Ethnomusicology and Performance Studies: Towards Interdisciplinary Futures of Indian Classical Music

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Abstract: Using Indian classical music as a site of transparency, the authors critically examine how the fields of ethnomusicology and performance studies approach performance. Responding to the (dis)placement of music scholarship within the framework of virtuosity, the authors treat generational frictions that exist between their disciplines not as oppositional or antagonistic, but as opportunities to maximize scholarly engagement between both fields. The authors propose de-centering music scholarship from traditional milieux of authority, in an effort to contextualize imperfect participatory performances of multiculturally emplaced subjects and scholars. This essay is concluded with some pragmatic directions that come out of the critiques highlighted therein.

Résumé : Considérant la musique classique indienne comme un lieu de transparence, les auteurs procèdent à une étude critique de la façon dont les champs de l'ethnomusicologie et des études de l'interprétation approchent la performance. En réponse au (dé)placement de la recherche musicale dans le cadre de la virtuosité, les auteurs traitent des frictions générationnelles qui existent entre leurs disciplines, non en tant qu'oppositions ou antagonismes, mais en tant qu'opportunités de maximiser l'engagement des chercheurs dans les deux champs. Les auteurs proposent de décentrer la recherche musicale des milieux faisant traditionnellement autorité afin de contextualiser les performances participatives imparfaites de sujets et de chercheurs se situant à un niveau multiculturel. Cet essai s'achève sur l'indication de quelques directions pragmatiques issues des critiques qu'il a mises en exergue.

A Prologue

Pavi

Anybody who has been to India in the summer knows the blazing afternoons, thick with sweat. The heavy humidity wraps itself around you like a blanket, and under every ceiling fan people sit, like effigies of

Prasad, Pavithra and Jeff Roy. 2017. Ethnomusicology and Performance Studies: Towards Interdisciplinary Futures of Indian Classical Music. *MUSICultures* 44 (1): 187-209.

themselves, staring off into space, avoiding any movement that could stir up the soupy air. If you are lucky, you could retreat into a dark room to wait out the harshest hours between noon and twilight. But, there is a shift in the rhythm of the day as evening approaches. It is as though the day starts over in those few hours between the scorching afternoon and sun-saturated twilight. This is my grandmother's favourite part of the day. It is when she bustles most – humming under her breath, watering the plants, picking flowers, making tea, inspecting the snack tins, re-braiding her hair and talking with the neighbours. When she is really in the mood, she sits down with her *veenai* and plays for 30 minutes. She never plays loudly, but the sound floats through the apartment, cooling the air, blowing on our foreheads, grazing past our ears. She is not a concert musician, and plays in a way that does not suggest a formal performance or an audience. Rather, she plays *around* the neighbours and their children coming and going from her apartment. Her fingers trace question marks rather than exclamations. I have to lean in to hear her questions. Gliding her fingers sideways across the fret board with a final flourish on the sympathetic strings, she asks not if I thought she played well, but if I liked the song.

My grandmother and I have many convergences of personality, but playing veenai together allows us ways of talking to each other across our vastly different lives. Since my moving away from India almost two decades ago, our correspondences have grown more infrequent, but my trips there always include playing veenai with her. I am a dreadful player, only keeping up with the melody because of my years of compulsory cultural training in Brahmin girlhood in the form of Carnatic vocal classes. We shared a sense of humour and found the same things funny. In the middle of a session of playing, we often bent over laughing as I worked up to challenging finger-work, only to flop spectacularly, the strings sending out a desperate wail as the note failed to land. We did not care much for perfection – we would fall into reverie together, in between songs, listening to the creak of a tree trunk against a metal gate as if it were the emissary of primordial sound. We would drift off into separate daydreams.

When we played our veenais together, we played whatever we wanted and those melodies made openings to telling each other the stories of our lives. As she grew to know me as an adult, it put a smile on her face to know one of her granddaughters enjoyed music the same way she did. This ritual on the days that I visited her was the space in which we talked about politics, gender and patriarchy, history, and what it meant to be a scholar. I told her about Pride Marches and she told me about her civil disobediences during India's struggle for independence. For every bit of context I gave her about

race and civil rights history in the US, she in turn gave me her memories of being an Army wife on the Northeast frontier during the Sino-Indian war. We agreed that a questioning and critical attitude was the antidote to the ever-looming threat of enslavement to patriarchy, to imperialism, to orthodoxy. She told me never to be complicit in my own erasure. Then, "*vaashi*," she would say – play.

Jeff

Anybody who has been to Milwaukee knows how cold it gets. The hops-infused arctic air penetrates your bones like needles, and on every street people walk as quickly as they can, gloves covering the holes on their face mask, avoiding moments of stillness that let the coldness seep in. If you're lucky, sub-zero temperatures enhanced by a lake-effect wind cancelled school for the day, and you stayed inside sipping tomato soup next to your fireplace, watching a marathon of *Star Trek, The Next Generation* reruns with a purring Siamese cat shedding on your lap. Any day off often meant spending a significant amount of time playing violin or doing school work. I was a nervous child – the only son of working-class, same-sex parents in the inner city – and regular violin practice became a way to channel that dispersed anxiety into something productive (to this day, it is still unclear to me which came first, the nervous energy or the violin). My many years of training on the violin, whether or not I enjoyed the material that was procured by my instructors, provided discipline and structure that otherwise lacked in my personal life. I had friends. But, my interactions with them were usually mediated by the persistent call to productive musicality.

