

# *Multitude* by Stromae: cultural appropriation or appreciation

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I hereby declare that, in line with the Faculty of Arts' code of conduct for research integrity, the work submitted here is my own original work and that any additional sources of information have been duly cited.

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## Abstract

Although Stromae's new album *Multitude* still reflects his typical hip hop, electropop, and French chanson backgrounds, the music on this album takes a new turn. It incorporates influences from music worldwide. The diversity of cultural influences is very clear. The album features different influences in all of the different layers of the music. There are the South American cumbia rhythms, the Bolivian instrument charango, and the Chinese erhu, among others. This thesis aims to analyze whether these influences are used in a context in which power balances are equal and whether Stromae's work is harmless to the represented cultures and in this way is a practice of appropriation or appreciation. Using a framework of cultural appropriation and appreciation, the analysis considers the most important voices in this debate. Surveys conducted in three different communities provide crucial insights. These surveys enable the comparison of the opinions of the represented communities on Stromae's album *Multitude* with the scientific discussion on cultural appropriation and appreciation. The conclusion about this case is that Stromae's album *Multitude*, especially the songs *Santé* and *L'enfer*, are examples of cultural appreciation.

## Introduction

On July 27, 2022, Stromae released his album *Multitude*, nine years after his last world-famous album *Racine Carrée*. It quickly became clear that he, beside his typical electropop, hip hop and French chanson influences, started to incorporate several new sounds and influences. Stromae created an album that explores diverse cultures worldwide. *Multitude* is deeply influenced by world music, defined by the New Grove as:

World music is a term that describes the local, folk, or roots music of a particular cultural group, society, or nation, oftentimes presented in conjunction with elements of religion, politics, and social customs.<sup>1</sup>

These influences of local traditions from all over the world are hearable in every aspect of the music, through for example traditional instrumentation with the Bolivian charango or rhythm with the South-American cumbia. All of these influences on a Western popular musician automatically raises questions on cultural appropriation. The scientific and also mainly Western debate on appropriation can be observed in the context of several case studies, but sadly enough lots of them are not integrating the voice of a very important group, namely the community of origin. In this thesis the goal is to formulate an answer to the following research question: “Is Stromae's album *Multitude* a case of cultural appropriation or appreciation, and how is it received in the relevant communities?”

This research is guided by three sub-questions. First, it examines the world music influences in Stromae's songs through an analysis of the cultural layers in *Santé* and *L'enfer*. Second, it evaluates these influences through the lens of cultural appropriation and appreciation using a scientific framework. Third, it investigates the perception of these influences by the relevant communities.

The research draws from several sources. The framework is based on academic literature, supplemented by media opinions due to the recent nature of the topic. This media analysis includes Belgian, international, and local media from the represented communities.

The primary academic sources for this thesis include *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* by James O. Young, *Between Cultural Appreciation and Cultural Appropriation: Self-Authorizing the Consumption of Cultural Difference* by Angela Gracia B. Cruz, Yuri Seo, and Daiana Scarabato, and *The Processes and Results of Musical Culture Contact: A Discussion of Terminology and Concepts* by

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew J. Forss, “World music,” *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, accessed May 23, 2024, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.kuleuven.e-bronnen.be/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002259436?rskey=ugSjTd&result=1>.



Margaret J. Kartomi. These sources form the foundation for Chapter one on cultural appropriation. For information on Stromae in Chapter two, primary literature such as his website, CD booklets, media sources, and the book *Stromae* by Thierry Coljon were used due to the lack of scientific sources about the artist. The final major part of the sources consists of YouTube videos. This is because much of the music studied in this thesis originates from non-written traditions. This includes Stromae's pop music, as well as traditional Andean, South American, and Bulgarian folk music. Additional YouTube videos include recordings of traditional instruments, television media clips, and analyses. A playlist of all these YouTube videos can be found the QR-code designed for this thesis (see Appendix one).

In addition to written and video sources, a survey was conducted in three different communities: Belgian, Bulgarian, and Bolivian. The Belgian survey was distributed through social media and word of mouth. The Bolivian survey was facilitated by my sister living in Bolivia. The Bulgarian survey was spread through contacts from De Centrale (my internship place), a dormmate, and fieldwork in Ghent. The detailed methodology of this survey and demographic information can be found in Chapter three.

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter one focuses on the general concept and framework in relation to cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. Chapter two covers Stromae's biography, providing a general overview of who he is and why he is influenced by other cultures. Chapter three elaborates on the methodology and demographic data of the survey. Chapter four analyzes the first case, *Santé*, using both the framework of appropriation and appreciation as well as the survey responses. Chapter five addresses the second case, *L'enfer*, following the same structure and format.

# **1. The concepts of cultural appropriation and appreciation**

## **1.1. Introduction**

This chapter aims to outline the concept of cultural appropriation and the extensive debate around it. Defining this complex and sensitive concept is challenging. Various sources highlight this difficulty. For example, James O. Young needed two books to explain his perspective on cultural appropriation.<sup>2</sup> In his book *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, Young notes that this concept spans many eras and appears in numerous historical contexts. He also emphasizes that artists have engaged in cultural appropriation throughout history, consistently sparking controversy and discussions among scholars, critics, and the general public.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter aims to introduce the discussions surrounding cultural appropriation and the challenge of understanding this complex concept. Instead of merely defining it, the focus is on exploring these debates. By the end of this chapter, the goal is to establish a theoretical framework for use in the following chapters.

## **1.2. The concept of cultural appropriation**

Before it is possible to construct the framework in its whole it is important to look at the two different aspects of cultural appropriation: culture and appropriation.

### **1.2.1. Culture**

The first concept is culture. Young quickly realizes that defining culture is difficult. Before examining Young's perspective, it is useful to consider some general definitions.<sup>4</sup> But, before delving into Young's perspective on culture, it is interesting to consider some general definitions. The Cambridge Dictionary defines culture as “the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time.”<sup>5</sup> Culture forms the narrative of a group of people or a person. Culture forms the narrative of a group of people.

Kwame Anthony Appiah, in *The Ethics of Identity*, questions whether it is useful to use the concept of 'culture' in a world where cultures combine and overlap. In increasingly diverse societies, it is

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<sup>2</sup> James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 1-5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 9-13.

<sup>5</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, “Culture,” accessed March 3 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture>.

difficult to talk about each culture separately. Individuals can participate in different practices, customs, and beliefs from various cultures.<sup>6</sup> For example, a child with a Belgian father and a Turkish mother might participate in both cultures and be part of a hybrid culture shared by other children with similar backgrounds

James Young also agrees that people can simultaneously be part of several cultures. He differentiates between two kinds of cultures: one with a geographical base (such as Canadian culture) and another without geographic anchoring, like religion or sexual orientation.<sup>7</sup> Young explains that a person can be part of a culture, or be an "insider", when they possess several traits and common beliefs shared by other insiders. When people share certain beliefs and norms, they form a culture. Thus, a person with similar beliefs or ideas is part of a culture where the general thoughts align. This concept is subjective; some may consider a person part of a culture, while others may not.<sup>8</sup> Due to these shared beliefs and thoughts, individuals can transition between cultures throughout their lives and become part of new ones. It's possible to become an "insider" of a new culture by adopting the same common beliefs and ideas.<sup>9</sup> To illustrate, consider a Belgian individual who joins an exchange program in Bolivia at age 18 and later chooses to settle permanently in the host country. Over time, they may assimilate into Bolivian culture while still maintaining aspects of their Belgian culture. This example focuses on geographically identified cultures, but similar assimilation can occur when individuals adopt new religious beliefs later in life, such as Catholicism, and begin to share the beliefs and norms of others in that religion. These examples illustrate the complexity of the hybrid nature of cultural identities. This can complicate defining who is an insider or outsider of a particular culture. The insider-outsider debate is complex and often subjective, as mentioned earlier.

### 1.2.2. Appropriation

To broaden the understanding of appropriation, it's valuable to explore fields beyond culture. In economics, Britannica Dictionary offers two distinct definitions. Firstly, there's the notion of unauthorized usage, characterized as "an act of using something in an illegal manner."<sup>10</sup> This definition carries a negative undertone. Secondly, there's a definition centered on budgeting for a specific purpose: "the act of getting or saving money for a specific use or purpose."<sup>11</sup> Despite their differences, both

<sup>6</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 130-154.

<sup>7</sup> Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 15-17.

<sup>10</sup> The Britannica Dictionary, "Appropriation," accessed March 3 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/appropriation>.

<sup>11</sup> The Britannica Dictionary, "Appropriation."

definitions highlight the idea of utilization, suggesting that appropriation could both have negative and neutral or positive connotations.

A more general definition from the Cambridge Dictionary moves away from the economic realm, defining appropriation as "an act of taking something for your own use, usually without permission."<sup>12</sup> Here again, the emphasis is on usage without consent what gives it the negative connotation like the first definition of the Britannica Dictionary.

Julie Sanders' book on adaptation and appropriation in literature offers an interesting perspective. She suggests that appropriation and adaptation are common and essential in artistic creation. Sanders emphasizes in her introduction how "art creates arts"<sup>13</sup> and "literature is made by literature."<sup>14</sup> In her book, Sanders doesn't explicitly define appropriation; instead, she provides examples and puts the difficulty of finding these cases.

"On the other hand, appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product domain. This may or may not involve a generic shift, and it may still require the intellectual juxtaposition of (at least) one text against another that we have suggested is central to the reading and spectating experience of adaptations."<sup>15</sup>

Sanders also discusses how appropriation often leads to the transformation of an original concept into a completely new cultural product. This transformation may involve a change in genre and may require comparing one text with another. Sanders emphasizes how appropriation places something in a new context, sometimes obscuring the original source.<sup>16</sup> She refrains from making value judgments on whether appropriation is illegal or unethical; instead, she presents it as a common practice.

The concept of appropriation is an important concept across various research fields, including economics and literature. The definitions or perspectives, presented above, all center on the use of aspects or objects. Some definitions focus on unauthorized usage, while others, like Sanders', highlight the reinterpretation of ideas in new contexts, which can make it challenging to trace the original source.

### 1.2.3. Cultural appropriation

With the background of the definitions above, it's possible to examine the concept of cultural appropriation as a whole. Beginning with the Cambridge Dictionary, where it's defined as "an act of

<sup>12</sup>Cambridge Dictionary, "Appropriation," accessed March 3 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/appropriation>.

<sup>13</sup> Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (Oxford: Roudledge, 2006), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture." <sup>17</sup> This definition highlights the negative connotation of appropriation, particularly focusing on the use without showing understanding or respect for the culture. The concept of respect presented here is subjective and challenging to analyze scientifically. However, the aspect of lacking understanding can be viewed as a more objective way to assess cases of cultural appropriation.

The next definition from Oxford Reference contextualizes cultural appropriation within the decolonization debate, emphasizing Western appropriations of non-Western or non-white cultural forms and expressions.

A term used to describe the taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another. It is in general used to describe Western appropriations of non-Western or non-white forms, and carries connotations of exploitation and dominance. The concept has come into literary and visual art criticism by analogy with the acquisition of artefacts (the Elgin marbles, Benin bronzes, Lakota war shirts, etc.) by Western museums. <sup>18</sup>

Incorporating the notions of exploitation and dominance further enriches the contextualization of decolonization. The examples above depict a problematic form of cultural appropriation associated with exploitation and dominance. <sup>19</sup> This definition introduces an additional layer of an unbalanced power dynamic between the culture being used and the one using it. This unbalanced power can be objectively examined when defining certain cases.

The focus of the West on the non-West in this example raises questions about our perception of other forms of cultural appropriation, such as the global dissemination and appropriation of jazz music. For instance, can we argue that a Japanese fusion band like CASIOPEA <sup>20</sup> appropriates the tradition of jazz, which originated in New Orleans, in a problematic way? <sup>21</sup> CASIOPEA, active from the 1970s to the 2000s, is a Japanese fusion jazz band. <sup>22</sup> Whether cultural appropriation is inherently good or bad is a debate that requires a nuanced analysis for each individual artist or band, as it varies case by case.

<sup>17</sup>Cambridge Dictionary, "Cultural Appropriation," accessed March 3, 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cultural-appropriation>.

<sup>18</sup>Oxford Reference, "Cultural Appropriation," accessed March 3, 2024, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095652789#:~:text=It%20is%20in%20general%20used,Lakota%20war%20shirts%2C%20etc.>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> CASIOPEA, "Time Limit," Youtube Video, 3:07, October 22, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PF0kv3a0KY&list=PLb83e9enzuMPxPLPBupHF6Gjzdd5pcBUD&index=1&ab\\_channel=CASIOPEA-Topic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PF0kv3a0KY&list=PLb83e9enzuMPxPLPBupHF6Gjzdd5pcBUD&index=1&ab_channel=CASIOPEA-Topic).

<sup>21</sup> Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 55-70.

<sup>22</sup>"CASIOPEA," Spotify, accessed May 18, 2024, <https://open.spotify.com/artist/0IRXEutklZUeNdWIJA1NI0?si=kyb0WBCYRIGo047HT9xmQ>

In all the preceding definitions, a sense of "respect" appears central in determining cultural appropriation. Respect is challenging to define objectively, so we'll consider elements like power balance and understanding of the culture when analyzing cases more as objective criteria. This raises the question of whether cultural appropriation is solely negative, or if there's another concept highlighting the positive aspects of cultural influences. Cruz, Seo, and Scaraboto explore this idea by introducing the concept of cultural appreciation.<sup>23</sup>

A cultural appreciation discourse frames the "making one's own" of another culture's elements (Young and Brunk 2009) as an unproblematic process of cultural diffusion and blending. By contrast, a cultural appropriation discourse frames the "taking" of elements from another culture in problematic terms (Ziff and Rao 1997)—as a harmful act of distortion, decontextualization, and domination.<sup>24</sup>

This definition of appreciation highlights various concepts. For example, domination refers to the balance of power, and decontextualization relates to the understanding of culture. Additionally, the authors introduce another concept linked to the idea of harmfulness, particularly in the context of appropriation.<sup>25</sup>

Cruz, Seo, and Scaraboto emphasize blending, which reinforces Sanders' idea. This cultural blending is an example of how cultures mix with each other. It requires an equal power balance to avoid dominance and is not harmful because the cultures become one or mix with each other. The concept of decontextualization may also play a role, as blending creates a new context with aspects of the two original contexts.<sup>26</sup>

Given the complexity of cultural influences, it may be worthwhile to delve deeper into the nuances of cultural appropriation. Young has attempted to define various forms of cultural appropriation, distinguishing between five distinct ideas.<sup>27</sup>

The first form described is object appropriation, involving the transfer of a physical work of art to another cultural context. Within this form, Young points out varying degrees. For instance, a tourist purchasing a traditional statue as a souvenir may not necessarily be seen as harmful. However, bringing an American totem pole to a European museum could be more harmful due to the cultural weight associated with it and its placement in a new context..<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Angela Gracia B Cruz, Yuri Seo, and Daiane Scaraboto, "Between Cultural Appreciation and Cultural Appropriation: Self-Authorizing the Consumption of Cultural Difference," *The Journal of consumer research* 50, no. 5 (2024), 962-964.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 963.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Cruz, Seo, and Scaraboto, "Between Cultural Appreciation and Cultural Appropriation," 962-964.

<sup>27</sup> Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, 5-6.

The second form outlined is content appropriation, where a non-physical item of art is reused by an outsider.<sup>29</sup> This relates to intangible aspects, such as the contents of a story from a certain culture, like Shakespeare for British culture.

A third idea he brings up is style appropriation, where stylistic elements of a culture are used by an outsider. An example here is Ethio-jazz, which merges Ethiopian musical traditions with jazz, an American genre.<sup>30</sup> The challenge lies in determining boundaries and distinguishing between appropriation and genuine cultural exchange. For instance, the Belgian band Black Flower<sup>31</sup> specializes in Ethiopian jazz, raising questions about appropriation as they are outsiders to this genre themselves. This way a Belgian band uses influences of a genre that is influenced by another culture. This shows a kind of chain surrounding cultural appropriation and cultural influences.

The fourth concept is motif appropriation, focusing on influences rather than complete stylistic reuse. Young maintains a less negative stance towards this concept, recognizing the inevitable influence and interaction between cultures.<sup>32</sup> For example, the pentatonic use of music in animation movies to evoke Chinese culture could be seen as offensive or harmful if it becomes a caricature rather than a genuine representation.

The last concept outlined is subject appropriation, involving an outsider representing a culture in a story. This can be seen in fiction literature where an invented culture is depicted with stereotypical characters. Young considers this form of appropriation as different because it does not necessarily take aspects directly from an existing culture but rather portrays one, which can be offensive or harmful..<sup>33</sup>

After examining various instances of cultural appropriation as outlined by Young, it is visible that not every instance neatly fits into one category but often involves a blend of appropriation methods. A notable illustration in this context is Pablo Picasso's Cubism. In 1907, Picasso introduced his groundbreaking style through the painting 'Les Femmes d'Alger' (O.J.), marking a significant leap in modern art. This innovative style was partly inspired by a sculpture displayed by Henri Matisse, acquired from the Republic of Congo. Picasso, captivated by this influence, acquired African masks himself, which became the basis of *Les Femmes d'Alger* and the genesis of his Cubist approach.<sup>34</sup>

This example underscores two distinct forms of appropriation: object appropriation and style appropriation. Initially, Picasso and Matisse appropriated African art by extracting it from its original

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Sdban Records, "Black Flower – Bones (official video)," Youtube Video, 5:02, September 14, 2016, <https://youtu.be/VEdX-GZTDHk?si=wdLAQmeGEjmsmhXq>.

<sup>32</sup> Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>34</sup> Nadeen Pennisi, "Picasso and Africa: How African Art Influenced Pablo Picasso and His Work" (Palm Beach State College), 1-10.



context and reintroducing it to Europe. Secondly, Picasso's adoption of the African mask's visual language represents style appropriation, as he fuses his painting's aesthetics with African artistic elements.

In an interview with the British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare, he explains how Picasso is not just a case of cultural appropriation because he found that it was clear how Picasso was also really interested in the spiritual side of these masks and in this way you could see this appreciated this culture. Of course he explains that he understands that there was at that time an unbalanced power dynamic between Picasso his culture and the culture of the African masks.<sup>35</sup> This interview again makes clear how the concept of appropriation really is no case of positive or negative and a lot of things have to be taken in account. This interview is especially interesting because this makes clear how it is important to listen to the opinions and thoughts of the represented communities in the cases.

These examples shed light on how the transfer of influences or styles from another culture in intangible heritage such as music can also be perceived negatively. Often, when an outsider artist uses a cultural influence, it is simplified to just one rhythmic motif or melodic element.<sup>36</sup>

This simplification can lead to two harmful consequences. Firstly, many listeners may not recognize or acknowledge the motif as a cultural influence, especially when power imbalances exist. This lack of recognition can prevent the dominant culture from giving proper exposure to the other culture, similar to plagiarism where an idea is used without proper citation. Secondly, oversimplification can be harmful because it reduces a complex culture to a single aspect, presenting it in an overly simplistic manner. The most negative outcome of this oversimplification occurs when a cultural aspect takes precedence over the broader, more nuanced traditional culture. This dominance of the simplified version can overshadow or even lead to the loss of the deeper, meaningful aspects of the culture. In extreme cases, this could result in the culture losing its essence.

To reinforce this argument, reference can be made to Margaret J. Kartomi discussion on musical impoverishment. She explains how a culture can undergo a process of standardization and in this way losing much of its richness and depth in the process because of the dominance of another culture.<sup>37</sup> Kartomi also raises the question whether traditional culture loses some of its essence when it is influenced by other music cultures like pop culture especially when it comes in contact with a dominant

<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Jones, "Cultural appropriation is a two-way thing": Yinka Shonibare on Picasso, masks and the fashion for black artists," *The Guardian*, June 14, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/jun/14/masks-monsters-masterpieces-yinka-shonibare-picasso-africa>.

<sup>36</sup> James O. Young, "The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation," 2000, <https://sfxhosted.exlibrisgroup.com/dal?rft.atitle=The%20Ethics%20of%20Cultural%20Appropriation&rft.aualast=Young&rft.aufirst=James%20O.&rft.date=2000&rft.volume=80&rft.issue=3&rft.space=301,303>.

