

# ACCULTURATION STRATEGIES IN MUSICAL SELF-PRESENTATIONS OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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*Abstract: This paper is based on my research dealing with musicians – members of different immigrant minority communities who explicitly identify themselves with their ethnicity and the region of their origin. The musicians mention that they come, e.g., from Cuba, Ukraine or generally from “Central Asia” and the music offered to the audience is presented as “Cuban,” “Ukrainian folk” or “traditional music of Central Asia...” The subject of study is their concerts, regarded as musical occasions – performances – with defined modes of participants’ interaction. In the Goffmanian sense, the meaning of each self-presentation is determined by the behavior of the musicians during the performances, and the repertoire, place and occasion of the event and type of audience are considered as “bearers of signs.” In their self-presentations, the musicians expose in various ways who they are, where they come from and in various ways present the musical (not only) culture of their origin. Inspiring myself by typology of acculturation strategies formulated by John W. Berry (Berry et al. 1997), I try to identify acculturation strategies based on factors determining the character of the respective musical self-presentations of the immigrants. When can we observe behavior according to the principles of integration on the one hand and separation on the other? When using each strategy, how do the musicians assert themselves on the Czech musical scene?*

**Keywords:** *ethnomusicology; self-presentation; immigrants; acculturation strategies*

The number of immigrants in the Czech Republic rapidly increased after the fall of the communist regime in 1989. Today, there are many immigrant communities which differentiate in the quantity of their members. While more than 106,000

Ukrainians and 56,000 Vietnamese officially live in the Czech Republic in 2012, there are only 139 Congolese, 270 Iranians, 350 Cubans, 546 Kyrgyz, 1,316 Uzbeks and 5,019 Chinese (Život cizinců 2011). In Prague, but also in other Czech cities, one can attend performances of musicians, each one identifying himself/herself with some of above-mentioned immigrant communities and presenting his/her skills on specific occasions, in specific places and for different kinds of audience. I focused on musicians who perform their own creations declared as a music originating from or having a relationship to the country (e.g., Cuba) or region (e.g., Central Asia) of their origin. Presenters, but also the musicians themselves, call their performances explicitly “Ukrainian folk,” “Vietnamese,” “traditional” or “Cuban” music for entertainment.

At the beginning of my research I tried to find out characteristics of the music itself, where musicians perform, for whom and on which occasions. I was especially interested in the musicians’ expression and reference to their ethnic identity (e.g., “Vietnamese” or “Kyrgyz”) in musical performances. The central task of my research became an analysis and interpretation of musicians’ self-presentations during their performances. Beside the participant observation I also had semi-structured interviews with musicians as well as with some co-organizers of events or with the manager of a musical group. Non-formal interviews were very useful, especially during almost “private” events for an internal audience, e.g., a *Nowruz* (“Persian New Year”) celebration organized by members of the Uzbek community in Prague.

It is evident that immigrant musicians are conscious of performing in the Czech musical environment and they are able to adapt to different conditions, so which *acculturation strategies* do they invent and choose? This became the central question of my investigation.

## Theory

First, this research is based on/reflects the paradigm of ethnomusicology or anthropology of music: What is considered to be “music,” thus not only the sound itself, but also the human behavior related to learning, creating, performing and listening to sounds considered to be “musical” is the result of culturally designed/formed conceptualization (Merriam 1964). Being iconic and indexical (Turino 1999), music has not only the ability of expression or representation of something (Bohlmann 2005). It is also able to create and maintain human relationships and form communities (Kaufman Shelemay, 2001). According to Thomas Turino

(2008), music reflects social life. I am convinced that the study of musical phenomena enables the researcher to recognize the specific intentions of people and their perception of the environment where they live and create music.

