

Music as an Adaptation Strategy: The Hruby Family's Voyage from Cehnice to Cleveland

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Abstract | This article looks at the history of the Hruby family as an example of how immigrants to the US adapted and acquired social status through music. The family originated in the village of Cehnice in South Bohemia. Frank Hruby, the family patriarch, started his career there as a musician playing in various circuses across Europe. During his travels, he visited Cleveland, Ohio, and in 1883 settled there with his wife and oldest son. Hruby joined several musical ensembles and gradually became an important personality in the local music scene. His children studied music as well and followed their father's musical path. They moved from playing in marching bands to founding their own orchestra, which toured across the United States as well as Europe. Using archival sources, I show how musical versatility and professionalism helped the Hruby family to integrate into American society and to reach a certain social status. Their history also illustrates how the family's music activities balanced their Czech heritage with the requirements of the new-world audience.

Keywords | Czech immigration to America, Circus music, South Bohemia, Cleveland

Every nation, with its mother tongue, its peculiar customs, its distinct mode of life, varies more or less in form of culture from all other nations. The differences of geographical positions, racial inclinations, and inborn temper influence all departments of life—even Art.

Ladislav Urban¹

1. Ladislav Urban, *The Music of Bohemia* (New York: Czechoslovak Arts Club of New York City, 1919), 23.



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These words open one of the chapters in a small book titled *The Music of Bohemia*, written by Ladislav Urban and published by the Czechoslovak Arts Club of New York City in 1919, one year after the Austro-Hungarian empire fell apart and Czechoslovakia was founded as an independent state. In the spring of 2022, I found one copy of this publication in a second-hand bookstore in Cleveland, Ohio. The book contained a handwritten dedication to Frank Hruby. The book was meant to serve American readers as an introduction to the history and basic characteristics of Czech music from the earliest times to the most recent classical music composers, such as Josef Suk. The author emphasizes the importance of music for Czech and Czechoslovak national identity and the role it played in the historical struggles of the Czechs against those who supposedly wanted to crush them, meaning mostly either the Germans or the Habsburg Empire. The text continues with a quote from philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson: “No man can quite emancipate himself from his age and country.” Paradoxically, Hruby, the book’s owner, came from a family of immigrants who arrived in the United States in 1883 and used music to emancipate themselves from Bohemia, their place of origin, and to find a new identity across the ocean.

This essay shows that the Hruby family used music as a tool to make a living and form new connections in their new community. At the same time, the Hrubys’ experience suggests that as they explored ways to reach new audiences, they also kept a connection to their original culture. The Hruby family’s musical activities in Cleveland illuminate the relationship between music and national identity. Combining historical and ethnomusicological approaches, I use musical and biographical documents to better understand what role music played in the lives and experiences of people coming to the United States from Central Europe. I reconstruct the story of how Frank Hruby and his family integrated into American musical life, how they eventually became an important part of Cleveland’s cultural life in the nineteenth century, and how they became “the Most Musical Family in America,” as one commentator called them.² The story of the Hruby family also illustrates that as immigrant musicians moved up the social ladder in their new environment, they turned away from popular music and embraced classical music and formal music education.

While looking at their journey, it is useful not to think of them just in connection with Czech lands or Czechoslovakia. The Hrubys’ connection to a particular region is very important in the context of this essay as it influenced the career of the whole family. Therefore, it can be seen as an example of a translocal phenomenon. I understand the term translocality to describe processes of

2. Miloslav Rechciĝl, *Czechs Won’t Get Lost in the World, Let Alone in America* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2018), 50.

movement and identity formation that transcend boundaries—including, but also extending beyond, those of nation-states.³

The Hrubys and the Circus

The Hruby family came from the village of Cehnice in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Located in South Bohemia, Cehnice currently has about five hundred inhabitants. The village is situated in a region where Czech- and German-speaking inhabitants mixed for centuries. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Cehnice had a special reputation. Together with the neighboring village of Dunovice, it was famous for producing many circus musicians. Local historian Josef Sichinger explains that the village had about eight hundred inhabitants yet produced approximately twelve groups of musicians of ten to twenty-five members every year. These musicians left their homes in early spring and returned in fall.⁴ Although these musical communities for a large part have been overlooked by musicologists, they have been discussed extensively by local chroniclers. These writers, however, focus mostly on social and economic aspects of the musicians' lives, leaving aside the music itself. Various first-hand accounts, such as bandleader Karel Polata's memoir, show that playing in a circus band required both versatility and professionalism.⁵ In the hierarchy of circus personnel, musicians ranked rather high in terms of wages, and their duties included not only providing musical accompaniment for the shows but also giving concerts before and in between these shows. To attract audiences, circus musicians adopted various new and fashionable styles of music and had to learn new pieces quickly. Their repertoire consisted of popular tunes as well as selected works of classical music.

