

Ireland's Eurovision dancers grab headlines as China censors performance

Ireland's Ryan O'Shaughnessy survived the dreaded Eurovision 'Semi Final of death' - however his dancers have caused controversy in some parts of the world.

As the singer kickstarts his #LoveisLove campaign on social media, it has emerged that the Chinese broadcaster of Eurovision edited out the entire Irish performance from their broadcast of Tuesday's Semi Final as it depicted a gay romance.

Mango TV is run by Hunan TV, China's second largest broadcaster. It has been broadcasting the Eurovision in China since 2015.

Despite speculation Russia would not broadcast the Irish performance, it was shown in full. However the Russian commentator told viewers the song was about "true male friendship".

Mango TV also removed the entire Albanian performance from the broadcast, due to the ban on showing tattoos on TV.

Ryan - whose girlfriend Ailbhe Casey joined him in Lisbon on Monday - said the decision to include dancers as a gay couple was because he wanted to show love was universal.

It is the first time in Eurovision history that a same-sex couple have been featured on stage during as a main act during a performance - although there have been same-sex kisses on stage on occasion in the past.

Ryan has launched a new social media campaign - #LoveisLove - and is urging fans to take a picture with a loved one on a bench and post it to social media using #LoveisLove #Together and #Ireland.

Ireland's entry has shot up the bookies ranking as anticipation mounts it could be our best result in years.

Ryan's backing dancers, Alan McGrath and Kevin O'Dwyer, said they have been overwhelmed by the support they have received so far in Lisbon.

Alan grabbed headlines in 2013 as one of Ryan Dolan's backing dancers, the last year Ireland made the final. He's been dubbed Ireland's 'lucky charm' after he joined another Ryan on stage this year and Ireland once again qualified for the final.

Speaking about his Lisbon experience, Alan said:

"It's an incredible feeling. You can't even remember it after you come off stage, it's that breathtaking. The feeling is overwhelming, you just go into your own little world for the three minutes on stage."

Kevin agreed, saying: "I don't remember one second on stage, it just was a blur, the feeling just from the whole arena was amazing."

Almost 600,000 people tuned in for the results of Tuesday's semi final to see Ryan qualify for the final. Despite declining viewership in Ireland in recent years, Saturday's final is expected to be one of the most-watched TV shows of the year as Eurovision fever grips the nation once again.

Ryan O'Shaughnessy represents Ireland in the final of the 2018 Eurovision this Saturday at 8pm on RTE One.