EXPATRIATE AS A BRAND: INTERCULTURAL SUCCESS STORIES OF ESTONIAN MUSICIANS

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Abstract: *One of the corner stones of Estonian national identity is music, and on the other hand we can say that one of the successful Estonian export articles all around the world are Estonian musicians. Thus, a successful expatriate musician can be seen as a beloved intercultural brand. According to Kapferer (2012), "in order to become 'passion brands', or 'love marks', brands must not be hollow, but have a deep inner inspiration." The six elements of brand identity, represented by a hexagonal prism, can be used to reflect the intercultural branding of an expatriate musician: the musician becomes a brand, the consumer marks the recipients from the host culture, and the brand identity facets relate to the cultural adjustment of the musician, Estonian culture and four stereotypes (aka (partly projected) identities). Since the respondents of the qualitative study are chosen based on the criteria of professional success, inter alia they have already been able to work out a success strategy, we claim that five of the elements of the brand identity prism are rather static, leaving us with the most dynamic element, namely, cultural adjustment. Through the brand identity elements of the Estonian expatriate musicians we study their cultural adjustment strategies, relying on the cultural adjustment strategies by Berry (2003), which have inspired other intercultural researchers like Cox (2004), Sussman (2000), Oudenhoven, van der Zee and van Kooten (2001).*

Keywords*: expatriate musicians, brand identity, cultural adjustment strategies*

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the article is to take a closer look at the cultural adjustment of classical music artists of Estonian origin residing in Finland – from the point of view of their success abroad as musicians. A successful classical musician, as we see him/her, is a beloved cross-cultural brand, and it has been an utmost interest to us to learn about the ways the musician's brand identity is (or is not) represented – since we have been looking for a thorough understanding of the musician's success strategies interculturally. Relying on the cultural adjustment strategies by Berry (2003), which have inspired other intercultural researchers like Cox (2004), Sussman (2000), Oudenhoven, van der Zee and van Kooten (2001) we take the inspiration from Kapferer's brand identity concept (2012) and convert it so that it reflects the particular intercultural success cases of the musicians as brands, whereas the qualitative in-depth interviews delivered the cultural adjustment case studies and the necessary insights.

2. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Cultural adjustment. Cultural adjustment refers to the individual's ability to fit in the new cultural environment. It applies to person´s relationship with his/her environment in which the needs are satisfied and the ability to meet physical and social demands exists; adjustment includes psychological and emotional well-being and satisfaction as well as the ability to fit in, to acquire culturally appropriate skills, and use them in communicating with host nationals (Thomas, Lazarova, 2014:189). Therefore, the cultural adjustment is an internal, psychological, emotional state and should be measured from the perspective of the individual experiencing the foreign culture (Searle, Ward, 1990).

Colleen Ward and her colleagues have proposed that cultural adaptation can be broadly divided into psychological adaption, mainly situated in a stress and coping framework, giving us a clue about the psychological welfare and satisfaction, and sociocultural adaptation, situated within the culture learning framework, i.e. the

ability to fit in and obtain culturally suitable abilities and the behaviour acceptable in the host culture (Searle, Ward, 1990; Ward, Kennedy, 1999:660). Psychological adjustment is influenced by personality traits and social support, sociocultural adjustment by the amount of contact with the host society, length of the sojourn, cultural identity and culture distance (Ward, Chang, 1997:526). The latter has been emphasized by several authors besides Ward and colleagues; for instance by Oudenhoven and colleagues who state that the greater the home and host culture, the more difficult the cultural adjustment usually is (Oudenhoven *et al.*, 2001:479; Ward *et al.*, 2001:9) – the more the sojourner will need to learn about the host culture (Caligiuri, 2000).

2.2 Factors influencing cultural adjustment. Since cultural adjustment is a complex whole, there are lots of factors that influence it, starting with personality traits and extravercy/introvercy of the sojourner, and the specific life situation of the person (Ward, Searle, 1991: 211, 218), language skills (Ting-Toomey, 1999:91-94), length of the stay (Polek *et al.*, 2008:919), hospitality of the host society (Ward *et al.*, 2001: 197), social, especially ethnic identity (Jenkins, 1996:3-4; 20), the frequency of the contact with the host society and social support (Lybeck, 2002:184).

