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Confluence

Perspectives from an intercultural music exchange in Nepal

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Confluence

perspectives from an intercultural music exchange in Nepal

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MALMÖ ACADEMY OF MUSIC | LUND UNIVERSITY

PERSPECTIVES IN MUSIC
AND MUSIC EDUCATION
NO 12

CONFLUENCE

Confluence

– perspectives from an intercultural music exchange in Nepal

David Johnson (Ed.)



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Figures and Photos

All photographs and drawings are provided by workshop participants.

We have chosen to present the photos and children's drawings that accompany the written texts in this book with limited commentary and without author attribution for aesthetic and rhetorical reasons. It is hoped that this presentation form might best let words and images flow together freely, allowing readers to build their own connections and associations between the individual contributions.

तम्रिो हाम्रो माया पूरतिी दोबाटोमा कुरी
रेशम फरिरिी रेशम फरिरिी

Love is found at the crossroads
My heart is flying like silk on the wind
-from Resham Firiri, Nepali folk song (anon.)

Preface

Heidi Westerlund

Professor, University of the Arts Helsinki, Sibelius Academy

Serendipity – the happenstance of being in the right place at the right time – could, for many reasons, be described as the impetus for this publication. It is written by individuals who found themselves together in the same place in Nepal at the same time in the spring of 2017, each having unique experiences of their meeting, each unable to control or predict what these experiences would be like. Instead of being based on strategic planning, this publication was born out of confluence as an intercultural exercise.

Serendipity could also describe my own relationship with Nepal. While I'd heard stories and seen pictures of Nepal in my childhood from a family friend who had worked most of her life as a nurse in an all-girls' school in Kathmandu, I never imagined that one day I would run a project with Nepali music teachers. I did try to visit the country as a tourist once, but was stopped by the acute political situation and civil war. When I was introduced to the Principal of the Nepal Music Center, Iman Shah, years later at the Cultural Diversity in Music Education Conference in Singapore in 2012, we made no specific plans to collaborate professionally. However, we trusted in the serendipity of our meeting. Iman Shah, who later joined our team of researchers, explained that there was a strong desire within the Nepal Music Center in Kathmandu to develop music teacher education for the country, and that the Center was looking for international collaborators. The Center had already been involved in music education curriculum development work with the Ministry of Education, but as yet Nepal had no teacher education combining musicianship and pedagogy. Whilst not having any particular idea of how the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki might contribute, I decided to give this potential collaboration a chance.

Our work together began early in 2013, when the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of

Finland granted funding for a teacher exchange between the Nepal Music Center and the Music Education Program at the Sibelius Academy. This was followed by the Music Teacher Education Development Project in Nepal in 2014 (http://mcau.fi/nepal/project/). These teacher exchange projects laid the foundation for further research collaboration beginning in 2015, when the Academy of Finland granted funding for the 4-year research project, Global Visions through Mobilizing Networks: Co-developing Intercultural Music Teacher Education in Finland, Israel and Nepal (http://sites.uniarts.fi/web/globalvisions). In this project, we have aimed to co-develop intercultural music teacher education through mobilizing networks in and between three music teacher education programs in three different countries. In this regard, the Global Visions project is a continuation of the previous research that I have conducted with Professor Sidsel Karlsen, who leads the project with me. Intentionally, many of the project's activities were left open – to be defined through the serendipity of intercultural meetings.

By the time the Global Visions project began, two doctoral studies in the Nepali music teacher education context had already commenced at the Sibelius Academy. Canadian-born Danielle Treacy (whom I first met by chance at the Cultural Diversity in Music Education conference in Singapore where she was living at the time, before later moving to Finland) set the goal of creating a network of musician-teachers in the Kathmandu Valley and of facilitating meetings in which the teachers could jointly envision music teacher education. It had been our observation that the experiences of these musicians already working in schools had not been considered when official plans for music education in Nepal were discussed. Today, more than 50 musician-teachers in the Kathmandu Valley have been involved voluntarily in the process of knowledge production, and several Nepali educators have also contributed as co-authors in Treacy's study.

In the second doctoral study, Vilma Timonen, a lecturer in folk music at the Sibelius Academy, set herself the task of working with four popular music teachers from the Nepal Music Center in order to create a 3-year Popular Music Performance Diploma Program that could later be a starting point for a pedagogically-oriented Bachelor's degree in popular music. Integral to this work was intensifying the four Nepali teachers' collaboration by creating the possibility for them to complete the Teacher's Pedagogical Studies – a program that certifies teachers for educational jobs in Finland – through a tailor-made curriculum that aimed to specifically support the Nepali teachers' planning of future study programs. During their studies, these teachers – Iman Shah, Rizu Tuladhar, John Shrestha and Kushal Karki – together with Vilma Timonen, have formed a reflexive teacher-researcher community, which has resulted not only in the planning of the program and the completion of their

studies, but also in international presentations of their work and research. The 3-year Popular Music Performance Diploma Program was introduced in the Cultural Diversity in Music Education Conference in Kathmandu in Spring 2017 and in the first International Society for Music Education South Asia Regional Conference in Bangalore, India, in Fall 2017. Besides these two doctoral studies, two postdoctoral researchers, Alexis Kallio and Heidi Partti, have also been involved in the work and research in Nepal. Furthermore, the teacher exchange that laid the foundation for the Global Visions project intensified significantly in 2017, when Prem Gurung, a research assistant in the project, began his Master's studies in the Global Music Program at the Sibelius Academy.