Second, I decided to deal with musical activities of immigrant musicians in the sense of Goffman's interactionism (Goffman 1956). Musicians always perform for someone; they *present* themselves to an audience: I consider them to be active agents consciously developing the overall design of musical activities as their own *self-presentations* whose constitutive elements are planned in advance and performed in real time in front of listeners. The key element is the *interaction* of musicians with a supposed kind of audience and context of an event – time, place and especially occasion. All these aspects determine the personal appearance or the “personal front” of the musicians (Goffman 1956: 14) and the “setting” of their performances (Goffman 1956: 13). I concentrated mainly on live performances in real time, the “front region” (Goffman 1956: 66). However, through interviews with the musicians and my attendance at rehearsals I also wanted to explore the “back region” (Goffman 1956: 69), that means preparations and planning of performances, choice of repertoire and its arrangement, appearance of musicians (the visual expression of the musicians' intentions such as clothes, posture and gestures) and ways of behaving in front of an audience, place and form of publicity. According to this assumption, every self-presentation has specific traits – bearers of signs or “sign vehicles” (Goffman 1956: 1) – which permit it to be identified and interpreted in such a way.

Third, I found inspiration in the theory of *stratégies identitaires* (Camilleri et al.: 1990) and the typology of *acculturation strategies* developed by psychologist John W. Berry (Berry, Sam in Berry et al. 1997: 291–326) who dealt with consequences of intercultural contacts not only among immigrants. Berry regards the concept of acculturation as a process of individual psychological adaptation of people to a different cultural environment. Each strategy is worked out by groups and individuals with respect to two major issues: “1) cultural maintenance (to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered important by individuals), and 2) contact and participation (to what extent should individuals become involved in other cultural groups or remain primarily among themselves)” (Berry, Sam in Berry et al. 1997: 296). Berry thus defines five acculturation strategies: A first possibility is *assimilation*, when “individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures” (Berry, Sam in Berry et al. 1997: 297). On the contrary, when “the non-dominant group places a value on holding onto their original culture” (Berry, Sam in Berry et al. 1997:

297), then the *separation* strategy is chosen. When this mode of acculturation is pursued by the dominant group with respect to the non-dominant group, Berry calls it *segregation*. When there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture and interacting with other groups at the same time, integration is the option. (Berry, Sam in Berry et al. 1997: 297). According to Berry, this strategy seems to be the most advantageous and the most successful option. Finally, when there is "little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance and little interest in having relations with others, then *marginalization* is defined" (Berry, Sam in Berry et al. 1997: 297).

In the spectrum of ways of presentation of musicians' unique skills I finally identified a few variants where I let myself be inspired by the framework and basic assumptions of the above briefly-presented Berry's typology. Musicians employ different strategies which are based primarily on a relationship to an external (Czech) or internal (members of immigrant communities) audience on the other hand. There is no one choosing the *assimilation* strategy: All the musicians intentionally refer to their own ethno-cultural identity, which is not considered to be perceived as "Czech": via their musical activities during commercial or benefit concerts immigrants present, e.g., a "Ukrainian" or "Central Asian" identity to the Czech audience. On the other hand they also refer to those identities during private meetings where music becomes an "autotherapy of homesick hearts" (Janýl Chytyrbaeva, 23.1, 2010). I didn't identify any performance which could be associated with the *segregation* strategy.

I was able to recognize four different types of musical self-presentations which reflect traits of Berry's *integration*, *separation* and *marginalization*. The first two are completely opposite. On the one hand, there is the *impressive musical fusion*, which I regard as an elaborate promotion of an "exotic" music for Czechs. This basically integrative strategy is chosen by a Chinese singer, Feng yün Song, and an Iranian guitarist, Shahab Tolouie. On the other hand, the *music of invisible enclaves* is definitely separative and it is preferred by often anonymous musicians during performances of a private setting with a strictly internal audience. The "*ethnic*" *music for entertainment* strategy chosen, e.g., by Cuban groups performing in bars and restaurants has features of marginalization. Finally, I consider the last option, "*indigenous*" *music as an example of multiculturalism*, to be "seemingly integrative." This strategy is employed by musicians performing at "multicultural" festivals for a Czech audience such as the Central Asian group Jagalmay.

## Impressive musical fusion: integration

The first strategy is chosen by two musicians declaring themselves as professionals having their main income from their musical activities – the Iranian guitarist Shahab Toluie and the Chinese singer Feng yün Song. Although being of Persian and Chinese origin and referring to totally different cultural backgrounds, their musical activities share many similar features. They both create their own original compositions based on a fusion of music considered as traditionally typical for their homelands China and Iran with musical elements of various origins.