I loved-hated playing violin. Practice sessions either ended with a bowl of peanut butter chocolate ice cream – a personal favourite – or a broken bow. I pushed myself to compete with peers who were older than me, win seats that had been promised to a debutante dilettante with deep-pocketed parents, and make enemies. I had a strong middle finger. My vibrato could make cats mew, and my tone was as rich and silky as my $100-hand-me-down instrument from a nearby convent would allow. While in high school, I came out of the closet. Music was part of my identity and became part of my activism. As a freshman, I affixed a rainbow ribbon to the scroll of my violin (as well as my clothing, bags, necklaces, and bracelets). The magic ribbons went everywhere – to orchestra rehearsals, state honours orchestra concerts, even concerto competitions – and mastering the violin introduced a talking point that, at least as far as I was concerned, had never been considered at these prestigious venues in pre-marriage-equality Wisconsin. For those

that understood the significance of the act, I had momentarily occupied the fraternity of music connoisseurs.

This intense desire towards mastery carried over to my studies on the North Indian classical violin, which I began as a freshman in college. It was Ustad Imrat Khan – an exceedingly soulful *surbahar* player who happens to be Ustad Vilayat Khan's younger brother – with whom I entered into a rigorous *guru-shishya* relationship. I entered a new fraternity, learning the language of subtlety, spending months at times on a single note or phrase, fine-tuning my intonation to expand the boundaries of my hearing. At the same time, out of respect for what had always been implied but never said out loud, I lowered my volume, softened my tone, separated my personal and musical lives, and eliminated some of the "white noise" that had interfered with my ability to prove the purity of my devotion. With Ustad-ji, the subject of queerness – mine, my mothers', or otherwise – was a non sequitur, and, so as not to disrupt the sanctity of our pedagogical relationship, never formally or informally discussed. He rewarded my complaisance with lessons on his new compositions. My technique expanded exponentially and the veracity of my commitment to the craft was rarely questioned. I loved him and he loved me.

Pavi

The social life of music outside the concert hall was all I really knew about how Carnatic music flows through everyday life. It is this communal aspect of South Indian classical music that has made indelible marks on my creative and scholarly life. As a performance studies scholar, I viewed the deep resonances of gender, class, and caste performativity in the everyday life of Carnatic music as central rather than supplemental to the study of this music. It is with such an orientation that I attended one of the Annual Conferences of the Society for Ethnomusicology to present on my work on race and electronic dance music subculture in India (which is decidedly *not* Indian classical music, but as a South Indian woman, I inevitably found myself entering into conversations about it). Still curious to explore the crevices of musical experience in India, I eventually found myself standing face-to-face with a senior scholar of Carnatic music. I tried different openings to a possible conversation, each time forestalled by his deep knowledge, knowledge so deep that the edges of his authority seemed shrouded in impenetrable shadows. I climbed down and down into this crevasse, sending pebbles of my own experience off into the void, hoping I would hear one of them bounce off the surface of this scholar's expertise. I never heard

their echoes. As I asked about how we might think of Carnatic music as it works as an interpersonal language outside of the *kutcheri* tradition, I grew increasingly uncomfortable under the impervious gaze and pointed silence of my esteemed and reluctant companion. I grew increasingly aware that this conversation – a performance studies scholar examining her flawed music as a deeply sensuous everyday practice of intergenerationality, familial relationality, and feminist performativity – was simply not viable or worth talking about. A sharp retort cut like a knife. He said, "Well, that's not really playing – there *is* such a thing as *technique*." Then the expert turned away, summarily ending the conversation, and leaving me alone with the chilly spectre of colonialist taxonomy that framed Carnatic music as an exclusively virtuosic (and elite) high art.

As a young scholar of colour, being silenced in academe was not entirely new to me, but this erasure of my unruly yet highly textured identitarian musical life, was particularly painful. I was pegged a "dabbler," an unwelcome and abject interloper into the more serious study of Carnatic music as defined by a masculinist tradition in the Western academy. At that moment I wanted nothing more than to leave the conference, and I did, seeking regeneration as always with my queer community.

Jeff

My conversation with Pavi began that night. I had attended the conference, as I did almost on a yearly basis, to get a feel for the current research of my colleagues and reconnect with conference friends. I had sought intellectual asylum in ethnomusicology. I thought of the field as a safe haven where my identity and music could rejoin through a balance of research and practice – an effort that I expanded through my dissertation work with transgender and *hijra* (commonly referred to as "third gender") musicians and dancers in India. While at the conference, as I have so often done, I searched the edges of the profession for music and dance that had not (yet) permeated through the disciplinary border. I left the conference hotel to attend a drag show at a nearby queer bar, and that is where Pavi and I met, fatefully. A mutual friend introduced us, and over the course of a few hours, we grew aware of how familiar each of our experiences felt to one another.

In between numbers, I recalled many experiences in and out of the field of being silenced, sidelined, or otherwise put in my "proper" place by strangers or former confidantes within and outside of my immediate community. It was not long before the conference, I shared, when I had met with a senior scholar of ethnomusicology, outside our immediate realm of

South Asian music, to share my CV and confide in him the challenges of the job market. I expected some amount of reassurance, but what I received was a suggestion that I "change my priorities." After recalling these words, one of the hairier drag queens punctuated my mood with a brazen backflip during an exceptionally athletic interpretation of Whitney Houston's "It's Not Right, But It's Ok." There is, I continued, a robust community of scholars of South Asian music and dance studies that have championed or otherwise warmly embraced the sensorial dimensions of musical experience and identity. The evidence is clear in the reception my own work, which was supported at the onset by my advisor, a stalwart of Indian classical *gharanedar* culture, and by a cornucopia of colleagues and friends along the way. I had a difficult time conveying the magnitude of the love and support that I have received from these and many other scholars of South Asia. But I suppose that is why it was particularly troubling for me to hear the kind of impulsive erasure of an extra-disciplinary musical experience, such as Pavi's, that did not fit within the taxonomies of Indian classical music in the western academy.