<sup>37</sup> Margaret J. Kartomi, "The Processes and Results of Musical Culture Contact: A Discussion of Terminology and Concepts," *Ethnomusicology* 25, no. 2. (1981), <https://doi.org/10.2307/851273>, 239.



culture. This question is complex and challenging to answer, as there are both positive and negative aspects associated with traditional culture interacting with popular culture.<sup>38</sup>

Even with the distinction between cultural appropriation and appreciation, defining complex and hybrid examples of cultural influence remains challenging. Consider, for instance, a reggae band in Spain consisting of four Spanish members and one Jamaican member, compared to a reggae band with five Canadian members who have lived in Jamaica for over fifteen years. It's hard to determine who qualifies as outsiders engaging in appropriation or appreciation of culture, and who are insiders simply expressing their own culture. Examples like these underscore the complexity and nuances of this debate, showing why there's no clear-cut answer to whether something constitutes cultural appropriation or not.

Considering these challenges, it might be valuable to introduce one final concept known as transculturation. Transculturation involves creating a new culture through the merging of different cultures. In this process, cultural aspects from various cultures assimilate or get lost.<sup>39</sup> This concept could be seen as the basis for both cultural appropriation and appreciation. When dominance enters this process, it can become harmful or offensive, leading to cultural appropriation.

### 1.3. Interim conclusion

Having explored various perspectives on cultural appropriation and gained insights into this concept, it's time to establish a theoretical framework for analyzing the cases in the following chapters. This framework will be based on some central concepts.

Figure 1 presents a schematic representation of the chapter above. Within this framework, two main distinctions are made: cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. These distinctions are defined by factors such as harmfulness, offensiveness, understanding of the culture, exposure of the culture, and balance in power.

Before determining whether an action falls into one of these categories, it's important to establish whether the individual is an insider or outsider of the culture in question. Then, the type of cultural use—whether it's appreciation or appropriation—can be determined. Once this distinction is made, it's possible to examine the different subcategories: object, style, content, motif, and subject appropriation or appreciation.

<sup>38</sup>Kartomi, "The Processes and Results of Musical Culture Contact," 239.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 239-241.

Cultural Appropriation	Cultural Appreciation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Object</li> <li>- Style</li> <li>- Content</li> <li>- Motif</li> <li>- Subject</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Object</li> <li>- Style</li> <li>- Content</li> <li>- Motif</li> <li>- Subject</li> </ul>

*Figure 1: Schematic representation of the theoretical framework of cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation*

## 2. Stromae and the album *Multitude*

Chapter 2 aims to provide context for the artist Stromae and his latest album *Multitude*. It consists of two main parts. The first part offers a brief biography of Stromae or Paul Van Haver (2.1.1.) and the musical influences that he encountered, which shaped the style presented on this album (2.1.2.). The second part of this chapter delves into the album itself. Initially, it discusses general and productional information about the album (2.2.1.). Subsequently, it explores the influences and contributions of various musicians to this work (2.2.2.).

### 2.1. Stromae

#### 2.1.1. A short biography

The objective of this section is to provide a short introduction to the biography of Stromae. This introduction exists out of two parts: the first part focuses on the general biography, while the second part delves into Stromae's profound influence by world music and other musical genres.

Due to Stromae's dislike to have a biography published during his lifetime, authentic biographical information is scant. Thierry Coljon, author of a book on Stromae, recounts his conversation with the artist regarding a biography. Stromae expressed his belief that he is too young to have a biography and suggested that such a work be written only after his death.<sup>40</sup> Despite this stance, Coljon undertook an analysis of Stromae's significance as a remarkable and influential figure. This analysis, along with insights from media sources and Stromae's official website, forms the basis for the biographical details presented below.

Stromae or Paul Van Haver was born in 1985 in Etterbeek, Brussels. He is the child of a Belgian mother and a Rwandan father and he has three brothers and one sister.<sup>41</sup> During his childhood, he was raised solely by his mother, as his father was absent.<sup>42</sup> In 1994, his father was killed in the Rwandan genocide. The song *Papaoutai*, in which he poses the question "father, where were you?" is dedicated to his father.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Thierry Coljon, *Stromae*, trans. Petra Van Caneghem (Antwerp : Horzion Overamstel uitgevers, 2023), 11-12.

<sup>41</sup> "Projects: Stromae," Mosaert, accessed May 3, 2024, <https://mosaert.com/projects/stromae>.

<sup>42</sup> Coljon, *Stromae*, 29 – 30.

<sup>43</sup> Kim Van De Perre, "Stromae," *De Morgen*, October 19, 2015, <https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/stromae-speelt-pakkende-show-in-het-land-van-zijn-vader~b713b507/?referrer=https://www.google.com/>.

Stromae grew up in the neighborhood of Laken, one of the multicultural parts of Brussels. After experiencing difficulties at school due to a lack of motivation, his mother sent him to the boarding school Sint-Paulus, a Jesuit school in Brussels. At Sint-Paulus, he was among the few students of color. After some time he developed a friendship with Jean-Dider Longane, also known as J.E.D.I.. Both friends, Paul Van Haver operating under the alias Opsmaestro, formed the rap duo 'Suspicion'. This is the first official music project of Paul Van Haver.<sup>44</sup>

After two years, the duo split and Opsmaestro continued to pursue rap within the Brussels' scene. In addition to rapping, Stromae took part in various breakdance competitions, which later influenced his dance moves visible in his music videos and performances.<sup>45</sup>

After high school, Paul Van Haver pursued his studies at *L'Institut national de radioélectricité et cinématographie* (INRACI), where he focused on cinema with a specialization in sound engineering.<sup>46</sup>

During his studies, Stromae undertook an internship in 2009 at the French Radio NRJ, where his music gained interest from the programmers, leading to the inclusion of his songs, such as *Alors on Danse*,<sup>47</sup> in their programming. This particular song became a hit.<sup>48</sup> As a result, Universal France approached Stromae and offered him a contract. Operating under his own label, Mosaert, which is affiliated with Universal France, Stromae released his debut album *Cheese* in 2010.<sup>49</sup> This album blends the electropop sound he became familiar with during his studies, with his hip hop influences.

What is noteworthy is the extent to which the Stromae phenomenon remains rooted within the family and close circle of friends. The music for Stromae's album *Cheese* was recorded at Studio Air, where the mixing was handled by Lionel Capouille, a childhood friend of Stromae. The concept for Mosaert, the label under which Stromae operates, originated from Dati Bendo, Stromae's older brother. The artistic direction of his songs is overseen by Luc Junio Tam, also known as Luc Van Haver, who is Stromae's younger brother and a key member of the Stromae team, alongside Paul and his wife Coralie Barbier.<sup>50</sup>

Following a year of radio silence in 2012, Stromae made a comeback with one of his renowned *Leçon* videos, a series where he explains his music-making process. Shortly thereafter, he released his

<sup>44</sup> Coljon, *Stromae*, 30.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 31-32.

<sup>46</sup> Mosaert, "Stromae."

<sup>47</sup> Stromae, "Stromae- Alors on danse (Official Video)," Youtube Video, 3 :54, April 28, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHoT4N43jK8&pp=ygUOYWxvcnMgZW4gZGFuc2U%3D>.

<sup>48</sup> Coljon, *Stromae*, 34-35.

<sup>49</sup> Mosaert, "Stromae."

<sup>50</sup> Coljon, *Stromae*, 46.

song *Papaoutai*.<sup>51</sup> On January 1st, 2013, he launched his album *Racine Carrée* which experienced immediate success, selling 40 thousand copies within just 10 days.<sup>52</sup> After a lot of concerts and awards, 2015 was the year he could begin his emotionally important tour throughout Africa. However, this tour was abruptly halted due to the adverse effects of preventive malaria medication he was taking. These pills induced hallucinations and other psychological issues. Following this incident, there was a prolonged period of radio silence that lasted for years,<sup>53</sup> with only occasional interviews and the release of his song *Défiler* in connection with a fashion show for his clothing brand Mosaert.

In 2022, Stromae broke this silence by releasing the album we will discuss in this thesis, *Multitude* (2.2.). Once again, the album became a worldwide hit, leading to numerous tours. However, in 2023, his concerts were canceled once more, this time due to psychological issues.<sup>54</sup> This could potentially mark the beginning of another extended period of silence and absence. The album *Multitude* will be further analyzed in section 2.2.

### 2.1.2. Musical influences in Stromae's life

Stromae began his musical journey at a young age, primarily exploring hip hop. During his high school years, his interests were focused on the underground music scene in Brussels, particularly French rap and breakdance.<sup>55</sup> Initially, he started as Opmaestro in duo Suspicion. Transitioning to a solo career, he released songs like *C'est Stromae*,<sup>56</sup> characterized by the typical rap sound of the 2000s.<sup>57</sup>

Stromae is frequently compared to Jacques Brel by the media due to their shared interest in the genre known as 'chanson réaliste',<sup>58</sup> a genre originating from the impoverished classes in Paris at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.<sup>59</sup> Stromae is not going against this assumption. If looked at the song *L'ivrogne*<sup>60</sup> by Jacques Brel in comparison with Stromae's *Formidable*.<sup>61</sup> In both videoclips the artists portray a drunken character.

<sup>51</sup> Stromae, "Stromae – papaoutai (Official Video), » YouTube Video, 3:52, June 6, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiKj0Z\\_Xnjc&ab\\_channel=StromaeVEVO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiKj0Z_Xnjc&ab_channel=StromaeVEVO).

<sup>52</sup> Coljon, *Stromae*, 57-63.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 95-100.

<sup>54</sup> Pieterjan Huyghebaert, "Stromae annuleert alle optredens tot eind mei: "Mijn gezondheidstoestand laat het niet toe", » *VRT nws*, April 4, 2023, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2023/04/04/stromae-annuleert/>.

<sup>55</sup> Coljon, *Stromae*, 31.

<sup>56</sup> Stromae, "c'est stromae," Youtube Video, 4:08, March 28, 2008, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx76hHdpjKg&ab\\_channel=Stromae](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx76hHdpjKg&ab_channel=Stromae).

<sup>57</sup> Coljon, *Stromae*, 32.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 16-17.

<sup>59</sup> Barbara Lebrun, "Rene, Ginette, Louise et les autres : nostalgie et authenticité dans la chanson neo-réaliste, » *French Politics, Culture and Society* 27, no. 2 (2009), *Gale Literature Resource Center* (accessed May 3, 2024), <https://link-gale-com.kuleuven.e-bronnen.be/apps/doc/A206686898/LitRC?u=leuven&sid=bookmark-LitRC&xid=707212ff>.

<sup>60</sup> B4CH, "Jacques Brel – L'ivrogne (1961), » Youtube Video, 4:03, December 2, 2008, <https://youtu.be/YeJjEezqi1I?si=F6eY5VaRUr44sNSt>.

A third influence present in Stromae's music is electropop. This influence becomes clear when he begins releasing his *Leçons*, explaining his music-making process. These videos feature Stromae using only one synthesizer, similar of the techniques employed by many producers during this period, such as Marc Moulin. He was a producer who was important in the new search of the sound of the synthesizer.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, during his *Racine Carrée* tour, Stromae performs a new beat version of his song *Alors on Danse* underscoring his significant influence from this Belgian genre.<sup>63</sup> New Beat, a genre originating in Belgium during the 1990s, has notably impacted Stromae's musical style.<sup>64</sup>

The unique sound of Stromae, resulting from a combination of these three genres, electropop, French chanson and hip hop, is present throughout his music.<sup>65</sup> In his album *Multitude* he diverges slightly from the electropop sound and explores a more folkloristic and world music-inspired direction.<sup>66</sup> In an interview with Knack, he elaborates on how these cultural influences have shaped his life since childhood. Primarily, growing up in what he describes as a "clash of cultures" in the Noordwijk area of Brussels has significantly shaped his musical perspective.<sup>67</sup> Notably, Brussels stands with 184 distinct nationalities as the city with the second-highest number of nationalities worldwide.<sup>68</sup> In an interview in the New York Times he illustrates this with a telling example.

When mentioning his interest in using the erhu, for example, Stromae explained, "it's a kind of Chinese fiddle that you hear a lot in 'Kung Fu Panda.' Those are all points of reference to me, a little vulgar, a little basic — it's my vision of world music coming from my hometown of Brussels."<sup>69</sup>

His mother plays a significant role in fostering his interest in different cultures. Her circle of friends comprises individuals from various parts of the world, resulting in diverse music being played at gatherings with friends and family. Stromae's affection for Bolivia particularly stems from multiple visits to the country with his mother and on his own. Despite expressing that his father does not serve as an inspiration, Stromae's background as the child of a Rwandan father also sparks his interest in, or attraction

<sup>61</sup> Stromae, "Stromae – Formidable (ceci n'est pas une leçon), » Youtube Video, 4 :53, May 27, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S\\_xH7noaqTA&ab\\_channel=Stromae](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_xH7noaqTA&ab_channel=Stromae)

<sup>62</sup> "Biography," Marc Moulin, accessed May 18, 2024, <http://www.marc moulin.com/bio.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Coljon, *Stromae*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> Kris Pennings, "New Beat: een beschrijvende analyse," (1990), 2-4.

<sup>65</sup> Coljon, *Stromae*, 17-19.

<sup>66</sup> Geert Zagers, "Exclusief, het grote Stromae-interview: 'Oef. De mensen zijn me niet helemaal vergeten'," *Knack Focus*, February 8, 2022, <https://focus.knack.be/muziek/exclusief-het-grote-stromae-interview-oef-de-mensen-zijn-me-niet-helemaal-vergeten/>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Coljon, *Stromae*, 27.

<sup>69</sup> Elisabeth Vincentelli, "Stromae's Music Delves Into Dark Topics. His Return Is Right on Time," *The New York Times*, February 28, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/28/arts/music/stromae-multitude.html>.

to, the African continent.<sup>70</sup> These influences, as we will observe, prominently feature in his latest album *Multitude*.

## 2.2. Multitude

This section will focus on the album *Multitude*. Firstly, there will be an examination of the general and productional aspects of the album, followed by an analysis of its content. This first part concludes with a brief overview of the various awards Stromae received for this album or its songs. The second part of this section will mirror the structure used above, examining the musical influences or decisions specific to the album itself.

### 2.2.1. General information

#### *a. Productional information*

The album *Multitude* was released on March 3, 2022, marking a nine-year gap since Stromae's previous album, *Racine Carrée*. The information below is primarily based on the CD booklet.

The production of *Multitude* is managed by the label Mosaert, with Paul Van Haver (Stromae) as CEO and creative director, his brother Luc Van Haver as executive and creative director, and his wife Coralie Barbier as the fashion designer and also a creative director.<sup>71</sup> Notably, three of the twelve songs on the album feature Moon Willis as a second producer.<sup>72</sup> Willis, active in the United Kingdom, is renowned for his global sound and his versatility across genres.<sup>73</sup> This is also the reason Stromae opted to collaborate with him due to his extensive network with musicians from around the world.<sup>74</sup>

The mixing for the album is carried out by Lionel Capouillez from Studio Air, situated in Brussels.<sup>75</sup> The mastering is conducted by Pieter De Wagter at EQUUS, located in a village in Flanders.<sup>76</sup> Beyond the mixing and mastering process, Stromae made an intriguing choice to employ the Dolby Atmos technique for his music. This technique represents a novel approach to mixing and mastering, involving the placement of music within three-dimensional soundscapes. Comparable to immersive or

<sup>70</sup> Zagers, "Exclusief, het grote Stromae-interview."

<sup>71</sup> Stromae, *Multitude*, Mosaert Label, 2022, compact disc.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> "Moon Willis," Redlight Management, accessed May 1, 2024, <https://www.redlightmanagement.com/artists/moon-willis/>.

<sup>74</sup> Zagers, "Exclusief, het grote Stromae-interview."

<sup>75</sup> "Accueil," Studio AIR, accessed May 1, 2024, <https://studioair.be>.

<sup>76</sup> Stromae, "Multitude."



surround sound, Dolby Atmos is considered the latest advancement in mixing technology.<sup>77</sup> Stromae collaborated with the Belgian mixer Peter Philips from Alaska Studios for this purpose.<sup>78</sup>

The final significant contributors in the production of an album include the labels, publishers, and distribution companies. Stromae and his team use their own label, Mosaert, for the general publication and dissemination of the music. Mosaert operates under license from Universal France. To ensure international reach, they collaborated with the Polydor label, known for its focus on export. Polydor oversaw the worldwide distribution of the album, except for the United States, where responsibility fell to the Universal group.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, for several songs, Sony Music Publishing shares responsibility for the music publishing alongside Mosaert.<sup>80</sup>

### *b. The songs*

In this section dedicated to the songs, discussion of the musical aspects will be avoided. Detailed music analysis will be reserved for specific case studies in Chapters four and five. Section 2.2.2 will further explain why Stromae's album *Multitude* is the focus of this thesis on music.

The album comprises twelve songs with a total playtime of thirty-five minutes. Throughout the songs certain themes come up on regular basis. Thematics like loneliness and depression are findable in four songs *Invaincu*, *La Solassitude*, *L'enfer* and *Mauvais Journée*. This comes back so often probably because of his own experience with these dark thoughts he had in the years of radio silence before the release of *Multitude*. Another theme that comes back is the focus on the working class or the classes of society where are looked down on like in *Fils de Joie* and *Santé*. This could be seen as one of the influences the French chanson or 'Chanson réaliste' has on his music. The last theme what comes back two times is relationships that are not working out in *Mon Amour* and *Pas Vraiment*.

Both *Santé* and *L'enfer* are the cases that will be studied in the last two chapters. These are also by accident the two most listened songs on the album. The first one has been streamed for over 126 million times on Spotify and is released as the first single in the promo for the whole album. *L'enfer* on the other hand has been streamed over 128 million times on Spotify.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Mike Thornton, "Mixing Music In Dolby Atmos – Everything You Need To Know," *Production Expert*, May 15, 2022, <https://www.production-expert.com/home-page/2020/7/1/everything-you-need-to-know-about-dolby-atmos-home-entertainment-r57h5>.

<sup>78</sup> Stromae, *Multitude*.

<sup>79</sup> Stromae, *Multitude*.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> "Multitude," Spotify, accessed May 10, 2024, [https://open.spotify.com/album/5JY3b9cELQsoG7D5TJMOgw?si=7SU5EVaETg2l6\\_HNEKfz2w](https://open.spotify.com/album/5JY3b9cELQsoG7D5TJMOgw?si=7SU5EVaETg2l6_HNEKfz2w).



### c. Awards

With his previous albums, Stromae received numerous awards. Prior to the music he released in 2022, he won fourteen Music Industry Awards, with eight awarded solely in 2013 for his album *Racine Carrée*. With the album *Multitude* he won less awards than in 2013. However, he still managed to secure three MIA's for best Artwork, best live act, and best author-composer.<sup>82</sup>

Another significant Belgian award Stromae received was the Ultratop Streaming Award from the Belgian Entertainment Association. This award is granted to the musician with the highest number of streams in Belgium. Stromae has won this award four times to date, underscoring the popularity of his music in the country.<sup>83</sup> Beside this award he also got a double platinum for *Multitude* in Belgium because he sold 40 thousand copies.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, he attained a double platinum certification in France, with 200 thousand copies sold.<sup>85</sup>

In France, Stromae received another significant award for his album in 2023. He won at the *Victoires de la Musique*, which is the largest music award show in France, in the categories of Best Album and Best Male Artist.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, he had the opportunity to perform on famous and large international stages. For the second time, Stromae performed at the Coachella festival in America and also at the Tiny Desk Concerts of *NPR Music*.<sup>87</sup>

### 2.2.2. Musical influences

In the subsequent paragraphs, the aim is to examine the overall concept behind the album, particularly focusing on world music influences. First, there will be a section dedicated to exploring the general idea, followed by an examination of the musicians and songs featured on the album and their connections to the musical influences.

<sup>82</sup> Wim De Maeseneer, and Kirstel Sokol, „Drie MIA's voor Stromae en Pommeliers Thijs, Angèle met lege handen naar huis ondanks 7 nominaties,” *VRT nws*, January 26, 2023, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2023/01/26/mias-winnaars/>.

<sup>83</sup> JOVS, “Stromae wint de ‘Ultratop Streaming Award 2022’,” *Het Laatste Nieuws*, August 18, 2023, [https://www.hln.be/muziek/stromae-wint-de-ultratop-streaming-award-2022~a2c361ea/?cb=25d37697-bc96-4432-b37e-833ae5fad386&auth\\_rd=1](https://www.hln.be/muziek/stromae-wint-de-ultratop-streaming-award-2022~a2c361ea/?cb=25d37697-bc96-4432-b37e-833ae5fad386&auth_rd=1).