Feng yün Song sings “Chinese,” “Korean” or “Mongolian” folk songs performed by solo voice or with an accompaniment of different idiophones, percussions or other, mostly “ethnic,” instruments whose part is incorporated in minimalist, experimentally-sounding arrangements. The singer performs at two types of concerts organized by herself. Feng yün Song often presents her creations at intimate, almost meditative “musical sessions” with approximately 17 people in the audience, who also participate during some parts of an improvised performance. Their active and spontaneous participation completes the impression of musical pieces which are often designed to be created directly on the stage of a small music club or tearoom. Moreover, Feng yün Song organizes an annual festival related to Chinese New Year celebrations. This event has already reached some level of publicity in the Czech Republic – the festival is mentioned in some, although specialized, radio or TV programs or it is possible to notice some posters and smaller billboards informing about the festival even situated in the Prague city center. There the singer performs the same songs as at the sessions at tearooms. However, she also invites different musicians to participate in this event. A non-musical program of the festival offers a promotion of her own musicoterapeutic activities, tea culture and esotericism.

Shahab Toluie, playing the flamenco and classical guitar or Persian chordophones such as the three stringed lute *tar*, interprets his own compositions based on “traditional Persian” and flamenco elements. The musician invented his own musical fusion which he characterized as “ethnoflamenco.”<sup>1</sup> This Iranian guitarist and singer performs his compositions with an accompaniment of several guitarists who participate in his ensemble and he occasionally works with other instrumentalists, usually percussionists. Some compositions are only instrumental, but the musician

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<sup>1</sup> “I use flamenco techniques in that, but it is not pure flamenco, so that is why...because since I add ethnic elements..., I felt the best word to describe this style would be ‘ethnoflamenco’” (Shahab Toluie, 16. 1. 2012).

sometimes sings his adaptations of Persian poems by famous “classical” authors such as Rumi or Hafez. His musical performances resemble “Western” art music concerts – they are organized in various concert halls, theaters or clubs not only in the Czech Republic. Shahab Tlouie participated with his ensemble in various festivals in Moldova, Ukraine and Turkey. However, concerts named “The Persian New Year Celebration” can be considered as highlights of his activities. In addition to Shahab Tlouie and his ensemble, other musicians and dancers participated at this event linked with the Zoroastrian holiday *Nowruz* – the “Persian New Year” – and constituted different performances with elaborated and impressive scenography.

It is worthy of mention that performances of these musicians are not attended by an internal public, i.e., by members of their immigrant communities. Only a very few Chinese or Iranians are exceptionally present at their concerts. On the contrary, Feng yün Song and Shahab Tlouie are musicians who desire to build their professional careers on the basis of their special and, in the Czech Republic, quite unique abilities, which they want to present to a basically external public. Both of these musicians are charismatic individuals whose musical talent together with their skills represents a useful tool which is utilizable in the creation of their musical self-presentation. Their concerts have a carefully elaborated conception of performance setting with the usage of professionally-made promotional materials and apparent care for personal image and way of presentation to their audience – the Czech public. In addition to live performances, both musicians have realized their own professional audio recordings.

They also recognize the importance of establishing contact with the Czech musical environment. Shahab Tlouie and Feng yün Song work with Czech musicians and with famous individuals such as David Koller or Emil Viklický, among others. However, this cooperation is designed rather as a support for their personal dominance, which remains unquestionable. A familiarity with the Chinese opera singing style, perfect knowledge of the Czech language in the former and acquaintance with theoretical principles of Persian music combined with guitar virtuosity in the latter case can be considered as the constitutive element of the “know-how” of their professional musicianship. At the same time, the musicians recognized that “pure” Chinese opera singing or “Persian traditional music” would not be as attractive to the external Czech public as the *impressive musical fusion* is<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the musicians use their specific skills related to their origins,