Following the night of the drag show, back at the conference, I was asked to contribute a piece to this publication. The article was originally meant to serve as a follow-up to a panel session that Rehanna Keshghi, Anaar Desai-Stevens, and I co-organized at the Annual Conference on South Asia in Madison, Wisconsin, about the sensorial and affective dimensions of our fieldwork, and what constitutes intersectional embodied knowledge in the ethnomusicological study of Indian music. Instead of writing solo, I wished to expand Pavi's and my discussion about the disciplinary mechanisms that continue to render the feelings, thoughts, and experiences that lie outside of the immediate realm of the classical arts training as marginal. What resulted was this collaborative article.

We recall these moments to point to what many interdisciplinary scholars often encounter when the walls of disciplinary tradition or generational bias forestall the promise of collaborative thinking. It is thus at the current moment of encounter between our two disciplines that we aspire to work towards ways in which an ethnomusicology of Indian classical music can interact with performance studies, and vice versa, ways not limited to citational practice. Throughout this discussion, we look to the works of multiple generations of scholars across both fields, and ask what doors of interdisciplinary collaboration can open when we decentre what is normally considered "virtuosity" or "technique" from our scholarly discourse. We want to grow our fields by diversifying our practices of aurality, and begin "playing by ear" as Roshanak Keshti puts it (2015). Together, we ruminate on these issues to try to articulate the puzzling experiences we have had in our engage-

ments with Indian classical music within the context of music scholarship. The discussion that follows seeks to understand why Indian classical music, particularly, seems to present unique challenges to collaborative work across our respective disciplines. Taking a cue from performance studies scholar Diana Taylor (2003), we ask what haunts the ontology of this music, and how we can forge better paths towards interdisciplinary collaboration. We think of Indian classical music through a hauntology, which functions as a critique of ontology that does not surpass it, but "reimagines it" (Powell and Stephenson Shaffer 2009). As such, we do not wish to critique the field of ethnomusicology, per se, but to reflect on the ways the study of South Asian music, dance, and performance in general can engage their subjects through a sensorial, affective, and *political* methodology.

Introductions and Interventions

Scholarship in the humanities over the last two decades has embraced an interdisciplinary hermeneutic to study and document cultural formations, practices, and performances. Not only does this approach attend to issues of gender, sexuality, nationality, class, and ethnicity, illuminating the social complexity of performance practices, it also perforates the boundaries of established research methods that frame our engagements in the field. This essay critically approaches issues that arise through interdisciplinary processes in the study of Indian musics. We view disciplinarity through a generational lens, which is to say the ways that ethnomusicology and performance studies approach issues of expertise, virtuosity, and authenticity reflect a certain legacy of thought and engagement. While uniquely distinct in their approaches to performance and culture, both fields have and continue to offer much to the other through various methodological engagements highlighted in many previous works, some of which we discuss later in this article. Our intention here is not to discount these important exchanges but to draw attention to the underlying regimes that continue to segregate these fields.

What we think of as a generational chasm between these disciplines is not so much defined through a chronological relationship with disciplinary pasts, but rather with distinct orientations towards future directions. Since ethnomusicology and performance studies share a similar mode of engagement with cultural production, as socially and politically located, we instead consider the different ways of thinking about a particular presence in both fields, a presence most succinctly characterized as virtuosity. Given the

contested nature of the term in both fields, we are interested not in advocating for or dismantling the concept itself, rather locating it as a "character" in the scholar's portfolio. We direct our attention to our own journeys within the academy in allegorical terms, where virtuosity is never fully named, specified, or demanded of us, but emerges instead as a ghostly presence, which haunts our relationships to our fields. Where virtuosity appears within scholarship itself, such as in Amanda Weidman's historical critique of voice and authenticity (2006), it is rarely named as a force of authentication in the academic training and subjectivity of scholars themselves. It appears not in text or even the location of performance, but during more institutional processes – graduate admissions, job applications, course loads, and conferences. In this discursive erasure, we see a ghosting. We see a parallel to the racial, sexual, and gendered microaggressions that code the Western academic tradition of manifesting authority and authorship, most notably in study of Indian classical music. We cannot show you photographic evidence of these ghosts. However, we can offer our empirical evidence by way of our personal narratives, in parallel with one another, to serve as media around which apparitions of virtuosity begin to float into focus.

Implicit in the evidencing of virtuosity as a form of haunting is the problem of naming itself. Our process of critique does not ignore the interdisciplinary work already being done in both ethnomusicology and performance studies. Likewise, the reader might consider the impossibility of critique based on object/text materiality to adequately capture more affective forms of experience. We ask that one refer instead to the locations of critical interdisciplinary work, that is, work that adopts an orientation towards futurity rather than historicity, critique rather than preservation. The academic spaces that scholars of music and culture occupy (or emerge from) are frequently departments of anthropology, folklore, music, performance studies, ethnic studies, communication studies, gender studies, media and film, sound studies, and area studies rather than ethnomusicology alone. While individual scholars may embrace increasingly interdisciplinary approaches to music, the work that deals explicitly with themes of gender, race, sexuality, and class are marginalized in institutional practices. We ask how the generational legacies of both ethnomusicology and performance studies might shape those with whom these disciplines speak and move towards.