As a whole, the Global Visions project was born out of the belief that an effective way to develop intercultural music teacher education is through cross-institutional and transnational collaboration. We believe that through mobilizing networks it is possible to co-construct knowledge that could not arise from our local and national environments. One of the challenges that we set for ourselves in the project was to involve teachers with little or no experience with research as co-researchers and co-authors. The aim of doing so was to make participation in the academic field of music education accessible to the Nepali music teachers.

This publication is related to the preconference workshops and concert events in Manamaiju and Kathmandu in March 2017, just before the Cultural Diversity in Music Education Conference, a conference that itself gathered over 100 national and international presenters. The preconference events provided the possibility for intercultural confluence, through music-making and learning for students and teachers from Finland, Sweden and Nepal. Although it is not possible to compare experiences gained during one week and those that some of the teachers and researchers have gained over several years, in the end the value of this kind of intercultural interaction may be best described as being about finding valuable things that were not sought for. It is about trusting in the value of happenstance in situations in which the normal routes for action are not open and where there is no guarantee of any positive results. Confluence is about the realization of what we can share when working and making music together. Intercultural serendipity in such meetings is the possibility for unexpected learnings and unforeseen knowledge production. Most importantly, it is likely to create lifelong friendships.



Arrival in Manamaiju

Introduction

David Johnson

PhD student, Lund University, Malmö Academy of Music

For four days and four nights in March, 2017, over 40 Scandinavian and Nepali musicians, educators, young children, and music education researchers met in Manamaiju – the "Village of Musicians," situated a short journey north from Nepal's capital, Kathmandu – to learn and make music together. Initiated in collaboration between Innovative Musician's Nepal and the Sibelius Academy of Music (Finland) as part of the Echoes in the Valley traditional music festival, this intercultural music meeting included intensive workshops in traditional music, children's music education activities, concerts, food, and celebration. This book seeks to capture and reflect upon the experience of intercultural musical learning through the first-hand accounts of the musicians, children, educators, and organizers who took part in this event, re-telling in words and images the story of the music that was made.

One of the main aims of the initiative was to promote local awareness for Manamaiju's rich Newari musical traditions, which were dramatically disrupted by the devastating earthquake of 2015. A further aim was to build a space for cultural exchange, shared creation, and musical learning, both for local Newari musicians and for the students and professors participating from the Sibelius Academy folk and global music faculties. Four intense days of listening, learning, composing, and practice culminated in a final concert event held outdoors in Manamaiju town square. The concert – which drew a large audience from both the town itself and the surrounding countryside – was marketed by the event organizers as "A Musical Confluence". Consequently, this image of confluence has been borrowed as a framing theme for the reflections collected in this volume, where confluence is examined as a provocative metaphor for the act of intercultural musical learning, and as a useful starting point for reflecting on and evaluating the aims and outcomes of this project: the ways we have failed and succeeded, how failure and success have been

defined and redefined, and what useful lessons might be drawn for ourselves and for others engaging in similar musical experiments in the future.

This book is intended, then, to be both a culmination and a continuation of the conversation that began in Manamaiju: a look forwards and a look back at the powerful and transformative experiences of musicians engaged in the unique challenges of intercultural learning. In its presentation, it is an unorthodox hybrid of literary and academic conventions with a collage of written reflections, essays, photographs, music, and artwork from over a dozen workshop participants and observers. Contributions come from Sibelius Academy musicians and professors, academics from Nepal, Sweden and Finland, Newari musicians and event coordinators, and Newari children from the children's workshops, offering an opportunity for participants from both Nepal and Scandinavia to reflect upon and share their personal experiences, and thereby deepening and challenging understandings and building knowledge collaboratively. The prismatic effect of a story told by multiple voices and different perspectives may in some measure faithfully reflect and evoke the delightful confusion of sounds, sights, tastes, and strong emotions of intercultural music-making, while offering insight into some of the diverse and unique ways individual musicians can experience and react to these challenges. The narrative first-hand accounts are framed by academic essays that contextualize and offer a grounding for the events in theoretical, historical, and political perspectives.

While serving as an intimate platform for participants' own continued learning, it is hoped that these first-hand accounts of musicians from distant cultures learning together in an intense and inspiring setting, presented alongside critical reflections from Scandinavian and South Asian academics, may be appreciated as a unique document with wide practical and academic interest to all readers interested in Music Education research, especially those with a particular interest in intercultural pedagogical practices and methodology. Taken collectively, the book offers contrasting perspectives on central issues of intercultural musicianship such as approaching traditional music as an outsider, finding and redefining one's musician identity, experiencing new learning approaches, negotiating musical outcomes, and finding common ground in and through music. As will become clear, everyone was moved by their experiences, but often in very different ways.

