30 PARTIES: MEMORIES SET TO THE MELODY OF THE ACCORDION

Since its first edition in 1996, the Immigrant Festival has brought together different communities to share music, dance, flavors, knowledge, and other cultural expressions. Over the course of more than three decades held at the Immigration Museum and the Arsenal of Hope, the Festival has evolved and expanded, drawing more than 31,000 people in a single weekend and representing more than 50 nationalities. While European participants predominated in the early editions, the program has progressively come to incorporate communities from different parts of the world, reflecting the diversity of the migratory processes that shape the city of São Paulo.

In this context of such diverse cultural expressions, the accordion stands out as one of the instruments featured in the musical performances of various groups of migrants and their descendants. Therefore, to honor the 30th Immigrant Festival, this edition of Collection Showcase features an eight-bass accordion from the Immigration Museum's collection, along with photographic and audiovisual records documenting the instrument's presence throughout the Festival's history.

As an instrument of European origin, the accordion and its repertoires traveled in the luggage and through the hands of travelers and migrants until they reached Brazil, where they took on their own distinct paths, shaping the musical character of various regions of the country. On the Festival's stages, the accordion is played, danced to, and sung along with by different groups, including Portuguese, Croatian, Serbian, Italian, and Russian performers. Through sound, image, and memory, we explore some of the stories that, for over 30 years, have made the Immigrant Festival a space for celebrating cultural diversity and the heritage built by migrant communities in São Paulo.

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE GRUPO FOLCLORE E ETNOGRAFIA REGIÃO AUTÔNOMA DA MADEIRA

Brazil, 2002
Immigration Museum Collection

POSTER FOR THE 1ST IMMIGRANT FESTIVAL

Brazil, 1996
Immigration Museum Collection

CORAL SAPORE D'ITÁLIA

In 1996, the Coral Sapore D'Itália, affiliated with the Circolo Sociale Calabrese, was founded in São Paulo with the aim of promoting Italian music. Currently, the group consists of about 25 choir members, including sopranos, altos, and tenors. The Coral Sapore D'Itália has performed at several editions of the Immigrant Festival, including the very first one in 1996, as can be seen in the video where the choir's voices are accompanied by the keyboard and the accordion, an instrument of great importance to Italian folk music.

PERFORMANCE OF THE SONG "LA ESPANHOLA"

Coral Sapore D'Itália
Brazil, 1996 (1st Immigrant Festival)
3'15''
Immigration Museum Collection

GRUPO VOLGA CORAL E DANÇAS FOLCLÓRICAS DA RÚSSIA

Founded in São Paulo in 1981, the Grupo Volga Coral e Danças Folclóricas da Rússia showcases various Russian cultural traditions, such as music, dance, and cuisine. The group, whose name pays homage to Russia's longest river, has participated in several editions of the Immigrant Festival, as seen in the video from the 13th edition in 2008, in which the voices of the Coral Volga are accompanied by the accordion, an instrument with a strong presence in Russian culture.

PERFORMANCE OF THE SONG “KATYUSHA”

Grupo Volga Coral e Danças Folclóricas da Rússia
Brazil, 2008 (13th Immigrant Festival)
2’07’’
Immigration Museum Collection

GRUPO FOLCLORE E ETNOGRAFIA REGIÃO AUTÔNOMA DA MADEIRA

The Grupo Folclore e Etnografia Região Autônoma da Madeira was founded in 1985 in São Paulo to promote the cultural expressions of the Madeira archipelago (Portugal) through musical performances, dances, workshops, and regional cuisine. The group has participated in the Immigrant Festival for many years, and the accordion is a prominent instrument in its performances, as seen in the video from the 26th Immigrant Festival in 2021 and in the photograph taken during the 7th Immigrant Festival in 2002, in which one of its members is pictured with an eight-bass accordion slung over her shoulder.

PERFORMANCE OF THE SONG “BAILE DA GALINHA PINTADA”

Grupo Folclore e Etnografia Região Autônoma da Madeira
Brazil, 2021 (26th Immigrant Festival)
2’30’’
Immigration Museum Collection

EIGHT-BASS ACCORDION

The accordion was created in the early decades of the 19th century in Central Europe, drawing on Chinese and European influences. In addition to being portable, the instrument is known for the vibration of its metal reeds, which are set in motion by pressing the buttons and moving the bellows; it is capable of playing several melodies simultaneously with just one musician. Quickly becoming a staple of folk festivals across Europe, the accordion was incorporated into the belongings of travelers and migrants. In the mid-19th century, the instrument began to circulate widely throughout Brazil, carried by muleteers and soldiers mobilized for the war against Paraguay (1864–1870), becoming one of the region's most significant musical traditions in the Northeast of the country. There, also known as the "fole de oito baixos [eight-bass bellows]" or "pé-de-bode", the eight-bass accordion was indispensable to the emergence of the brazilian musical genres *forró* and baião. In the Southeast and Midwest of Brazil, the accordion provided the soundtrack for the rural dwellers cultural imaginaries, known in Brazil as *"caipira"* and *"sertanejo"*, as noted in the inscription at the top of the accordion on display. Thus, the accordion's tuning, playing style, and expression were gradually transformed from hand to hand, from festival to festival.

EIGHT-BASS ACCORDION

No location, no date
Unidentified donor
Immigration Museum Collection