The research on circus music presents a specific set of problems. The ever-changing nature of the circus limits the amount and reliability of sources. Therefore, it is difficult to find out exactly where a particular musician played at a given time and what their travel routes and repertoire were. It is possible, however, to understand what skills circus productions required from musicians. As Kim Baston notes: "Circus has incorporated a style of presenting music in which the music is prominent, yet remains subordinate to the physical performance."⁶

3. See, e.g., Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak, "Translocality: Concepts, Applications and Emerging Research Perspectives," *Geography Compass* 7 (2013): 373–84.

4. Josef Sichinger, *Strakonice* (Strakonice: Národní výbor, 1970), 32.

5. Ivana Šafránková, *Šumavští muzikanti ve vzpomínkách Kapelníka Karla Polaty* (Plzeň: RegionAll, 2012).

6. Kim Baston, "Circus Music: The Eye of the Ear," in *The Routledge Circus Studies Reader*, ed. Peta Tait and Katie Lavers (London: Routledge, 2016), 117.

Baston describes various cases in which the music was closely intertwined with the action in the ring, which called for exact timing and precise coordination. Another important skill was the ability to switch between varied styles of music as the accompaniment to acrobats and equestrians often ranged from classical excerpts to marches to “exotic” pieces imitating non-Western cultures.

From a European Circus to an American Conservatory

The following discussion is based on archival materials from the Western Reserve Historical Society. The collection includes eighteen pages of text written by Frank Hruby VI⁷ and his son F. Michael Hruby in 2012 and titled “Cleveland’s Musical Hruby Family.” The authors represent the latest generation of the Hruby family. While this text has not been published officially, it is still formulated as promotional material, pointing out the successful career of the family and not focusing on details. Although their account is based on family archives and personal memories, it leaves some crucial questions about the family’s history unanswered. Most importantly, the document does not reveal the birthplace of Frank Hruby IV, the first patriarch of the family to settle in the United States. Hruby’s birthplace, the village of Cehnice, however, is listed in the *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, published by the Case Western Reserve University.⁸

Whereas Hruby IV’s gravestone at the Calvary Cemetery in Cleveland, together with other documents, gives 1856 as the year of his birth, local registry records in the State archive in Třeboň state that he was born on January 11, 1857, and baptized two days later as František, the Czech version of Frank.⁹ Although it is not entirely clear whether the record really refers to the same Frank Hruby who later emigrated to Cleveland (Hruby being a rather common family name in Bohemia), no other child of that name was born in the village during that period.¹⁰ Another confirmation of Hruby’s date and place of birth can be found in his death certificate, which also lists his mother’s maiden name as Kottoun. According to the registry, František originally used his mother’s maiden name

7. Traditionally, firstborn sons in the Hruby family were given the name František or Frank. Frank Hruby who came to Cleveland was referred to as Frank IV, indicating he was already the fourth generation.

8. “Hruby, Frank, Sr. (IV),” in *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, Case Western Reserve University, accessed October 30, 2022, <https://case.edu/ech/articles/h/hruby-frank-sr-iv>.

9. The family memoir mentions his Czech name as “Frantacek,” a misspelling that can be attributed to the authors’ lacking knowledge of the Czech language.

10. “Paračov 7 1834–1860,” Digitální archiv SOA v Třeboni, accessed October 30, 2022, <https://digi.ceskearchivy.cz/6277176>.

Kotaun¹¹ and was given his father's name Hrubý the following year, which suggests that his parents were not married at the time of his birth. Little is known about Hruby's childhood. The family papers indicate that he learned to play the clarinet and joined a circus band at a young age. The family memoir also states that he "eventually worked his way to becoming the music director of the internationally famous Hagenbeck circus."¹² It is not possible to confirm this claim from other sources, however. Carl Hagenbeck did direct a circus that started in Germany and later moved to America where it transformed into the Hagenbeck–Wallace Circus and became one of the largest American circuses. Besides acrobats and wild animals, the Hagenbeck circus also featured so-called ethnological exhibitions that presented natives from Africa or Greenland. However, as Carl Hagenbeck writes in his book, he did not start the circus before 1887, which was after the Hruby family had already settled in Cleveland.¹³ Prior to founding the circus, Hagenbeck organized animal and human shows and brought one of them to Prague in 1880,¹⁴ but there is no evidence that music accompanied these shows and that Hagenbeck employed any musicians.