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<sup>2</sup> “Basically this kind of fusers were those who presented their music to the world, their culture to the world... If Ravi Shankar played only traditional music, he would not be too well known. Of course they

but, on the other hand, they feel the necessity of invention and flexibility in the sense of preference of experimentation and fusion with distinct musical elements, apparently becoming very fruitful and popular at the present time. A combination of the two factors enables them to create sophisticated and attractive “exotic” music which is acceptable to a Czech or an international audience. In such a way, the musicians are able to reflect current multi-faceted reality with their activities. Each self-presentation of the musicians is very impressive: while Shahab Tolouie pays attention to his “personal front,” gestures, behavior on the scene, texts of promotional materials and their visual design, the presentation of Feng yün Song is not so evident at first glance. The power and persuasiveness of her musical personality emanate from her behavior and acting with participants of musical events which are not explicitly presented as “unique” or “amazing.” Nevertheless, Feng yün Song is able to impress the audience not only with her singing but also with her therapeutically guided communication.

This strategy could be thus considered as a type of “successful” integration. The musicians who employ this strategy do not intend to stay in the closed and invisible sphere of their communities with the internal public. At the same time they do not want to stay on the margins of the Czech musical scene such as those musicians choosing “*ethnic*” music for entertainment marginalizing strategy or the “*exotic*” music as an example of multiculturalism strategy which is “seemingly” integrative.

## Music of Invisible Enclaves: Separation

Musical performances are often part of private meetings organized by immigrant minority communities in the Czech Republic which are held on the occasion of some important religious or secular holiday celebrated in the native homeland

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have great traditional... you know Indian masters, but one of them goes and starts fusing by collaborating with George Harrison, with this and that... And this way he presents the music to the world and make it a little bit understandable for the Western audience. So this is, this was something that I realized, that was missing in our music. We have traditional music, we have pop musicians who are understandable only for Persians or for Iranians in general, but there was one category missing over there. It was fusionists. And that's what I got in Spain. When I was studying with my teacher I realized, OK, I play something which is a copy. And they will never play better than me, you know in my Persian music, they can never play better Persian music than me and I can never play and feel flamenco better than them. Because... always this kind of traditional music has a root in culture and in history. And to play the traditional music, you have to be born over there, to understand it, exactly... Of course, I can play Moravian music, but I can never play it like Moravians. Because it's a culture, you know. So I realized, it's better to get the technique and to mix it, to fuse it in my way and to express it my own way.“ (Shahab Tolouie, 16. 1. 2012).



(e.g., the Vietnamese *Tet*, the Central Asian *Nowruz*, the Ukrainian *St. Melanie*, *Kazakhstan Day*). From time to time, such events have organizational support from official diplomatic representatives or minority associations; sometimes they are the results of the personal initiative of a few community members.

I decided to regard these events as “invisible” due to their discrete character; except for some rare invitations situated sporadically, e.g., on specialized websites, the events are not promoted and invitations for interested visitors are communicated only personally. News about those events sometimes appears in minority periodicals or on Internet websites. For this reason the audience is always constituted only of members of immigrant minorities, except for a few Czechs who are friends of theirs. Although such events have a prearranged structure, it is possible to perceive many informal elements as well. There is usually someone who moderates the whole evening and introduces each part of the program – this also concerns the musicians and their performance.

On the one hand, organizers invite existing musical formations, otherwise regularly playing for a different audience, to participate in a community event: this is the case of the folk-music group *Ignis* performing at the Ukrainian “*Malanka*” ball or Central Asian musicians performing at the *Nowruz* celebration organized in 2010 by the Uzbek community in Prague. Those musicians are not professionals; music making is only their hobby and their activities have a non-profit character. On the other hand, especially at the Vietnamese *Tet*, or New Lunar Year, celebrations it is possible to notice many “unknown” and almost anonymous musicians who perform their chosen piece only at special community events as volunteers. The Czech language is usually not used during the whole event except, e.g., for greetings like “good evening” (*dobry večer*). Musicians perform their own arrangements of folk and “traditional,” but also modern, songs which are popular in their homeland. The performed pieces are thus related to the culture of the community’s origin or they refer to something “foreign” that is nevertheless perceived as attractive, entertaining and preferred by the audience: we can thus hear Persian, Arabic and Russian songs at an Uzbek meeting as well as imitators of Czech pop singers at a Vietnamese *Tet* celebration. All the performed pieces are received with an apparent and often nostalgic<sup>3</sup> acquaintance by the audi-

