to the best entry as voted on by the accredited media and press during the event ; the Artistic Award , presented to the best artist as voted on by the shows ' commentators ; and the Composer Award , given to the best and most original composition as voted by the participating composers . " Rise Like a Phoenix " was awarded the Press Award , which was accepted at the awards ceremony by Kathrin Zechner , ORF 's Managing Director .

===== Voting =====

Voting during the three shows consisted of 50 percent public televoting and 50 percent from a jury deliberation . The jury consisted of five music industry professionals who were citizens of the country they represent , with their names published before the contest to ensure transparency . This jury was asked to judge each contestant based on : vocal capacity ; the stage performance ; the song 's composition and originality ; and the overall impression by the act . In addition , no member of a national jury could be related in any way to any of the competing acts in such a way that they cannot vote impartially and independently . The individual rankings of each jury member were released shortly after the grand final .

Below is a breakdown of points awarded to Austria and awarded by Austria in the second semi @-@ final and grand final of the contest , and the breakdown of the jury voting and televoting conducted during the two shows :

===== Points awarded to Austria =====

===== Points awarded by Austria =====

===== Split voting results =====

The following five members comprised the Austrian jury :

Stella Jones ? Chairperson ? singer , songwriter , vocal @-@ stagecoach , represented Austria in the 1995 Contest

Michael Dörfler ? producer and owner of a sound studio

Dietmar Lienbacher ? Division Head Austria Sony Music

Diana Lueger ? singer , musician , songwriter

Alexander Kahr ? producer

= = After Eurovision = =

As the winners of the 2014 contest , Austria was given the responsibility of hosting the 2015 contest . Shortly after the 2014 final , ORF confirmed the preliminary dates for the 2015 contest , as well as that several cities in Austria were competing to host the 60th edition of the Eurovision Song Contest . After a competition was held to determine the host venue , three cities were short @-@ listed by ORF : Vienna ; Innsbruck ; and Graz . On 6 August it was announced that the Wiener Stadthalle in Vienna would host the 2015 contest , scheduled to be held on 19 , 21 and 23 May 2015 . On 19 December 2014 , the hosts of the contest were announced , with Wurst taking on the role of green room host for the event .

On Wurst 's return to Austria after winning Eurovision , she was greeted at Vienna International Airport by thousands of fans and hundreds of journalists celebrating her victory . On 18 May she met with Werner Faymann , the Chancellor of Austria and Josef Ostermayer , the Minister of Arts , Culture , and Media at an official reception , followed by a performance on stage at Vienna 's Ballhausplatz to an audience of thousands of fans . The concert was however criticised by the conservative Austrian People 's Party , a member of the coalition government .

" Rise Like a Phoenix " went on to become a hit across Europe , reaching the top 3 in iTunes download charts in fourteen countries , including both Belarus and Russia , where she had courted controversy before the contest . The song also reached the top 10 in charts in twelve countries , including number one in Austria and the UK Indie Chart .

Wurst received both praise and criticism following her victory . Many celebrities sent their congratulations and support to Wurst via Twitter and other means , including Elton John , Cher , Lady Gaga , Boy George and Robbie Williams , as well as from fellow Eurovision winners Alexander Rybak , Emmelie de Forest , Lena Meyer @-@ Landrut and Charlotte Perrelli . However her victory was also met with negative reaction by some more conservative sections of European society . In Turkey , which had not taken part in the contest since 2012 , the government party AKP criticised Wurst 's win , with then @-@ Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan vowing that Turkey would never take part in the contest again and his colleague Volkan Bozkır proclaiming " Thank god we no longer participate in Eurovision " .

Church leaders in the Balkans have also claimed that Wurst 's win is responsible for floods in south @-@ east Europe in May 2014 , which left over 60 people dead . Metropolitan Amfilohije , the Montenegrin patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church claimed that " this [flood] is not a coincidence , but a warning " and a " reminder that people should not join the wild side " , Patriarch Irinej , the spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodox Serbs has reportedly said the floods are " divine punishment for their vices " and that " God is thus washing Serbia of its sins " . Wurst had previously been condemned by the Russian Orthodox Church . However Fr . Michael Unger , Tom Neuwirth 's childhood Catholic priest , condemned the homophobic backlash against him , and said that he is " just happy that he 's happy " .

In the wake of her Eurovision win , Wurst was invited onto several television programmes across Europe . Wurst appeared as a guest on several BBC programmes in the United Kingdom ; including The Graham Norton Show on 16 May , a chat show hosted by British commentator Graham Norton ; and on 23 May 2014 she appeared on The One Show and Newsnight . Wurst was invited onto the German talk show TV total on 4 June 2014 , hosted by former Eurovision contestant and host Stefan Raab , and was in demand by German broadcaster RTL as a new personality for their upcoming reality shows . Wurst also performed on the popular Swedish show Allsång på Skansen in July 2014 .

In June 2014 , Wurst headlined the Vienna Life Ball , Europe 's biggest charity event supporting people with HIV and AIDS , attending the event in a dress designed by Jean Paul Gaultier . Wurst has since modelled for both Gaultier and Karl Lagerfeld at several events .

Both before and after her Eurovision win , Wurst had become very involved with the LGBT community . In June 2014 Wurst recorded a message for the It Gets Better Project , an Internet @-@ based project devoted to preventing suicide among LGBT youth by having gay adults convey the message that their lives will improve , and to inspire change required to make life better for them

. Wurst was also invited to perform at several pride events in several cities across Europe , including in Stockholm , Zürich , Dublin , Berlin , Madrid , Amsterdam , London and Manchester among others . In October 2014 , British gay lifestyle magazine Attitude awarded Wurst with the ' Moment of the Year ' award for her win at Eurovision as part of the 2014 Attitude Awards .

In October 2014 , Wurst accepted an invitation by Ulrike Lunacek MEP , vice @-@ president of the Austrian Greens , to perform in a special concert at the European Parliament . The concert was organised by MEPs from 5 different parliamentary groups , with the aim to support the adoption of a report against homophobia and sexual discrimination in February . This was followed in November 2014 by a performance at the United Nations Office at Vienna and a meeting with the Secretary @-@ General of the United Nations Ban Ki @-@ moon . Ban hailed Wurst 's win as a " powerful message " , praising her promotion of respect for diversity , which he called a " core value " of the United Nations and that " discrimination has no place in the United Nations , nor in the world of the 21st century " . Wurst had also extended her CV into voice acting , voicing the character of Eva in the German dub of the computer @-@ animated film Penguins of Madagascar , spin @-@ off of the Madagascar film franchise .