

■ Music as identity marker: individual vs. collective

Dan Lundberg*

Abstract In today's society, music plays a key role as an indicator of and a tool for change. Many typical tendencies can be observed and investigated in the study of music. This article investigates in which arenas and in what situations music can function as marker of identity. I have tried to focus on the tensions that can occur between the individual and the collective. Persons in key positions in different fields of this arena have been studied and interviewed.

Keywords Music, identity marker, change, individual, collective, folk music

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Our music – whose musicians?

At the end of the 1980s, the audiocassette *Govenda me* was recorded by the culture organisation *Hünerkom* in Düsseldorf, West Germany (released in 1990). *Hünerkom* is a cultural organisation with political ambitions and a more or less outspoken connection to PKK (the Kurdish Labour Party). *Hünerkom* acts on an international level with a focus on 'the Kurdish issue'. The organisation promotes and distributes Kurdish literature and music and is an important arranger of events such as festivals and meetings.

The cassette *Govenda me* has a distinct ethnic or national appearance, not least the title which means 'our dances'. The cassette lacks information in any other language than Kurdish and is obviously directed towards an exclusively Kurdish audience. The cover depicts five armed Kurdish soldiers marching in a field in front of a large mountain range. Some of the rocks in the background have the form of human faces. The first tune on the cassette starts with the rattle from machine guns accompanied by the ululation of some women – *zilgitar*.¹ The volley is mixed with shouting, and after a few moments this is succeeded by a fiery and furious *zurna*² and intensive drumming on a *davul*.³ For anyone initiated in 'the Kurdish issue', the hidden meaning of the arrangement cannot be missed: both the music and the dance form part of the battle against the Turkish oppressors. The music is used to create and strengthen the Kurdish community – to unite the people. By claiming the music on the cassette as 'ours', the publishers have not only indicated the origin of the dances but also given themselves identity as a group. 'We are Kurds, and we have our own music, our own language and our own culture, and from this follows that we have the right to be a people – a nation'. The fact that a *zurna* is the lead instrument on the first tune is also of great symbolic value. The shrill, penetrating and aggressive sound of the instrument is not only associated with folk music but also with combats and war, not least because of its use in the Ottoman military ensemble – the Janissary. But the *zurna* has also become a symbol for Turkish folk culture in general. An interesting paradox, considering the fact that *zurna* players in Turkey are normally of non-Turkish origin. At Turkish weddings, the *zurna* players are often of Kurdish or Roma descent (Lundberg, 1994:45,132). In light of this, the title "our dances" becomes a way of pointing out that the music and the instruments actually belong to the Kurdish people and not to the Turks. All the recordings on the cassette represent traditional dance music from Anatolia. The melodies are performed on traditional wind instruments used in the folk music of that area: *zurna*, *mey* and *bilor*.⁴ The accompaniments are performed on traditional drums and string instruments.

Ziya Aytekin, a Turkish musician who has lived in Sweden since 1979, plays all the wind instruments. So we have here a Turkish musician playing for Kurds – is that possible, or more important – is it permissible? Supposedly, a Kurdish audience would not accept that an 'enemy', a Turk, plays their dances. And for the same reason, a

Turkish musician would find it problematic playing Kurdish music, not least considering PKK policy.

Figure 1 – Ziya Aytekin and Edip Akinci with friends playing at a wedding party in Stockholm.



Illustration: Ann Ahlbom Sundqvist

The question becomes even more complicated as it turns out that the Turkish musician has, on his own initiative, reissued the cassette in Sweden with a new title, *Oyunlarimiz*, which is Turkish for 'our dances'. So, who can claim ownership of the dances, and further, who are the 'we' that 'our dances' refers to? Are Turks and Kurds part of a mutual folk music tradition? If this is the case, it might be possible to talk about a collective 'we' that includes the entire population of Asia Minor. PKK would hardly agree to that description, and neither would Turkish nationalists. Both groups would probably state the opposite, that the Kurdish tradition is completely different from the Turkish and vice versa.