In the opening chapter, "In the Middle of Harmony", violist Krishna Nagaraja considers what role his instrument may play in shaping both his identity as a musician and his role as a participant in the Manamaiju workshops. He also reflects on his own musical roots, a question taken up again in the following chapter, "A White and Red Ribbon", where the Finnish/Bulgarian singer Anna Dantchev describes how her identity as a bicultural musician frames her learning experiences, and parses the challenges of being given a leadership role within her workshop setting. In

"Heart of the Lady", event organizer Prakash Maharjan takes readers on a virtual tour of the village, its history and culture. Innovative Entertainer's Nepal founder Roshan Maharjan describes in "A Musical Confluence" the impetus behind the Manamaiju initiative in terms of music's power to bring people together and change lives, a theme further elaborated in the following chapter by the multi-instrumentalist Megan Stubbs, where moments of personal and musical connection are placed in focus. In "Just Play!", the singer/percussionist Venla Ilona Blom relives the emotion and "surrounding chaos" of intercultural musical learning by taking the reader inside the head of the musician as she immerses in the unknown. In the chapters "Children's Games", "Birdsong", and "Suns", Katja Thomson and David Johnson reflect on their roles leading children's workshop activities and present some of the artwork children made during the lessons. In the chapter "Guru", an online conversation between David Johnson and Ramesh Maharjan – the son and grandson to Manamaiju's expert musician/teachers – is graphically reproduced as it first appeared online to give a sense of the sometimes determining role social media played in the composition of this book. The mandolinist/guitarist and Music Theory teacher Roope Aarnio provides a transcription of one of the songs performed by his workshop group and reflects on his attempts to analyse and build an understanding of Newari musical knowledge in "Newari Autumn Song" and "Transcribing Newari Music". Finally, in "Zozolepa" and "Different Languages, Same Stories", editor/guitarist David Johnson and violinist/vocalist Päivi Hirvonen respectively describe their personal learning arcs from the moment of arrival to the return home, reflecting on some of the transformative knowledge they have carried with them from their experiences.

The book concludes with academic essays by Nepali Educationist Dr. Phanindra K. Upadhyaya and Swedish Music Education Professor Eva Sæther. These chapters offer an analytical frame for the participant reflections by critically considering the opportunities and challenges of intercultural learning initiatives. They touch on ethical issues, prevailing discourses and previous research in intercultural music education, and the political contexts underlying cultural exchange. Photographs and drawings by participants are interspersed throughout.

Structure of the Manamaiju workshops and daily routine: A short background

The purpose of this section is to orient the reader for the narratives that follow, by providing a brief description of how daily life and the music workshops were organized during the Confluence events.

Musicians participating from Finland and Sweden lived together in Manamaiju in groups of two or three with several host families. Three traditional Newari ensembles were prepared in advance by the local Manamaiju musicians as the basic organizational framework for the planned workshops. On the afternoon of arrival in Manamaiju, all the visiting participants were brought together to meet the local musicians and to hear a sample of music from each ensemble, before choosing which group they wanted to join. The three ensembles then spread out around the village to their separate rehearsal spaces together with their new Scandinavian recruits, where they would practice twice a day: a morning session after breakfast, and an afternoon session after lunch.

Despite the short length of the Confluence event, a clear daily routine was established by representatives of Innovative Entertainer's Nepal, who scheduled and ran the workshop activities in collaboration with other Manamaiju musicians and townspeople. Each day began with a music lesson for a selected group of village children, where all the visiting musicians as well as a large contingent of the local musicians and festival organizers participated. This children's workshop was held at dawn before breakfast, outdoors on a grassy point of land overlooking the valley, and was scheduled to last an hour each morning. Structured and led by Katja Thomson and Megan Stubbs from the Sibelius Academy, and David Johnson from the Malmö Academy of Music, the purpose of the workshop was to test pedagogical methods and offer an introduction to formal music training for young children.

After eating breakfast with their host families back at their respective homes, the visiting musicians joined their ensembles for daily practice. After a lunch with their host families, practice continued into the afternoon. The afternoon session was followed each day by a reunion of all the visiting musicians and festival organizers for a large early evening meal combined with lessons in traditional cooking. Formal activities ended each day with a time set aside for group reflection. Afterwards, the visitors were invited to rest or participate in the local women's choir, the so-called "Housewives' Choir": an unusual initiative founded by the activist teacher Mr. Nuuche Bahadur Dangol to promote traditional music. The women met each evening to sing together, accompanied by percussion and harmonium. This was followed by a second, late evening meal for visitors, again at home with their respective host families.

The "Musical Confluence" concert event was held on the last night of the visiting musicians' stay in Manamaiju. Early the next morning, they traveled back to Kathmandu to attend and perform in the opening ceremonies of the Cultural Diversity in Music Education (CDIME) conference, serving as a kind of farewell performance for the workshop participants.

In the weeks and months following the Confluence events, participants remained in

contact online in order to begin the work of collecting the documents and reflections that would lay the groundwork for this book project. Having common access to 3G telephones, social media, file-sharing services, online translating tools, and internet-based video communication platforms has enabled participants to work collaboratively over great distances, allowing for a balance of perspectives and contributions from co-authors in a way that probably would not have been possible until very recently. Perhaps the continuing development and increasing accessibility of these emergent communication tools may encourage more musicians and educators to undertake similar initiatives in diverse settings worldwide, thereby facilitating the sharing of intercultural experiences on an ever broader scale. For now, this book may hopefully serve as an example of how these tools may be used to make compelling intercultural music and research, and, as Professor Eva Sæther writes in this book's final chapter, point "a way forward".



Confluence organizer Roshan Maharjan (right) introduces the Manamaiju musicians and their ensembles before the workshops get underway.