Thus, Frank Hruby likely spent his formative years as a traveling musician and gained experience in circus music. It was during his travels with the circus to England and other countries that he learned English. When visiting the United States in 1883, Hruby met Josef (Joseph) Zamecnik (1832–1915), a bandleader who was also from South Bohemia.¹⁵ Zamecnik turned Hruby's attention to opportunities in Cleveland. After the end of the Civil War, the city went through an intense development, and its population grew rapidly thanks to the booming iron and steel industries. Among the incoming immigrants were many Central Europeans, who worked in newly opened factories and built homes in the vicinity. Individual immigrant groups formed ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods, where they preserved their original culture and ways of life. The Czech community settled mainly around Broadway, a road running

11. The spelling Kottoun is probably incorrect as this version of the name cannot be found in any Czech sources.

12. Frank Hruby and F. Michael Hruby, "Cleveland's Musical Hruby Family: Eighty-Five Years of Leadership in Musical Performance and Instruction in Cleveland, Ohio, 1883 to 1968," p. 3. Container 1, MS 5258 Frank Hruby, Slov. Family Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH.

13. Carl Hagenbeck, *Beasts and Men, Being Carl Hagenbeck's Experiences for Half a Century among Wild Animals* (London: Longmans, Green, 1912), 31.

14. Barbora Půtová, "Freak Shows: Otherness of the Human Body as a Form of Public Presentation," *Anthropologie* 56, no. 2 (2018): 98.

15. His son, John Stephen Zamecnik (1872–1953) studied composition with Antonín Dvořák in Prague and became a successful composer of film music.

from Cleveland downtown to the southeast. According to Stephen J. Sebesta, there were two important waves of Czech immigration to Cleveland in the nineteenth century. The first occurred in the 1850s, the second after 1870. At the time of Hruby's arrival, the Cleveland Czech community was already well established, and the city had the fourth-largest Czech population in the world, after Prague, Vienna, and Chicago.¹⁶

Following their settlement in Cleveland, the Hruby family became part of Cleveland's musical life, as various members either joined existing bands and orchestras or founded their own. Frank IV started his Cleveland performance career by playing in the Opera House orchestra at Euclid Avenue in 1883. In 1889 he became the director of the Great Western Band, a group that frequently performed at various public events. Hruby's performances with the Great Western Band included significant events in the civic life of nineteenth-century Cleveland. In 1894, for example, the Band performed at the dedication of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Cleveland's public square. The program of the ceremony included a "Grand Concert by the Great Western Band under the direction of Prof. F. H. Hruby," followed by several patriotic songs performed by a children's chorus, prayers, and speeches.¹⁷

In the Great Western Band, Frank Hruby worked together with another important personality of Czech heritage, Anthony Louis Maresh (1877–1960). Maresh, whose parents emigrated from Bohemia in the 1860s and 1870s, was a conductor and composer, but also a producer of an important music media of the time—the player piano rolls. According to Michael A. Kukral, Maresh was the "name associated with more Czech piano rolls than any other person."¹⁸

When they came to Cleveland in 1883, Frank Hruby and his wife Katerina brought their six-month-old son Frank (later referred to as Frank V, 1883–1974). In the following years, they had seven more children: Alois (1886–1968), John (1887–1964), Cecelia (1889–1937), Fred (or Ferdinand, 1891–1978), Charles (1893–1976), Mayme (1897–1984), and William (1899–1965). All children received musical training from their father but also from Charles V. Rychlik (1875–1962), a Cleveland-born composer and violinist of Czech descent. Thus, the Hruby family's focus on music training continued in the United States, and

16. Stephen J. Sebesta, *The Settlement, Growth and Movement of the Czechs and Their Institutions in Cleveland* ([Bloomington, IN]: Xlibris, 2020), 18.

17. Francis M. Van Etten, *Brief Historical Sketch of the Cuyahoga County Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument* (Cleveland, OH: The Monument Commissioners, 1896).

18. Michael Andrew Kukral, "Czech, Bohemian, Slovak and Czechoslovak Piano Rolls," in *Ethnic Piano Rolls in the United States*, ed. Dariusz Kučinskas (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021), 66.

the children eventually followed their father in both joining already-existing local musical ensembles and founding their own.