<sup>84</sup> SDE, “Stromae haalt dubbel platina voor derde album ‘Multitude’,” *Het Laatste Nieuws*, June 6, 2022, <https://www.hln.be/showbizz/stromae-haalt-dubbel-platina-voor-derde-album-multitude~a95daea7/#:~:text=De%20muzikant%20kreeg%20namelijk%20dubbel,n%20derde%20album%20'Multitude'.&text=In%20maat%20bracht%20Stromae%2C%20na,de%20toonbank%20in%20ons%20land>.

<sup>85</sup> Jeff Kravitz, “Stromae: “Multitude” Certifié Double Disque De Platine,” *RFM*, August 4, 2022, <http://www.rfm.fr/news/Stromae-Multitude-certifie-double-disque-de-platine-27046>.

<sup>86</sup> Robinson Hollanders, “Victoires de la Musique 2023: le palmarès complet de la cérémonie,” *RTL France*, February 11, 2023, <https://www.rtl.fr/culture/musique/victoires-de-la-musique-2023-le-palmares-complet-de-la-ceremonie-7900235041>

<sup>87</sup> Ellen Maerevoet, “Billie Eilish (20) jongste hoofdact ooit op Coachella, ook Stromae opnieuw op de affiche Amerikaans festival,” *VRT nws*, January 13, 2022, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2022/01/13/billie-eilish-20-jongste-headliner-ooit-op-coachella-ook-stro/>.

*De Tijd* portrays *Multitude* as an "exploration journey from Latin America across Africa all the way to China."<sup>88</sup> Later in this interview, Stromae elaborates on how he grew tired of dance music, likely due to his age. He characterizes the new sound of his album as "my own version of world music."<sup>89</sup> This personal interpretation can be perceived as a fusion of various cultures. He articulates his intention not to align each song with a specific country but rather to create a blend of multiple influences in every song.<sup>90</sup> His objective was to create music with a more folkloristic essence. Initially, he was thinking of the title *Folklore* for this album, but this idea was abandoned when Taylor Swift released her album *Folklore*.<sup>91</sup>

When discussing folkloristic influences used on the album, Stromae mentions several examples, including the charango from the Andean region, a Chinese erhu, Mongolian throat singing, Turkish flutes, Brazilian Bailefunk, and Congolese rhythms.<sup>92</sup> Another interesting example is classical music, which Stromae defines as a form of Western folklore.<sup>93</sup>

In a review on the site *Written in Music*, Hendrik Vanhee examines the cover art and interprets it as depicting five Stromae figures, each representing a continent.<sup>94</sup> However, it is worth noting that America is portrayed as a single continent rather than North and South America separately, so it is unclear if this interpretation aligns with Stromae's intention. Nevertheless, the number five is consistently featured in all the album's pictures and promotional materials.

With a clear understanding of the album's concept, the focus shifts to the songs and the musicians involved. While not discussing every song individually, several examples are provided to illustrate the album's concept. Stromae collaborated with musicians from various cultures in the production of this album. This is how Stromae sees the collaboration with these musicians:

Yeah, it's interesting. I am who I am. The worst thing is to just try to imitate. Of course I couldn't be better than a famous band from Bolivia. The only thing I can do is my thing.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Peeters, "Stromae klinkt op 'Multitude' nog meer als een wereldreiziger," *De Tijd*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.tijd.be/cultuur/muziek/stromae-klinkt-op-multitude-nog-meer-als-een-wereldreiziger/10370844.html>.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

<sup>90</sup> Lior Phillips, "How Stromae's Multicultural Upbringing Led To A Triumphant Return To Music In 2022," *Grammy Awards*, December 12, 2022, <https://www.grammy.com/news/stromae-multitude-album-comeback-tour-lenfer-sante-interview-racine-carree>.

<sup>91</sup> Zagers, "Exclusief, het grote Stromae-interview."

<sup>92</sup> Zagers, "Exclusief, het grote Stromae-interview."

<sup>93</sup> Robin Joris Dullers, "Stromae over zijn nieuwe album 'Multitude': Mijn leven is in evenwicht," *BRUZZ*, March 4, 2022, <https://www.bruzz.be/culture/music-nightlife/stromae-over-zijn-nieuwe-album-multitude-mijn-leven-nu-evenwicht-2022-03-04>.

<sup>94</sup> Hendrik Vanhee, "Stromae, Multitude," review of *Multitude*, by Stromae, *Written in Music*, March 8, 2022, <https://writteninmusic.com/albumrecensie/stromae-multitude/>.

<sup>95</sup> Phillips, "How Stromae's Multicultural Upbringing Led To A Triumphant Return To Music In 2022."

As the theme of Bolivia will come back in Chapter four, Stromae's collaboration with Alfredo Coca, a Bolivian charango player from Cochabamba, is interesting. This Bolivian musician contributes to four of the twelve songs on the album: *L'enfer*, *C'est que du Bonheur*, *Mauvaise Journée* and *Bonne Journée*.<sup>96</sup> In an interview, Coca expresses his support for Stromae's efforts to showcase Andean music, emphasizing that music transcends borders.<sup>97</sup> He is not the only charango player on the album. In the song *Santé*, we hear Juanpaio Toch.

Another group of musicians on the album is the French-Bulgarian Orenda Trio Choir, practicing the Bulgarian polyphonic tradition.<sup>98</sup> The choir features in three songs: *Invaincu*, *L'enfer* and *Bonne Journée*. In an interview, one of the singers highlights how the Bulgarian chants enhance the refrain in *Invaincu*, intensifying the emotion of the song.<sup>99</sup> Stromae initially attempted to replicate Bulgarian voices on his laptop, but his brother Luc suggested seeking out a real choir.<sup>100</sup>

The Belgian National Orchestra, conducted by Dirk Brossé, performs in five songs: *Déclaration*, *Riez*, *L'enfer*, *La Solassitude* and *Invaincu*. Brossé describes the recording process as mysterious and secretive, highlighting it as one of the pinnacles of his career.<sup>101</sup>

As presented in the presentation of the musicians, many collaborate on the final track, *Bonne Journée*. This serves as an example of Stromae's fusion of diverse cultures, incorporating Bolivian charango, a Bulgarian choir, and a Turkish/Arabic Ney.<sup>102</sup> Another notable example is *Fils de joie*, where a harpsichord is combined with a Brazilian Baile funk beat.<sup>103</sup>

## 2.3. Interim conclusion

The biographical information and album analysis demonstrate how Stromae is influenced by various cultures and genres. While his musical identity encompasses electropop, French chanson and hip hop, he enriches it on this album with folkloristic influences. His affection for Bolivia is clear through the

<sup>96</sup> Stromae, *Multitude*.

<sup>97</sup> Redacción Red Uno de Bolivia, "El charango boliviano, de la mano de Alfredo Coca, billa en el nuevo disco del belga Stromae," *Red Uno*, April 3, 2023, <https://www.reduno.com.bo/tendencias/el-charango-boliviano-de-la-mano-de-alfredo-coca-brilla-en-el-nuevo-disco-del-belga-stromae-20234414414>.

<sup>98</sup> "Bio," Orenda Trio, accessed May 3, 2024, <https://orendatrio.fr/bio/>.

<sup>99</sup> Albena Bezovska, "Bulgarian voice power unleash emotion in Stromae's new single L'Enfer," *Radio Bulgaria*, February 14, 2022, <https://bnr.bg/en/post/101601030/bulgarian-voice-power-unleash-emotion-in-stormaes-new-single-lenfer>.

<sup>100</sup> Dullers, "Stromae over zijn nieuwe album 'Multitude'."

<sup>101</sup> Judit Verstraete, "Dirigent Dirk Brossé werkte mee aan nieuwe album Stromae: "Alles verliep in grootste geheim, was een blind date," *VRT nws*, February 22, 2022, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2022/02/22/dirigent-dirk-brosse-over-samenwerking-met-stromae/>.

<sup>102</sup> Stromae, *Multitude*.

<sup>103</sup> Gunter Van Assche, "Multitude' van Stromae: de diepte van Brel, de wijde van de wereld," Review of *Multitude*, by Stromae, *De Morgen*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.demorgen.be/tv-cultuur/multitude-van-stromae-de-diepte-van-brel-de-wijde-van-de-wereld~bacaade6/>

prominent presence of the charango, yet he also incorporates influences from Bulgarian, Chinese, South American, and African musical traditions.

### **3. Survey: methodology and demographics**

This short chapter provides an overview of the survey, covering participant demographics, distribution methods, and data collection procedures. This part on the survey's methodology aims to avoid repetition in the case studies (Chapter four and Chapter five). The substantive findings from the survey regarding two specific songs by Stromae, *Santé* and *L'enfer*, are analyzed separately through case studies. Each case study consists of two parts: a music analysis exploring the 'world music' influences on the song, and an examination of how these musical aspects contribute to the debate on cultural appropriation or appreciation, using the framework established in Chapter one and the perspectives of survey respondents on Stromae's use of these influences. This parallel study of the two songs facilitates a more comprehensive comparison.

#### **3.1. Idea of a survey**

While reading about cultural appropriation and listening to Stromae's music, there was a constant feeling that something crucial was missing in the ongoing debates and literature. Discussions on cultural appropriation often seemed to be dominated by theoretical analysis from a few authors regarding specific cases, neglecting the perspectives of the communities represented by the examples of appropriation.

The turning point for the research occurred when my sister, who is an AFS exchange student in Bolivia, sent me a voice message describing how all her friends were loving Stromae's new album, especially the song *Santé*. This changed my perspective on Stromae's music, revealing how much it is influenced by Bolivian music (see below, chapter four.). This realization prompted to launch a survey in Bolivia.

The insight from Bolivia led to considering other opportunities to gather perspectives from different communities. During my internship at *De Centrale* (Gent) this academic year, there was a clear connection between the programming of this cultural center and the Bulgarian community in Ghent. Demographically, the Bulgarian community is the second largest group in Ghent, after the Turkish community.<sup>104</sup> This information led to the gathering of input from this community regarding the song *L'enfer*.

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<sup>104</sup>“Databank,” provinces.incijfers.be, accessed January 3, 2024,  
[https://provincies.incijfers.be/databank?workspace\\_guid=1e09b4af-c839-4f26-b1b2-75debb6870f1](https://provincies.incijfers.be/databank?workspace_guid=1e09b4af-c839-4f26-b1b2-75debb6870f1).

### 3.2. Launch of the survey

The survey (See Appendix two) in Belgium and Bolivia was launched on January 26, 2024. The Belgian segment of the survey concluded one month later, on February 26, yielding 129 responses. In contrast, the Bolivian and Bulgarian sections of the survey remained open until April 21, due to challenges in reaching respondents. Despite additional efforts made, the Bolivian section of the survey closed with 25 responses.

Reaching the Bulgarian community posed the greatest difficulty, with only one survey response received after one and a half months. Despite attempts to solicit responses through various channels such as Facebook groups and organizations, assistance was sought from Mattias Laga, a bridge-builder between the city of Ghent and its Bulgarian community. Laga informed that the Bulgarian community in Ghent tends to be insular. He suggested visiting several Bulgarian cafés in Ghent to distribute and collect surveys. This fieldwork in various Bulgarian cafés led to an increase in survey responses, totaling 13.

In the two case studies below, the substantive answers surrounding the topic (see 4.3. and 5.3) will be examined. Here, only the demographic data are presented: age, gender, and place of residence. The survey consists of three parts: a survey launched in Belgium and among Belgians abroad; a survey launched in Bolivia and a survey launched in Belgium and Bulgaria among Bulgarians.

In all three surveys, both quantitative and qualitative questions were asked. As shown in the appendix, which contains all the questions, the qualitative questions often request further argumentation following a quantitative question or provide respondents with space to express their thoughts. This approach yielded deeper and fuller context on the respondents' perspectives.

### 3.3. Demographics of the Survey

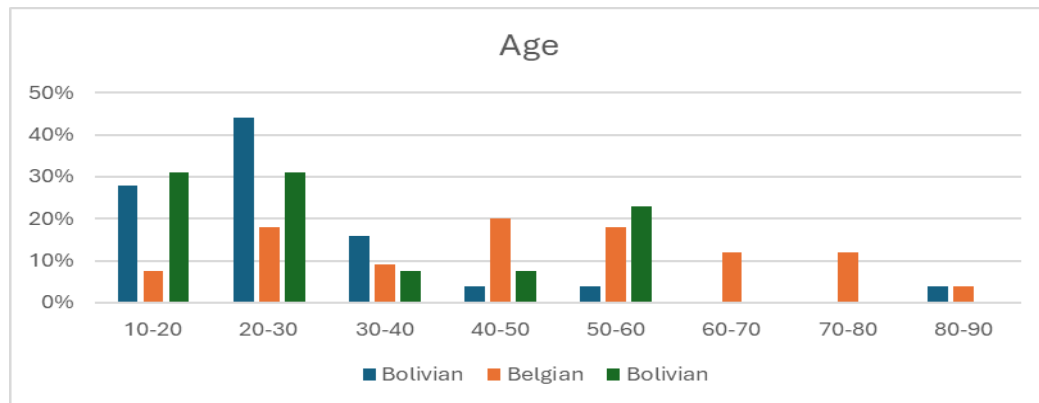


Figure 2: Comparison of the three different surveys concerning age

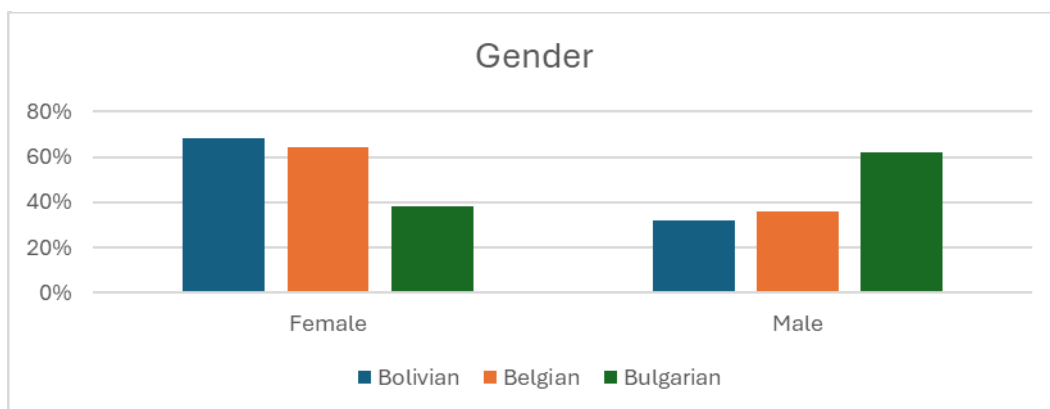


Figure 3: Comparison of the three different surveys concerning gender

**Belgium** - The first part was spread in Belgium. With a total of 129 answers this is an interesting and a good representation of a public opinion. A gap in the Belgian survey is the lack of Walloon and Brussels answers (see Figure 4): of the 129 answers, 114 answers are Flemish, 4 Brussels, 1 Walloon. There is also a group of 10 Belgian respondents that live abroad or foreign respondents that are studying in Belgium.

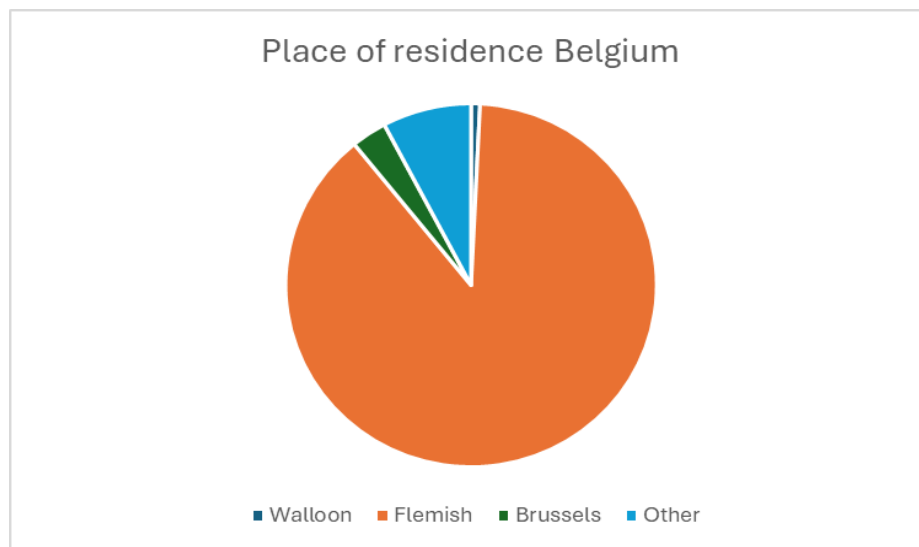


Figure 4: Responses on the question of residence in the Belgian survey

With regard to age (see Figure 2 above), the responses are well-balanced and in this way also the best representation of society as could be seen on figure 2. The age groups least represented are those between 10-20 and 80-90, which is unsurprising given the challenges associated with very young or elderly individuals completing questionnaires. Regarding gender (see Figure 3 above), as illustrated in figure 3, there were more female respondents (64%) compared to male respondents (36%). Existing literature indicates that females are more inclined to participate in surveys than males.<sup>105</sup> By combining age and gender data, it can be inferred that women aged between 40 and 50 are the most well-represented demographic among the respondents in the Belgian survey.

**Bolivia** - The Bolivian segment of the survey yielded 25 responses, providing a decent insight into opinions in Bolivia. It is worth noting that all responses originate from the Cochabamba region, where my key contact was based. Nonetheless, this regional focus will be interesting, as the coming analysis will demonstrate (refer to section 4.1. and 4.2.). Within the Bolivian survey, respondents are spread across the age range of 10 to 60, with no participants falling in the older age categories (see Figure 2 above). However, there is a fairly even distribution across ages 10 to 30 and a smaller representation in the age range of 50-60.

In terms of gender (see Figure 3 above), female respondents are once again the majority, mirroring the gender distribution observed in the Belgian survey, with a ratio of 68% to 32%. This similarity allows for meaningful comparison between the two surveys. When considering both age and gender, it is

<sup>105</sup> William G. Smith, "Does Gender Influence Online Survey Participation?: A record-linkage Analysis of University Faculty Online Survey Response Behavior," PhD (San José University, June 2008).



noteworthy that the group consisting of females aged 10 to 20 and the group of males aged 20 to 30 are the most represented.

**Bulgaria** - With only 13 responses in the Bulgarian survey, these findings are far from representative. Furthermore, half of the responses are from individuals born in Bulgaria but residing in Belgium. This aspect could be considered a limitation of the research or an interesting aspect, as Bulgarians living in Belgium may hold different perspectives on Stromae's music compared to those residing in Bulgaria. Additionally, the Belgian Bulgarians, being part of a minority group, might have distinct sentiments compared to Bulgarians living in Bulgaria itself.

It is essential to recognize that although results are presented in percentages for easy comparison, the impact of each response is bigger in a smaller sample size, such as 13 responses, compared to the Belgian survey with 129 responses.

Similar to the Bolivian survey, the age range in the Bulgarian segment spans from 10 to 60, with no respondents older than 60 (see Figure 2 above). Notably, in terms of gender (see Figure 3 above), there is a higher proportion of male respondents (68% to 32%). This is undoubtedly related to the way in which responses were collected: during field research in Bulgarian cafés in Ghent, only male Bulgarians wanted to fill in the survey.

## **4. Case study 1: *Santé***

This chapter examines the relationship between Stromae's music and the debates on cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. It also explores how his music is received and perceived within the communities represented in his music.

In this research, *Santé* is looked at as a song influenced by Bolivian music. As discussed in Chapter two, Stromae asserts that his intention is not to associate a song with a specific country or region of the world. Rather, each song embodies a fusion of diverse cultures and traditions. The prominent presence of Bolivia on the album is not coincidental; Stromae has spoken about his mother's deep affection for the country and recounted childhood trips to Bolivia (see Chapter two). Growing up, Stromae and his brother were immersed in love for Bolivia, which likely accounts for the Bolivian influences evident in at least four songs.