2.2.1 *Language and host-culture knowledge.* Language competence plays an important role in cultural adjustment, similarly important is to know the host culture in general, especially its values (Inglehart, 1998:27; Ting-Toomey, 1999:91-94). Without mutual understanding there can be no success in communication (Chen, Starosta, 1998: 252-253). Language is a tricky variable, though: in order to understand the meaning of what has been said, one has to know the beliefs and value systems that lay behind the way words are used in various situations (Ting-Toomey, 1999:93) – since language is much more than just a communication tool, it expresses the philosophy of the speaker and his/her beliefs (Ting-Toomey, 1999:94). In order to successfully adapt to the host culture, one has to have a holistic picture of it, including both facts and beliefs and judgements (Inglehart, 1998:27).

2.2.2 *Cultural awareness.* In order to communicate successfully across cultures, one has to be aware about his/her own behaviour, way of communicating, only so can the communication patterns be changed and signals and information while communicating with strangers recognized (Chen, Starosta, 1998:252-253). Developing cultural awareness takes time and thus the length of the stay correlates positively with cultural adaption (Ward *et al.*, 1998:280; Polek *et al.*, 2008:919).

2.2.3 *Social support.* Social support is an important resource of cultural adaption; it can be offered by for example family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues (Ward *et al.*, 2001:85). The well-being of the sojourner is influenced both by host-country members as well as fellow countrymen (Ward *et al.*, 2001:88) or third-country nationals. It is important that the sojourner does not experience stress due to solitude rather than who offers the support.

2.2.4 *Hospitality of the host society.* Cultural adjustment is influenced also by the attitude of the host nationals. The public policies regarding immigration relate to the expectations of both the host community and strangers, when it comes to integration (Bourhis *et al.*, 2010:783). State integration policies consist of the approaches adopted to help immigrant and host communities adapt to the growing ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity of modern states (Bourhis *et al.*, 2010:784). Often, expatriates are not affected by the attitude towards immigrants, but it does depend on the group the expatriate belongs to. The ideology, policies and possible national discourses, positive or negative attitude of the host culture depends often on the cultural background of the sojourner (Ward *et al.*, 2001:197).

2.2.5 *Social identity.* The concept of social identity goes back to Erik Erikson (1950) who conceived identity as a central feature of "personhood", namely, a person's unified "essence," and a special experience of it, from which superficial characteristics of the person a redifferentiated; the identity evolves throughout one´s (Kim, 2012). Social identity theory introduced the concept of a social identity as a way to explain intergroup behaviour (Tajfel, Turner, 1986). In this identity conception, personal and social dimensions are considered simultaneously. Nowadays in social research, the individual's association with a cultural or social group is the essence of the identity rather than the "personhood". Now, we tend to view identity as temporal continuity or common tradition linking its members to a common future reflected in the communal life patterns associated with language, behaviour, norms, beliefs, myths, and values, as well as the forms and practices of social institutions (Kim, 2012) As Giordano has put it, the identities of members of an ethnic group are regarded as being rooted in the emotionally profound self-awarenss of parentage and a concomitant mythology of discrete origin, providing a sense of common origin, as well as common beliefs and values, serving as the basis of self-defining ingroups, offering the individual a ground on which to stand (Kim, 2012:x).

Strong social identity strengthens the self-esteem of the person (Ting-Toomey, 1999:147;

Chen, Starosta, 1998). In communication, members of ingroup are consequently favoured to outgroup members, which, on the other hand, are treated with prejudices. When meeting strangers, they are identified with the help of the social map in our heads, and often not successfully as they are categorized in a way that differs a lot from their identity (Jenkins, 1996:5).

2.3 Cultural adjustment strategies and identity. Sojourners arrive in the host country with different personal attitudes about preserving their cultural inheritence and adapting to the host culture – besides personal reasons, these attitudes are influenced by both the actual and the perceived acceptance by the host society, and official migration policies (Phinney *et al.*, 2001:494).

In intercultural communication, there is an ongoing debate about the changes in the ethnic identity of the sojourner, starting with the culture shock theory fathered by Cora Dubois and popularized Kalervo Oberg (Paige, 1993). The theories dealing with identity-related cultural adjustment strategies mostly come up with four strategies that the sojourner – expatriate or a migrant – has the "choice" from, whether conscious or rather subconscious, influenced by the factors that have been discussed earlier. Present article does not aim to separate between migrants and expatriates, as the difference seems to be rather artificial: expatriates see their sojourn as temporary while migrants presumably plan to stay abroad (see Thomas, Lazarova, 2014:189; also Kaljund, Peterson, 2014) – both assumptions often prove wrong with time, or not.