The Hruby Brothers Orchestra, later renamed the Hruby Family Orchestra and sometimes presented as the Hruby Brothers Quintette or Quartette, was founded in 1907 and comprised the father and five of his older sons. The ensemble traveled around the United States until 1935. During their tours, they often followed the so-called Lyceum and Chautauqua circuits. These were part of a movement aimed at combining education and entertainment in the form of public lectures and art performances for wide audiences. The performances took place either in tents or in local theaters. Although the main goal of these events was to cultivate moral sensibilities and intellectual tastes, the form of presentation was similar to circus performances. Productions usually consisted of various comic or inspirational speakers, poets, and dramatic presentations. As Frederick Crane observed, musical numbers were very popular, and the productions required versatility. Musicians were frequently able to switch from a string to a brass ensemble and vice versa.¹⁹ These events also enabled mutual contact between musicians and the exchange of repertoire.

Promotional materials for these events, such as a 1912 booklet for a series of performances on their Chautauqua tour, not only emphasized the musical skills of the Hrubys and their ability to play multiple instruments but also operated with the image Bohemia, Hruby's place of origin, as a land of music:

Sons of an illustrious father, the world renowned clarinetist and director Mr. Frank Hruby, they are gifted by nature with that deep feeling and fine temperament so characteristic of their musical mother-country Bohemia; Masters of fourteen different instruments, they have played together since first childish fingers could pick a string, or draw a bow. Thus the heritage of generations, and the constant ensemble work of their lifetime, have combined in giving them technique so finished, and dynamic power so potent, that critics and rivals unite with the public everywhere in proclaiming them five true virtuosos.²⁰

Of course, the statement comes from a promotional booklet, and such texts tend to exaggerate. As Paige Clark Lush notes in her dissertation on the role of music in the Chautauqua movement, "local reviews of chautauqua

19. Frederick Crane, "The Music of Chautauqua and Lyceum," *Black Music Research Journal* 10, no. 1 (1990): 105.

20. *Hruby Brothers Quintette: Born Not Made*, 1912, p. 2, Redpath Chautauqua Collection, posted January 1, 2001, https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/islandora/object/ui%3Atc_39411.

performances—especially by headliners—were nearly always laudatory. This phenomenon can likely be explained by the pressure placed on local newspapers to support the chautauqua unconditionally in the name of supporting the community.²¹ At the same time, the booklet provides insight into those aspects of the Hrubys' performances that American audiences found attractive. Besides great technical skills, the Hrubys also clearly felt that the American public appreciated their repertoire that combined classical sophistication with simple entertainment and a hint of exoticism connected to their country of origin:

The practically unlimited repertoire of these versatile artists embraces the finest classical compositions, as well as popular selections and novelties, prime favorites among the latter being Alois Hruby's impersonation of celebrated bandmasters—Sousa, Creatore, Strauss and others—which invariably convulse the audience. The strange melodies of Bohemia too are a fine treat on a program which spells a round of pleasure to every true music lover.²²

Texts such as this, accompanied by professional photos and laudatory quotes from local newspapers, illustrate that the Hruby family made good use of the principles of American show business.

Besides touring, other occasions for the Hruby Orchestra included performances in Cleveland churches or charitable institutions, such as the Sisters of Charity's home for young orphan girls. Between 1907 and 1935 the family played hundreds of concerts and became known as a group of highly professional musicians. Archival photos show that the family orchestra understood the importance of publicity. The folder in the family's collection in the Western Reserve Historical Society²³ contains numerous photographs with editorial markings showing how the family considered the ideal cropping and shot selection to make the result look good. These photos also document the musical versatility of the Hruby family. The Hrubys are shown playing and holding a wide range of musical instruments, including more common classical instruments, such as the piano, clarinet, or cello, and instruments that were less widespread, such as various kinds of fanfare trumpets and other rare brass instruments, bass clarinets, and basset horns. One photograph shows Charles and Fred Hruby playing anvils in Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Il Trovatore*. Another photo depicts

21. Paige Clark Lush, "Music and Identity in Circuit Chautauqua: 1904–1932" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2009), 157–58.

22. *Hruby Brothers Quintette*, 2.

23. Frank Hruby Sr. Family Photographs, folder PG 608, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH.

Frank Hruby Jr. playing a cellophone, a string instrument held between knees with a conical horn for amplification. According to the photo's caption, this was the only specimen of the instrument in America.