Naturally, several dances can be, and are, used by both groups, dances that have obviously been claimed by the 'others'. Issues regarding the origin of cultural expressions are often hot topics in political controversies. Ethnic or national rights deal to a large extent with the right to one's 'own' culture, to be allowed to speak one's own language, and so on. And for expressing a specific ethnic uniqueness, music, dance and other cultural forms have important functions as markers of group identity.

An important characteristic for a symbol is its potential of carrying multiple meanings. The condition for this ambiguity is in fact that the symbol's relationship to what it symbolises is not based on resemblance, which is why flags and emblems and cultural expressions in the form of clothes, music, dance and even food can function as symbols or membership markers. The relationship between the symbol and the

expression/event/ sentiment being symbolised rests on the intersubjective interpretation of its meaning. But this ambiguity is also the reason for controversy.

As we can see, a constant game is being played in the arena of social life, a kind of power struggle between different groups and organisations. Membership markers are distinctive features of this game. The most obvious examples are uniforms: armies and football teams display their affiliation through their clothes. Equally, folk costumes and hip-hop fashion display the same kind of group belonging.

In Bosnia in former Yugoslavia, we have witnessed the struggle with people openly fighting for the right to specific symbols. What makes a Croat, a Serb or a Bosniac – a Catholic, a Serbian-Orthodox or a Muslim? The ethnic and religious mixture of Bosnia has gone from being a scene of exciting cultural diversity to a horrendous war zone in which peaceful neighbours become enemies.

The multicultural context constitutes an arena in which many different groups fight for recognition. Mark Slobin talks about 'cultural brand-naming' – an attempt to claim musical expression as the property of a group. In the same way that a flag, an emblem or a uniform can symbolise a certain organisation or group, thereby also symbolising its ideology and values, music – and musical instruments in particular – can be infused with symbolic functions as identity emblems. *Bouzouki* music symbolises a Greek identity, the bagpipes symbolise a Scottish identity, the *nyckelharpa* (keyed fiddle) symbolises a Swedish identity, despite the fact that it is known that the bouzouki belongs to a family of long-necked lutes common to most nations around the eastern Mediterranean, and that bagpipes are one of the oldest European folk instruments and part of a Eurasian cultural heritage with roots in the Middle Ages.

In the multicultural arena, the musicians – and other expressive specialists – have an important status as qualified bearers and interpreters of their groups' cultural identities. If something is to be made visible, it must be given shape; it must be expressed and dramatised, and this requires access to skills of expression. The right kind of skills is necessary but not sufficient in itself to visualise identity. For this, context is needed, in other words, visibility emerges through access to situations, arenas and conditions in which it is both possible and relevant to display cultural differences.

Figure 2 – The Nyckelharpa – a symbol for Sweden, here on the Swedish 50 kronor note.



A primary function of group symbols is their potential as ethnic markers. Thus, music can indicate belonging and community. 'Ownership' entails keeping a careful watch on the symbols that are used. There is an ongoing struggle for ethnic symbols in which cultural brand-naming functions as a kind of claim to available expressive forms. In such contexts, a great deal of effort is often focused on proving historic links between one's group and the origins of a musical instrument or a musical genre. And while a symbol indicates belonging, it also marks dissociation. By signalling 'us', we single out 'the others'. Or, in the case of the Kurds, we are Kurds but at the same time, and equally important, we are not Arabs, Turks, Swedes, Christians, etc.

However, there is an important difference between various types of organised affinity. Group membership displays differing degrees of compatibility, even in cases where membership is marked by the use of similar symbols. As Ronström (1996) states, pensioners' clubs display the same type of attributes for group identity as ethnic groups: special music, dance, clothes, etc. But at the same time, in another context or situation, a pensioner can claim a completely different identity that represents his or her nationality, religion, gender, etc. Simply put, our actions are based on the fact that we possess and have at our disposal a number of identities that can be used in different occasions and different contexts. But not all group identities are compatible.