The author of the classic quartering of cultural adjustment strategies – assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization – is John W. Berry (2003), who sees the migrants having a choice whether to relate entirely to the host culture, i.e. to assimilate, losing the original ethnic identity, or to integrate – obviously, author´s preferred choice – that is, to adapt successfully to the host culture, at the same time keeping the home culture identity, or to separate, i.e. keep the original ethnic identity with minimal contact to the host culture, or to adapt a marginalizing adaption strategy, alienating from ethnic identity as such (Berry, 2003:24). J. Ben Cox, re-evaluating Berry's conceptualization in repatriation context, i.e. thinking specifically expatriates, assigns new designations to the concepts, renaming the identity groups respectively as host-favoured, integrated, home-favoured, and disintegrated (Cox, 2004, 205). Nan M. Sussman (2000:394) classifies the identity work done by expatriates, again, in four patterns: subtractive (resp. assimilating, identifying with the the norms and values of the host culture – high adaption), additive (resp. integration of both culture´s norms and

values), affirmative (resp. separation, strong home country identity – low adaption to host culture), and intercultural/global (resp. marginalization thanks to multiple international experiences). Last but not least, Berry's cultural adaption strategies inspired Jan Pieter van Oudenhoven, Karen van der Zee and Mariska van Kooten (2001:467), whose four categories – going native (assimilating), dual citizens (integrating), hearts-at-home (separating), and free agents (marginalizing) – take two significant characteristics of expatriate workforce into consideration, namely the importance of their job, and the perceived temporary character of their stay.

Colleen Ward et al. in their categorization of adjustment strategies relate to Berry with three categories: passing (resp. assimilating), chauvinist (resp. separation), marginal and multicultural, the latter two both meaning marginalization, although the first category means that the person does not relate to neither original nor host culture, but the latter individual raises to a meta-level and is able to mediate between cultures (Ward *et al.*, 2001:31; Bochner, 1981). Milton J. Bennett in his classification of adjustment strategies labels the latter two as an encapsulated marginal and a constructive marginal: encapsulated marginals experience are stressed by the discrepancy of different cultural perspectives, whereas constructive marginals are able to integrate their cultural identities – this formulation relates the constructive marginalization strategy to the integration strategy of Berry.

Bourhis intercultural acculturation model approaches acculturation from the other side, discussing the five possible acculturation orientations the host majority members wish strangers to adapt: assimilationism, integrationism, segregationism, exclusionism, and individualism; whereby assimilationism corresponds to the traditional concept of absorption (immigrants are expected to relinquish their linguistic and cultural identity for the sake of adopting the culture and language of the dominant host community); integrationism is endorsed by host nationals who accept that immigrants maintain some aspects of their original culture and at the same time adopt important features of the host culture; segregationism refers to host community members who accept that immigrants maintain their culture as long as they keep their distance from host nationals, as they do not wish immigrants to transform or "contaminate" the host culture and value system, and exclusion refers to the host nationals who deny immigrants the right to adopt features of the host community culture and at the same time the choice to maintain their heritage language, culture, or

religion (the latter two being different corresponding attitudes from the host community´s side to migrants´ separation identity strategy by Berry) (Bourhis *et al.*, 2010:786). And finally, individualism is an orientation endorsed by host nationals who define themselves and others as individuals rather than as members of group categories and thus interact with immigrants in the same way they would with other individuals who happen to be members of the host community (Bourhis *et al.*, 2010:786). For successful cultural adjustment and in order to avoid intercultural misunderstandings it is important that the acculturation preferences of the sojourners and host nationals would overlap (Bourhis *et al.*, 2010:788).