### **4.1. Bolivian music: roots and instruments**

Before analyzing the song *Santé*, it is valuable to explore the musical traditions of Bolivia. Although the focus is on contemporary traditions, a brief historical context is necessary. It is important to note that Bolivia's musical tradition is not strictly Bolivian but rather Andean, spanning Bolivia, Peru, and Argentina. Therefore, references to the Highland Bolivian tradition in this thesis encompass a broader geographical area.<sup>106</sup> The focus will be on the instruments rather than on Bolivian musical styles, as these are directly relevant to Stromae's music, as detailed below (section 4.2.3.).

Much of the known history of Bolivian music dates back to the Spanish empire's arrival in Bolivia and the Andes, but various flutes and percussion instruments were likely used earlier. Archaeological remnants from 900 BC to 300 AD, preserved in the University Museum of Cochabamba, provide some insights, despite most earlier instruments being poorly preserved. Among these artifacts are clay panpipes, highlighting their ancient cultural significance.<sup>107</sup> A Tiwanaku statue depicting a panpipe player further supports this.<sup>108</sup> Traditional songs, rooted in mythology and passed down through generations, offer additional insights into ancient Bolivian culture. During the Inca empire, flutes and percussion instruments were used, and the Spanish invasion in the 1530s introduced European instruments like the

<sup>106</sup> Thomas Turino, "Quechua and Anymara," In *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, Volume 2: South America, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean*, ed. by Dale A. Olsen, and Daniel E. Sheehy (New York: Routledge, 2013), 205-206.

<sup>107</sup> Henry Stobart, "Bolivia," In *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, Volume 2: South America, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean*, ed. by Dale A. Olsen, and Daniel E. Sheehy (New York: Routledge, 2013), 281-284

<sup>108</sup> Tiwanaku is a pre-Columbian archaeological site in Bolivia, near the Titicaca lake

guitar and vihuela. These instruments influenced both religious and traditional music.<sup>109</sup> This led to the development of new Andean string instruments, such as the charango.<sup>110</sup>

The charango can be found in Bolivia, Peru and Argentina. Like it was in the past, the charango is still symbol of the Andean identity. Initially, the charango was mostly played by the so-called *campesino* or farmer class people. After some time, these instruments gained popularity among the *mestizo* community as well, which consists of individuals with one European parent and one indigenous parent.<sup>111</sup>

Within the Andean region, there are five distinct types of charango's, each varying due to geographical or class distinctions. All of the charango's, except for one, are made out of wood today. One of the types of the charango is made of the shell of an armadillo. This animal mainly lives in the region of Tarabuco in Bolivia. This charango A is also the smallest one (middle one in Figure 5). The charango M is the most interesting one for our research. This is part of the *mestizo* instruments and one of the more expensive instruments. The charango is influenced by the guitar introduced by the Spanish. Compared to the other charango's, this one is more ornamented.<sup>112</sup>



Figure 5: Owen Woods, *The Evolution of the Bolivian Charango*.

What distinguishes the charango with instruments like the guitar or ukulele is its strings. All charango instruments feature five strings, each of which is doubled. This configuration contributes to the

<sup>109</sup> Stobart, "Bolivia," 283.

<sup>110</sup> Owen Woods, "The evolution of the Bolivian Charango," *The Galpin Society Journal* 68 (2015), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44083261>, 167.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 169.

characteristic clear and full sound of the instrument. The strings are tuned to g-c-e-a-e.<sup>113</sup> Comparing it with the Portuguese ukulele, for example, the differences are visible due to the 4 versus 5 strings, but also audible due to the presence of double strings. In terms of tuning and size, these instruments are similar. The tuning of a ukulele is also g-c-e-a, which is almost identical, except for the absence of the last string.<sup>114</sup>

Both the *mestizo* and the *campesino* type of charango's have their own playing techniques. In the traditional music of the rural worker (*campesino*), the charango is almost always strummed. This technique is utilized for playing rhythms and melodies but is not commonly used for accompanying singing. In contrast, *mestizo* techniques are characterized by plucking, often used for playing melodies rather than accompaniment. For instance, the Armadillo of the charango's, traditionally played by the *campesino*, is typically played using the strumming technique. Paired with the armadillo shell, this results in a loud and piercing sound. On the other hand, model *mestizo* is traditionally played using the plucking technique.

The charango, according to tradition, is limited to specific periods of the year for playing. In Bolivia, particular instruments, pitches, and genres hold significance in daily life, often played at specific moments within the agricultural calendar. For example, flutes are believed to attract rain and prevent frosts when played, typically during the transition from winter to the rainy season.<sup>115</sup>

The charango serves various purposes. For example the high-pitched sounds are used to attract the frost in the country, while it is also utilized to attract dryness at the end of carnival and the end of the raining season. During this time, the charango fulfills a more accompanying role as it is played while people are singing songs about dryness.<sup>116</sup>

Like elsewhere in the world, many practices have evolved over the past decades. For instance, the playing techniques of strumming and plucking are often combined or used across all instruments due to evolving musical and artistic ideas. Furthermore, the charango is now played throughout the entire year and has become a national symbol for a variety of music in Bolivia. While there may still be regions in Bolivia where the charango is played in the traditional manner and at specific times of the year as intended, these instruments have also found their way into less traditional or more contemporary versions of traditional music. Consequently, they often no longer strictly stick to traditional rules and meanings.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Owen Woods, "The evolution of the Bolivian Charango," 169.

<sup>114</sup> "How To Tune A Ukulele," Fender, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://www.fender.com/articles/setup/how-to-tune-a-ukulele>.

<sup>115</sup> Stobart, "Bolivia," 284.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 289-290.

<sup>117</sup> Owen Woods, "The evolution of the Bolivian Charango."

Following this overview of the charango's role within Bolivian culture, it is interesting to explore some significant genres within this cultural landscape. In Bolivian music, two major trends emerge.<sup>118</sup> There is a music tradition in the lowlands that has a more meditative music what stands in big contrast with the highland peasants where music is a big part of the so called *fiestas*. The focus will not be on the lowland cultures because for the cases under study, it is primarily important to examine the highland culture. Within these highland communities, a distinct music tradition is observed. Most of the music produced in this part of Bolivia is associated with celebrations or *fiestas*, such as the famous carnival in Potosi. Music in these celebrational traditions typically features the high-pitched charango and singing, imbuing the music with energy.<sup>119</sup>

The carnival in Potosi encompasses various practices and genres of music, including the *zapateo*. This involves aggressive stomping dances where men and women dance together. These dancers are accompanied by a band with the characterizing sound of the charango.<sup>120</sup> Occasionally, some dancers also play the charango alongside the band members. It is worth noting that, as in many other cultures, mainly men are permitted to play instruments. On platforms like YouTube, one can find popular or competitive renditions of this dance and music.<sup>121</sup> Aside from the grand festivities of carnival, this music also permeates initiation celebrations, such as baptisms, where it is common to hear music played by brass bands, local wind instruments, and, of course, the charango.<sup>122</sup>

## 4.2. Music analysis of *Santé*

Before delving into the various 'world music' influences in the song *Santé*, attention will first be directed towards the general music analysis, beginning with an analysis of the lyrics. This step is crucial due to Stromae's reputation for his lyrics and the subtle wordplay often present in his songs.

### 4.2.1. Lyrics

Displayed below are the original French lyrics by Stromae on the left and their English translation on the right. The translation primarily relies on Deepl, with some adjustments made to maintain the original meaning of the lyrics.

<sup>118</sup> Stobart, "Bolivia," 290.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 290-295.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Danzarte Bolivia, "88 Domingo Sabio – Zapateo Potosino," YouTube Video, 6:22, August 12, 2021, <https://youtu.be/gNg0QiZSNZ8?si=Fq-LFSHGOP6sYkJS>.

<sup>122</sup> Stobart, "Bolivia," 290.

<p><u>Intro:</u></p> <p><i>À ceux qui n'en ont pas</i></p> <p><u>Verse:</u></p> <p><i>Rosa, Rosa,</i>  <i>Quand on fout l'bordel, tu nettoies</i>  <i>Et toi, Albert,</i>  <i>Quand on trinque, tu ramasses les verres</i>  <b>Céline, bataire</b><sup>123</sup>  <i>Toi, tu t'prends des vestes au vestiaire</i>  <i>Arlette, arrête,</i>  <i>Toi, la fête, tu la passes aux toilettes</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>Et si on célébrait ceux qui ne célèbrent pas ?</i>  <i>Pour une fois, j'aimerais lever mon verre à</i>  <i>ceux qui n'en ont pas</i>  <i>À ceux qui n'en ont pas</i></p> <p><u>Verse 2:</u></p> <p><i>Quoi les bonnes manières ?</i>  <i>Pourquoi j'ferais semblant ?</i>  <i>D'toute façon, elle est payée pour le faire,</i>  <i>tu t'prends pour ma mère ?</i>  <i>Dans une heure, j'reviens, qu'ce soit propre, qu'on</i>  <i>puisse y manger par terre, trois heures que j'attends</i>  <i>Franchement, ils les fabriquent ou quoi ?</i>  <i>Heureusement qu'c'est que deux verres</i>  <i>Appelle-moi ton responsable et fais vite, elle pourrait</i>  <i>se finir comme ça, ta carrière</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>Oui, célébrons ceux qui n'célèbrent pas</i>  <i>Encore une fois, j'aimerais lever mon verre à ceux</i>  <i>qui n'en ont pas</i>  <i>À ceux qui n'en ont pas</i>  <i>À ceux qui n'en ont pas</i></p>	<p><u>Intro:</u></p> <p><i>To those who don't have one</i></p> <p><u>Verse:</u></p> <p><i>Rosa, Rosa,</i>  <i>When we make a mess, you clean it up</i>  <i>And you, Albert</i>  <i>When we toast, you pick up the glasses</i>  <i>Céline, bataire</i>  <i>You take jackets from the checkroom</i>  <i>Arlette, stop,</i>  <i>You spend the party in the restrooms</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>How about celebrating those who don't celebrate?</i>  <i>For once, I'd like to raise a glass to those</i>  <i>who don't have one</i>  <i>To those who have none</i></p> <p><u>Verse 2:</u></p> <p><i>What about manners?</i>  <i>Why should I pretend?</i>  <i>She's paid to do it anyway,</i>  <i>you think you're my mother?</i>  <i>I'll be back in an hour, it better be clean</i>  <i>we can eat off the floor, three hours I've been waiting</i>  <i>Honestly, do they make these things or what?</i>  <i>It's a good thing it's only two glasses</i>  <i>Call your manager and hurry up,</i>  <i>your career could end like this</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>Yes, let's celebrate those who don't celebrate</i>  <i>Once again, I'd like to raise a glass to those who</i>  <i>don't have one</i>  <i>To those who have none</i>  <i>To those who have none</i></p>
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<sup>123</sup> This is an example of the puns Stromaë uses in his lyrics. It can be read as "Céline bataire" or as "célibataire" (single). Since this does not contribute to the research in this thesis, it will not be examined in detail.

<p><u>Verse 3:</u></p> <p><i>Frotter, frotter, mieux vaut ne pas s'y frotter, frotter si tu n'me connais pas Brosser, brosser, tu pourras toujours te brosser, brosser si tu n'me respectes pas</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>Oui, célébrons ceux qui n'célèbrent pas Encore une fois, j'aimerais lever mon verre à ceux qui n'en ont pas À ceux qui n'en ont pas</i></p> <p><u>Verse 4:</u></p> <p><i>Pilote d'avion ou infirmière, chauffeur de camion, hôtesse de l'air Boulangier ou marin-pêcheur, un verre aux champions des pires horaires Aux jeunes parents bercés par les pleurs, aux insomniaques de profession Et tous ceux qui souffrent de peine de cœur,</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>qui n'ont pas l'cœur aux célébrations Qui n'ont pas l'cœur aux célébrations<sup>124</sup></i></p>	<p><u>Verse 3:</u></p> <p><i>Rub, rub, it's better not to rub, rub if you don't know me Brush, brush, you can always brush, brush if you don't respect me</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>Yes, let's celebrate those who don't celebrate Once again, I'd like to raise a glass to those who don't have one To those who have none</i></p> <p><u>Verse 4:</u></p> <p><i>Airplane pilot or nurse, truck driver, stewardess baker or fisherman, a drink to the champions of the worst working hours To young parents rocked to sleep by crying, to professional insomniacs And all those who suffer from heartache,</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>who don't feel like celebrating Who don't feel like celebrating<sup>125</sup></i></p>
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Figure 6: Lyrics original by Stromae and translated by Deepl and author of Santé

The lyrics follow a typical pop verse-refrain structure, with both an intro and an outro. The refrain appears partially at the beginning, before the first verse, and at the end, after the fourth verse. The lyrics focus on people who are never celebrated, especially those who work when others are not. This theme is a reference to the working class. Stromae's inspiration for the song came from his cleaning lady. In an

<sup>124</sup> Stromae, *Multitude*, Mosaert Label, 2022, compact disc.

<sup>125</sup> This original text was translated by Deepl and edited by the author.



interview with Knack Focus, Stromae explains that *Santé* is a tribute to their cleaning lady, Rosa.<sup>126</sup> He aims to honor her importance in their household, emphasizing the significance of celebrating such people more. Stromae mentions Rosa in the first sentence of the initial verse, highlighting her role in cleaning up after her employer's messes. Throughout this verse, he references various individuals in similar jobs, like Céline, who manages the cloakroom.

*Rosa, Rosa, Quand on fout l'bordel, tu nettoies  
Et toi, Albert, Quand on trinque, tu ramasses les verres  
Céline, bataire Toi, tu t'prends des vestes au vestiaire  
Arlette, arrête, Toi, la fête, tu la passes aux toilettes*

When examining the lyrics, one sentence stands out because it is repeated several times throughout the song.

*À ceux qui n'en ont pas*

This sentence could be defined as the hook or main sentence of the refrain in the text. The second time this sentence occurs in the song, it is accompanied by additional context, making it easier to analyse it as a refrain or chorus. Upon examining the entire text, this chorus three times in between each verse, each time with slight variations a characteristic Stromae often employs, altering small words to subtly alter the meaning of the text. At the beginning and end, we observe a partial repetition of the refrain.

*Et si on célébrait ceux qui ne célèbrent pas ?  
Pour une fois, j'aimerais lever mon verre à  
ceux qui n'en ont pas  
À ceux qui n'en ont pas*

The first time the refrain occurs is just after the first verse about Rosa. After this first refrain, another verse follows, structured differently from the first. In this verse, Stromae portrays those who do not respect the work of these individuals. For instance, the last sentence translates to "Call your manager and hurry up, your career could end like this." Following this verse, the refrain is repeated, with a slightly different emphasis this time. The first time, Stromae poses a question to someone: "How about

<sup>126</sup> Geert Zagers, "Exclusief, het grote Stromae-interview: 'Oef. De mensen zijn me niet helemaal vergeten'," *Knack Focus*, February 8, 2022, <https://focus.knack.be/muziek/exclusief-het-grote-stromae-interview-oef-de-mensen-zijn-me-niet-helemaal-vergeten/>.



celebrating those who don't celebrate?" The second time, it is noteworthy that he changes the sentence with two or three words, transforming it into a response to the first refrain: "Yes, let's celebrate those who don't celebrate." Additionally, he modifies the second sentence of the refrain slightly, changing "For once" in the first refrain to "Once again" in the second refrain. While these alterations may not be immediately discernible upon initial listening to the song, they contribute to a sort of dialogue between the refrains.

After the second refrain, the third verse follows, exhibiting a structure akin to the first verse. One might contend that this serves as a response to the second verse, suggesting that individuals in these occupations are reacting to the disrespectful 'customers' depicted in verse two. In loose translation, it conveys the sentiment that these individuals assert, "If you disrespect me, you can do it yourself."

*Frotter, frotter, mieux vaut ne pas s'y  
frotter, frotter si tu n'me connais pas  
Brosser, brosser, tu pourras toujours te  
brosser, brosser si tu n'me respectes pas*

The next part is the refrain again, in the same answer structure as the second refrain. The last verse is written in a new structure. This implies that the verses follow an ABA'C structure. In this last verse Stromae is listing several examples of people who deserve it to be celebrated. Moreover, he broadens the scope of those unable to celebrate, mentioning heartbroken individuals and young parents deprived of sleep due to a crying baby. After this verse there is a last version of the refrain. Its reading rhythm mirrors that of the repeated sentence in each refrain. The concluding sentence, "Who don't feel like celebrating," summarizes and adds an additional layer, focusing not only on those unable to celebrate but also those who choose not to celebrate.

Like all of his songs, this text is full of different layers what makes it probably possible to analyze this extensively. However, in the context of this research it is important to look at the music itself.

#### 4.2.2. Music: structure and harmonics

The song lyrically has a very typical pop song structure with a verse-refrain format. In terms of music, the overall structure closely mirrors the lyrical form. Upon listening to the song, a general structure can be discerned: Intro (including material from the refrain) – A – Refrain – B – Refrain (repeated twice) – A' – Refrain – C – Refrain/Outro.

The refrain consists of two elements. It begins with a soft singing segment that slowly builds up to a climax. This climax, or the second element, starts with the hook sentence, followed by a South-American cumbia beat and melody played on the synthesizer, contributing to the distinctive Stromae

sound in this song and adding the danceable character to this part. The entire refrain is formed of 8 bars in 4/4 and are equally spread in these two elements. This structural aspect makes the second repetition of the refrain different. The entire first part with the buildup remains identical, with the addition of some extra instruments. Initially, it may sound like a repetition of the refrain, but when the danceable segment concludes, the second danceable part is repeated, extending the refrain to a 12-bar structure. The third time the refrain appears it is again its original 8-bar structure. The last time, when the refrain also functions as outro, only the danceable element is played, following the 12-bar structure established in the second refrain. This results in the outro consisting of 8 bars in total. Instead of two different elements, it features the instrumental element repeated twice.

Now that the structure of the refrain has been explained, attention can be turned to the introduction, which notably includes elements from the refrain. It begins with an instrumental prelude featuring the charango, a motif that persists throughout the entirety of the song. Following two bars of this introduction, Stromae delivers the recurring sentence that typically precedes the material of the second element of the refrain. After this sentence, the familiar melody emerges for the first time, though in a more understated manner compared to its presentation during the refrain. This melody corresponds to the synthesizers of the danceable segment of the refrain but does not include the buildup. Notably, the introduction differs from the rest of the song in that it comprises only 4 bars in total: 2 bars of instrumental prelude and 2 bars of the refrain element before transitioning into the initial verse. Consequently, this section can be perceived as an introduction featuring material from the refrain rather than a standalone section.

All of the verses have an 8-bar structure. Verse 1 and 3 have the same material and rhythm. The only difference is that verse 3 has additional musical elements that makes it sound fuller. This can be observed in the instrumentation. For example, the first verse features only the charango along with low bass tones and claps of the cumbia. In the third verse, high beat sounds like a kind of samba balls and a piano-like sound join the charango in the accompaniment.

The song, is in A minor and features a progression of four chords, repeated throughout the whole song: Am – C – Dm – E7. These follow a typical pop music structure of I – III – IV – V7.

What is noteworthy is that despite its celebratory sound, the song is composed in a minor key. This contrast between the upbeat rhythm and instrumentation creates a lively atmosphere. However, the minor key creates an underlying melancholic tone. This dual nature of the song could imply a message: individuals who are sadly overlooked deserve recognition. Thus, both in its lyrics and harmonics, there exists a blend of joy and sorrow, respect and disregard.

### 4.2.3. Musical influences

At this moment the text gave a clear view on the general structure of the music and the lyrics. With this understanding, it becomes possible to discuss the various influences present in the music. Three influences are consistently recognizable when listening to Stromae's overall work:

- 1) With its story of celebrating the parts of society that are never celebrated what points to the workers class. This is a topic that is sung a lot about in the tradition of the French Chanson in the so called *Chanson Réaliste*.
- 2) The second influence is that of the hip hop. As discussed in Chapter 2, this is the genre where Stromae started. While less prominent in this particular song, hip hop influences can be observed in Stromae's delivery of verse 2. In contrast to the other verses and the refrain, verse 2 features more rap-like delivery, accompanied by a shift in the music towards a more rhythmic character with reduced emphasis on melody, characteristic of hip hop music.
- 3) The last influence is dance music, which is apparent in several of Stromae's notable hits like *Alors on Danse* and *Papaoutai*. In *Santé*, this influence is less pronounced than in previous songs but is notable in the second element of the refrain. The synthesizer sounds used in this section resemble those found in Stromae's earlier dance tracks, particularly *Alors on Danse*. However, dance elements are relatively subdued in Stromae's latest album compared to his earlier work.<sup>127</sup>

These three elements contribute to the typical Stromae sound. However, in the album *Multitude*, there is something new resulting in a whole other sound. Stromae himself described it as "his kind of worldmusic".<sup>128</sup> *Santé* is a very good illustration of this world music experiment. Most of the influences that are hearable in this song are from the Hispanic world, and more specifically from Central- and South-America.