The example of *Govenda me* illustrates the symbolic potential of the music. Depending on how the music is perceived, it can be either Kurdish or Turkish. The same music can symbolise two different identities and, in this case, the music also represents two political opponents in present-day Turkey. The reason why we experience this as a paradox, has partly to do with the fact that folk music has been ascribed a very strong connection to ethnicity and origin. If Ziya Aytekin had been a musician in the fields of popular music or art music, the existence of the two cassettes would have given rise to other objections, such as issues of copyright legislation.

Musical chameleons

Who is the musician behind the ambiguous music on *Govenda me*? How is it that a musician can choose to perform as a Turk in one instance and as a Kurd in another without being accused as a traitor by either group? In this particular case, there are many co-operating factors that can explain how one and the same individual is able to perform in two such different and ethnically specific contexts. First, it is common in Asia Minor, as in many other places in the world, to 'bring in' musicians from neighbouring ethnic groups. Traditionally, both ethnic Turks and Arabs have left much of the instrumental music making to Roma musicians (here, the term Roma is used to denote other folk groups, not just 'ethnic' Roma). In addition, the Islamic religion has an ambivalent attitude towards music and music making, since both can be considered a sin according to some interpretations of the religion.

In Turkey, the instruments zurna and davul are associated with Roma musicians, though this practice varies in different parts of the country. In the eastern parts of Anatolia, zurna music is often performed by the Abdal, a group of people that from an ethnic point of view is often regarded as Turkish, but who often label themselves as Gypsies (Lundberg, 1994:133). A negative attitude towards profane music making can also be found among the Christians in this area. Although a zurna player needs to necessarily be regarded as a sinner, musicians in the folk music sphere are associated with the *zutoye*, the lowest class of people in Assyrian/Syrian society (Lundberg, 2009). In other parts of Middle Eastern music life, the musicians are of Greek, Albanian, Armenian or Jewish heritage and they are not chosen for their ethnic origins but for their skills. Of further importance is the fact that immigrant communities in northern Europe often have difficulty finding competent musicians within their own groups and that they therefore have to spend a lot of money on bringing in musicians from the home country instead of choosing somebody from a different ethnic group. Weddings are particularly interesting in that the demand for quality music is so high that it can be extremely tricky finding 'group' musicians who can master the skills needed.⁵

The example of 'our dances' (*Govenda me*) also illustrates another complex field of ethnomusicology: the function of music as a uniting symbol and the role of musicians as representatives and mediators of tradition, ethnicity and, in extension, identity. Again, who is the musician behind this ambiguous music? Considering the marketing of the cassette, surely the musician is a cold-hearted calculating music-machine selling his music to the highest bidder? Or maybe he is a musical chameleon who has no moral concerns whatsoever? Actually, Ziya Aytekin is neither a cold-hearted music-machine nor an amoral chameleon, but he does help illustrate the fact that there are no indisputable or universal answers to how individual musicians think or function in terms of 'belonging'. And from the perspective of the musicians, it turns out that the double or multi-ethnic situation is often not a problem:

"Yes, I am Turkish, but at the same time you can say that music has no nationality and no borders. If you have the skills required you can play any music. When you play, it doesn't matter if the music is of Arabic, Syrian, Turkish or Kurdish origin. When you are in to the

music you just play and it all comes together. Of course you can listen and say: 'oh yes, this is Arabic, and that is Armenian and that is Turkish'. You can distinguish between different kinds of music. But when I play it... Then it's just MUSIC and I can truly say that the music I am playing knows no boundaries." (Aytekin, Ziya, personal interview, 12.02.1996).⁶