At this temporal juncture, through collaborative representational process, we turn to reflect on how our experiences with Indian classical music have resonated differently in our respective scholarly pursuits. We put forth the idea that our different disciplinary trainings derive from scholarly

legacies that are authoritative in the Western academic context, which nonetheless succeed in forging interpretive paths that are intergenerational in their processes and applications. Through the use of performative writing techniques and autoethnographic reflections, we explore the points of convergence and divergence in our respective experientially generated musical knowledges. We consider the points of friction that exist between our schools of thought not as oppositional or antagonistic, but as opportunities for productive exchange on both sides. Taking a cue from performance studies scholar Ramon Rivera-Servera (2009), we make a claim for Indian music performance practice to be understood within the framework of "sincerity" rather than on authentic and virtuosic technique.[1] That is, academic practices of performance should be decentred and decolonized from their traditional milieux of musical authority and revised to embrace the often imperfect-yet-sincere participatory performances of culturally sensitive scholars. We offer at the end of this essay some pragmatic directions that come out of the critiques we highlight herein.

Indian Classical Music: Presences and Absences

Despite the major convergences between ethnomusicology and performance studies methodologies, specifically in embodied research and participant observation, the two disciplines often approach the question of performance itself quite differently. Historically, ethnomusicologists have foregrounded the epistemological concerns of musicology, although directing interpretative attention to the social contexts music performances illuminate. Despite increasing exceptions to the norm, North American music departments, are largely modelled after conservatories. Many – if not the majority – of ethnomusicologists are housed in programs that have required attention to virtuosity in order to validate academic works on and within the western classical tradition. In order to gain legitimacy, ethnomusicologists of Indian music have engaged in this same discourse of virtuosity. Bonnie Wade explains how Hindustani music scholarship was more easily incorporated into the fold because of its recently minted status as a classical art form (1978). Just as nationalist forces had elevated a new classical paradigm for the gharanedar musicians in North India, accomplished musicians and scholars from the West and other parts of Asia later found pathways into Indian music through a shared classicist language of technique and repertoire. Today, scholars privileging musical repertoires as the focal point of inquiry continue to acquire great hermeneutic depth

through their own performances, and situate their musical practice as artifacts of their expertise in their research areas.

Performance studies scholars value similar embodied investments in the communities with whom they work, although a point of difference emerges around these issues of virtuosity and authenticity. For the performance studies scholar, performance is neither bound to authentication through its original context nor reproduced formally, but is more frequently reinvented as a way to represent research. This is particularly the case in performance ethnography, where embodied practices are *representations* of the field rather than accurate or authentic *demonstrations*. That is, performance studies tends to acknowledge the researcher's insider/outsider status more poignantly by treating performative research *as* method rather than as performance itself.

Alejandro L. Madrid notes this disciplinary distinction in his introduction to a special issue of *TRANS: Revista Transcultural De Música*:

> While music scholarship (including performance practice) asks what music is and seeks to understand musical texts and musical performances in their own terms according to a social and cultural context, a performance studies approach to the study of music asks what music does or allows people to do. (2009)

Madrid takes up Gary Tomlinson's use of the term "supraperformative" (2007) to illustrate the locus of disjuncture between scholars (across disciplines) who are interested in the socially constitutive role of musical performance. Madrid highlights Tomlinson's use of this particular theoretical language as an example of where ethnomusicology and performance studies converge in terms of their theoretical objectives (understanding music performance as socially and culturally constitutive), but where they fail to cohere around a shared language about the ontology of performance and performativity. If we are to seriously consider the implications of this divide in the deployment of theoretical language, we might ask why and how a shared language of performance theory can lead the researcher to rethink the social significance of techniques that we have been trained to master. Since the two disciplines speak about the same issues in markedly different terms, their collaborative interactions could lie in the deliberate merging of the ways in which we *talk about performance,* and in a commitment to a shared lexicon, which makes our work legible to each other. We might think, for instance, of moving our language from a focus on Indian classical forms to the performativity of a classical paradigm.

In highlighting the generational distinctions between the two fields, we are not suggesting that earlier ethnomusicological writings necessarily replicate or repeat classical modes of authority while newer ones, by definition, do not. On the contrary, many early examples of writing stem from perspectives that have written against the grain of classicist orthodoxy, and from perspectives coming from outside the fraternity of music connoisseurs. For instance, Joep Bor (1986-87), Daniel Neuman (1990), and Regula Qureshi (2007) critique their training on the socially diminutive *sarangi*, an instrument from which Bor hopes to "shake off the prejudices and misconceptions."[2] In South India, Amanda Weidman problematizes the very definition of the "classical" from her position as a female violin student in postcolonial Madras (2006). Indeed, the field is already populated with established scholars whose work lies outside of the classical arts (Babiracki 2008), concerns music and dance forms that have been sidelined by nationalist moral codes of respectability (Morcom 2014; Walker 2014; Soneji 2011), and engages with marginalized musicians through a lens of social justice and advocacy (Sherinian 2013; Babiracki 2008; Maciszewski 1998). Therefore, in this article, we do not locate generationality specifically through the lens of publication date – thereby implying age – but in the disjuncture between formal adherences to the social frameworks that structure classical music training, and the productive approaches that critique the historical and cultural processes that legitimize them.