A view of ceremonial bells from inside the Hindi temple that served as rehearsal space for one of the workshop groups.

In the Middle of Harmony: Musical Sharing in Nepal, and the Quest for Artistic Identity

Krishna Nagaraja

PhD student, Sibelius Academy

> "In musical parties... Johann Sebastian Bach took pleasure in playing the viola. With this instrument he was, as it were, in the centre of harmony, whence he could best hear and enjoy it on both sides."
>
> Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749-1818)

In March, 2017, I had the pleasure of taking part in a musical experience carried out in the village of Manamaiju, approximately six kilometers north of the Nepali capital Kathmandu. A group of European musicians travelled there to participate in a four-day workshop with local traditional musicians, with the hope of sharing musical material, ideas, and ultimately building bridges and knowledge between people and cultures. The event was inscribed into the larger frame of the Conference on Cultural Diversity in Music Education (CDIME), held in Kathmandu after the workshop.

The whole contingent of ten Western musicians was split into three units, each paired with respective local masters of the Newari musical traditions. The group I attended featured four Newari percussionists, a Finnish kantele player and researcher in Ethnomusicology, a Finnish-Bulgarian singer and Master's student in Global Music, and myself: namely, an Italian-Indian PhD student with a baroque, folk, and contemporary music background.

From the very beginning of this musical exchange, some group dynamics and roles made themselves rather clear, and it is on those that I will first focus, to later draw conclusions regarding their impact on my current music-making.

The Newari musicians were the "hosts" in our musical house: bearers of the local

tradition, kindly and patiently sharing it and teaching it to us. They seemed to know very well the content and the boundaries of their heritage, and did not spontaneously venture much further beyond. It was, of course, their village, their music, their "home" we were in; all through the workshop, they stayed anchored to what they knew best, namely their rhythms, and tried to put them at the service of the communication with the musical items the Western musicians presented. Upon our request, fulfilling the duties of musical hospitality, our Nepali partners played some of their musical material for us, consisting of a rhythm pattern in seven beats. The first welcoming word of the musical dialogue was thus uttered; the variety of replies to that statement underlined the different characters and roles that we Europeans assumed within the sessions.

The kantele player was perhaps the most eager to learn that pattern directly on their drums, an attitude she kept throughout the whole workshop, always trying to absorb Newari rhythms "at the source". She in turn presented her particular instrument – the Finnish kantele – to our partners; however, she seemed more inclined to learn their music directly from them. In fact, she performed the pieces that came out of the workshop in the final public concert on Newari drums, side by side with the masters. Her answer to the Newari musical proposal can be summarized then as: "I would really like to learn what you just presented."

The singer was also extremely keen on trying out percussion, but she soon felt inspired by those rhythms to revert to singing and to present a Bulgarian song, also in seven beats. From that moment, she took on a central role in terms of suggestions and decisions about which melodies to include in the pieces and how to steer the musical conversation between us. Her skills as a singer, as a Bulgarian culture bearer, and her experience as a global musician proved to be of great avail in this sense. In her case, her answer to the initial Newari musical statement was therefore: "Here is something from my own culture that was inspired by what you just played."

As for myself, it was immediately clear to me that learning those rhythms on their drums with all the attention and care I would require myself to use, would have been too long and complicated a process to enact in three short sessions. Being no bearer of any particular tradition myself, I resolved to step back and "listen to the conversation" for a while before taking part in it. My initial answer was then: "I find what you all are saying very interesting; for now, I'll just observe you".

Soon, though, I asked myself how to participate in that conversation in an enriching way. Two very definite musical items had already been put on the table; one member of our Western company was already rather engaged in learning the Newari rhythm on the drums; pressed by these circumstances, my musical being almost instinctively replied: "Here is something I just created, inspired by what I just heard." I wrote a Bulgarian-flavoured melody in seven, where the rhythm repro-

duced exactly the Newari pattern. In the end, this composition was not used in the performance, but was perhaps the most well-fitting way for me to enter the conversation. In the growing awareness of what my role in the ensemble would be for the rest of the days, I used my instrument – the viola – to construct accompaniments that could go well with the Bulgarian melody and bridge it with the Newari percussion. In other words, the situation triggered my inclination towards "connecting" people and musical genres, to facilitate conversations, to build bridges between musical subjects, and to do it in my own personal way, which is no more and no less than the musician I happen to be in that very moment.

To make this last point even clearer, I will report a conversation I had with a Swedish musician and academic who attended two different performances of the piece that resulted from the Manamaiju workshop. The first performance was held in the village itself, and due to technical problems that made it impossible to soundcheck before the concert, the final sound of the band was quite chaotic and unintelligible. The second took place some days later in Kathmandu at the CDIME conference venue, with a better sound that made all the different instruments (including mine) audible.

It was after the latter performance that my Swedish friend came to me and confessed: "Finally I heard your beautiful viola lines! Last night I couldn't, I could just see you move your arms but heard no sound from the PA... but now your accompaniment was so blended with the singer that at first I thought there was a second voice... then I realised it was your viola! How fitting!"

The Manamaiju experience and this little anecdote have shown to me once more what my true essence as a musician is: someone who might not belong to a specific field or tradition, but perhaps because of this, is able to provide a more general, external view, to observe, measure, maybe reproduce, but then re-create what he hears, and ultimately incorporate it into his own music-making.