The song starts with the charango, as indicated in the CD booklet, confirming the instrument's identity. Two charango players, Juanpaio Toch and Alfredo Coca, are credited in the album. Specifically, in *Santé*, Juanpaio Toch performs on the charango.<sup>129</sup> It is played with a strumming technique that relates back to traditional Bolivian/Andean charango playing. In the beginning this instrument plays the most important role, retaining prominence throughout most of the song. As the composition progresses towards the second refrain, however, the charango stays into the background, yielding precedence to other instruments like the accordion. Consequently, the traditional function of the charango, typically responsible for carrying the melody and accompanying vocals, becomes less pronounced. In the last verse

<sup>127</sup> Thomas Peeters, "Stromae klinkt op 'Multitude' nog meer als een wereldreiziger," *De Tijd*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.tijd.be/cultuur/muziek/stromae-klinkt-op-multitude-nog-meer-als-een-wereldreiziger/10370844.html>.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Stromae, *Multitude*.

the charango comes to the front again and mixes together with all the other instruments. Stromae's decision to feature the charango prominently aligns with its cultural significance in festive contexts. The charango's usage during various life celebrations or agricultural rituals underscores its symbolic importance. Upon listening closely, one might hear references to the traditional music style known as *zapateo* in the charango's performance. The spirited and lively character of the charango's melody in this tradition resonates with Stromae's music.<sup>130</sup>

Examining the responses from the Bolivia survey (see Figure 7) reveals a prevalent recognition of the charango's presence in the music (40%). This underscores the instrument's significance within Bolivian culture and reaffirms its prominent role, as discussed in our analysis.

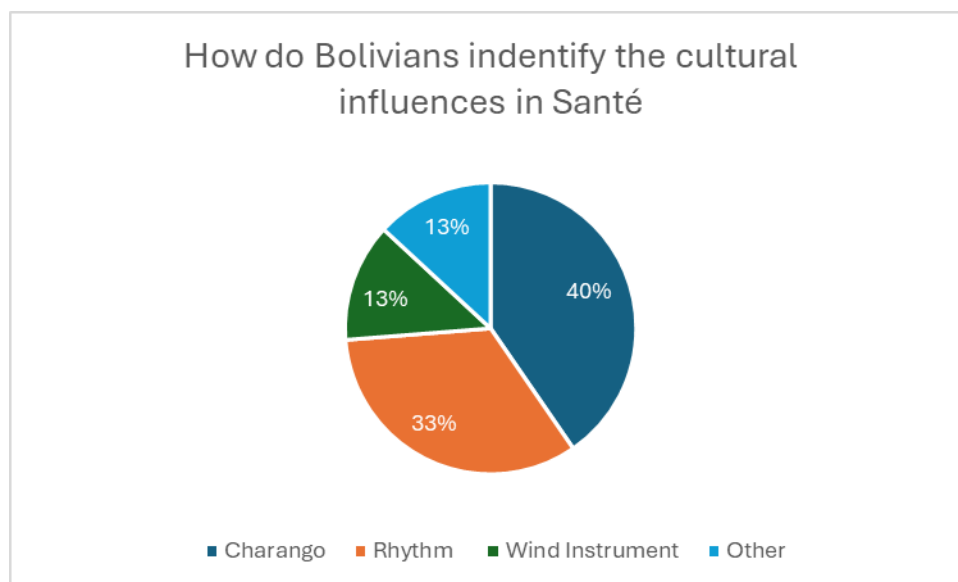


Figure 7: Bolivian Survey: How do Bolivians identify the cultural influences in *Santé*

In conjunction with the music and the incorporation of the charango, it is notable to examine the choreography on the song *Santé* featured in Stromae's music video and his performance on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. During the latter, viewers observe a circle dance routine.<sup>131</sup> This circle dance is a clear reference to the folkloristic character Stromae wants to create in his album, but one can also see the similarities with the traditional *zapateo*. Certainly, Stromae's version incorporates modern dance influences. However, upon reviewing the video of *88 Domingo Sabio – Zapateo Potosino*, one can observe a striking resemblance. Towards the end of the video, female dancers perform a solo routine featuring a leg switch pass, which closely resembles one of the dance steps executed by the circle in

<sup>130</sup> Stobart, „Bolivia,“ 290-291.

<sup>131</sup> Stromae, “Stromae – Santé (Live From The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon),” YouTube Video, 3:16, December 21, 2021, <https://youtu.be/CW7gfrTlr0Y?si=27l2iV4lyCd4pG4r>.

Stromae's video.<sup>132</sup> Later, the circle does this hands up hands down dance movement which closely resembles one of the movements by the female and male dancers together to the end in the *zapateo* dance.<sup>133</sup> Given the limitation of dance expertise, delving deeply into these aspects is not possible. However, this example strengthens the argument that there is a probable influence of the Andean zapateo tradition in the song *Santé*.

Survey responders also identified Bolivian/Latin American elements within *Santé* (see Figure 7 above). Two survey responders highlighted the whistle as a distinctive element in Bolivian music. Specifically, they referred to the whistle heard just before the second half of the refrain. This whistle might symbolize actual whistling, a challenging aspect to replicate in Bolivian music. Traditional Andean music often features high-pitched flutes, which could potentially serve as a representation. Additionally, my own speculation arose upon hearing it, considering a connection to whistle language utilized in various Hispanic mountainous regions to communicate over long distances. A notable example exists on the Canarian Island La Gomera. This notion was inspired by the context of the highland setting and Hispanic influences. Probably this also point more to a Andean tradition than a Canarian Island but this whistle language is something found all over the Hispanic world.<sup>134</sup>

In addition to the Andean influences, other South- and Central-American elements are evident in this song. The rhythmic groove, present throughout, clearly reflects the influence of cumbia rhythms. This influence was also recognized by respondents from the Bolivian survey. Approximately 33% of respondents identified the rhythm as culturally familiar, a big part of this subgroup specifically identifying it as cumbia (see Figure 7). This genre is one of the most popular dance genres or rhythms found in South-America.<sup>135</sup> With its origin in the Caribbean it spread in all locally variants like the Bolivian, Chillian or Colombian. It is a dance in a 4/4 bar with a lot of bass drum.<sup>136</sup> Stromae explains in an interview in *Knack Focus* how he got 'bored' of the typical pop music groove and how he got very interested in the work of DJ Alex, who mixes reggaeton with the ternary rhythms of cumbia.<sup>137</sup> This served as the foundation for his song *Santé*. It also clarifies why the underlying beat in the song may not precisely adhere to traditional cumbia rhythms. Adam Neely, a music theorist and professional jazz

<sup>132</sup> Danzarte Bolivia, "88 Domingo Sabio – Zapateo Potosino," YouTube Video, 6:22, August 12, 2021, <https://youtu.be/gNg0QiZSNZ8?si=Fq-LFSHGOP6sYkJS>.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid

<sup>134</sup> DW Euromaxx, "The Ancient Whistled Language Of La Gomera – Silbo Gomero I Europe To The Maxx," YouTube Video, 6:55, February 10, 2021, <https://youtu.be/TfGwFM9-wFk?si=DI9UZH2QAF522Ucy>.

<sup>135</sup> Moses Iten, and Israel Marquez, "Digital Cumbia: Tradition and Postmodernity," *Dancecult* 14, no. 1 (2022), 60–63.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Geert Zagers, "Exclusief, het grote Stromae-interview: 'Oef. De mensen zijn me niet helemaal vergeten'," *Knack Focus*, February 8, 2022, <https://focus.knack.be/muziek/exclusief-het-grote-stromae-interview-oef-de-mensen-zijn-me-niet-helemaal-vergeten/>.

musician based in New York, demonstrates how Stromae transformed the basic rhythm of cumbia, as depicted in the Figure 9 below, into the new rhythm shown in Figure 8.<sup>138</sup>



Figure 9: Adam Neely, What is that WEIRD rhythm in Stromae's *Santé*?

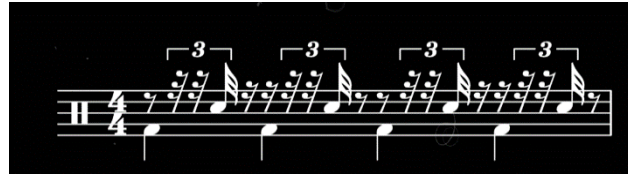


Figure 8: Adam Neely, What is that WEIRD rhythm in Stromae's *Santé*?

According to Neely, the cumbia basis sound has a constant sound of 1 eighth and 2 sixteenth notes (see Figure 9) in the song *Santé* this sixteenth note comes a little bit earlier what gives the rush character in the song that is strengthened even more by the charango (see Figure 8).<sup>139</sup>

The ability of Bolivian respondents to identify the rhythm's South American origin may not be surprising, but it also caught the attention of Belgian respondents. 29% of the Belgian respondents identified South & Latin American influences in the song. Beside these influences 13% heard that there was something going on with the rhythm. Within these two groups of respondents there were four people who identified the rhythm or South-American influence as cumbia.

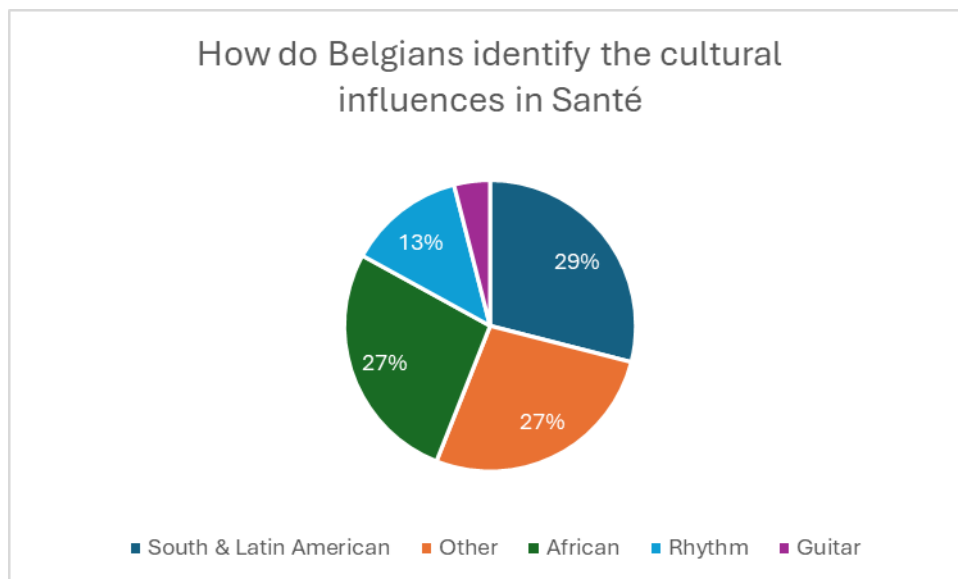


Figure 10: Belgian Survey: How do Belgians identify the cultural influences in *Santé*

<sup>138</sup> Adam Neely, "What is the WEIRD rhythm in Stromae's *Santé*? I Q+A," YouTube Video, 17:34, December 15, 2021, <https://youtu.be/CAzl6xLe4as?si=vBrWfqBrxzf12ENj>.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

Additionally, there is a notable second big group that hears African influences (27%), which is not that surprising given that cumbia originated among enslaved African who were brought to South America and encountered Hispanic and Indigenous music.<sup>140</sup> Notably, 4% of respondents detected something distinctive about the guitar. The charango was not explicitly identified; rather, it was mentioned twice as a ukulele.

Another influence could be discovered in the section just before the third refrain. A flute-like sound, somewhat altered electronically, is heard. It is difficult to define what kind of wind instrument is referred to. Most probably it points to an instrument in the South-American and specifically Andean tradition because of all the other references. This could be defined as a Bolivian quena<sup>141</sup> or pan flute<sup>142</sup> but also as a Colombian gaita<sup>143</sup> for example. Because Stromae added a whole extra electronic layer onto this music it is even more difficult to define.

Furthermore, at the end of verse 2, one can hear a subtle accordion starting to play. This gets clearer in the first part of the refrain. The accordion is an instrument that is played in so many traditions that it is difficult to really find out the intentions of Stromae. When looking at South-American traditions the accordion is a common played instrument, for example in the Brazilian choro<sup>144</sup> or of course the bandoneon in the Argentinian tango.<sup>145</sup>

One final influence can be discerned, tracing back to the Western world. During the refrain, a string orchestra harmonizes the chorus. It is notable to observe how this typical dramatic string orchestra contrasts with the upbeat and joyful synths playing over the danceable Central American rhythms.

After presenting the cultural influences in the song it is time to examine them through the lens and framework of cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation outlined in the Chapter 1.

<sup>140</sup> Leonardo D'Amico, "Cumbia," In *The SAGE International Encyclopedia of Music and Culture, Volume 5*, (SAGE Publications, 2019), 703-704.

<sup>141</sup> QuenAncestral, "Lejanias – Quena – Angelo Stara," YouTube Video, 3:53, October 29, 2017, <https://youtu.be/duECtDWp5Jw?si=RDMhXeo1XMvVpkNs>.

<sup>142</sup> Miskysonko, "Tito Vargas – Canto Bolivia," YouTube Video, 6:09, April 1, 2009, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvr6l0Y0\\_qk&ab\\_channel=miskysonko](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvr6l0Y0_qk&ab_channel=miskysonko).

<sup>143</sup> Amplificado.tv, "(HD) Gaiteros De San Jacinto / Mi Suspiro : Amplificado (Colombia)," YouTube Video, 3:38, October 25, 2012, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CTZRTl6Aio&ab\\_channel=Amplificado.tv](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CTZRTl6Aio&ab_channel=Amplificado.tv)

<sup>144</sup> Miller Theatre, "Regional de NY plays Brazilian choro | Live from Columbia," YouTube Video, April 28, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FzdJeJQzr4&t=299s&ab\\_channel=MillerTheatre](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FzdJeJQzr4&t=299s&ab_channel=MillerTheatre).

<sup>145</sup> FOTOKINO, "Aníbal Troilo Quejas del Bandonéon," YouTube Video, 2:34, March 26, 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDE2DMVURyc&ab\\_channel=FOTOKINO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDE2DMVURyc&ab_channel=FOTOKINO).



### 4.3. Cultural appropriation or cultural appreciation in *Santé*

The final section of the case study *Santé* provides an analysis through the lenses of cultural appropriation and appreciation, by comparing it with the responses from the survey. This analysis necessitates the utilization of the framework developed in Chapter One.

Cultural Appropriation	Cultural Appreciation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Object</li> <li>- Style</li> <li>- Content</li> <li>- Motif</li> <li>- Subject</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Object</li> <li>- Style</li> <li>- Content</li> <li>- Motif</li> <li>- Subject</li> </ul>

Figure 11: Schematic representation of the theoretical framework of cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation

Before delving into the various facets of the music, it is important to define if the discussion pertains to appropriation or appreciation. Stromae, a Belgian singer with a Rwandese background on the side of his father, stands clearly outside the Bolivian or Andean cultural sphere, or, as Young would point out, he is an outsider to that community. This part of information is an important aspect in the appropriation versus appreciation discourse.

One might contend that Stromae's deep affection for Bolivia, created and originated through regular visits since childhood to this country, suggests a familiarity with its culture surpassing that of a mere visitor. Stromae's evident familiarity with Bolivian culture, reflected in his incorporation of its elements into his music, suggests a degree of immersion in its customs and traditions. This engagement with Bolivian cultural influences, rather than being opportunistic, underscores a genuine interest in and understanding of the cultural context. Thus, from an objective standpoint, Stromae's approach appears to align more closely with cultural appreciation than with appropriation. A deeper analysis will be needed to justify this statement.

The examination of how Stromae integrates these influences, beginning with the CD booklet, can provide insights into the layer of respect evident in this case. For example, on page 2 featuring the lyrics of *Santé*, details are provided about the production, including the author, composers, musicians, and publishers. Among the composers listed are Stromae, Moon Willis, and Juanpaio Toch. The inclusion of Toch, a South American guitarist who contributes the charango to the song, highlights Stromae's deliberate effort to collaborate with a musician from the region of origin of the instrument. This choice reinforces the notion of appreciation rather than appropriation, as it signifies an authentic engagement



with the music and culture. This collaboration also indicates a balanced power dynamic between the pop artist and the musicians from these cultures. Stromae is not merely sampling their music.

This gets strengthened by some news articles where Stromae is very open about the use of world music influences. He explains in several interviews for example with *Humo*,<sup>146</sup> *Knack*,<sup>147</sup> *De Tijd*<sup>148</sup> and *The Guardian*<sup>149</sup> how he was influenced by Bolivian music because he often travelled there as a child. He also names the different musicians he asked to work with, such as Juanpaio Toch and Alfredo Coca, another famous charango player in Bolivia.<sup>150</sup> In the interview with *Humo* Stromae also explains that he used the cumbia rhythm in his music and was influenced by the Argentinian reggaeton DJ Alex who combines cumbia with reggaeton.<sup>151</sup> The comprehensive interviews and references to the cultures Stromae incorporated contribute to the argument that his song *Santé* is an example of cultural appreciation. The collaboration with local musicians further strengthens this notion. By comparing these elements with the responses from the surveys, it becomes possible to critique or reinforce the idea of cultural appreciation in this case.

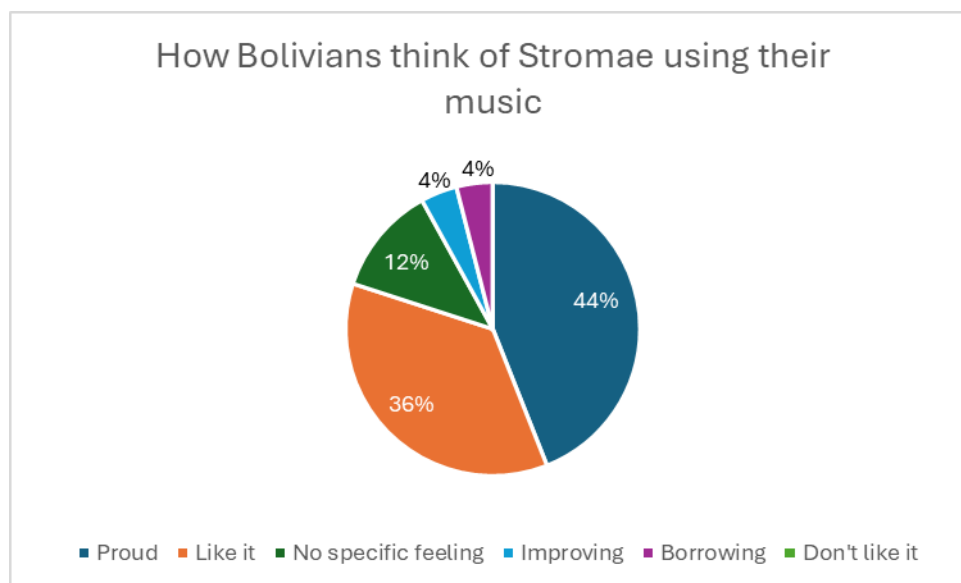


Figure 12: Bolivian Survey: How Bolivians think of Stromae using their music.

<sup>146</sup> Vincent Van Peer, "'Multitude' maakt één ding héél duidelijk: le maestro is terug," *Humo*, February 28, 2022, <https://www.humo.be/muziek/multitude-maakt-een-ding-heel-duidelijk-le-maestro-is-terug~b23d4a10/?referrer=https://www.google.com/>.

<sup>147</sup> Zagers, "Exclusief, het grote Stromae-interview."

<sup>148</sup> Thomas Peeters, "Stromae klinkt op 'Multitude' nog meer als een wereldreiziger," *De Tijd*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.tijd.be/cultuur/muziek/stromae-klinkt-op-multitude-nog-meer-als-een-wereldreiziger/10370844.html>.