Despite the prominence of intergenerational figureheads, ethnomusicology's rich and sustained India-focused body of literature still stems largely from scholars who participated in the guru-shishya pedagogical relationship. It is certainly possible to assert that the "classical" traditions have been studied the most and that scholars have tended to seek musical expertise in them, some to the point of becoming professional musicians themselves. Consequently, the ways in which scholars in the field approach generationality stems from their treatment and conceptual framework of "elders" as "authentic" culture-bearers and thus as standard-bearers of authority for the writing and practicing of Indian music. In these cases, musical expertise has been linked to one's credibility as a scholar, and one's credibility depends not only on how well one can write about it but also on how they have demonstrated their devotion to the art form.[3] This may be reflected in how much time one has spent in this tradition, the number of *rags* or *tals* one can identify and recite fluently, the quality of one's analysis of the compositions underlying each rag or tal, the quality of one's improvisatory abilities, the instrument one plays, the amount of time one reports to spend practicing, and even the guru to whom one belongs (the ideal guru being one

that possesses some amount of name recognition and/or who belongs to one of the major *gharanas* in the Hindustani tradition).

Those who pursue the study of music as performance must strive harder to overcome the boundaries that emerge around the body, its cultural context, and required virtuosity as conditions for its authentication. This is not to suggest practitioners should not strive for excellence. Indeed, as one reviewer suggested to us, if one were studying migrant labourers in a metal polishing factory in India, the time spent in the factory and knowledge of how workers use the machines would be important experiences that would strengthen representational fairness, accuracy, and academic credibility. But, to expect a degree of expertise from the scholar in metal polishing itself would not necessarily contribute to the quality of the work on labour, gender, and migratory politics of the worker. Moreover, the visibility of the researcher as a virtuosic musician is frequently tinged with certain opacities, such as the privileges of race, class, caste, gender, and access that shape the Indian classical traditions – opacities that have been reproduced in textual representations of Indian classical music and dance. In other words, the insistence on the virtuosity of the researcher – or their[4] association with virtuosic masters – reproduces the very constraints that classical music training has historically relied on to protect its dominant status. It is possible in these cases to see how access to virtuosity, even for the Western scholar-practitioner, is coloured by various generationally inflected colonial hangovers.

Dance's corporeal challenge to British colonial codes of morality in the 19th century, however, renders it an opportune field through which to explore the various mechanisms of power that breathe life into (the study of) classical music performance. Many recognized "ethnomusicological" works that explore these mechanisms have largely done so through the lens of dance history and practice. From their (former) positions as "outsiders" in the field, scholars such as Soneji, Morcom, and Walker follow the foundational works of Saskia Kersenboom (1995, 1984) and Anne-Marie Gaston (1996) to establish new standards of authority on performance-generated social meaning. These works offer not only a possibility for the expansion of the field's parameters of investigation, but also new insight into a possible reinterpretation of performance as both subject and method.

Taking their cue from these historically oriented studies are the ethnographic works of new, even unpublished ethnomusicologists who, despite being trained in Indian classical musics, have distanced themselves from the traditional hermeneutic to the study of music as performance and/in marginalized communities. In addition to those mentioned above, scholars such as Chlöe Alaghband-Zadeh (2015), Rumya Putcha (2015),

Anna Schultz (2014), and Nilanjana Bhattacharyja and Peter Kvetko (2012) represent a generation of scholars that is actively engaged in this mode of scholarship. As mentioned in the opening, Rehanna Keshagi, Anaar Desai-Stephens, and Jeff Roy recently co-organized a panel at the interdisciplinary Annual Conference on South Asia in 2015 to engage in conversation about what constitutes intersectional embodied knowledge in their respective communities of musicians and dancers.[5] More work can and should be done to address the ways in which ethnomusicology defines itself through practice and engages interdisciplinarity in its treatments of music and dance performance beyond the confines of classical virtuosity.

Ethnomusicology's embrace of performance ontologies represents one way forward. In part due to its broad approach to issues in and of performance, performance studies comes (anti)structurally equipped to offer ethnomusicologists new ground upon which to explore the intersection of identity, performance, and culture. Performance studies scholarship of Indian traditional arts, for instance, has largely been concerned with the circuits and flows they engender over and above form and genre. Ethnographic works have focused on the ways in which popular music and classical dance reorder identity, class, gender, sexuality, and labour *outside* their perceived traditions or locations. Studies of Indian classical dance are most visible in this field, and they perform a variety of disciplinary interventions rather than documentation. Performance studies scholars working with classical dance forms have theorized the nature of performance as labour in the diaspora (Srinivasan 2011), the reframing of dance historiography through a transnational lens (Medhuri 2008), and the intervention on and surveillance of performing bodies by the state (Banerji 2010). Such scholars use interdisciplinary methods to restructure our understanding of what these classical forms do within and outside their traditional cultural contexts, and in doing so, invest the field with a different missive – to interrogate and critique, rather than reproduce or valorize. Many scholars of Indian classical dance are practitioners themselves, having arrived at the scholarship through their prior training and performance histories. Their scholarly work is intergenerational by virtue of their transnational migrations, often tracing the global movement of bodies and performances across borders. But, since dance travels differently and has a distinct visuality to its embodied presentations, an intergenerational exchange is made possible in a way that is challenging for music performance.

Ethnomusicology of non-Indian musics has come closer to fusing the fractures between theory and practice. Ethnomusicological focus has

enriched an interdisciplinary perspective that considers how the structure of music performance shifts and shapes the cultural context, rather than vice versa. The contributions that ethnomusicologists have made to performance studies have often flown under the radar, but nevertheless exist in the works of such scholars as Tamara Roberts (2016), Roshanak Kheshti (2015), Elias Krell (2013), and Josh Kun (2013), who employ a musical hermeneutic to advance critical interrogations of cultural ideologies. Their methodological leanings surely open up a wider decolonized consideration of how music shapes people's complex contemporary identities. We say all of this because there is, of course, no clear oppositional binary between these two fields. A productive exchange is already happening, although the continued focus on virtuosity in Indian classical music detracts from the attention that this interdisciplinary flow deserves.