From Ziya Aytekin's point of view music has no boundaries. But at the same time it is obvious that music, more than ever before, constitutes an important boundary marker between different groups in society. It has become more and more common to use ethnic labels to describe music, and folk music in particular. This tune is Swedish, that one is Norwegian or Russian, Korean, Indian, Jewish, etc., or in an even more subtle way to discriminate between regional styles and genres. But there are deeper dimensions to the symbolic meaning of music of a more individual or personal character. When we hear Turkish folk music, memories of Turkey surface in our minds. For Swedes who have been on vacation in Turkey, the memories are filled with images of the sun, beaches, swimming, taverns and people they met. The music symbolises a link to specific experiences. The music will also evoke images of Turkey for a Turk, but these will be other images, such as remembrances of the home village, childhood experiences and friends or enemies. When Ziya Aytekin plays the same piece of music to Kurds and Turks here in Sweden, it evokes feelings of recognition or nostalgia. But we can be pretty certain that their experiences differ.

Music, identity and politics

When people move to a new place they bring their music with them. Often the meaning of the music changes. Sometimes it is used for other purposes; for instance it can become a tool for bringing people together. Many immigrants testify that if it were not for the music, they would never have met in the new country.

"So we began to organise parties in Motala, in Linköping and in Gothenburg where the Assyrians lived. The simple fact is that the music got things going. So you can say that organising parties brought people together? Well, that's how we attracted people. And people began to like each other. And they began to form stronger ties, relationships, and to feel less isolated. Their isolation was broken and they felt that somebody cared about them. And music - I think that that is the greatest element one can use to show that people care for each other and have feelings for each other." (Malki, Joseph, personal interview, 03.03.1997).⁷

Music can also be used to convey national ideas, or as a pedagogic tool in language tuition, for example. Maybe these are the two most important aspects of music; its ability to be both an actual part of culture itself and, at the same time, to serve as a transmitter and symbol of cultural community. Without music, many of Sweden's immigrant organisations and clubs would never have been established, and different cultures, in other words, ways of living, thinking, speaking, etc., would not have found a way of surviving and prospering. Thanks to the unifying powers of music, preconditions for other activities are created, a fact that many immigrants emphasise.

The accordion player Ismet Lolic was born in Tuzla in Bosnia in 1964. When he was five, his family emigrated to Södertälje, about 30 km south of Stockholm in Sweden. In his teens, he started to think about ethnic heritage — nationality and culture. Lots of his family's everyday Yugoslavian characteristics became visible in contrast to the Swedish culture surrounding him. Ismet identified himself as a Sweden-based Yugoslav. The fact that he was of Bosnian or Muslim origin was not important to him. He shared this view of national identity with many other young 'Swedish' Yugoslavs who came from different parts of the old country. Ismet was born into a musical family. His father Hazim worked as a professional accordionist before moving to Sweden. His main occupation was for the national radio station in Tuzla. When Ismet started to play the accordion, his interest lay in folk music and he dreamt about becoming a dance musician. Already as a teenager, he formed a band called YUS, with which he toured among the Yugoslav groups in Sweden playing *zabava* music – party music. The band consisted of young musicians from different parts of Yugoslavia and the birthplaces of the various musicians were of no consequence. Skills were what mattered. The band aimed to sound like other orchestras in Yugoslavia, and this actually meant that at times the ethnical diversity of the band could be considered an advantage.

When the modern Yugoslavia was created under Tito, the government and the communist party played on the unifying powers of culture. The diversity in cultural expressions was merged into a collage supporting the national unity. It became popular to create and link dance and music suites representing all the different provinces and many of the minorities of the country at dance and music events and concerts. In the same spirit, Ismet's orchestra, like most other Yugoslavian bands, had a repertoire consisting of music from almost all parts of the country.