2.4 Auto- and heterostereotypes. The generally accepted definition of the stereotype is from Ashmore, who has stated that stereotypes are beliefs about the characteristics of social groups and their individual members (Dorsch Psychologisches Wörterbuch, 1994:764; Lexikon der Psychologie, 2001(4):246). In general we are talking about incorrect and/or exaggerated generalizations (perceptions, conceptions) of an aspect of reality, especially of persons and social groups, that are rigid, oversimplified and biased (See Katz, Braly, 1933, Klineberg, 1951, Allport, 1954 and English, English, 1958 in Stroebe, Insko, 1989:4, 5; Brigham, 1971 in Hinton, 2000:11; Ostermann, Nicklas, 1982:17; Saressalo, 1983:84; Schäfer, 1988:51). Tajfel has pointed out that stereotypes are shared by group members, they are well-known and serve to create and maintain group ideologies and differentiation between groups (Tajfel, 1982:41ff.). The cognitive school sees the oversimplification and bias of stereotypes as a result of the limited ability of human beings to process information, a stereotype defined thus as a *set of traits ascribed to a social group used to predict and explain behaviour* (Stephan, 1985 in Horwitz, Rabbie, 1989:106).

While talking about ethnic groups we differentiate between heterostereotypes (the beliefs about the other group) that usually are negative, and from the autostereotype (the conception about the traits of the ingroup) that is usually positive; besides, the ethnic stereotypes include projected autostereotypes (the beliefs about the conception that the outgroup presumably has about the ingroup), and projected heterostereotypes (the presumable autostereotype of the outgroup) (Schäfer, 1988:18; see also Taylor, 2002). The function of all those stereotypes is to construct and maintain a positive ethnic identity. Since the heterostereotype of the outgroup serves the purpose of demarcation of the ingroup, the construction of the positive identity often means that the Others have to be attached negative traits (Suppan,

1998:14). The similarity or the difference of the respective autostereotype and heterostereotype influences the understanding or the conflict of two ethnic groups (Quasthoff, 1973:46; Bassewitz, 1990:26).

The autostereotype and the heterostereotype are strongly bond to each other, since what we are is constructed in direct opposition to them (Bishop, Jaworski, 2003:248; see also Paalamo, 1998:39; Hinton, 2000:107; Mummendey, 2002:214). We can say that the heterostereotype extends the autostereotype of the group (Suppan, 1998:14): the personality traits that are attached to the outgroup give us little information about the culture of the others but speak of the ethnic identity of the ingroup (Bartmiński, 1998:311; Hinton, 2000:13). The negative traits of a heterostereotype, corresponding to respective positive traits of the autostereotype, serve as a warning towards the others (Hahn, Hahn, 2002:32).

How common a stereotype about an outgroup is and which traits of it are relevant when and why – are positive or rather negative characteristics emphasized? – depends on the social, political and cultural relations of respective ethnic groups. The geopolitical and social distance play a role here: ethnic groups that are located far away produce rather vague stereotypes whereas groups that reside geographically close often produce especially negative stereotypes – positive perception of national neighbours is rather exceptional. The hostility towards the other ethnic groups often has its roots in the political climate within the country, dissatisfaction with present economic and social conditions as well as in international tension (Bassewitz, 1990:24). The demographic situation of a country also has a strong influence on ethnic identity and the perception of outgroups, i.e. on stereotypes and how common they are. The bigger the relative and absolute majority of an ethnic group, the less it feels endangered according to the ideal of the homogeneous national state; the smaller the outgroup (within the country as well as outside), the less threatening they are perceived (Götz, 1995:14). To sum it up: the ethnic stereotypes are influenced by the historical relationships of the groups and the historical relevance in the identity construction (the Significant Others), by up-to-date social factors like neighbourhood, work contacts and marriages; by economic factors like trade, movement of capital, tourism and the comparative economic situation; cultural factors like the exchange in the field of culture and science; political and ideological factors as well as military (Quasthoff, 1973:51, 86; Suppan, 1998:17; Spaniel, 2002:356). The stereotypes are constructed and reconstructed on daily basis in every culture: historiography and national holidays, general

education and belletristic, comics and especially foreign language training, to name a few apart from the almighty media influence the relevant discourses, i.e. ethnic stereotypes of a culture.

In case of Finland and Estonia it is important to mention the north-south and east-west dichotomy that ethnic stereotypes tend to exhibit (see Koch-Hillebrecht, 1977; Kõvamees, 2005), especially the latter. It is assumed that the confrontation of east and west goes back to the image of barbarians in the Antique world (Koch-Hillebrecht, 1977:245). The nations located in Eastern Europe – whereas the border between east and west is rather variable in the insight of various peoples – are seen as backwards, wild, unspoilt; in one word, the west is of a superior quality (Koch-Hillebrecht, 1977:246; see also Huntington, 1998; Kaljund, 2006). The Iron Curtain "confirmed" this and draw a rather precise line between the east and the west.