Excavating the Interdisciplinary Self

The critical turn in both disciplines has emphasized the need for transparency regarding the researcher in the field, and we recognize this as a promising point of entry for interdisciplinary work. This turn to the self as an influential presence in the field responds to what performance studies scholar D. Soyini Madison calls "the labor of reflexivity" (2011), wherein scholars are beholden not only to portray their research subjects with honesty and clarity, and to acknowledge their own roles in transforming or influencing the field, but also to reflect critically on what our work continues to do after it has left the field.[6] Building on this effort to extend reflexivity to the limits of fieldwork, this section illuminates generational frictions produced when the ghosts of traditional performance training make their presence felt in vastly divergent research trajectories. Using Indian classical music as a site of transparency between ethnomusicology and performance studies, we now turn to some points of convergence and divergence using performative writing and autoethnographic reflections on our development as scholars of musical cultures.

Part of our motivation for writing this essay was to parse out exactly how we came to be connected as co-producers of critical work on Indian music, despite our different backgrounds, training, and scholarly projects. While both of us attended flagship schools of our disciplines – UCLA and Northwestern – with backgrounds in Indian classical music, neither of us ended up focusing exclusively on the ethnographic writing of these traditions. Our research took us into an exploration of performative

approaches on the margins of musical taxonomies. After completing an MA dissertation on internet practices among prominent Hindustani and Carnatic music practitioners, Jeff's research led him to Mumbai, where he committed to producing a series of participatory documentary films about the city's vibrant transgender-hijra communities and their music and dance practices. Pavi's interest in transgressive music subcultures took her to research psychedelic trance and the racial politics of tourism in Goa. Both paths incorporated self-reflexive perspectives – arguably queer – leading towards an investigation of ourselves as the "other" even while researching contexts within which parts of our identities "belonged."

In this case, we are not only concerned with understanding the relationships between researchers and the performers with whom they work, but also the researchers' own histories and current practices. We have used our personal narratives to show how rhizomatic the reach of music and performance can be in revealing larger issues of representation, authenticity, and otherness – issues we hope will receive sustained attention within the field of ethnomusicology in particular. To be perfectly clear, our personal narratives here do not validate us within the musical cultures we study; they deviate from strictly documenting the terrain of our study, and expose our vulnerabilities as scholars. In her narrative, Pavi presents her experience of "exclusion," whereas Jeff discusses his experience of "expulsion" from the field. We bare ourselves in the following section to show what transparency can look like when we engage in interdisciplinary methodology.

A Rubric for the Unruly Ethnographer[7]

Pavithra Prasad	**Jeff Roy**
I begin studying Carnatic music in the city of Madras, India at the age of 5 with multiple music teachers of total obscurity, who live in and around my neighbourhood. Rather than being driven by interest in or desire to learn the tradition, this requisite training marks my entry into Hindu Brahmin femininity.	I begin violin classes at age 8 while at an arts magnet school in the Milwaukee Public School District, and subsequently start independent music lessons in the western classical tradition. This is driven by my mother's belief that a classical training in music represented a discipline of character, particularly her own as a lesbian woman in the grips of a traditional French-Acadian family.

I reluctantly study Carnatic music on and off till the age of 16 when I perform my *arangetram*, a solo concert in a temple. My mediocrity is underscored by the setting, which is not a grand affair at one of the city's famed music halls. My caste rite-of-passage complete, I promptly quit taking classes and proceed to teach myself to play the guitar. I think of this as a far more feminist, anti-caste, and liberatory mode of music performance.	During middle and high school, I play violin in several youth symphonies, pit orchestras, quartets, and small ensembles, and serve as concertmaster for my high school orchestra. I also participate in my high school choir, perform at prestigious venues like Carnegie Hall, and am slated to be my Madrigal Ensemble's conductor – a position that I ultimately refuse in order to pursue a more independent artistic path (and embarrassingly, in retrospect, to follow a crush).
In sharp contrast to the guru-sishya format of Carnatic music lessons, I revel in the hours I spend alone with a book of chords. I write terrible folk-melodies inspired by Fleetwood Mac and Bob Dylan. On occasion my songs incorporate a Carnatic inflection, but that seems almost accidental. I learn a soulful vocal style by listening to and mimicking Whitney Houston on cassette tapes.	I come out at age 13 and engage in volunteer work at the local LGBT Community Center. Soon after, I start a Gay-Straight Alliance at my Catholic high school, and volunteer for several national gay and lesbian organizations. I channel my musical and artistic energies into political advocacy, and am even granted an award from Desmond Tutu for this work.
Things fall apart in my Indian family, and I accept a full scholarship to study English and Theater at Ohio Wesleyan University. I continue to play guitar and sing at open mics, showcases, and at feminist singer-songwriter events. I sing in an *a cappella* group, and develop rudimentary skills in reading western notation. I record a couple of fusion-inspired electronica tracks with a friend. I rarely, if ever, sing Carnatic music, but feel its influence on my voice and style of vocal ornamentation. I apply to graduate school to study performance theory and critical cultural studies.	I accept a full scholarship to pursue a dual degree in visual arts and comparative literature at Washington University in St. Louis. I sing for an *a cappella* group and travel to New York to perform on the *Today Show*. After a study abroad year in France, I pursue comparative arts to combine my interests in critical studies and artistic practice. Around this time, I meet Ustad Imrat Khan in order to learn new ways of hearing and playing the violin. I stay with him for over five years in the guru-sishya format of Hindustani music training.
During the year between undergraduate and graduate school I begin to research goa trance and electronic dance music (EDM) after I encounter a group of young Indian rave enthusiasts. The subculture's exoticization of Hinduism gets me interested in the intersection of new religious movements and EDM.	During the year between undergraduate and graduate school, I travel to India for two months to study violin with Ustad-ji. He involves me in several of his performances in Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. On a short trip to Varanasi, I meet a member from the gay community in Mumbai, and he invites me to visit – an invitation I accept two years later.