This is precisely the most crucial lesson I learned from the Master's programme I attended, the GLOMAS Master in Global music; this same question of mixing and moving between genres in search of my personal language is currently the underlying research question of my PhD studies.

What are our roots? Are we looking for them? What do we do with them? Do they change when we share them? Do we change when we share them?

As a "rootless" human being, as I sometimes like to define myself (not without a smile), I am aware that I don't enjoy proposing my own traditional musical material as much as finding myself surrounded by others' traditions, in the middle of all their colours and possibilities – "in the center of harmony" – as all viola players, and as one of the greatest composers ever, Johann Sebastian Bach, liked to find himself, when playing with others.



A Red and White Ribbon: On Suddenly Finding a Piece of Me in Manamaiju

Anna Dantchev

GLOMAS student, Sibelius Academy, Bulgaria/Finland

I am a bicultural musician. The Oxford Living Dictionary's definition of bicultural is "having or combining the cultural attitudes and customs of two nations, peoples, or ethnic groups." There it is: in one sentence, the answer to the core question of my being. In one sentence, it looks really easy to understand, but unfortunately, it takes more than one sentence to really internalize it. At least for me. As a bicultural individual, I carry my two backgrounds with me wherever I go. As a bicultural musician, I don't only carry my two backgrounds and cultural heritages, but I also carry my musical heritage with me. As a bicultural person, I am constantly trying to locate myself in my surroundings, and trying to find a representation of me within it. It is quite obvious that this happens when swapping between my two countries Finland and Bulgaria. But I hadn't expected it to happen here.

I'm sure that all biculturals are also individuals with unique individual family backgrounds. So talking about this concept and describing it, I cannot honestly say that I'm talking about those other biculturals, only about myself. Also, being a bicultural doesn't automatically mean that one is also a bicultural musician in the sense of knowing about both traditions and traditional music. For me, this just happened to be the case, since my father was a Bulgarian musician with knowledge of his own tradition and transmitted this tradition to me, and since our family happened to live in a small town in Finland with a strong traditional music scene, and since I as an individual had always been interested in traditions, traditional music, and locating myself.

We say that travelling opens the world to us. It is easy for us to say, we who are

privileged in this world, and can travel when and where we want to. But when we travel, are we truly opening the world around us, or are we just changing the scenery and staying as we are? When we travel, we travel as we are. We take with us our background, knowledge, heritage, experience, and much more. When we travel, it is up to us how much we really let the surroundings affect us, or how much we just stay as we are. When a bicultural person travels to a third place, there are always two backgrounds to take along; there are always two backgrounds to use or not to use in these new surroundings.

So it was when I arrived in Manamaiju, about 30 minutes' drive up into the hills from Kathmandu. I had travelled 2 days from Helsinki to get there. I was exhausted, and the thinner, slightly hotter mountain air made me feel dizzy. I had difficulties locating myself geographically. I have travelled in my life, but mostly between my two home countries or in countries with family connections. So coming this far, reaching the other corner of the world (from a Finnish perspective), was emotional for me, and also physically exhausting.

As our minibus rolled up, a group of local percussionists moved forward to greet us. We were immediately surrounded by a community and we were welcomed. After all that travelling, finally landing in one place felt really good. That moment of arriving was accompanied by strong, rhythmical sounds. They were kind of hypnotic and comforting at the same time, and I felt that all my senses started to open up to the surroundings. I started to observe, I started to experience. I started to locate myself, again.

The purpose of our stay in Manamaiju village was to learn more about Newari culture and rhythms. We were in three different groups for four intensive days. Each group had their own songs, instrumentation, and rhythms to learn and explore. In my group we had only local Newari percussions with no local melody instrument. We, visitors, were the melody. I would say that having this starting point for merging cultures based on transmitted local musical material was challenging in our group.

Before the trip to Nepal, I was trying to think about where I was going to, not only geographically, but also musically. That part of the world was not very familiar to me. As an academically trained musician, obviously I had learned something about their musical traditions, but hadn't really paid much attention to them before this trip. I was being really conscious of the fact that there might be some clashes, both musically and pedagogically, because my knowledge of Newari culture and tradition was so minimal. I was trying to avoid the situation where I'd feel like I was leading the group too much or trying to force my own knowledge on others in the workshop.

"When we travel, are we truly opening the world around us, or are we just changing the scenery and staying as we are?"

I am a singer, but I also play percussion. Knowing that I could spend three days learning Newari percussion and rhythms got me really excited. But even though I had some previous experience on percussion, I was a bit lost at the beginning when our group workshop started. I heard something and thought that I had understood it, but at the same time, I realised that I didn't internalise it as the locals did. I was confused. I wasn't really located. The same musical meter could be understood at least in two ways – it seemed like that. When you have five beats in a bar, you have five different options for stressing the beats, creating the groove that is either local or not. And don't forget also those subdivisions, are they a part of the beat or not? And is the tempo steady or organic in a way that only locals would understand?

There is this saying that music is an 'international language' that you can use when there are no common words. It is a nice idea, but does it really work like that, if the elements of music are not truly understood and internalized by everyone in a group? I have a Western, European, classical music education background, combined with knowledge of learning-by-ear methods, too. But I haven't internalized North Indian music's theoretical systems just because I have an academic knowledge about it. I was really doing my best and 'opening my ears' for these Newari patterns, but something was lacking in transmission for me. It was kind of a frustrating feeling to notice that my skills with this 'international language' were not enough.