Just like the stereotypes are influenced by the aforesaid factors, the same is with the acculturation strategies that are expected from the sojourners – it depends largely on their group membership. The expatriate expecting to adjust culturally finds him-/herself inside invisible boundaries that are determined by both host national and international relevant discourses both in the past and present. Although this diminishes the personal choice, the cultural adjustment is more complex than that: some make it, some don´t, independent of the network of discourses.

2.5 Brand identity. One of the very few worldwide experts on brands, Jean-Noël Kapferer has theorized that leaving the classical stimulus-response paradigm, modern brand communication theory reminds us that when one communicates, one builds representations of who speaks (source re-presentation), of who is the addressee (recipient re-presentation), and what specific relationship the communication builds between them – this is the constructivist school (Kapferer, 2012:158-163).In order to become 'passion brands', engaging brands, must not be hollow, but have a deep inner inspiration – they have their own character, their own beliefs, and that brand identity has six facets (Kapferer, 2012:158-163).

2.5.1 *Physique.* A brand, first of all, has physical specificities and qualities – its 'physique'. It is made of a combination of either salient objective features (which immediately come to mind when the brand is quoted in a survey) or emerging ones. Many brands have problems with their physical facet, but even an image-based brand must deliver material benefits – brands are two-legged value-adding systems.

2.5.2 *Personality.* A brand has a personality. By communicating, it gradually builds up character.

The way it speaks shows what kind of person it would be if it were human. 'Brand personality' has been the main focus of brand advertising since1970. In the identity prism, brand identity is the personality facet of the source, and it should not be confused with the customer reflected image, which is a portrayal of the ideal receiver. Thus, brand personality is described and measured by those human personality traits that are relevant for brands – brand personality fulfils a psychological function, and it allows consumers either to identify with it or to project themselves into it.

2.5.3 *Culture.* A brand is a culture, a vision of the world. It is the most important facet of brand identity. Major brands are not only driven by a culture but convey their culture. Although present since 1991 in Kapferer's identity prism, this cultural dimension of brands has only quite recently been recognized by academics – building emotional ties today needs another kind of self-definition, a much deeper one, which energizes the brand and its followers.

2.5.4 *Relationship.* A brand is a relationship as brands are often at the crux of transactions and exchanges between people. This facet defines the mode of conduct that most identifies the brand. This has a number of implications for the way the brand acts and relates to its customers.

2.5.5 *Reflection.* A brand is a customer reflection. Because of its communication a brand will always tend to build a reflection or an image of the buyer or user which it seems to be addressing.

2.5.6 *Self-image.* Finally, a brand speaks to our self-image. If reflection is the target's outward mirror (they are …), self image is the target's own international mirror (I feel, I am …). Through our attitude towards certain brands, we indeed develop a certain type of inner relationship with ourselves.

The brand identity prism demonstrates that these facets are all interrelated and form a well-structured entity as it derives from one basic concept – that brands have the gift of speech. Brands can only exist if they communicate, and since a brand is a speech in itself, it can thus be analysed like any other speech or form of communication.

Semiologists have taught us that behind every type of communication there is a sender, either real or made up. Even when dealing with products, communication builds an image of its speaker or sender and conveys it to us – customers, when asked through projective techniques, do not hesitate to describe the brand's sender, i.e. the person bearing the brand. Both the physique and personality help define the sender thus built for that purpose. On the other hand, every form of communication also builds a recipient: when we speak, everything seems as if we were addressing a certain type of person or

audience. Both the reflection and self-image facets help define this recipient, who, thus built, also belongs to the brand's identity. The last two facets, relationship and culture, bridge the gap between sender and recipient.
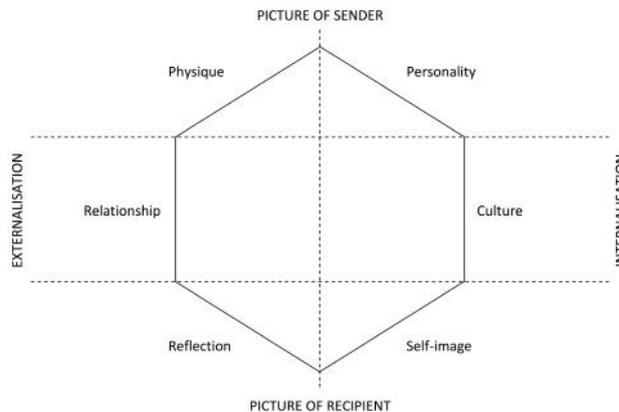