I enter Northwestern University's Performance Studies program to prepare for research on the goa trance subculture. By now, I am well distanced from Carnatic music, and while I recall and revisit the cultural significance of my training, I do not perform this music frequently until I am in the field. Ironically, it is Carnatic music that serves as a backing track to my ethnography of EDM tourism. In Goa, I meet and cultivate intersubjective rapport with my interlocutors by singing Carnatic-adjacent fusion with local and tourist musicians.	I enter UCLA's ethnomusicology program to study Indian music. My Masters research centres on internet music practices among Indian classical musicians, incorporating interviews from students in the Hindustani and Carnatic music traditions, as well as my experiential knowledge as a *shishya* of Ustad-ji in face-to-face and online settings. I recall and revisit my experience in Varanasi and, in the midst of my Masters work, write a proposal to conduct fieldwork with the transgender and hijra communities in Mumbai.
I remain for ten months doing ethnographic fieldwork in Goa, and I start to understand myself as an outsider/other in my own country. I begin to write more field notes about the race relations I observe rather than about the music being played at the ritual dance parties that happen every week. I continue to sing rock and blues with a couple of bands, but I am told often that I seem to be "losing touch with my Indian roots." I start to think how much more "Carnatic" my improvisations have started to sound in response to those allegations. I can belt a mean Led Zeppelin, but the audiences and bands seem to expect something "more Indian" and less queer from me. I return to the US to write my dissertation.	While in the field, I stay with my friend and begin to acquaint myself with the queer, trans, and hijra communities in Mumbai. My initial period of fieldwork in 2010 takes me to Lucknow the next year, and back to Mumbai again for a ten-month period and a six-month period and other short trips in between. All the while, I begin using documentary filmmaking as a methodological approach to music representation. My interest in film expands during my dissertation research, a move that is supported by my advisor. I direct a documentary that travels the film festival circuit and wins awards, and I go on to make other film projects with music themes which were supported by Fulbright-mtvU and Film Independent. On occasion, I play my violin and compose for film.
I routinely disappoint those who assume my research on "music in India" pertains to Indian classical music.	I am subject to various claims of "impurity" from Indian music exponents who see queerness as exiled from classical music traditions.

We offer these personal stories and reflections not only to illustrate our relationships to Indian classical music, but also to advocate for a way of registering this relationship in non-normative ways. That we do not explicitly research and write about Indian classical musics does not account for the

deep and persistent ways in which those musics continue to be felt and sensed by us in the process of our scholarly work. This delayed or displaced relationship is in fact what we think of as a generational divide in how certain performance histories of researchers make it into or are erased from the scholarly narrative. Jeff's training in classical violin performance offers several key points of reference. His entry into Hindustani music from the Western classical tradition will likely be familiar to most ethnomusicologists. This movement echoes ethnomusicology's trademark cleavage from musicology, illuminating a generational difference in understanding non-Western musics as compositionally complex. In the early years of study, he wrote about the tradition of his guru framed through the prism of his own positionality as disciple. This represents an adherence to a form of (self)authentication through musicological analysis and his own mastery of the music – a measure of evaluation that was eventually met through the earning of a "high pass" on his Master's work. As his studies took shape in his PhD research, however, his queer identity and encounter with virtuosic performances on the peripheries of ethnomusicological research necessitated a critical cultural standpoint that lay outside the parameters of this measure of authentication.

His work on transgender and hijra dancers in India illuminates the frictions that arise when "illegitimate" or "illicit" forms compete for validation alongside grander traditions. The generational frictions highlighted at the end of his narrative show how deeply the idea of legitimacy is entwined with compulsory heteropatriarchy and class hierarchies, aspects of Indian classical music that frame the parameters of ethnomusicological study. More importantly, however, in departing from the study of Indian classical violin, his work is inflected by the experience of a generational divide, one he works against to recast his research subjects as performative agents rather than merely performers. His assertion of his identity as white, American, and openly gay in (post)colonial Indian transgender and hijra contexts through the lens of queer participatory filmmaking further serves to frame his work as interdisciplinary performance studies and transgressive of traditionally established methods of immersive research.

Pavi's experience with music training, on the other hand, reveals a cultural tradition that haunts her experiences as a researcher. As a queer-identified woman, her histories of training act as a disciplining mechanism that regulates her experience in a musical field. Carnatic music functions not just as an art form in her life – it codes her lived experience as a(n inescapably) Brahmin woman. It performs a constructivist function, validating her gender and caste as ideally realized in the acts of training and performance. This is particularly present in the life of an academic whose declared interest

in music in India is often mistaken to be interest and expertise in classical music. The obfuscation of a complicated relationality between music and identity exposes deeper orientalist tendencies in the framing of the Indian researcher. Even where her interest in music deviates from the expected terrain, it is interwoven with moments in which her Carnatic training asserts itself to authenticate her racial and cultural identity in the field. By exploring these queered ontologies of Indian classical music, we hope to show what interdisciplinary methodology can do to release ethnomusicology from the constraints of certain representational politics in the field.