But then I saw those white and red ribbons. They were tied in a flower-decorated drum. Seeing those small items was really a surprise to me. I know from my Bulgarian culture that in springtime we give our friends, family, and others little bracelets and dolls made out of white and red ribbon. They are called *martenitsa*, and with these little gifts, we wish all the best fortune and happiness to the person. I wanted to know the purpose of these ribbons on the Newari drums, why they were there. I got the answer that they were for "peace and happiness". Peace and happiness, they need to be in balance in life. And at that moment I found myself getting more located. You see, I was taught in Bulgaria that parts of Bulgarian heritage have travelled all the way from the "northern part of India." So here I was thinking that, maybe, I'm 'with my family' now. Those simple ribbons opened the surroundings to me in a new way. One could say that I took my other background and let it help me to get more comfortable with new experience.

When you are searching and trying to find something that would connect you to the surroundings, even small things, weak scents and hints will have a big importance for you, and these little things can make you feel comfortable, at home, relaxed, feeling the space and time and not searching for something more. These little things help you to be located and help to open up the world for you.

After seeing those ribbons, I was as excited as a small child, and I think this excitement was transmitted to the group, for the local musicians, too. For me in that situation, it was quite natural then to introduce some Bulgarian songs that were using the same rhythm patterns as the Newaris. It was my way to bring something from me to that shared musical table, my way to start somehow understanding this new musical language, my way to find a connection.

Since introducing these Bulgarian songs was only my way to find some clarity in musical confusions in our group, it was a surprise to me that the Newaris wanted to work with them for our concert. It was also a bit of a personal disappointment to me, since my plan was not to push my own tradition during those days, but only use my own musical heritage as a musical bridge between us. While all this merging happened naturally, the balance in our group changed, both musically and also in terms of the whole transmission process. For us, visitors, being in this group began as an open canvas: us learning something new, being open to Newari tradition, making sure that we were the learners and not the teachers. But now, instead, we were merging both musically and pedagogically. In the process of merging different musical backgrounds, it happened that some of the original character of the Newari patterns and the Bulgarian melodies were put aside in order to find a common solution. Another change in the group was that the leader's role was now given partly to me. I was in a position where I now needed to find balance in my own role, to make sure that my fellow visitors as well as the locals would feel comfortable in this merging process and not feel that I took the lead too much.

When a group with individuals of different backgrounds work for one direction, it is the group that starts creating a unified sound and form using all the material presented by the individual members. I think this is exactly what happens when at least two cultures or two traditions come together, and this is what happened in the end in our workshop group in Manamaiju.

Is it a good thing, then? Don't we lose some uniqueness and start shaping everything towards one form when doing this? Well, I don't know. But I think that when the connection is made, the shaping will happen naturally in that moment, in that place. And everything might start from something really small – like a red and a white ribbon.

**"What are our roots? What do we do with them?
Do they change when we share them?
Do we change when we share them?"**



Musicians from one of the three workshop groups. Anna Dantchev is in the back row, middle



The temple custodian listening to workshop rehearsals

Manamaiju – Heart of the Lady

Prakash Maharjan

Confluence organizer, Manamaiju, Nepal

Manamaiju village is situated in the Kathmandu District of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. Many different caste and ethnic groups co-exist in Manamaiju, including Brahmin, Chhetri, and Newar, although Newaris are in the majority. There are many other Newari villages throughout the Kathmandu Valley, where they have traditionally lived as farmers.



There are two important and related aspects to Newari farming life: the one is economic, the other, cultural, with communal values supported by the caste system and the Newari Guthi (social structure). Newari cultural identities have a long, cherished history in the Kathmandu Valley, and their lovely paintings and incredible sculptures can be found in temples, palaces, stupas, and shrines all over in Nepal. Indeed, many aspects of Newari cultural heritage have spread far from Nepal to nations all over the world.

Women in traditional dress in preparation for the Confluence final concert



There are two main Newari groups in Manamaiju village: Maharjan and Rajbahak. Both groups believe in Hinduism and Buddhism and share the same Newari cultural practices. They speak the Newari language as their mother tongue.

In general, the traditional houses of Manamaiju are attached to each other. The old houses are made of raw bricks with muddy joints of bamboo and wood. The height of the houses in a traditional Newari settlement will indicate their owners' rank and caste identities.

A traditional Newari meal is served with flattened rice (also called beaten rice), buffalo meat, which is served with Aila (homemade liquor), and Thon (rice-beer).

The main attraction of this village is the temple of Manamaiju. The word mana means "heart", and maiju means "lady". The temple of Manamaiju is built in the traditional Nepali style with multiple roofs. An inscription dated Nepal Samvat 786 is found here, which establishes the existence of the temple as far back as the medieval era. According to historical records, King Girvana Yuddha Bikram Shah donated some land to the temple in 1801 AD.

Manamaiju is considered the goddess of beauty, and it is believed that she can remove black spots and cure diseases that affect the face. According to a popular legend, there was once a young girl named Mana, cursed with terrible black spots on her face and an ugly visage. There is a place where the rivers called Bishnumati and Mahadev khola meet, and there she went to to avail herself to the mercy of Lord Indra (the God of Heaven). Indra was happy with her acts of penance,



and asked her what she wished for, promising that her wish would be granted. She responded, “I wish for you to be my husband!”. Lord Indra accepted, and married her. Nevertheless, because of her terrible black spots and ugly visage, he was unable to take her to heaven. Indra himself gave her the name Manamaiju. She was later transformed into a goddess by Lord Indra and given the task of curing ailments that made people ugly. People call Manamaiju a goddess of beauty.