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<sup>3</sup> As noted by Viktor Rajčinec, the leader of the Ukrainian folk music group *Ignis*: “We played in Plzeň. You have also been there, I remember it...so it was interesting that people were coming out of the hall, I was putting the musical instruments in the car and then some old people came to me and they told me: “We haven’t heard those songs for twenty years...and we started to remember...twenty years...” So you see, it’s great that we played it and they remembered....And in Eastern Slovakia, it was the same



ence. Members of the audience sometimes participate together with musicians by dancing or music making themselves or they ask musicians to perform some concrete compositions. These events are totally different from events where the identical immigrant musicians perform for Czechs. The informal and pleasant atmosphere is nourished by the familiarity of the audience with the repertoire and their participation. Musical performances coincide with Thomas Turino's participatory music making model (Turino 2008: 28–51). An important role is also played by an accompanying program together with an offer of “national” food catering such as an Uzbek *plov* or a Vietnamese New Year's menu.

According to the presented theoretical typology of acculturation strategies, this case could be interpreted as *separation*. By their participation at musical performances and other parts of the program, members of immigrant minorities revive a piece of their own former world of their homelands during such events. That is the reason why I call this strategy the *music of invisible enclaves*. It seems that immigrant minorities often live unnoticed next to the Czech majority and they are invisible to the Czechs although their cultural events are attended by 60 Central Asians or a few hundred Vietnamese or Ukrainians. During these events, distinct ethno-cultural enclaves are brought back: one can feel oneself to be in Vietnam, Central Asia or Ukraine for a while. All the performed pieces are “insider” oriented. Therefore, any adaptation for “outsiders” is needless as well as an invented or reinforced “authenticity.” Whereas members of the Central Asian group Jagalmay play for Czechs on the *rubab* lute and a dancer presents “Uygur” dances, later the same musicians play an electronic keyboard or a guitar and music playback accompanies belly dancing of the same dancer in front of a Kyrgyz audience. Vietnamese volunteers often present various popular music pieces which are not directly related to the New Lunar Year celebration. However, the main task of those performers is entertainment of their “own” internal audience<sup>4</sup>. They do not want to impress the listeners with original virtuoso creations, nor earn money for their special musical “craft,” nor represent an idealized form of “their” musical culture to Czechs.

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situation. They were so impressed. They said: “It's balm for the soul”...or: “Oh, this song, I sang it as a child!” (Viktor Rajčinec, 5.2.2010).

<sup>4</sup> According to a Vietnamese co-organizer of the Vietnamese community Tet celebration in Teplice, “During the whole year, all the people are interested in business; they are stressed and have a lot of worries...so then the people want to relax and they want to be entertained. Basically, the program should be designed to entertain everybody, all generations.” (Thuy Duong Trinh, 22.2.2010).

## “Ethnic” music for Entertainment: Marginalization

Music characterized by presenters, organizers and often by immigrant musicians themselves as “ethnic” has various forms and functions. During my research I found out that some musicians of immigrant origin perform regularly at Prague bars and restaurants and they entertain guests with their musical skills. This is the case of groups playing various genres and styles presented as “Latino” music, such as the Cuban ensemble *Santy y su Marabú*. The group consists of several musicians of Cuban, other Latin American and also Czech origin. In addition to the founding members, other musicians are often only temporary members of the group. With their repertoire of their own arrangements of Cuban “traditionals” performed on “typical” Cuban instruments such as the Cuban guitar – *trés cubano*, the bass guitar, the *conga*, *bonga* or other regionally “typical” types of percussions, the flute and sometimes some brass instruments and the keyboard they appear in Prague music clubs such as the *Popocafépetl* or *Jazzdock* and they participate in festivals and events related to Latin American dance and entertainment. However, in a small “Cuban trio” they often accompany private meetings with their music and perform in up-scale restaurants and bars situated in the city center such as the bar *La Casa de la Havana Vieja* in Prague 1. Every Thursday, the frontman of the group playing the *trés cubano* arrives there at 8 PM with two or three other musicians. Situated in a corner of the bar, they usually perform the same songs as at various concerts, just in more modest arrangements without sonorous instruments such as the flute or the trumpet. The musicians play practically indifferently and without considerable attention of the bar’s guests, who only occasionally pay attention to their playing. According to the bar’s official website, the musical accompaniment of those Cuban musicians helps to invoke a “real Cuban atmosphere.” The presence of “live” musicians from Cuba with their music is thus a marketing strategy to increase the attractiveness of the bar.