Fig.1 Kapferer's brand identity prism (*Ibid.*)

3. THE CASE STUDY RESEARCH

We chose particular individual expat classical musicians for our case studies based on what experience the musicians have that provide a possibility to gain a variety of new understandings about our specific research area. Firstly, the experience of professional success. The sources of this importance vary: 5+ years of residence and success as a classical musician in their homeland – Estonia; success in the host society – Finland; success elsewhere.

The success we define as an employment contract between an institution and a musician or regular public appearances as a freelance musician. Namely, part of the cultural adjustment is always the economic adjustment – the ability to earn income in order to function in the host society. And as we were looking for a variety, it is of no great consequence where we draw the line – there is a sharp distinction between institutionalised success and freelance success:

– *Institutionalised success: the case study:* strong social identity as an ingroup member; psychological and emotional satisfaction professionally; high frequency of the contact with the host society; remarkable social support; higher perceived acceptance by the host society;

– *Freelance success: the case study:* strong social identity as an outgroup member; anxiety regarding the ability the ability to fit in; low frequency of the contact with the host society; lack of information and social support; power perceived acceptance by the host society.

However, despite the varieties the general intercultural success model of an expatriate classical musician was applicable, without distinction, to both the institutionalised and freelance success strategies.

4. EXPAT ARTIST BRAND IDENTITY: THE DISCUSSION

Finding the brand identity prism most inspiring from the point of view of intercultural communication in our success case studies from Finland, we ended up with a reversed identity model: a brand "made human" again – actually by multiplying the concept of the brand identity by itself. Considering the factors influencing cultural adjustment, the following humanate brand identity prism occurred, the Expatriate Artist Identity Prism:
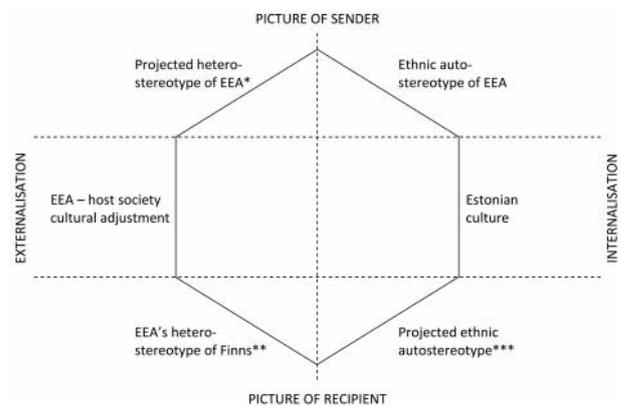

Fig.2 Expatriate Artist Identity Prism

The picture of the recipient is the expatriate – the Estonian musician (in Finland). The picture of the sender is the foreign "market" of the brand, namely Finland, the host culture. The five facets of the brand identity prism that we found to be rather static are in the intercultural context the following: the personality of the brand corresponds to the ethnic identity, i.e. autostereotype of the Estonian expatriate musician. The culture of the brand is the musician's original, Estonian culture. The physique is the projected heterostereotype of the Estonian musician, i.e. the presumed picture of the Estonian musician as an Estonian in the eyes of the host nationals, Finns – the way the musician expects the Finns to see him/her as an Estonian[*]. The reflection[**] is the Estonian heterostereotype of Finns, i.e. how the Estonian musician sees the host nationals. The self-image is the projected autostereotype (ethnic identity) of Finns, i.e. how the Estonian musician believes the Finns to see themselves[***]. The most dynamic facet is the relationship – here, the cultural adjustment, the Estonian expatriate musician in the Finnish context. This is where the intercultural success story of the musician wins (or fails).

We hope our case studies of expatriate classical music artists and the proposed new

approach of the Expatriate Artist Identity Prism has helped to illustrate the ways in which intercultural success in the domain of classical music art can be conceived by further research, especially in the light of the Expatriate Artist Identity Prism's most dynamic and easily influenceable element (to start with, by other elements of the prism) – the cultural adjustment.

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