Visiting musicians at home with their host family

"Music is a medicine which can heal a wounded soul with its melody and its words."



A Musical Confluence

Roshan Maharjan

Founder of Innovative Entertainer's Nepal

Everything was for the purpose of changing ourselves rather than changing others – the desire to start something, the wish to change people's attitudes towards ancient music and tradition.

After the dreadful events of May, 2015, everything was brought to its knees. Being a music lover, I had the idea that we could use this moment in time to change society and address social injustices with the support of music. It was our aim to heal audiences mentally rather than physically. This is how Innovative Entertainer's Nepal was formed in 2016, with a keen interest in music and a passion and enthusiasm for shaking up society and uniting individuals with the help of music.

Innovative Entertainer's Nepal was born in a typical Newari community, where we have many different cultures and traditions that have inspired me since I was a small child. As I grew up and saw our traditional values being eroded over time, it pained me. Even before I formed Innovative Entertainer's Nepal, I had already been building my concept of bringing traditional music to our youngsters, making them listen to it and to hear the meaningful messages it contained. Our goal now with IEN is to build unity in our diverse culture; in my view, music happens to be the best way to do it.

Music is a medicine which can heal a wounded soul with its melody and its words.

After working with IEN for certain time, it occurred to me that a collaboration between our traditional music and modern music was a better way to unite youngsters, communicate with them, and get them involved in forging a path towards better days for our society. We also recognized the importance of utilizing regional resources in setting a good example for communities and transmitting the love we hold for our tradition, music, and musical instruments to others.

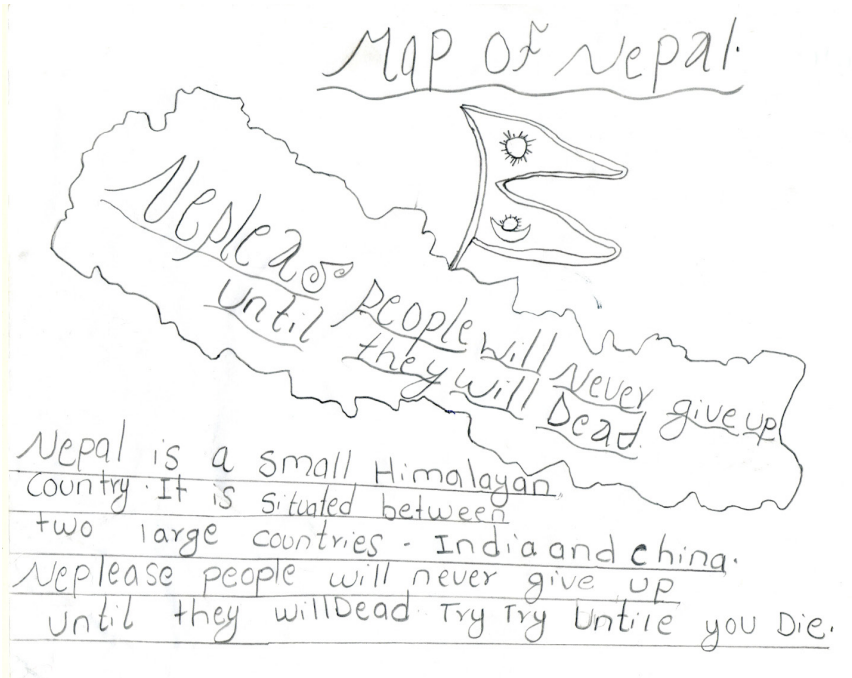
With A Musical Confluence – the event we organized on March 28, 2017, in

Manamaiju – we sought to mix our traditional music with other music in order to make our people see what could be done with our traditional instruments. They were happy and kind of shocked to see foreigners playing our instruments and hear a musical confluence. As we happen to be involved with various musical programs and have contacts with many musicians in the region, the very supportive band Kanta Dab Dab agreed to collaborate with us to make this particular event happen. This musical meeting and everyone involved represented a successful step in promoting traditional music and its importance.

I personally took away a great experience from this event, particularly as young people were so supportive. It happened to become a musical way to interact with local people and helped to show them what collaboration in music means. It made our local people believe that just as we had interest in learning western music and their musical instruments, they too were interested in our music and our instruments. And young people who are often accused of being the ones responsible for the deterioration of traditional culture and cultural norms, could show that they are actually the ones preserving them! It created a friendly vibe within the society and helped bring about social unity, and in this way we felt we had succeeded.

We were always eager to learn about music – it is our passion. There is an absolute uniqueness in music and an opportunity in it. In music, there is always a chance to bond with people, understand each other, and that is what we are all about. What we have done is to take music and use it to transform a time of difficulty into a time of opportunity in real time. With the success of this program, I am so excited to make more such events happen.