Notes on Interdisciplinary Futures

The ethnomusicology of India is founded upon a generational/disciplinary departure from the Western classical music tradition. Nevertheless, the field's historical emphasis on the preservation of these musical forms, which depends on a stable object of study as worthy of preservation, has placed a tight frame on the field limiting the boundaries of its critique. Moreover, the field's implicit elevation of music as authentically demonstrative of culture enacts constraints that are generationally inflected and tinged with certain opacities of privilege.

Preservation has historically been contingent upon the view of music as object, as an artifact from another world that requires intervention in order to live in some kind of academic afterlife beyond its culturally generated boundaries of existence. While there *are* musical traditions that seem to be disappearing, their imminent deaths too often serve as determinative frameworks for their lives. Moreover, preservation places the onus on the scholar to determine who and what gets saved, a process which has tended to serve the heteronormative, patriarchal agenda that frames the classicization of India's "high arts." While undoubtedly there is value in preservation – especially as it pertains to performance genres that have hitherto not been salvaged – we nonetheless advocate for a redrawing of the theoretical and methodological blueprints that render this Ark as sacred.

This involves a widening of the disciplinary floodgates. In performance ethnography, we may begin to consider the ways in which embodied practices are representations of the field, rather than merely accurate or authentic demonstrations. The reliance on music-as-artifact risks turning the study of Indian classical musics into an artifact itself, as this article ironically demonstrates. Performance studies offers assistance in this regard as it concerns itself with both the *what* of Indian classical music and the *how*. Here,

we offer some pragmatic points of entry into contemporary interdisciplinary practice within this area of ethnomusicology:

- Develop a shared vocabulary with performance studies on theoretical concepts concerning the co-constitutive relationship between Indian music and culture. Some of these theoretical concepts might include performance and performativity, affect, temporality, futurity, alterity, post/de/coloniality, appropriation and orientalism, performativity of race-gender-sexuality, and intersectionality.
- Expand the definition and analysis of Indian classical music to include the influences it has on the dances, theatrical numbers, images, films, multimedia, histories, languages, and all other material embodiments that respond to it.
- Embrace the imperfect-yet-sincere performances of culturally sensitive participants as representations of the field, not as technically inaccurate demonstrations of form.
- Implicate the researcher in the representation of these imperfect-yet-sincere participatory performances.
- Qualify the researcher's identity, role in, and journey into the field, when they are not – or despite being – a product of the sub/culture they are studying.
- Rely on collaborative field methods, especially those with wide applications such as music, dance, theatre, spoken word, photo, film, multimedia, social media, virtual or augmented reality projects.
- Decentralize textual modes of representation in scholarly process.
- Incorporate constructive feedback from participants and scholars across a wide range of backgrounds and scholarly trainings into the researcher's representational process.
- Resist social pressures to replicate and repeat normative mainstream modes of representation (by colleagues, advisors, or even co-participants).
- Depend on and learn from failure (to satisfy colleagues, advisors, or even co-participants).
- Chart one's interdisciplinary journey through citational practice.

Considering performance studies' foremother Peggy Phelan's oft-cited missive, "Performance's only life is in the present" and that "[p]erformance

cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" (Phelan 1993: 146), we ask how ethnomusicology might continue to reframe Indian classical music as an embodied process of research rather than a means to reproduce or preserve music's forms and functions. We ask how, in fact, ethnomusicology can expand its support of critical scholars who serve as agents of decolonization, assuaging the frictions between generationally divided methodology and championing a collaborative and mutually enriching intergenerational hermeneutic in our respective disciplines.

Notes

1. This is a partial reference to John Jackson's *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity* (2005).

2. Author's commentary on his book, as published on https://sarangi.info/2006/09/13/the-voice-of-the-sarangi-by-joep-bor/.

3. We should note here that, ironically, academic scholarship of Indian music continues to centre textual production as a marker of authority in the Western intellectual tradition. So, while virtuosic performance is expected of the researcher, performance without publication is not validated as an adequate scholarly practice.

4. Feminist criticism has pointed out that the lack of gender-neutral, third-person singular pronoun in English structures language along a sex-gender binary that excludes nonconforming subjectivities. We consciously continue this linguistic intervention as an illustration of interdisciplinary language we seek to move towards.

5. The forthcoming edited volume *Queering the Field: Sounding Out Ethnomusicology,* edited by Gregory Barz and William Cheng, represents significant push forward in the discussion about embodiment and method in the field of ethnomusicology. Following Barz and Timothy J. Cooley's foundational book *Shadows in the Field* (2008), the forthcoming volume includes many essays that interrogate the "audibly silent" structures of power (gender, sexual, and otherwise) that implicitly frame our disciplinary subjects, practices, and geographical areas of focus. The volume includes writings on queer hip-hop in urban America, queer cyber culture, and the use of queer filmmaking to highlight issues of musicality within India's transgender and hijra communities.

6. Madison's engagement with reflexivity continues and expands a tradition initiated in anthropology through the germinal works of James Clifford (1986), George Marcus (1986), Renato Rosaldo (1986), and Kiran Narayan (1993).

7. The unruly ethnographer is based on other attempts to describe a mode of critical interpretative engagement, borrowing specifically from Priya Srinivasan's persona of the "unruly spectator" as she gives voice to invisiblized female dancers in India (2011).

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