According to my observations and accounts from interviews, I decided to regard this strategy as *marginalization*. Although their music is presented as “authentic” and “traditional” Cuban *son*, it is not perceived as completely strange and unusual for a Czech audience. It is generally known that Cuban or Latin American musical elements such as basic rhythmic patterns have been naturalized in European popular music since the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The members of *Santy y su Marabú*, professionals with a musical education obtained in Cuba, can use their musical skills the way they learned them without the necessity of a change or adaptation, unlike the above-mentioned *Feng yün*

Song or Shahab Tolouie. The original purpose of the music of Santy y su Marabú and other similar ensembles is for “dance and entertainment.”<sup>5</sup> However, even during the group’s performances at summer festivals with large audiences, it is often not easy to persuade people to dance. The music seems to be too complex for listeners, except for occasionally present salsa connoisseurs<sup>6</sup>. This is the first aspect of marginalization.

Second, the concerts of the complete group mostly during summer festivals and sometimes in clubs are less numerous and less important than regular playing of the Santy Trio in bars and restaurants, which is the major income of the musicians. According to the manager of the group, the musicians live by their music. Especially in those places and contexts, the music performed by the Santy Trio seems to be mere, although “unique and original,” sonic accompaniment of bar or restaurant guests’ conversations. The ability of the Cubans to offer an “authentic” form of their “own” music represents a unique possibility of application of their skills and special musical “craft,” not as a means of nostalgic longing for their homeland, but for making a living here in the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, the musicians are rarely noticed by the audience, who perceive their playing as a part of the atmosphere of the entertainment in the bar. On the other hand, the musicians seem to be satisfied with their position and roles which they perform<sup>7</sup>. They are not inclined to experimentation or inventions of something very new and original; they do not intend to become “famous” as those who choose the *impressive musical fusion* strategy. Instead of this they are faithful to the Cuban *son* and they just practice and use what they have learned. Although they sometimes perceive their activities as routine and non-reflected by the audience, they represent for them the advantage of living in the Czech Republic, e.g., without the necessity

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<sup>5</sup> As Kalanda Kititi, a Congolese guitarist said: “In my concerts, I want people to come, dance and have a good time, you see?...When there are Africans, they dance; that’s the greatest atmosphere. It’s necessary to feel relaxed, so often they dance....But Czechs...they are shy, they wait until others are already dancing and then they join, so it’s good atmosphere when the Czechs start to dance with the Africans.” (Kalanda Kititi, 16.4.2010).

<sup>6</sup> “There are some few people who come to dance the salsa; they know the steps...But the majority of the Czech audience...it’s very difficult to get the Czech audience to dance. People are shy and withdrawn.” (Bibiana Jiménez Smith, 12.1.2012).

<sup>7</sup> The manager of Santy y su Marabú told me the following: “There are places, restaurants...expensive restaurants in good prestigious locations in the city center of Prague as on Pařížská street, for example... And there the group is limited...just play...minimum volume...so as not to disturb the guests so they can chat...And the group is disgusted by it...Because to play and sing with minimum volume, that’s silly... But they take it as their job: “Yea, it’s our job, we are paid for it...so we play what and how they like and we get paid.” (Bibiana Jiménez Smith, 12.1.2012).

of knowledge of the Czech language. While groups such as *Santy y su Marabú* practice and even live by their musical activities, their music is perceived by the local audience as something exotic and complex. Within the category of popular music for entertainment their music therefore stays at the margins of the Czech musical scene. These are the other aspects of marginalization in this strategy.