<sup>149</sup> Alex Petridis, "Pranks, panic attacks and baby poo: Belgian pop star Stromae on his first album in nine years," *The Guardian*, February 25, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/feb/25/pranks-panic-attacks-and-baby-poo-belgian-pop-star-stromae-on-his-first-album-in-nine-years>.

<sup>150</sup> Geert Zagers, "Exclusief, het grote Stromae-interview: 'Oef. De mensen zijn me niet helemaal vergeten'," *Knack Focus*, February 8, 2022, <https://focus.knack.be/muziek/exclusief-het-grote-stromae-interview-oef-de-mensen-zijn-me-niet-helemaal-vergeten/>.

<sup>151</sup> Vincent Van Peer, "Multitude."

When examining the responses from the Bolivian survey (See Figure 12 above), it becomes evident that respondents harbor no negative sentiments towards Stromae's incorporation of Andean sounds. The majority of Bolivian respondents expressed pride in Stromae's use of their music (44%), while the second largest group indicated their appreciation for the incorporation of their culture (36%). The qualitative follow-up to the question yielded interesting insights. One respondent saw Stromae's use of Bolivian music as positive and raising visibility of their home country's music:

If they want to make music for the world with sounds from my place, that's perfect. They are free, and it helps my culture to be more recognized in the world.

International recognition is a theme that appears in other answers. It seems to align with Stromae's open communication and collaboration with charango players as well as his appreciation for Bolivian culture. By creating this track, the public could become interested in these cultures and this gives Bolivians traditions maybe more exposure. In this way the album serves as a gateway for Bolivian culture to get to the broader audience. One comment in the Belgian survey also strengthened this idea. The respondent explains how it was important to learn and listen to all of this music and that this was not happening enough.

Let the world come in, the world is overflowing with beautiful styles and types, dances and atmospheres. It may sound naive, but if we all learn to listen and move to each other's music and embrace each other tightly while dancing, the world might be a better place. How often do we hear a song from another culture each week? Very rarely, and even then, usually with a half-hearted apology. We can learn so much from each other in terms of feelings, poetry, composition, claves-tempo, and rhythms.

Despite the overall positive feedback from Bolivian participants, one individual was less complimentary and highlighted the risk of oversimplification and impoverishment. These concepts underscore the potential consequences of incorporating only select elements of a culture, which may result in a diluted representation of the cultural tradition for outsiders:

[The song is] beautiful, but Bolivian musical culture is much broader. Some possible combinations are missing, such as wind and percussion instruments, which give 'strength' to Bolivian cultural music.

Here, the respondent noted that the song lacked many of the combinations that contribute to the strength of Bolivian music. While it is challenging to replicate all aspects of a culture without appropriating its

traditions, it is essential to remain mindful of the threat of oversimplification when integrating these influences into pop music.

When examining the responses from the Belgian population (Figure 13) regarding their perception of how Bolivian people might react toward Stromae's use of their culture, it is noteworthy that the findings closely align with those of the Bolivian respondents. The two largest groups, aside from those who responded “I don't know”, are those who believe that Bolivians would express pride (32%) and those who think they would appreciate it (28%).

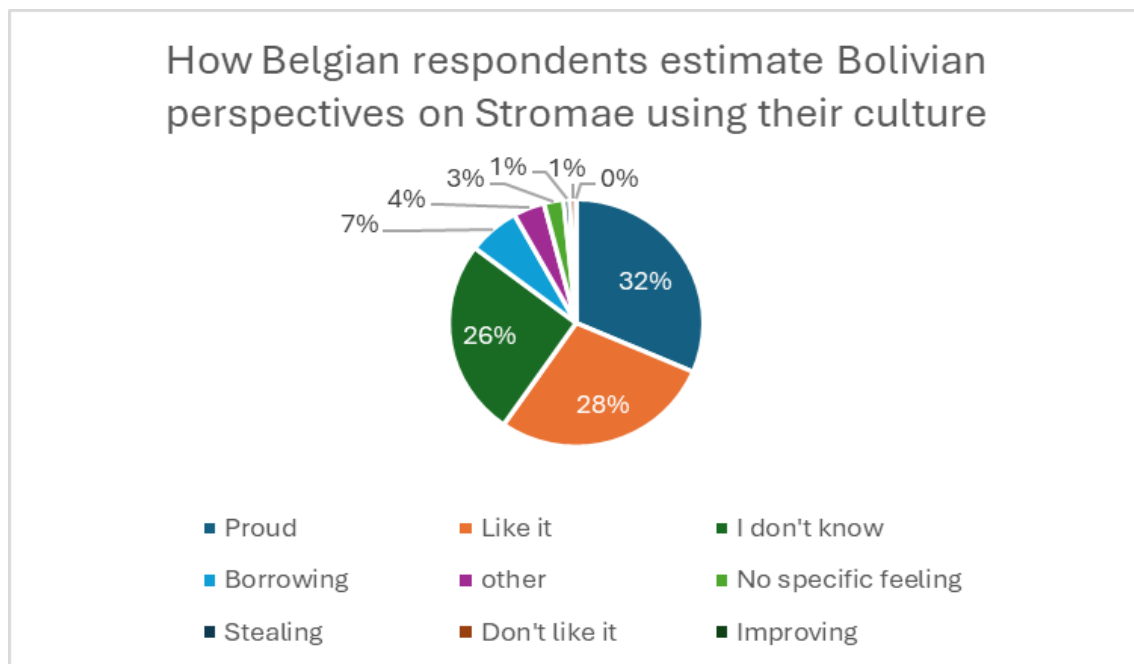


Figure 13: Belgian Survey: How Belgian respondents estimate Bolivian perspectives on Stromae using their culture

The most common reason for those who answered positively is that Stromae gives Bolivian culture good exposure, combined with a respectful approach. Among those who responded with uncertainty or “I don't know” some hesitated because they did not feel they could answer in name of a Bolivian person. Others also questioned whether Bolivians were even aware of the music, and if so, to what degree its usage might be perceived as harmful or offensive. Interestingly, one response stood out, especially when compared with the perspective from Bolivia mentioned earlier.

I'm not sure to what extent Stromae appropriates Bolivian music in this song. If he simply replicates the entire sound without acknowledgment, it amounts to theft and unfair competition (given his celebrity status) with Bolivian musicians. In that case, Bolivians are likely to take offense. However, if he handles the influence respectfully, they might be satisfied with it or view it as him 'borrowing' the sound. In any case, I suspect Bolivians wouldn't believe that Stromae, as a non-Bolivian, enhances the Bolivian sound.

The Bolivian respondent remarked that Stromae failed to incorporate the combinations that contribute to the strength of their music. Conversely, the Belgian respondent suggested that it would constitute appropriation if Stromae were to merely replicate Bolivian music. This comparison underscores the complexity and sensitivity inherent in the discourse surrounding cultural appropriation or appreciation, as evidenced by the divergent perspectives of the Belgian and Bolivian respondents. Further research into this area might include a survey specifically addressing the acceptability of various influences and when they might be considered problematic.

After considering the survey responses and Stromae's perspective on integrating South-American influences, it seems that this case could be categorized as an instance of cultural appreciation. This is due to Stromae's love for this culture and his collaboration with a musician from within that culture. By naming this musician as a composer on the album, Stromae gives him full credit and part of the royalties. When this is compared to the positive responses from Bolivian respondents and their pride in Stromae using their music, it suggests appreciation rather than appropriation. This conclusion, drawn from the comprehensive analysis, warrants a closer examination of the diverse influences evident in *Santé* and an assessment of which categories of appreciation, as delineated in James O. Young's theory, can be applied.

The charango, performed by a musician from South America, showcases traditional playing techniques within the context of a pop song. Incorporating elements of the *zapateo* style, creating a festive atmosphere, featuring dance movements influenced by this genre in a live performance, and the use of the charango exemplifies stylistic appreciation as it effectively captures aspects of Bolivian culture.<sup>152</sup>

When examining the cumbia rhythm present throughout the entire song, it becomes challenging to categorize it as stylistic appreciation due to its limited representation of the genre. To fit under the category of stylistic appreciation it would need more aspects of the genre like the instrumentation or harmony. Focusing solely on this rhythmic element suggests a form of motif appropriation, where a small aspect of a culture is extracted for use in the music. This same concept applies to the accordion and gaita heard later in the song.<sup>153</sup> The string orchestra heard at a certain moment cannot be categorized as part of the appreciation, as it belongs to Western Classical music. Stromae, as a Belgian citizen, incorporates elements from his own cultural background into his music.

<sup>152</sup> James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 6.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

## 4.4. Interim conclusion

Stromae's song *Santé* is strongly influenced by Andean traditions, among other musical elements, including Western classical music and broader South-American styles like cumbia. The incorporation of cumbia, zapateo style, accordion, and notably the charango exemplifies Stromae's aim to create a world music album with a broad spectrum of influences, including South-American styles, hip hop, pop music, and classical music. Through the analysis of the piece, it becomes apparent that the selection of the charango and zapateo style was not arbitrary. Stromae's interest for Bolivia, coupled with the textual theme of celebrating undervalued workers, aligns perfectly with the musical elements, such as the prominent role of the charango and the *zapateo* rhythms typical of traditional *fiestas*.

This analysis was conducted to understand the extent to which this song would be considered as using cultural appropriation and appreciation. Through the survey responses, it appeared that in this case, cultural appreciation is more applicable than appropriation. This determination stems from the close collaboration with a cultural insider like Juanpaio Toch who plays the charango, and the close ties Stromae feels for Bolivian culture. The idea of appreciation could be strengthened by the responses to both the Belgian and Bolivian surveys. Respondents agreed that Stromae used the music respectfully and spread the traditional sound internationally, thus providing appropriate exposure. However, some concerns arose that are important to bear in mind when working with external musical influences, such as the concept of oversimplification and the importance of not merely copying everything.

## **5. Case study 2: *L'enfer***

*L'enfer* is the fifth song on the album and opens immediately with the distinctive sound of a Bulgarian choir. Before delving into the analysis of this song, an introduction to the history and theory of Bulgarian music tradition is necessary. Subsequently, a detailed musical analysis of the song *L'enfer* will be conducted. Following this information about the Bulgarian music tradition and the analysis of the song, the notion of cultural appropriation in this case will be evaluated. The concluding part of this discussion will focus on the reception of this case within the Bulgarian community.

### **5.1. Bulgarian music: a brief historical introduction**

Bulgarian music history is characterized by diverse influences and periods of isolation. Today, these influences are evident in various aspects of Bulgarian music, including instrumentation and tradition.<sup>154</sup> The two main influences are the Ottoman Turkish empire and the socialism during the Soviet era. The thesis will therefore address these two.

The Ottoman Turkish influence, for instance, is notable in traditional Bulgarian instruments like the Tambura.<sup>155</sup> The prolonged Ottoman rule and subsequent isolation from the West preserved many traditional Bulgarian musical practices.<sup>156</sup> Pre-1944 music, often termed 'village music' is considered the most traditional.<sup>157</sup>

During the Soviet era (1944-1989), Bulgaria's musical landscape was shaped by government-funded efforts to promote original Bulgarian music. Wedding music, a significant genre, underwent evolution during this period, blending traditional and military ensemble elements.<sup>158</sup> Post-socialism musicians such as Ivo Papasov revitalized international interest in Bulgarian music by incorporating jazz influences in the wedding music. Besides wedding music, there is another genre that gained worldwide fame during the socialist period and gained even more after the socialist era. Obrabotki. This music was essentially a creation of the government at that time. Obrabotki music, particularly choral Obrabotki, still remains highly popular today. In this genre, the choirs typically consist of female.<sup>159</sup> In Bulgarian culture, as in many others, it was uncommon for women to play instruments. So, they were primarily found as

<sup>154</sup> Timothy Rice, "Bulgaria," In *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, Volume 2: Europe*, ed. By Dale A. Olsen, and Daniel E. Sheehy (New York: Routledge, 2013), 890.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 893-896.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 903-905.

<sup>157</sup> Kalin S. Kirilov, *Bulgarian Harmony: In Village, Wedding, and Choral Music of the Last Century* (London: Routledge: 2020), 9-10.

<sup>158</sup> Rice, "Bulgaria," 905-906.

<sup>159</sup> Kirilov, *Bulgarian Harmony* 13-15.

vocalists within this musical tradition.<sup>160</sup> Today, the most renowned choir internationally is *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares*.<sup>161</sup> For instance, on June 20<sup>th</sup> 2023, this choir held a concert at *De Bijloke* organized by *De Centrale* in Ghent, which sold out the entire concert hall.<sup>162</sup> When asked about the audience demographics, one of the programmers from *De Centrale* mentioned that it predominantly consisted of Westerners, underscoring the choir's widespread acclaim beyond Bulgaria and into the Western world.<sup>163</sup> This aspect of Bulgarian culture, originating from a Communist regime, is significant for the analysis below of the song *L'enfer*.

It is time to look into the theoretical aspects of Bulgarian music. Bulgaria is renowned for its asymmetrical time signatures, such as 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, etc., divided into unequal groups, like 3+3+2 or 3+2+3 for 7/8 time signature. However, these signatures are predominantly found in the Pirin region of Southwest Bulgaria, where there is a notable influence of Turkish music instruments, particularly the Tambura. In other parts of Bulgaria, rhythms tend to be more symmetrical. Regions like Shop and Sredna feature many 'village tunes' sung with two voices, where one voice typically holds the drone or changes slowly while the other voice carries the melody. Similarly, in other regions, similar tunes are played on instruments and serve as the basis for improvisation.<sup>164</sup>

These tunes also serve as the foundation for the music created during the socialist period. Obrabotki choirs adapt them for choir performances, incorporating many characteristics of the so called traditional village music.<sup>165</sup> Kirilov identifies various defining elements of Bulgarian musical identity. One such characteristic is the presence of drones. Traditional Bulgarian music often involves two-voice singing, with one voice providing a shifting drone. This influence is evident in Obrabotki choirs, where lower voices often sing foundational tones akin to drones. Kirilov also discusses the practice of clusters and seconds. Bulgarian harmony consists of chords made from stacked minor and major seconds, creating dissonance.<sup>166</sup> When examining the harmony, triadic harmony or the basic I-IV-V harmony is commonly used. These characteristics are prominent within the choir tradition.<sup>167</sup>

In addition to music theory, an important aspect defining the typical Bulgarian choir sound is the singing technique. This technique contributes to the various dissonances and harmonies of the choir. The

<sup>160</sup> Rice, "Bulgaria," 892.

<sup>161</sup> KEXP, « Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares – Full Performance (Live on KEXP), » YouTube Video, 44 :54, June 27, 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFgzzWT3zX4&t=2162s&ab\\_channel=KEXP](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFgzzWT3zX4&t=2162s&ab_channel=KEXP).

<sup>162</sup> "Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares," De Centrale, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.decentrale.be/nl/agenda/muziek/le-mystere-des-voix-bulgares>.

<sup>163</sup> During my internship in De Centrale in Ghent (November 2023 – April 2024). I had to interview the different employees and this was one of the answers one of them gave.

<sup>164</sup> Rice, "Bulgaria," 895-897.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 905.

<sup>166</sup> Kirilov, *Bulgarian Harmony*, 76-79.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 164.



style they are singing in involves producing a nasal sound. This is done by singing through the throat while closing the vocal folds.<sup>168</sup> When this technique is not practiced good this can destroy the voice.<sup>169</sup>

## 5.2. Music analysis of *L'enfer*

This section will follow the same structure as in Chapter 4.2.

### 5.2.1. Lyrics

Below are the lyrics of *L'enfer* in French, along with the translated lyrics into English. The translation was generated by Deepl and focuses solely on the meaning of the text. As mentioned earlier, Stromae's lyrics are often filled with puns, which may be lost in translation. However, the focus here is on the general content rather than preserving the puns. Additionally, some adjustments were made to the Deepl translation by the author of this thesis to maintain important meanings.

<p><u>Verse :</u></p> <p><i>J'suis pas tout seul à être tout seul</i>  <i>Ça fait d'jà ça d'moins dans la tête</i>  <i>Et si j'comptais, combien on est</i>  <i>Beaucoup</i></p> <p><i>Tout ce à quoi j'ai d'jà pensé</i>  <i>Dire que plein d'autres y ont d'jà pensé</i>  <i>Mais malgré tout, je m'sens tout seul</i>  <i>Du coup</i></p> <p><u>Refrain :</u></p> <p><i>J'ai parfois eu des pensées suicidaires</i>  <i>Et j'en suis peu fier</i>  <i>On croit parfois que c'est la seule</i>  <i>Manière de les faire taire</i>  <i>Ces pensées qui nous font vivre un enfer</i>  <i>Ces pensées qui me font vivre un enfer</i></p>	<p><u>Verse:</u></p> <p><i>I'm not alone in being alone</i>  <i>I'm not alone, I'm not alone</i>  <i>And if I counted how many of us there are</i>  <i>Many</i></p> <p><i>All I've ever thought about</i>  <i>To think that many others have already thought of it</i>  <i>But still, I feel all alone</i>  <i>That's why</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>I've sometimes had suicidal thoughts</i>  <i>And I'm not proud of it</i>  <i>Sometimes you think it's the only way</i>  <i>To shut them up</i>  <i>These thoughts that make life hell</i>  <i>These thoughts that make my life hell</i></p>
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<sup>168</sup> Jennifer Anne Sawer, "Voice analysis in ethnomusicology: De-mystifying Bulgarian singing," (Australian National University, 2003).

<sup>169</sup> Robin Denselow, "We fell like cosmic rain': how the Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices became global stars," *The Guardian*, June 6, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/jun/06/we-fall-like-cosmic-rain-how-the-mystery-of-the-bulgarian-voices-became-global-stars>



<p><u>Verse:</u></p> <p><i>Est-c'qu'y a que moi qui ai la télé</i>  <i>Et la chaîne culpabilité?</i>  <i>Mais faut bien s'changer les idées</i>  <i>Pas trop quand même</i></p> <p><i>Sinon ça r'part vite dans la tête</i>  <i>Et c'est trop tard pour qu'ça s'arrête</i>  <i>C'est là qu'j'aimerais tout oublier</i>  <i>Du coup</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>J'ai parfois eu des pensées suicidaires</i>  <i>Et j'en suis peu fier</i>  <i>On croit parfois que c'est la seule manière</i>  <i>de les faire taire</i>  <i>Ces pensées qui me font vivre un enfer</i>  <i>Ces pensées qui me font vivre un enfer</i></p> <p><u>Verse:</u></p> <p><i>Tu sais, j'ai mûrement réfléchi</i>  <i>Et je sais vraiment pas quoi faire de toi</i>  <i>Justement, réfléchir</i>  <i>C'est bien l'problème avec toi</i></p> <p><i>Tu sais, j'ai mûrement réfléchi</i>  <i>Et je sais vraiment pas quoi faire de toi</i>  <i>Justement, réfléchir</i>  <i>C'est bien l'problème avec toi<sup>170</sup></i></p>	<p><u>Verse:</u></p> <p><i>Am I the only one with the TV</i>  <i>And the guilt channel?</i>  <i>But you've got to take your mind off things</i>  <i>But not too much</i></p> <p><i>Otherwise it'll go to your head</i>  <i>And it's too late to stop</i>  <i>That's when I'd like to forget everything</i>  <i>That's why</i></p> <p><u>Refrain:</u></p> <p><i>I've sometimes had suicidal thoughts</i>  <i>And I'm not proud of it</i>  <i>Sometimes you think it's the only way</i>  <i>To shut them up</i>  <i>These thoughts that make my life hell</i>  <i>These thoughts that make my life a living hell</i></p> <p><u>Verse:</u></p> <p><i>You know, I've given it a lot of thought</i>  <i>And I really don't know what to do with you</i>  <i>That's just it, thinking</i>  <i>That's the trouble with you</i></p> <p><i>You know, I've given it a lot of thought</i>  <i>And I really don't know what to do with you</i>  <i>That's just it, thinking</i>  <i>That's the trouble with you<sup>171</sup></i></p>
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Figure 14: Lyrics original by Stromae and translated version by Deepl and author of *L'enfer*

Before examining the structure, it is crucial to first understand the meaning of the song. The lyrics of this song deal with deep emotions. The overarching theme of *L'enfer* is depression and suicide, highlighting the pain of feeling isolated. This theme is further emphasized by the title *L'enfer* which translates to "hell". In the verses, the artist expresses feelings of loneliness but acknowledges that he is not alone in experiencing these emotions. This song initially appears to focus on loneliness, a recurring

<sup>170</sup>Stromae, *Multitude*, Mosaert Label, 2022, compact disk.