The Serbian-controlled army attacked the secessionist provinces Croatia and Slovenia in July 1991. This led to an immediate crisis for the Yugoslavian groups in Sweden, as well as elsewhere of course. The main task for the groups in Sweden had been to organise meetings and parties and to administer cultural activities and sports events. All these efforts ceased more or less at once for most of the groups. The immediate effect of the Yugoslav conflict was that most of Ismet's job opportunities disappeared in one go. The conflict was extended when Bosnia and Herzegovina declared their independence in March 1992 and civil war once again broke out in the country. For Ismet personally, this was a catastrophe that led to an acute identity crises. It was not possible to be a Yugoslav any more. The homogeneous Yugoslav community in Sweden dispersed and was almost overnight transformed into isolated ethnic groups. The Yugoslavs became Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs, Croatians, etc. The already mixed population of Bosnia was broken down into three groups that were identified by way of their religion: Islam, Serbian Orthodox (practised by the Serbs), and Roman Catholicism (practised by the Croats).⁸

Before the conflict, Ismet, like Ziya Aytekin, had felt no boundaries to his music. He divided his repertoire into four categories:

- Western music that he played for everyone (pop music - dance music);
- Modern Yugoslavian dance music that he played for all Yugoslavs;

- A 'local' repertoire comprising specially chosen tunes from different parts of Yugoslavia;
- A specialised local repertoire for folklore groups meant to be performed on stage.

He could use and play whatever music he liked and he had been happy to play what people asked for – Macedonian music for Macedonians, Serbian music for Serbs, etc. Like Ziya, he often emphasised that he was a musical omnivore and that whatever music he played and liked was 'his' music. The origin of the music was of minor importance. But for Ismet, in contrast to Ziya, the symbolic meaning of the music suddenly, almost overnight, became tangible. The genesis of the music became charged with meaning and with this a complicated set of rules stating what was appropriate and inappropriate in almost all situations.

So Ismet stopped playing all together. Like many other Bosnians, Ismet is the child of an ethnically and religiously mixed marriage – in his case his father is a Bosniac (Muslim) and his mother is a Bosnian Croat (Catholic). Before the conflict none of his friends identified him as the child of a mixed marriage. After all, the fact that his roots were in different ethnic Yugoslav groups was one of the things that made him a typical Bosnian (this was something of Bosnia's hallmark). But once the conflict flared up, the situation for Ismet and others of a mixed background became almost unbearable. Who was he if it was no longer possible to be a Yugoslav? And what music was he to play if Yugoslav music was equally impossible as a concept?

After a long period of silence he started to find his way back to the music again. At first, he followed the nationalist prescription and stuck to playing Bosnian music. After four to five years in what he has describes as a 'musical straitjacket', he embarked on a fight to recapture his old Yugoslav repertoire. From a musical perspective, the tunes were still the same, but as symbols, in other words, representatives of identity, they had been claimed as otherwise. Yugoslav music no longer existed, instead the tunes were Serbian, or Macedonian, or Bosnian, and so forth. But this made Ismet even more persistent in his efforts to 'take them back'. He now had both a personal and a political reason behind his choice of repertoire – to regain control, to make the music 'his music' again and to rescue what was left of the music from the war.

Reels and Guinness

Let us pay a visit to the Irish pub *The Loft* in Stockholm. Inside it has the true smell and taste of a traditional pub. The lights are dim – a long wooden bar, high bar-chairs and small tables are spread out in the rooms. And all kinds of beer brands are on offer. Some thick and sluggish, some foaming and sparkling, dark, light, bitter, sweet, the pub serves everything a beer lover can ask for. But beer and atmosphere alone do not make an Irish pub. Music is needed too. Every Sunday night there is a session in the back room of *The Loft*. Different musicians participate from time to time. They arrive equipped with instruments of various kinds, sit down with a pint of beer and join the spontaneous orchestra that is formed around the long table.

Ireland, the green island, whose people like no other have emigrated to all the corners of the globe. During the second half of the 19th century, more than half the population of Ireland, nearly 4.5 million people, left to get away from hunger and misery. But the Irish who move to Sweden today come here for other reasons. About 100 Irish employees are at any given time employed by the Ericsson Telephone Company in Stockholm. They are sent over in groups from the company's subsidiary in Dublin. Often they come for a period of three months before returning home.

The difference between Irish and Swedish culture is not as marked as for other immigrant groups in Sweden, but roots are roots, and so is the need to meet other countrymen. It is obvious that the pub plays an important role for most of the Irish who live in Stockholm, and it is probably of more importance than a Swede can imagine. When I asked the fiddler and Ericsson employee Kevin Finucan if there was any other place than the pub in which Irish people could meet, he did not even understand the question.