### **“Exotic” music as an example of multiculturalism: “Seeming Integration”**

The last strategy is chosen by musicians obviously presenting their performances as “traditional music” within the context of festivals organized in the public and open spaces of city squares or as musical accompaniment during thematic events organized by NGOs and related to migrants and their life in the Czech Republic. In the former case, musical performances take place on big outdoor podiums, in the latter in small theaters or coffee houses, but always with free admission. On the one hand, there are events which are focused on one ethnicity (“Ukrainian *soirée*,” Plzeň) or they are “multiethnic” on the other (Refufest, Prague). In some cases, such events attract the attention of almost a few hundred people: youths, families with children, inquisitive passers-by, pensioners, tourists and homeless people, among others. The musical program usually consists of many different performances. Each group or performer presents some few short musical pieces. Costumes, dances and different instruments are welcome by the public. Careful observation enabled me to find out that the repertoire of performed pieces is not large and one can see a performer presenting the same pieces in Prague as one month ago in another Czech city. Nevertheless, most of the visitors watch the performers for the first and usually for the last time. The audience briefly pays attention to some few performances of anonymous and unknown musicians, looks at “exotic” dances and colorful costumes, tastes different “ethnic” foods and goes away. Only a small number of participants watch the whole musical program.

Musicians and other performers participating in those events are not professionals who would live by their musical activities. Performers such as an Iranian poet or a Mongolian girl singing and playing their “traditional” instruments perform as volunteer individuals or join groups or ensembles whose member base is unstable, often formed for a concrete event. Among others, this is the case of the group *Jagalmay*, founded by Kyrgyz journalist *Janyl Chytyrbaeva* from a musical family living and working in Prague. The ensemble consists of several members who come from various countries of the Central Asian region.

Except for the three-member female “core” of the group, the majority of the other members join the group only temporarily. All the members of the ensemble are thus amateur musicians variously positioned and integrated in the Czech society whose participation in the ensemble is motivated by a desire “to console their homesick hearts.” The group presents its own arrangements of folk or semi-folk musical compositions from diverse Central Asian countries with the accompaniment of instruments traditionally utilized in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan such as the *komuz* lute, the *temir komuz* Jew’s harp, the *doira* frame drum, or other chordophones and percussion of Arabic, Persian or Turkish origin. The musicians meet irregularly and they often enjoy spontaneous music making in privacy. The repertoire of Jagalmay thus originates from improvisation-based contributions of each member. Some pieces are only vocal and instrumental, while others are accompanied by dances performed by several members or by the youngest member – the daughter of one of the Kyrgyz singers who performs solo dance parts. All the members wear several traditional-like costumes and different headgears associated with a concrete Central Asian region. Clothes and head-covers are consequently changed even during a performance according to the origin of the song currently played.

Performances of Jagalmay and similar ensembles or groups could be characterized as a declaration of an exoticism and tangible difference reified on an aural and visual level. Several Central Asian identities expressed in musicians’ self-presentations then seem to be flexible categories which can be employed according to situational circumstances: when performing Uzbek songs, Kyrgyz musicians wear Uzbek costumes and vice versa. When arranging their repertoire, the musicians mix together different Central Asian elements and resultant arrangements are created within a process of bricolage. However, they refuse musical borrowings which are not considered as traditionally used in Central Asian musics so they do not “modernize” or adapt their music to make it commercially more acceptable by adding, e.g., Western musical elements. This strategy is based on an accentuation of their own “original” and unique traits and their instrumentalization in the sense of their intended usage for “demonstrative” purposes. Because of their intentionally reinforced difference or alterity, the musicians can thus perform only at certain of the above-mentioned events and it is not possible to utilize their music making as an attractive and cashable art or entertainment. It is worthy of mention that ensembles similar to Jagalmay do not appear at solo concerts organized without a relation to some extra-musical occasion.