<sup>171</sup> This original text was translated by Deepl and edited by the author.

theme in other songs on the album. However, the refrain underscores that the song delves deeper into the contemplation of suicide. The artist reflects on considering suicide as a means to silence his intrusive thoughts.

*I've sometimes had suicidal thoughts  
And I'm not proud of it  
Sometimes you think it's the only way  
To shut them up  
These thoughts that make life hell  
These thoughts that make my life hell*

The significance of this song was considerably amplified after an interview Stromae gave on French news television. During the interview, when asked about struggling with loneliness, Stromae responded by singing *L'enfer*.<sup>172</sup> This TV moment, although potentially perceived as a promotional stunt, had a significant impact in France. The day after, there was an increase in the number of requests for appointments with psychologists, psychiatrists, and other mental health services. Stromae explains that his goal is to provide support to people experiencing loneliness.<sup>173</sup>

Now that the general meaning of the lyrics has been established, it is time to examine their structure. The primary structure observed in the lyrics is verse-refrain. There are three verses with two occurrences of the refrain in between. The verses do not adhere strictly to a consistent syllabic pattern, but each verse consists of two distinct parts. Notably, the last sentence of each verse serves as the first part of the first sentence of the refrain.

In the first verse, the focus is on the paradox of individuals feeling alone despite the presence of many others experiencing similar emotions. This sentiment is emphasized in the refrain. In the second verse, the narrative explores the duality of being stuck in a routine yet afraid of change, which could potentially trigger suicidal thoughts, leading back to the refrain. The refrain consistently occurs at moments that could be considered triggers for suicidal thoughts. The final verse presents a vague text that could be interpreted as self-dialogue or self-blame. While it is possible to delve deeper into the text for word puns or larger structures that may provide additional layers of meaning, such analysis may not align with the focus of this thesis.

<sup>172</sup> Stromae, "Stromae – L'enfer (Live Performance)," YouTube Video, 4:55, January 9, 2022, <https://youtu.be/YAG6nj7Sff8?si=mlb6tJrkKobB2X9g>.

<sup>173</sup> Sasha Van Der Speeten, "Een avondjournaal dat levens redde: het verhaal achter 'L'enfer' van Stromae," *De Morgen*, May 11, 2024. <https://www.demorgen.be/tv-cultuur/een-avondjournaal-dat-levens-redde-het-verhaal-achter-l-enfer-van-stromae~b58b50a9/>.

### 5.2.2. Music: structure and harmonies

The song follows a basic verse-refrain structure both lyrically and musically. The musical structure consists of an Intro, Verse, Refrain, Verse, Refrain, Verse (with refrain material), and an instrumental Refrain at the end. The intro exists out of two parts. It begins with a Bulgarian choir singing quite freely what makes that the meter is not clear yet. The choir is followed by a ballad like piano accompaniment introducing the song. This piano accompaniment is present throughout the whole first verse.

As observed in the lyrical analysis, the verses are divided into two parts, which aligns with the musical structure. Each verse consists of two four-bar segments. Following the verse, the first refrain comprises two distinct parts: the lyrical buildup and the subsequent non-lyrical section featuring instruments and the choir from the intro, synchronized tightly with the rhythm. This first occurrence of the refrain has a structure of 8 bars for the lyrical part and 4 bars for the non-lyrical section.

The second verse follows the 4+4 structure, similar to the first verse, followed by a refrain with a slightly different structure compared to the first one. Instead of the non-lyrical part lasting 4 bars, it extends to 8 bars this time. This mirrors the pattern observed in our previous analysis of *Santé*, where the second refrain was longer than the first (4.2.2.).

The third verse maintains the same structural pattern as the other verses, consisting of 4+4 bars. However, there are significant musical differences in this verse. Notably, there is no lyrical refrain following this verse, only a musical one. As a result, the buildup occurs within the third verse itself. One notable aspect is the repetition of lyrics instead of presenting two separate parts. Musically, there is a noticeable buildup characterized by vocal effects adding depth to the voice and the introduction of synths during the second part of the third verse. This buildup culminates in the non-lyrical section of the refrain, lasting 8 bars, similar to the second refrain.

Examining the harmony of the piece reveals a typical 4-chord structure common in pop songs. The song is in D minor, with the chord progression: Dm/A – Gm/Bb – Gm/E – A. This progression adheres to the typical Western music structure of I-IV-IV-V.

Before exploring the musical influences, it is noteworthy to observe the similarities in the structure of *Santé* and *L'enfer*. Both songs feature a chorus consisting of two parts: a lyrical buildup followed by a semi or non-lyrical part. In both instances, the refrain lengthens during the second repetition, with the second part being repeated. Following the final verse, both songs only feature the second part of the refrain without the buildup of the first lyrical part. This buildup occurs in the last verse of each song. This structural similarity suggests a recurring pattern in Stromae's compositions, which could be interesting for further research on Stromae's music structure within the album *Multitude*.

### 5.2.3. Musical influences

Before examining the cultural influences of other communities, the three main influences on Stromae will be explored: hip hop, French chanson and electropop.

First, it is challenging to identify the hip hop influences in this song. *L'enfer* illustrates how Stromae minimizes his hip hop influences in *Multitude*. While the hip hop influence may be elusive, the influence of French chanson is more apparent. The ballad-type accompaniment, heard in the piano during the first verse, can be likened to songs by artists such as Jacques Brel, for instance in *Ne me quitte pas*.<sup>174</sup> This observation is also echoed by Belgian respondents. Six percent of the responses regarding the music influences in the song *L'enfer* cite French chanson (see Figure 15).

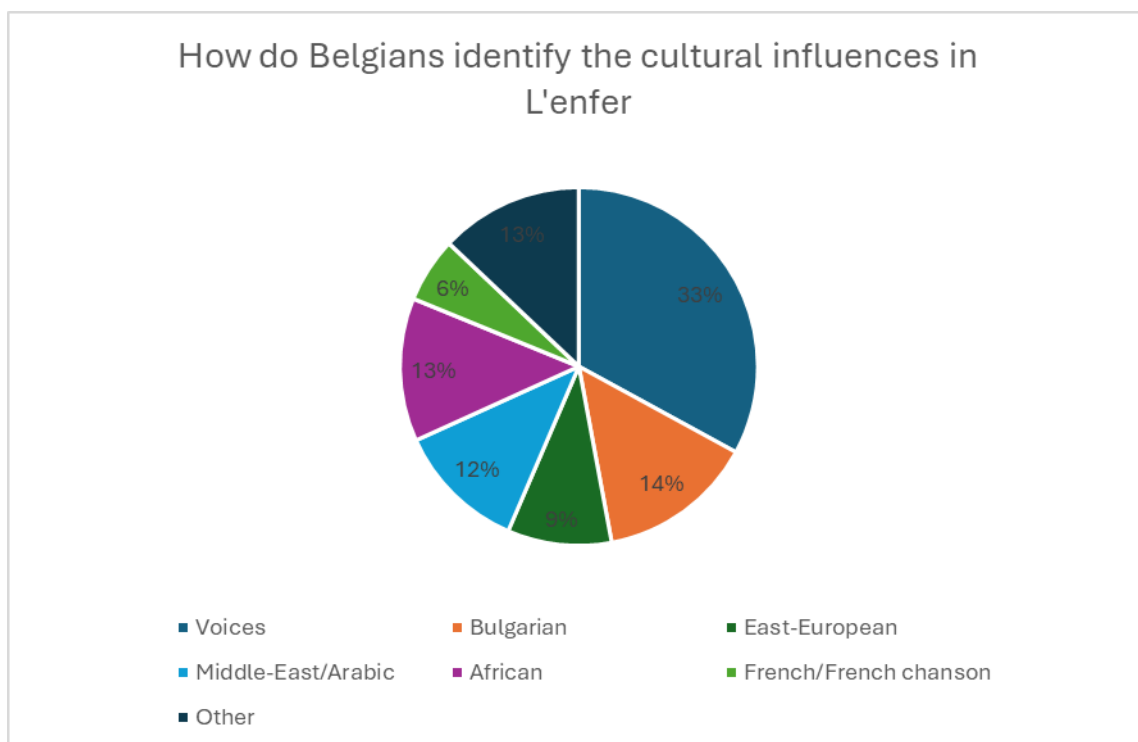


Figure 15: Belgian Survey: How do Belgians identify the cultural influences in *L'enfer*

<sup>174</sup>Jacques Brel, "Jacques Brel – Ne me quitte pas," YouTube Video, 4:11, September 17, 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oR\\_SZR\\_tmzM&ab\\_channel=JacquesBrelVEVO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oR_SZR_tmzM&ab_channel=JacquesBrelVEVO).

The third influence, electropop, is still somewhat hearable in *L'enfer*. During the chorus, the typical synths heard in *Santé* and Stromae's album *Cheese* are present.

Similar to our previous case study (Chapter 4), this song is drenched with various cultural influences from around the world. This can be heard already in the intro of the song. The choral singing is reminiscent of the polyphonic choir harmony found in Bulgaria, as discussed earlier. This singing style aligns with the tradition of Obrabtki choir, with the most famous of *La mystère des voix Bulgares*. Stromae utilized a real Obrabtki choir, featuring the Orenda Trio, as in his other songs. In the intro, the choir sings with typical harmony, with lower voices producing drones and the highest voice delivering a melody, accompanied by quartertones. Additionally, the open-throat singing characteristic of this tradition is present. In the chorus the open-throat singing is only prominent. In the refrain the choir keeps the dissonances and clusters behind to fit into the more pop structured refrain. Additionally, as observed earlier, the harmony in the song follows a I-IV-V structure, which is also a basis in Bulgarian choir music.

As shown in Figure 15 (above) the Belgian respondents noted the influence of the choir, attributing it to a wide range of cultures. For instance, 12% defined it as typical Arabic/Middle-Eastern singing, despite the lack of a significant choir music tradition in the Arabic world. Nonetheless, the use of quarter tones in Arabic music distinguishes it from the Western tonal system, suggesting a potential similarity influencing this attribution.<sup>175</sup>

Examining the beat of the refrain reveals a rhythmic pattern featuring various sounds and instruments. These include a combination of claps, a deep drum, and a rattling sound reminiscent of a tambourine. Responses from the Belgian survey frequently cited African rhythms, prompting further investigation into Rwanda, a significant country in Stromae's life. Traditional Rwandan music, such as the *Ikinimba* dance, features claps combined with choral singing. However, the sound differs from that of Stromae's music.<sup>176</sup> Exploring popular Rwandan artists like Miss Jojo<sup>177</sup> and Kamichi<sup>178</sup> revealed similarities in beat structure to *L'enfer*, including electronic claps and rhythms, of course with minor differences.

<sup>175</sup> Scott Marcus, "The Interface between Theory and Practice: Intonation in Arab Music," *Asian Music* 24, no. 2 (1993), <https://doi.org/10.2307/834466>, 39-41.

<sup>176</sup> Pierre Dieudonne Furaha, « Ikinimba, » YouTube Video, 0 :30, July 29, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gbhr6M4B-\\_M&ab\\_channel=PierreDieudonneFuraha](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gbhr6M4B-_M&ab_channel=PierreDieudonneFuraha).

<sup>177</sup> RwandaBEAT, "Miss Jojo – Beletilida," YouTube Video, 3:37, March 5, 2010, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LiA4aS9HJw&ab\\_channel=RwandaBEAT](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LiA4aS9HJw&ab_channel=RwandaBEAT).

<sup>178</sup> Kamichi, "Ni Forever – Kamichi (Official Lyic Video)," YouTube Video, 3:07, July 5, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbjL22Ugv1A&ab\\_channel=Kamichi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbjL22Ugv1A&ab_channel=Kamichi).

These bass drum sound hearable during the chorus could be analyzed in another way. A significant part of the song features the Belgian National Orchestra with music arranged by Bruno Letort.<sup>179</sup> This orchestra contributes in the dramatic character of the song. The low bass sound may resemble a timpani or bass drum from a classical orchestra. The orchestra's contribution extends beyond what was previously mentioned. At the start of the first refrain, there is a string section playing with pizzicato. However, as the second refrain is played, they switch to using their bows. Each time the refrain's instrumental part plays, it grows more intense by adding more layers to the orchestra. Initially, the orchestra is mainly heard building up the music, but from the second refrain onwards, the string section harmonizes with the Bulgarian choir melody. In the final refrain, the brass instruments play long notes in the background to add onto the bombastic character of the song.

When the last verse begins, a guitarlike sound takes over the piano's role in providing the ballad accompaniment. This instrument was already discussed in the previous chapter. Alfredo Coca plays the charango in a plucking style during the last verse and outro, adding elements of the mestizo style.

All these influences clearly contribute to the song's dramatic impact. The combination of Bulgarian harmonies and the classical orchestra creates a grand sound. This stands in contrast to Stromae's intimate singing style and piano accompaniment in the verses and the meaning of the lyrics.

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<sup>179</sup> Stromae, *Multitude*.

### 5.3. Cultural appropriation

In the concluding part of this case study, attention will be directed towards examining musical influences within the context of Cultural Appropriation and Cultural Appreciation, employing the framework established in Chapter 1.

Cultural Appropriation	Cultural Appreciation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Object</li> <li>- Style</li> <li>- Content</li> <li>- Motif</li> <li>- Subject</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Object</li> <li>- Style</li> <li>- Content</li> <li>- Motif</li> <li>- Subject</li> </ul>

Figure 16: Schematic representation of the theoretical framework of cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation

In the influences where Stromae is an outsider it is possible to look to two different examples. These instances involve the inclusion of musicians or musical groups from the respective communities represented in the song. The first and most prominent example is the participation of the Orenda Trio with singers Stefka Mitega, Julia Orcet and Sandrine Conry singing the Bulgarian polyphony and harmony in the intro and the choruses. Another instance involves the collaboration with Alfredo Coca, who contributes by playing the Bolivian charango. Notably, Stromae's decision to credit these musicians as arrangers and contributors to the song serves as a clear indicator of recognition. This approach ensures that the credit is given to the musicians, thereby preventing any appropriation of their sounds.

In an interview, Stromae recounted his initial exposure to Bulgarian choir music, which occurred while watching the Japanese movie *Ghost*. Initially, he attempted to replicate the music on his laptop, but his brother Luc Van Haver advised him to collaborate with real musicians instead.<sup>180</sup> This decision by his brother facilitated a shift in perception, framing Stromae's engagement with this musical influence more as appreciation rather than appropriation. Stromae's initial misidentification of the music as Japanese underscores the importance of ensuring proper attribution and recognition of its Bulgarian origins. In addition to featuring the Orenda Trio on his CD, Stromae also underscored the importance of cultural visibility by inviting the New York Bulgarian choir Yasna Voices to perform during his Tiny Desk

<sup>180</sup> Robin Joris Dullers, "Stromae over zijn nieuwe album 'Multitude': Mijn leven is in evenwicht'," *BRUZZ*, March 4, 2022, <https://www.bruzz.be/culture/music-nightlife/stromae-over-zijn-nieuwe-album-multitude-mijn-leven-nu-evenwicht-2022-03-04>.

Concert at NPR Music in America.<sup>181</sup> This choice demonstrates his dedication to presenting cultural influences to a wide audience.

Upon examining the responses of Bulgarian participants when questioned about their thoughts regarding Stroma's use of their music traditions (see Figure 17), it is noteworthy that the vast majority of responses are positive.

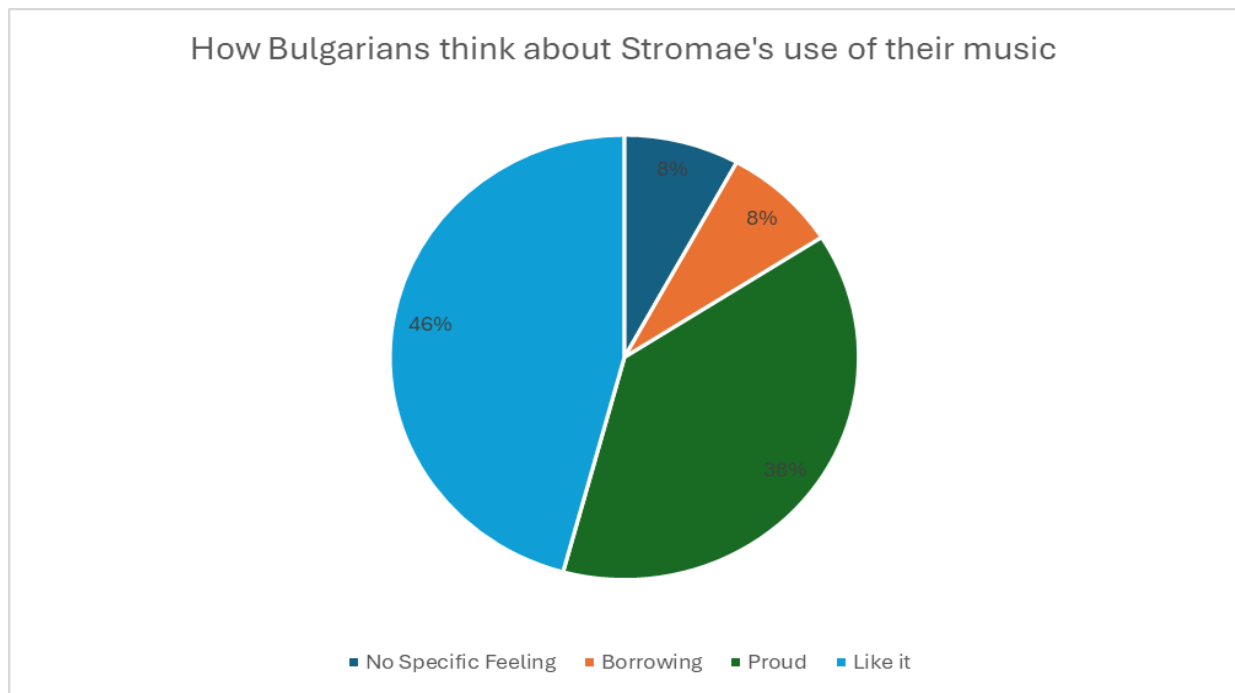


Figure 17: Bulgarian Survey: How Bulgarians think about Stroma's use of their music

The main and largest group of respondents showed their appreciation for Stroma's music and the way he incorporates Bulgarian influences. Most of them expressed admiration for Bulgarian music and liked how Stroma used it in his songs. Specifically, 38% of respondents said they felt proud that Stroma included their culture in his music. One respondent put it as follows:

I feel proud, because the Bulgarian culture is not particularly spread around the world, but I think that it is extremely beautiful (especially the Bulgarian folk music), and this song gives a chance to a part of the world to get to know it.

Once again, the theme of pride in the global recognition of their culture emerges, along with the concept of exposure. This theme is apparent in both the Bolivian and Bulgarian responses. When examining how Belgian respondents estimate Bulgarian perspectives (see Figure 18 below), a similar pattern emerges to that seen in Belgian responses to the Bolivian survey. Many anticipated that Bulgarians would express

<sup>181</sup>NPR Music. "Stroma: Tiny Desk Concert." YouTube Video, 16:14, December 5, 2022. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dkDepLX0rk&ab\\_channel=NPRMusic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dkDepLX0rk&ab_channel=NPRMusic).



pride (32%) or appreciation (21%) for their cultural influence on a pop artist. Conversely, another significant portion of Belgian respondents refrained from speculating about Bulgarian sentiments (31%). Among those providing positive responses, the focus was on the community's satisfaction with a renowned pop artist acknowledging and promoting their music.