The Irish are seldom the majority nationality among the guests. On a normal evening, the guests roughly comprise 60% Swedes and 40% Irishmen and Englishmen. It is not really possible to compare the pub to other ethnic meeting places like the Kurdish, Turkish or Yugoslav societies and clubs, something the Irish guests at The Loft also stress. The pub is more of a public meeting place, as indeed the name indicates. And this is what the guests want it to be. The reasons for going to the pub differ from guest to guest. To many of the inhabitants of Stockholm, places like The Loft are exotic features in the flora of public meeting places, a place where you can experience an Irish atmosphere, drink good beer and listen to live Irish music on 'home turf'. To the Irish and British guests, the language is probably of most importance. To be able to speak one's mother tongue together with fellow countrymen makes one feel 'at home' in a foreign country.

The music played during sessions at The Loft does not differ from the music you hear in most pubs in Dublin. It is typical modern-style Irish folk music performed on fiddle, tin whistle, flute, guitar, concertina, bodhran, etc. But the musicians differ from their Dublin colleagues in one important respect; at The Loft, they are mainly Swedes.

Figure 3 – CD cover from the Swedish Irish group Blackthorn.



How do the guests at the pub feel about this? Well, for the Swedish guests this can sometimes be a problem. Many want the pub to be as genuine as possible. Authenticity is the key word here. Authentic (old) Irish music played by real Irish musicians and real Irish beer – imported Guinness, not the stuff that is brewed on license by Swedish breweries. But for the Irish guests this does not seem to be a problem at all. If the musicians possess the necessary skills and if the beer tastes as it should, the origin of the beer or the musicians matters less.

It would not be fair to say that Irish music in Stockholm does not relate to Ireland and to Irish culture at all. On the contrary, it is a very important part of the pub's Irish identity. But at the same time, the music has become disengaged from its ethnic origin. Irish music has become a music genre comparable to jazz, hip-hop or salsa, and it is played with very good results by musicians all over Europe and North America who have no Irish blood whatsoever flowing in their veins.

However, in contrast to the Yugoslav situation, this is not a problem, and musicians, in similarity to Ziya Aytakin, have no problem playing music that might not be theirs by 'birth right'. Neither do the Irish feel a need to 'claim' the music as theirs or, as Tom Sommers, a bartender at The Loft, puts it when discussing Swedish musicians playing Irish music:

"I was amazed when I first heard them. I couldn't believe they weren't Irish. They are fantastic musicians. But playing music is one thing. Actually, anyone can become an Irish musician if he is talented enough and interested enough. But it's not as easy to become an Irish bartender, for example. You see, you can't learn how to get an Irish personality. You can't pretend to be Irish." (Tom Sommers, personal interview, 14.01.1996)

Some Discussion Topics

Experienced and ascribed identity

The closer we get to the musicians and their music, the easier it is to see that the issue of identity is related more to concepts and ideas *about* the relationship between music and musicians than to the relationship in itself. When Tom Sommers tells us that it is one thing to play Irish music and something completely different to be Irish, he touches upon a central issue concerning the relationship between music and identity. What does it actually mean to be Irish, Swedish, Kurdish or Turkish? First of all, we need to distinguish between two major aspects of identity, the idea an individual has of what he or she is, and the individual's collective identity, which is dependent on a social context. If we were to ask the musicians at The Loft if they were Irish or Swedish, naturally none of them would call themselves Irish. At the same time, in some respects they certainly can be called Irish. In the social context, it is easy to talk about ethnically defined characteristics as 'Irish' or 'Swedish', but it is very difficult to define what such labelling actually comprises. What is an 'Irish personality' or an 'Irish musicality'? Are the Irish characteristics to be found in the melodies, the repertoire, the musical dialect, clothes and similar items, or can it only be ascribed to

that which is verbally communicated in the presentation of a tune or a performance? When we observe and interpret the world around us from an ethnic perspective, we have to remember that the interpretation is in the hands of the observer. We have to face the fact that expressive specialists – musicians, authors and other artists – are given roles in an ethnic play. They are ascribed an ethnic belonging through the work they convey whether they want it or not.