Although the musicians have the possibility to perform in front of an often numerous, mostly Czech, audience a few times per year, their integration into the Czech musical sphere is only “seeming” because they can enter it only during special occasions: Individuals and ensembles similar to the Central Asian group Jagalmay are invited to participate in festivals or events linked with a sphere of “multiculturalism” and “migration,” such as the Refufest, Respect festival, Ethnica Poetica, or Praha srdce národů. According to the organizers, a supposed purpose of such events is an increase of the informational level of the Czech general public about different cultures, life experience and difficulties of migrants and refugees. The most characteristic feature of this strategy is its *spectacularity*: The program of those festivals and events does not consist only of musical performances; there are usually “multicultural” catering, exhibitions of photographs or souvenir-like objects “typically” representing each region and its culture. The main purpose of everything that is presented there is an “example of multiculturalism.” Musical pieces are recontextualized and they adopt this new role: The more “exotic” and “entertaining” a musical performance, dance or costumes seem to be, the more the audience clap their hands. Performers intentionally choose “typical” musical and other cultural traits in an idealized form and they present their, e.g., Central Asian, Vietnamese or Ukrainian “culture” as a collection of artifacts or curiosities: Central Asia is associated with high white headgear of men, Jew’s harps, the Kyrgyz *komuz* lute or the Uzbek drum *doira* and singing in different Turkic languages; Vietnamese musicians perform an extract from *ca trù* and “lion dances” in red and gold costumes. All the exposed traits should be easily identified with a concrete “culture” or “ethnicity” as its symbolic markers. However, the ethos of “exoticism” and “alterity” is common to *all* of the performers. Due to this alterity [in other words, meaning something like this: “We (immigrants) live with you (Czechs), but we are totally different from you”] they can be part of the Czech musical scene, but only during those special occasions and contexts. For this reason the musical activities corresponding to this strategy stay only *seemingly integrative*.

## Conclusion

It is evident that the way of self-presentation of musicians influences their position and possibilities on the Czech musical scene. The chosen acculturation strategy determines the place, audience, occasion and context of the event and each musician has different benefits from it. There are several types of musicianship

practiced by immigrant musicians from one-off amateurs to professionals or highly motivated amateurs. First, it seems that all the musicians mentioned and their activities have relatively little publicity. Even those who have chosen the most auspicious strategy, inventive and flexible integration in the form of *impressive musical fusion*, have not become famous or even known to the general public. Regular Czech listeners of immigrant musicians could be characterized as “specialists” whose interest in this music has some particular reasons – from a belief in the relaxation potentials of Chinese music to the conviction that Cuban music dulcifies a meeting of friends in the bar or the curiosity of a boy who joins his Vietnamese girlfriend at the New Lunar Year celebration. However, the four strategies differentiate by levels of their “visibility”: While a billboard inviting to the SongFest (Chinese New Year Celebration festival founded and organized every year by Feng yün Song) can attract the curiosity of a random passer-by, Jagalmay’s performance at Refufest requires some interest in refugees or “foreign cultures” in general. Finally, performances of foreign musicians at community meetings are known only to those who obtain a personal invitation.

From the typology of acculturation strategies point of view, the four kinds of self-presentations presented are related to different integration and identity formation strategies. Application of this theoretical viewpoint lets us understand why there are musicians who prefer to interact with a Czech audience and those who prefer to stay “invisible” and known only in their own community. Nevertheless, the aforementioned four strategies should not be considered as completely stable and definitely bound categories applied exclusively by such or such musician. On the contrary, the musicians often utilize different strategies according to the situational context: this is the case of musicians performing for a Czech audience as well as for listeners from their minority in various circumstances. Although the first “integrative” *impressive musical fusion* strategy seems to be the most successful, I do not consider each strategy as more or less “successful”: Musicians are active agents who choose and elaborate their self-presentations and they consciously realize their intentions there.

In conclusion, the way immigrants *treat* their music, how they adapt and arrange it, how they conceptualize the “authenticity” or “representativeness” of their music (representing “their” culture to Czechs), and the way of their overall self-presentation reflect the character and level of their integration in the Czech environment. The framework of their activities is based on the identification and fulfillment of expectations of an audience with whom they aspire to interact. Different features of each musical self-presentation then imply their acceptability



and appropriateness in each context: the greater the attractiveness for a Czech audience, the higher the probability of commercial success, for example. In any case, by performing “their” music in the Czech Republic, the immigrants utilize their unique skills. This can serve many purposes from a hobby or autotherapeutic activity curing homesickness to musicking as livelihood.

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