In 1912, Frank Hruby IV traveled with his children to Europe, where they performed in Holland, Germany, and Bohemia. The same year, Frank IV died shortly after returning from the trip. The Hruby Family Orchestra continued to perform, but the touring activities were limited as the siblings married and started their own families. The oldest of the children, Frank V, together with his brother Fred, founded the Hruby Conservatory in 1916. The school was built at the corner of Broadway and East 55th Street, in a neighborhood that was at that time mostly Czech. The school, however, had students from other parts of Cleveland as well.²⁴ The building had eight rooms for teaching music and a small concert hall. The brothers led the Hruby Conservatory until 1968, and after a period of neglect, the building is now used as the home for the Broadway School of Music & the Arts. The original name of the school is still visible on the building's wall.

Members of the Hruby family were also involved in the founding of the Cleveland Orchestra. The institution was founded by Adella Prentiss Hughes and played its inaugural concert on December 11, 1918, a few months after Czechoslovakia gained independence from the Austro-Hungarian empire. In his book on the orchestra's history, Rosenberg points out: "Yet another brood that had deep roots in the orchestra's annals and the city's musical history was the Hruby family, which supplied no fewer than five brothers and a sister, out of a total of eight siblings, to the Cleveland Orchestra's violin, cello, clarinet, trumpet, and percussion sections over the decades. Clarinetist Frank, violinist John, and cellist Mamie . . . played in the inaugural concert."²⁵ Besides playing in the opera and founding the conservatory, this participation marked another step of the family from popular entertainment into the respectable world of "high" arts.

While most of the musical activities of the members of the Hruby family were aimed at the general public in Cleveland and elsewhere in the USA, the family also remained in contact with their Czech heritage. The archival sources show that Czech music was often represented in the family's repertoire. An important reason for the family's attachment to Czech music may have been their regular contact with the Czech community in Cleveland. Preserved in the Western Reserve Historical Society's archive are several pieces of sheet music,

24. Silvia Zverina, *And They Shall Have Music: The History of the Cleveland Music School Settlement* (Cleveland, OH: The Cobham and Hatherton Press, 1988), 106.

25. Donald Rosenberg, *The Cleveland Orchestra Story: Second to None* (Cleveland, OH: Gray & Company, 2000), 52.

both in manuscript and in print, containing mostly funeral music. Among these funeral works, there is a piece titled “Tyršův Smuteční Pochod” (Tyrš’s funeral march), referring to the founder of the Czech Sokol organization Josef Tyrš. Another piece of sheet music includes the song “Bývali Čechové” (The Czechs used to be) written by Czech composer František Labler (1805–1851) and often sung by Czech patriots. The collection also contains several recordings on vinyl and shellac discs of unknown dates. Most of them are homemade recordings with handwritten information on the label. As it was not possible to play these recordings due to their condition, the only hint at what they might contain is the information on the labels. One of them reads: “The recordings—Metal, Wood Clarinets, by Frank Hruby for H. N. White Company.” Another note states simply: “Nepudu domu, clarinet solo, Frank Hruby.” “Nepudu domů” (I am not going home) is a title of a popular Czech folk song from nineteenth-century collections.²⁶

Successful Americanization

After the large waves of immigration from Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, US politicians and institutions reassessed the ways in which to achieve successful modes of coexistence between various national, ethnic, and social groups. In the first decades of the twentieth century, this resulted in the so-called Americanization Movement. The initiative was meant to help the integration of newcomers—to help them learn the language and understand American history, the political system, and other aspects of American society. The efforts were organized by state committees. While the goal was a certain homogenization of society, attention to differences between various ethnic groups was also promoted. The Cleveland Americanization Committee published a pamphlet in 1919 titled *The Czechs of Cleveland*, which presented Czech culture, history, and way of life. The author, librarian Eleanor E. Ledbetter, wrote about the Czech attitude to music:

The devotion of the Czech to music is well known. A newspaper squib attributed to Bohemian men a double life, —tailors by day and musicians by night. Every Czech child takes music lessons; little girls have piano lessons first, often followed by some other instrument, while boys usually start with the violin, and often take up wind instruments also. This is considered just as necessary as any other part of their education, and it is

26. See, e.g., Zdeněk Vejvoda, Věra Thořová, and Jiří Traxler, *Lidové písně z Prahy ve sbírce Františka Homolky I. díl* (Prague: Etnologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2011), 306.

often the means of assisting their way through college and professional schools.²⁷

Ledbetter goes on to mention important personalities of local music life, and the Hruby family is among them:

Most of the orchestras of the city are made up largely of Czechs. Mr. C. V. Rychlik, one of the best known violinists of the city, comes from a prominent Czech family. Vincent Charvat was one of the best local cornetists and Edward Krejsa excels as a pianist and as a conductor. The Hruby orchestra, consisting of the talented members of a single family, for years toured the country with great appreciation. The Hruby Conservatory of music, at 5415 Broadway, is an important center of musical instruction, and there are many other Czech teachers of great ability. The Machan family also have much more than local fame. Miss Clarice Balas is now on a concert tour, and John Zamecnik is a widely known composer.²⁸

The Hruby family served as a positive example in the publications aiming at the integration of new immigrants into American society. Their name was also mentioned by other authors writing about the Czech communities in America, such as Thomas Čapek who writes in his book *The Čechs (Bohemians) in America*:

How many musical families in the United States can equal the record of the Hrubys of Cleveland? Local No. 4, American Federation of Musicians, has enrolled twelve Hrubys as members. Lagging somewhat behind the Hrubys in numbers, yet a force to be reckoned with, is the Zámečnick clan of the same city: John Zámečnick (honorary), John S. Zámečnick, Joseph Zámečnick (honorary), Joseph E. Zámečnick, Joseph J. Zámečnick. The directory of membership of Local No. 4 contains 179 Čech names.²⁹

The mention of the Hrubys' name in connection with the American Federation of Musicians can be seen as a symbolic completion of their transition to America because in 1903 this organization passed a resolution against foreign musicians

27. Eleanor E. Ledbetter, *The Czechs of Cleveland* (Cleveland, OH: Americanization Committee, 1919), 15.

28. Ledbetter, *Czechs of Cleveland*, 15.

29. Thomas Čapek, *The Čechs (Bohemians) in America: A Study of Their National, Cultural, Political, Social, Economic and Religious Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 224.

taking work from domestic bands and petitioned president Roosevelt to protect American musicians by limiting the importation of musicians from outside the US.

Conclusion

Histories of itinerant musicians in the nineteenth century illustrate how different kinds of music were connected to both certain social groups and specific places of origin. Because the activities of these musicians did not fall clearly into either classical or folk music categories, music scholars often overlook them. The social status of these musicians varied widely as did their musical activities. In general, music was an important factor in nineteenth-century transatlantic cultural transfer of which the Czech lands were an integral part. In her study on women musicians from the Erzgebirge region on the Bohemian-German borders, Nuppu Koivisto claims that the “late nineteenth-century European entertainment industry was fundamentally urban and translocal.”³⁰ She shows that the town of Pressnitz (Přísečnice) was a place where “ladies’ orchestras” were founded and from where some of them traveled as far as Egypt.³¹ These orchestras were often family-based, and the profession was transferred from generation to generation. This connection between translocality and family-based music-making occurred all over Europe at that time. John E. Zucchi has discussed several Italian regions from which groups of child musicians traveled to play harps and other instruments in the streets of Paris, London, and New York. Many itinerant harp players also came from the Czech lands. In eastern Bohemia, the town of Nechanice and surrounding villages were known as the center of harp players, some of whom traveled as far as China and established a complex business network. In his 1906 pamphlet titled “Východočeské otrokářství” (East Bohemian slavery), local lawyer Bohuslav Gebauer described in detail how many families trained their children to play the harp or other instruments and then sent them off to make money performing abroad with touring groups led by “managers.” Gebauer views this business as morally dubious, often leading to prostitution and crime.³² Other European regions encountered similar situations in the nineteenth century, as their inhabitants traveled

30. Nuppu Koivisto, “From Bohemia to the Balkans: Towards a Socioeconomic History of Itinerant Women Musicians, 1860–1889,” in *Music as Labour*, ed. Dagmar Abfalter and Rosa Reitsamer (London: Routledge, 2022), 48.

31. Pressnitz was a mining town at the Czech-German border. In the 1970s it was flooded by a newly built dam.

32. Bohuslav Gebauer, *Východočeské otrokářství* (Prague: Lidové družstvo tiskařské a vydavatelské, Borový, 1906).

to make money by performing music far away from their homes. Most of these musicians never transcended their social status and mostly returned home after performing abroad.

The original environment of circus music from which the Hruby family came also had a rather low social status; however, it required musicians of great versatility and other professional abilities. Adaptation to these requirements helped Frank Hruby IV to teach his children the same musical skills. In their new home in Cleveland they used these skills to gradually build a professional reputation and change their social position with it. While most of the circus musicians from Cehnice returned to their village, for Frank Hruby a combination of talent, luck, and versatile training in music opened a path to a new life across the ocean.

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