The Swedish mosaic

The ethnic heritage of people has become an increasingly important factor in today's multicultural societies. We can see how the categorisation of people in Sweden has gradually changed from the 1970s to today. The social categorisation, in which class constitutes the most important ground for the political division in Sweden, is gradually being replaced by a categorisation that departs from the idea of groups based on ethnicity, interest, etc. (Aronson, 1976; Ronström, 1996; Lundberg, 1997). The multicultural Sweden of today is often metaphorically described as a mosaic. The Swedish society constitutes a framework in which different ethnic groups form a pattern, much like the stones in a mosaic. But the mosaic requires or implies difference – to be entitled to be a piece in the mosaic, every single one of the stones has to differ in a distinct way. The stones have to be different but adaptable. Every single group of people in the mosaic is required to manifest its own distinct characteristics within a strictly defined framework of cultural expressions (Lundberg and Ternhag, 1996: 132). This brings us back to the expressive forms of culture once again – food, dance, music, clothes. Through these means of expression, particularly music and dance, different groups in society can expose their specific cultural nature. Music and dance can represent the different groups and mark them out in relation to each other. To be able to take part – to form part of the mosaic – you have to be visible.

The cultural symbols of representation become most obvious and visible at official manifestations where cultural diversity is the theme. Such activities include events such as 'immigrants' day', international culture festivals and parades. During such events, the mosaic metaphor is almost overstated. Take a typical form of event in Sweden, a multicultural festival in a small Swedish town, where each separate culture is represented by a booth or a book table. The booths or tables are placed around the central square in the middle of the town and visitors can purchase food, records, cassettes, literature and clothes from them. In a compatible format one can enjoy cultures from all corners of the globe – Peruvian, Iranian, Finnish or Turkish, side by side, presented in the same form of wrapping. The key word for such a multicultural manifestation is representation. Woe! The poor immigrant group that lacks something notable and specific to present! From the idea of representation follows the focus on the group. The individuals are reduced to representatives of their respective cultures. In many articles in major Swedish newspapers, the Swedish/Turkish debater and festival arranger Ozan Sunar has pointed out the problems that ethnic classifications of people give rise to. Generalisations create and enforce differences and tend to place people in restrictive categories: "*There is something seductive about grandiose words. How often do we not hear phrases as now we are going to tear down the walls and build bridges between the cultures? It is easy to imagine cultures as*

immovable stone rocks, separated by almost insuperable depths. A simple meeting between people is suddenly turned into gigantic building schemes to be engineered and administrated by the carpenters of culture.” (Sunar, 1997).⁹

So what is so special about cultures then? Can we distinguish between ‘cultural behaviour’ and other behaviour? Owe Ronström (1992) has described how Yugoslavs in Sweden experience a ‘Yugoslav’ identity as being ascribed to a particular social zone: ‘the close outer world’, a zone between the more intimate zones (‘the bedroom zone’ and ‘the living room zone’) and the official zone (‘the citizen zone’). In the intimate zones an individual is first and foremost a woman, a man, a friend, a relative, and so on. In the citizen zone a person is primarily a citizen like everybody else, irrespective of descent. ‘Yugoslav’ is an identity that you take on under very special circumstances. When Ozan Sunar criticises the common classification of immigrants and minorities in Swedish society, he touches upon the tendency to join together all immigrant groups in huge mass of people who supposedly have the same needs and qualifications. But he is also discussing the fact that there is an inclination to impose ‘cultural behaviour’ on situations where it has no relevance. A Turk is expected to behave in a ‘Turkish’ way in all situations, a Frenchman in a ‘French’ manner, and so on, without anyone really knowing what this means.