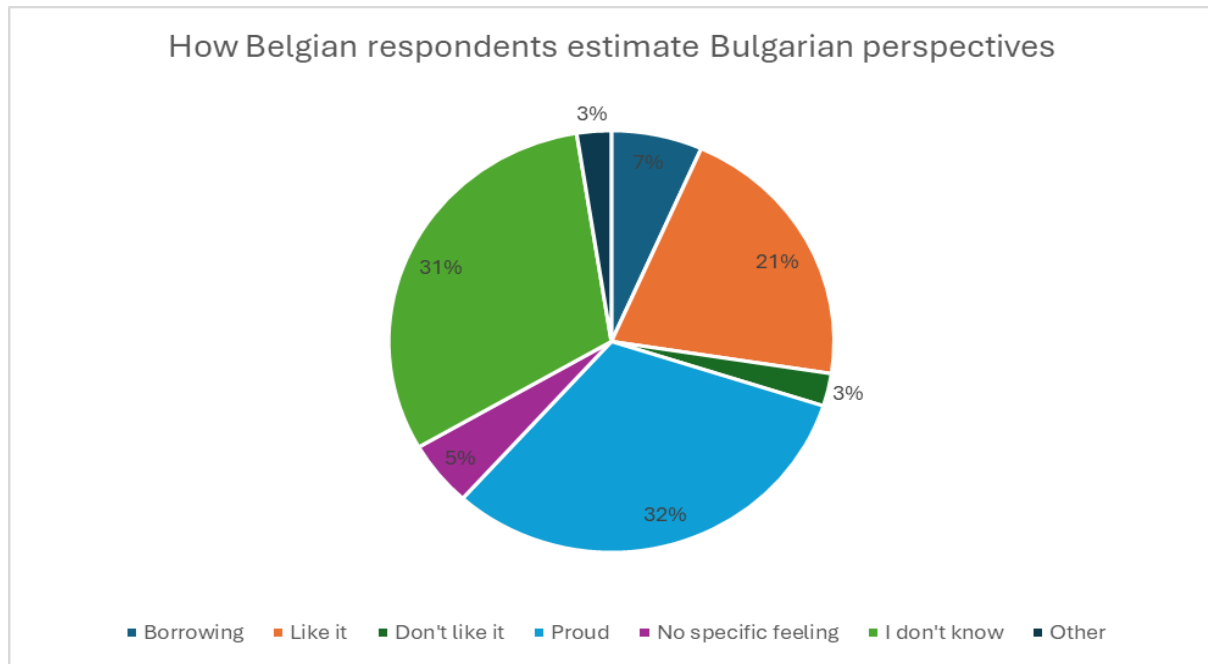


Figure 18: Belgian Survey: How Belgian respondents estimate Bulgarian perspectives

In responses highlighting borrowing (3%) or disapproval (3%), there is a more robust argument than in the Bolivian responses. A common aspect in these answers is the notion that the Bulgarian community is resistant to or less receptive to Western music. This observation stands out in the Belgian responses, particularly when compared to those concerning *Santé* where this concern or idea is not that present.

To conclude the discussion on the Bulgarian segment, a quote from one of the Belgian respondents is telling. He elucidates the distinction he perceives between the Bolivian and Bulgarian cases.

In contrast to the previous issue, the influences are very clear in the beginning, but later not so much, making it feel a bit like the influence is pasted onto the song rather than fully integrated. A piece of Bulgarian music is truly borrowed.

This quote offers an intriguing insight into the nature of appropriation or appreciation. It suggests that the *Santé* case leaned more towards stylistic appreciation due to the consistent use of the charango in zapateo style throughout the song. In contrast, the example under consideration leans more towards content

appreciation, as it prominently features a clear instance of the Bulgarian choir tradition at the song's outset. It could be argued that the subsequent sections where the choir sings during the chorus tend towards stylistic appreciation, as they alter their typical open-throat singing.

In the arguments presented in the Belgian survey, the idea of appreciation or appropriation in this case was less clear. Some individuals felt that Bulgarians might accept this less than Bolivians. However, looking at the Bulgarian responses, it is visible that this is not the case. It should be noted here that these responses are solely from 13 Bulgarians, some of whom reside in Belgium. Almost all Bulgarian respondents answered positively, with a large group expressing pride. Stromae's clear promotion of Bulgarian choir culture by inviting these choirs to concerts and recordings suggests appreciation rather than appropriation.

One factor that might suggest this case is somewhere between appreciation and appropriation is that Stromae has less familiarity with Bulgarian culture compared to Bolivian culture. Initially, he intended to simply replicate it digitally without realizing its Bulgarian origins. In this scenario, Luc Van Haver ensured that the culture was appreciated rather than appropriated.

## 5.4. Interim conclusion

*L'enfer* is a clear example of one of the songs Stromae describes as “his own version of world music.”<sup>182</sup> The song blends influences from a Bulgarian choir, a Western orchestra, Rwandan rhythms, and the Bolivian charango. This creates a mix of cultures from around the world, distinguishing it from *Santé*, which focuses more on Andean and South American music.

Survey respondents, media analysis, and Stromae's own statements indicate that he engages in cultural appreciation. However, this is less clear than in the first case. Stromae admitted that he initially planned to simply copy the voices without realizing they were Bulgarian. His brother played a crucial role by advising him to work with authentic musicians.<sup>183</sup> The musicians are credited as arrangers and performers, which provides exposure but likely fewer royalties than a composer credit, as seen with Juanpaio Toch in *Santé*.<sup>184</sup>

In *Santé*, the charango plays a central and structural role throughout the song and the song structure. While in *L'enfer*, the Bulgarian choir and Bolivian charango have less structural roles and more ornamenting roles. Despite this, Stromae gives credit to the choir in live shows, inviting Bulgarian choirs to perform instead of using samples. These factors all suggest cultural appreciation.

<sup>182</sup> Elisabeth Vincentelli, “Stromae’s Music Delves Into Dark Topics. His Return Is Right on Time,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/28/arts/music/stromae-multitude.html>.

<sup>183</sup> Dullers, “Stromae over zijn nieuwe album ‘Multitude’.”

<sup>184</sup> Stromae, *Multitude*.

## 6. Conclusion

This thesis tried to answer the research question: ‘Is Stromae's album *Multitude* a case of cultural appropriation or appreciation, and how is it received in the relevant communities?’ The research was conducted through two case studies and surveys distributed in Bolivia, Bulgaria, and Belgium. The study used a theoretical framework of cultural appropriation and appreciation without seeking to redefine the concepts.

Cultural appropriation, a sensitive topic in art and history studies, involves the harmful or offensive use of cultural aspects by outsiders without proper context. In contrast, cultural appreciation involves adopting cultural elements respectfully, often through engaging with and acknowledging the culture of origin. The framework distinguishes between different types of appropriation and appreciation, such as object appropriation (taking tangible items) and motif appropriation (using small elements like rhythms or styles). Using this framework, the songs *Santé* and *L'enfer* from *Multitude* were analyzed.

In addition to the framework of cultural appropriation, it is crucial to examine the context of Stromae and the creation of his album *Multitude*. Paul Van Haver, known as Stromae, was born in Brussels to a Belgian mother and a Rwandan father who was largely absent from his life. During his teenage years, he formed the hip hop duo Suspicion with J.E.D.I. under the name Opsmaestro. After the duo separated, Opsmaestro became Stromae. In 2010, Stromae released his first album *Cheese* which was a mix of electropop and hip hop. After several years, and a period of silence, he created his globally acclaimed album *Racine Carrée*, which achieved immediate success. The media began to refer to him as the new Jacques Brel. Following an extensive world tour, Stromae fell ill and withdrew from public life. In 2022, he released a new album *Multitude* which is the focus of this thesis.

Stromae's music is influenced by three main elements. His roots in the Brussels' hip hop scene are present in the rap-like segments of his music. Electropop influences are present in nearly every upbeat song, characterized by the typical synthesizer sound, most notably in *Alors on Danse*. The third influence, noted by the media, aligns him with Jacques Brel and the Chanson réaliste style. *Multitude* represents a different approach, blending world music influenced by Stromae's multicultural upbringing in Brussels, where cultural mixing are a daily reality.

To understand the debate on cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation in relation to this album, three surveys were distributed in Bolivia (25 responses), Bulgaria (13 responses), and Belgium (129 responses). Overall, the respondents represented a balanced age range. Gender balance varied, with

the Bolivian and Belgian surveys having more female respondents, while the Bulgarian survey had more male respondents.

The first case study examined the song *Santé*. The song's lyric content focuses on the working class and aligns with themes in the *French chanson* genre. Additionally, the *zapateo* style is present in the playing technique of the charango and the celebrative character of the song. The beat, based on the South American cumbia style, runs throughout the song. Both Belgian and Bolivian respondents recognized these influences, with a small percentage of Belgians and nearly all Bolivians identifying the charango and South American dance beat. Several minor influences are also present, such as the presence of the accordion, which is prominent in South and Latin American music, and of an electronic flute, reminiscent of Andean wind instruments. Western classical music influences appear through the use of string orchestras, which Stromae describes as ‘the folklore of the Western world.’

Stromae is an outsider to Bolivian and South American cultures. However, he expresses a deep affection for Bolivian culture in several interviews. Notably, Stromae credits Juanpaio Toch, who plays the charango in *Santé*, as the composer of the song. By doing so he acknowledges the musician, an insider to the culture, and ensures he receives royalties. Stromae admits he cannot imitate Bolivian music and prefers to collaborate with cultural insiders. These actions suggest cultural appreciation rather than appropriation. Survey responses support this interpretation: 44% felt proud that Stromae used their musical influences, citing cultural exposure and recognition as reasons. Additionally, 36% of Bolivians expressed that they liked it, while 4% appreciated Stromae borrowing Bolivian influences and another 4% felt he improved them. The remaining Bolivians had no specific feelings about his use of their influences. 26% of the Belgian respondents felt unqualified to judge about Bolivian reactions. These answers support the case as an example of cultural appreciation.

The second case study, *L'enfer*, focuses on Bulgarian culture due to the prominent use of Bulgarian choir chants. During the Soviet era (1944-1989), the socialist government promoted Bulgarian traditional music, leading to the formation of obrabotki choirs like *Le Mystere des Voix Bulgares*. This choir music features drones, clusters, and triadic harmony (I-IV-V), along with open-throat singing techniques that create its distinctive sound.

*L'enfer* has dark lyrics emphasizing suicide and loneliness. Its lyrical structure follows a typical verse-refrain pattern, mirrored in the music structure: intro (refrain material), verse, refrain, verse, refrain, verse, outro (refrain material). Examining the musical influences in *L'enfer* reveals several key elements. The French Chanson influence is strong, with a ballad-like piano accompaniment and a vocal style reminiscent of Jacques Brel. This is noted by 7% of Belgian survey respondents. An electropop influence appears in the refrain with the typical synth sound. The main musical influence in this song is the

Bulgarian choir chants, immediately present in the introduction and reappearing in the refrain, featuring typical drones in the lower voices and the open-throat singing style. The songs beat resembles a typical Rwandan pop music beat, similar to those found in Miss Jojo's music. A classical orchestra adds to the song's dramatic character, enhancing the refrain each time. Initially, the string sections play pizzicato, then bowing, and finally, brass instruments join with long notes. The charango is present but less prominent, except in the last verse, where it is played by plucking rather than strumming.

It is clear Stromae is not an insider in the Bulgarian community. However, he collaborated with Orenda Trio for the choir and Alfredo Coca for the charango, giving full credit to these musicians. Unlike in *Santé*, these musicians were not part of the composing process but performed in the song. Initially, Stromae planned to imitate voices from a Japanese film without knowing they were Bulgarian. His brother, Luc Van Haver, advised him to collaborate with a real Bulgarian choir, ensuring proper cultural credit. This decision shifts the case towards cultural appreciation rather than appropriation.

Survey responses indicate that Bulgarians, like Bolivians in *Santé*, felt pride (38%) and appreciation (46%) for the exposure and recognition of their culture on an international level. Additionally, 8% said that Stromae borrowed the Bulgarian influences, and another 8% had no specific feelings about it. Belgian respondents also believed Bulgarians would feel pride and appreciation. Among Belgian respondents with negative views, there was a common belief or argumentation that Bulgarians would be more opposed to the West. This belief was not evident in responses regarding Bolivia. One of the answers saw the use of Bulgarian chants as more literal copying compared to the Bolivian sounds integration in *Santé*. Overall, *L'enfer* is another example of cultural appreciation, though it initially had elements that could have led to cultural appropriation.

With the analysis of the two cases *Santé* and *L'enfer* and a general overview of the album *Multitude* strengthened by survey respondents from the represented communities on the album, it is possible to say that Stromae took a well-considered approach on using cultural influences in his new album. It seems that Stromae practiced what should be understood as cultural appreciation rather than cultural appropriation.

It is not possible to fully confirm this without a deep analysis of all the different songs on the album and in the oeuvre of Stromae. However, this research could be the framework for further research on cultural appropriation in Stromae's music.

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## Appendix 1: playlist



## **Appendix 2: questions survey**

### Survey Multitude Stromae (Equal in all three surveys):

I am Lars, a musicology master's student at KU Leuven in Belgium. This survey is part of my Master's Thesis that focuses on Stromae's new album 'Multitude' (2022). This album is influenced by world music, or traditional music of cultures around the world.

The survey aims to explore the reception of culturally-diverse influences within specific songs of Stromae. The survey consists of 3 parts, each distributed in a different country: Bolivia, Bulgaria and Belgium. The survey takes about 15 minutes to fill in.

### Personal information (Equal in all three surveys)

#### 1: Age:

- <10
- 10-20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-60
- 60-70
- 70-80
- 80-90
- >90

#### 2: Gender:

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

#### 3: Nationality:

#### 4: Country of Birth:

#### 5: Residence:

- Flanders
- Wallonia
- Brussels Capital Region

## **Belgian**

### Languages:

- English
- Dutch
- French

### Santé – Stromae

#### Youtube video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3QS83ubhHE&ab\\_channel=StromaeVEVO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3QS83ubhHE&ab_channel=StromaeVEVO)

6: Do you know this song?

- Yes
- No
- I have heard it

7: How much do you like this song? (1 not at all – 5 very much)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

8: Do you hear influences of another culture in this song?

- Yes (Question 9 & 10)
- No (Question 11)
- Not sure (Question 9 & 10)

9: Can you identify which culture or try to identify?

10: What is your general feeling about the use of cultural influences in this song?

- I feel proud about it
- I think he is borrowing these cultural influences
- I think he is improving these cultural influences
- I think he is stealing these cultural influences
- I don't have an specific feeling about this
- Other:

### Bolivia

In the song *Santé* you hear a certain string instrument named the Charango. This is an instrument that is very popular in South-America, and especially in Bolivia and Argentina.

11: Do you think they know the music of Stromae in Bolivia?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

12: How do you think people in Bolivia feel about Stromae using Bolivian influences in his music?

- They like it
- They don't like it
- They feel proud about it
- They think he is borrowing the original Bolivian sound
- They think he is improving the original Bolivian sound
- They think he is stealing the original Bolivian sound
- They don't have any specific feelings about this
- I don't know
- Other

13: Why?

### L'enfer – Stromae

Youtube video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DO8NSL5Wzeg&ab\\_channel=StromaeVEVO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DO8NSL5Wzeg&ab_channel=StromaeVEVO)



14: Do you know this song?

- Yes
- No
- I have heard it

15: How much do you like this song? (1 not at all – 5 very much)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

16: Do you hear influences of another culture in this song?

- Yes (Question 9 & 10)
- No (Question 11)
- Not sure (Question 9 & 10)

17: Can you identify which culture or try to identify?

18: What is your general feeling about the use of cultural influences in this song?

- I feel proud about it
- I think he is borrowing these cultural influences
- I think he is improving these cultural influences
- I think he is stealing these cultural influences
- I don't have an specific feeling about this
- Other:

### Bulgaria

In the song 'L'enfer' the choir you hear at the beginning and throughout the song is a Bulgarian choir that sings in a traditional way.

19: Do you think they know the music of Stromae in Bulgaria?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

20: How do you think people in Bolivia feel about Stromae using Bulgarian influences in his music?

- They like it
- They don't like it
- They feel proud about it
- They think he is borrowing the original Bulgarian sound
- They think he is improving the original Bulgarian sound
- They think he is stealing the original Bulgarian sound
- They don't have any specific feelings about this
- I don't know
- Other

21: Why?

### Cultural Influences

In interviews: Stromae is very open about the using of different cultural influences. For example in an interview with the Belgian public broadcasting (VRT) he said that "World is the new pop".

22: What is your general feeling about a song with cultural influences?

- I like it
- I don't like it
- I don't have any specific feelings about this
- Other

23: What do you think about the using/borrowing of influences from other cultures when an artist communicates openly about this?

- Completely acceptable
- More or less accept
- Neutral
- Not really acceptable
- Absolutely not acceptable

24: In general, do you believe the use of cultural influences in pop music is a good thing?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Depends on how the artist tells the story
- Depends on how the artist gives credit to the specific cultural influences and their performers
- Other

25: Why?

## Bulgarian

Languages:

- Bulgarian
- English

Context:

1: How familiar are you with traditional Bulgarian Music?

- Not familiar at all
- Somewhat familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Very familiar

2: How familiar are you with the Belgian artist Stromae?

- Not familiar at all
- Somewhat familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Very familiar

3: Are you a fan of Stromae's music?

- Yes
- No
- Neutral
- I don't know him

L'enfer – Stromae

Youtube video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DO8NSL5Wzeg&ab\\_channel=StromaeVEVO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DO8NSL5Wzeg&ab_channel=StromaeVEVO)

4: Do you know Stromae's song L'enfer?

- Yes (Question 5)
- No (Question 6)

5: Where did you hear this song for the first time?

- On the radio
- At a party
- On Spotify
- A friend or family member let me listen to the song

6: How much do you like this song? (1 not at all – 5 very much)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

7: Do you hear influences from Bulgarian music in this song?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

8: Can you identify specific elements or aspects of Bulgarian music in this song?

9: What is your general feeling about Stromae using the Bulgarian influences?

- I like it
- I don't like it
- I feel proud about it
- I think he is borrowing the original Bulgarian sounds
- I think he is improving the original Bulgarian sounds
- I think he is stealing the original Bulgarian sounds
- I don't have any specific feeling about this

10: Why?

#### Cultural Influences:

In interviews, Stromae is very open about the using of different cultural influences. For example in an interview with the Belgian public broadcasting (VRT) he said that "World is the new pop". On his tiny desk concert at NPR music he also invites Yasna Voices NY Bulgarian Women's Choir to sing the singing voices in the beginning.

11: What is your general feeling about a song with cultural influences?

- I like it
- I don't like it
- I don't have any specific feelings about this
- Other

12: What do you think about the using/borrowing of influences from other cultures when an artis communicates openly about this?

- Completely acceptable
- More or less accept
- Neutral
- Not really acceptable
- Absolutely not acceptable

13: In general, do you believe the use of cultural influences in pop music is a good thing?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Depends on how the artist tells the story
- Depends on how the artist gives credit to the specific cultural influences and their performers
- Other

14: Why?

## **Bolivian**

Languages:

- Spanish
- English

Context:

1: How familiar are you with traditional Bolivian Music?

- Not familiar at all
- Somewhat familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Very familiar

2: How familiar are you with the Belgian artist Stromae?

- Not familiar at all
- Somewhat familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Very familiar

3: Are you a fan of Stromae's music?

- Yes
- No
- Neutral
- I don't know him

Santé– Stromae

Youtube video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3QS83ubhHE&ab\\_channel=StromaeVEVO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3QS83ubhHE&ab_channel=StromaeVEVO)

4: Do you know Stromae's song Santé?

- Yes (Question 5)
- No (Question 6)

5: Where did you hear this song for the first time?

- On the radio
- At a party
- On Spotify
- A friend or family member let me listen to the song

6: How much do you like this song? (1 not at all – 5 very much)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

7: Do you hear influences from Bolivian music in this song?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

8: Can you identify specific elements or aspects of Bolivian music in this song?

9: What is your general feeling about Stromae using the Bolivian influences?

- I like it
- I don't like it
- I feel proud about it
- I think he is borrowing the original Bolivian sounds
- I think he is improving the original Bolivian sounds
- I think he is stealing the original Bolivian sounds
- I don't have any specific feeling about this

10: Why?

#### Cultural Influences:

In interviews, Stromae is very open about the using of different cultural influences. For example in an interview with the Belgian public broadcasting (VRT) he said that “World is the new pop”.

11: What is your general feeling about a song with cultural influences?

- I like it
- I don't like it
- I don't have any specific feelings about this
- Other

12: What do you think about the using/borrowing of influences from other cultures when an artis communicates openly about this?

- Completely acceptable
- More or less accept
- Neutral
- Not really acceptable
- Absolutely not acceptable

13: In general, do you believe the use of cultural influences in pop music is a good thing?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Depends on how the artist tells the story
- Depends on how the artist gives credit to the specific cultural influences and their performers
- Other

14: Why?