Individuality and group membership

Music is an important part of our identity and its symbolic potential lies in the fact that it can be used to express and maintain both differences and similarities. In the multicultural context, music is used as a marker of group boundaries for the own group. But it is also used outwards, marking boundaries against other groups and individuals. Internally, the group can use its ‘own’ music to strengthen the feeling of belonging, and the same process can be used to mark a difference between ‘others’ and ‘us’. This use is by no means limited to ethnical categories in society. People forming identities around music concept such as hip-hop, jazz, old time folk music and heavy metal also use markers to a similar extent.

Expected representation

What these examples really show us – the Kurdish/Turkish dances, the confused Bosnian accordion player and the Swedish-Irish musicians – is whether it is necessary for there to be a connection between an expressive specialist and the culture that he or she is expressing. This discussion has more to do with the fundamental problem one faces when attempting to analyse a process that claims to liberate the creative powers of individuals in order to link those powers to grandiose words like history, culture, tradition, in other words, words that form the basis of our socially constructed and collectively experienced world. The same problems are dealt with in sociology when analysing the possibilities of statements such as *‘the world is created by human beings – and the world has an objective existence – humans are created by the world’*. Every day, we take for granted that ethnic identity and other types of belonging are objective or hereditary characteristics of human beings, even though we realise, on an analytical level, that they are the results of choice.

Music, and folk music in particular, constitutes a special case as an identity marker. Especially since it, together with other forms of expression, moulds our perception of what collective human identity actually is. Despite our best intentions, we have not put behind us the old notion of folk music as created by the 'folk' (its own users) in one mighty collective creative process. Folk music has born and created by itself in the soul of the people – a true parthenogenesis. This strong connection to a collective identity has for many centuries formed the ideology and rhetoric of folk music. Many people have benefited from this notion of folk music, whereas others have experienced it as an obstacle. It may be that in recognition of this fact, many folk musicians have been motivated to work within musical spheres that primarily honour the individual, spheres such as jazz, art music and pop music. This is probably also one of the reasons why Swedish folk musicians of today often refer to themselves as folk musicians and not '*spelman*' or folk fiddlers.

Cultural expressive forms are constantly recreated in a synthesis between tradition, available media, technical resources and individual practitioners. It is easy to forget this, not least in the field of ethnomusicology where we actually have a tradition of regarding music as collective and inherited and the musicians that play the music as conveyors of that 'belonging'.

Notes

¹ Zilgit (plural zilgitar) is the Turkish name for the high, shrill hollers that women use to express excitement and joy, but also to contribute to the intensity of the dance. The English equivalent is ululation – 'cry of joy'.

² Zurna is the Turkish name for shawm. Instruments of this type are very common and important in folk music, not only in Anatolia and the Middle East, but also throughout Eurasia.

³ Davul is a big two-skinned drum.

⁴ Mey is the Turkish name for a family of wind instruments that is used from the east of Japan (*Hichiriki*) to Caucasus and eastern Turkey in the west. The mey is a short cylindrical wind instrument with a huge double reed as its source of sound (Lundberg 1994:135) The rim blown flute bilor is known as *çoban kavali* (shepherds flute) in Turkish. The bilor is also part of a larger family of flutes used in the areas around the south and east coasts of the Mediterranean and throughout Asia

⁵ One example is the Assyrian group in Sweden. For the 'Swedish' Assyrians, who to a large extent originate from Tur'abdin in south-east Turkey, the zurna is an almost indispensable part of the wedding celebration. At the same time, there are no zurna players of Assyrian descent living in Sweden. Sometimes the problem can be solved by replacing the zurna with a synthesiser equipped with a sampled zurna sound. But to make a wedding 'genuine' a real zurna and davul is needed (Lundberg, 1994 and 2009).

⁶ Translated by Dan Lundberg

⁷ Translated by Dan Lundberg

⁸ The ethnic names used for these groups are Bosniacs, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats.

⁹ Translated by Dan Lundberg

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