Looking ahead to future plans, I am working on an idea to organize an event celebrating our past traditions and music that combines a photo exhibition with musical collaboration. Like A Musical Confluence, it shall look to bring people together to experience our traditional culture, music, and musical instruments. In this case, we hope to specifically showcase ancient music such as panchey baja, ponga baja, and the Dafa orchestra, bhajan – important aspects of Newari tradition and culture. We also intend for this event to draw attention to our cultural monuments and statues and mobilize people to take care of them and guard against their deterioration, link traditions to issues of social welfare and development, and promote our traditional food, festivals and values.





Drawings from children's workshop participants - the children were given coloured cardboard paper and felt pens to draw singing animal pictures for musical games. At the end of the session, several participants drew pictures and composed letters on spare paper, and some handed in artwork that they had done outside of the music lessons.



Musician Megan Stubbs leads children in an impromptu song after a morning workshop session.

Musical Miracles: The Power of Music to Create Global Connections

Megan Stubbs

GLOMAS student, Sibelius Academy, Tanzania/US

Some people say that music is the universal language. While there are many directions to take with this statement, I choose to understand it as a way of saying that music can be a globally accepted mode of communication and interpersonal connection. Through music, you can travel, experience, meet, and develop in a way that is difficult with any other medium. I have experienced this many times in my own life, but my journey to Nepal was an exceptional example of the power of music to me.

There is much that music can reveal about the people and cultures that surround it, and through music we can learn so much about each other. Our four days in Manamaiju were a time of discovery, friendship, and a mutual exploration of our music and culture. The first day I attempted to take everything in: the sights, the sounds, the souls of the people and life around me. Listening to the music in our workshop, everything sounded new. The rhythms, the instruments, and the language swirled around through my head, and I constantly reminded myself to just take it in. Sometimes in life when experiencing the new, I must force myself not to attempt to quantify it and process it according to previous understanding but rather to simply accept and find a new understanding.

There was quite a lot of attempting to find a new understanding during my time in Nepal, both within myself and within our musical group during our time at Manamaiju. Differences in pedagogical methods, organization of musical material, and definitions of small things such as phrases and the tuning of instruments made for a colorful period of exploration. The confusion of whether a small wink of the eye was a cue to move to the next section or just a moment of musical connection, the elaborate ornaments that were impossible to distinguish from the melody (were

they even two separate things?) and the endless interpretation of language and accents while slightly bewildering the first day soon became clearer, and I felt myself adjusting in how I perceived both the music and the people around me.



Music has been the most effective tool for me in terms of personal evolution and awareness. I feel that music reveals so much about the environment around itself, much of which is difficult to put in words or observe with simply the eyes. It is able to carry the feel, the emotion, and the beliefs of its partakers and has the power to create moments of shared understanding between people that may not have found common ground otherwise. Music has physically carried me from country to country and from people to people; it has emotionally supported me in the mountains and valleys of life. Talking to our new friends, we discovered that they shared much of the same regard towards music and its unique power. We talked many times about how we would never have met if not for music, and how it brought us together in a way nothing else could. I formed many personal connections to people in Manamaiju through music, friendships and experiences that I value deeply and which have shaped me as a person.

One such moment of connection was on the top of one of the local mountains, looking out over the temple and hearing the chanting in the background. We shared stories of friends and loved ones, and of the beauty and fragility of life. As we lit candles of remembrance for those that had passed, we talked of firm foundations and earthquakes, and tears, laughter and close embraces abounded.

In the daily workshops where we learned musical traditions from our hosts, many different things came to light. The method of transmission, the tuning of the instruments, and the technique of practicing the musical material: these were a few of the aspects that were different in some ways, similar in others (depending on your reference lens through which you perceive what is 'normal'). Some members of our group didn't speak English, yet we were able to communicate, learn, teach, and laugh together through music. During the local festivals, I was a bit lost amidst the new language, culture, religion, and customs, yet at home with the role of music in all of these. While I couldn't answer or ask all the questions I came across, while I didn't remember who was related to whom and what their role was in the village, I could understand the part music had played in their community and in their lives. I could clap, sing, and dance alongside people who I wouldn't have had a dream of meeting if not for music. And while I went on to develop deeper friendships and connections outside of music with the people I met, music was the instigator of it all.

Music is the thread that has the ability to connect us all, no matter the origin, the culture, the language. This is why it is such an important medium to develop. Our job as musicians and as music educators is much more vital to global bridges and integration than some let on; we must endeavor to develop the reach of music based partnerships and connection. One reason why it is so important to utilize the mu-

sical landscape of the world is the very nature of music itself. Music has embedded within itself the power to convey and shape emotions, not only of the performers but also of those observing. When people participate in music, either performing or listening or being engaged in some other way, they can enter into a state of shared emotion, shared empathy, a shared experience of life itself. People who have these kinds of shared experiences create connections with each other in a way only music can facilitate.

However, it is important to realize the element of personal and cultural openness and willingness to share not only music but also a piece of your soul. Music is indeed a most powerful, awesome tool to initiate connection, but as with all tools, its power relies much on how it is wielded and used. To access the true moving and shaking power of music, one must first open oneself to the possibility of change and the idea of new connection and growth. In order to create change around you, you must be willing to accept change yourself. This was why the trip to Nepal was such a potent one for me. To see the level of openness that they showed to us, not only musically but also with everyday hospitality and sharing, was inspiring and a wonderful example of the impact a little open-mindedness can have when it comes into contact with the music medium.

In today's world of ever-widening chasms, of ever-growing walls, of ever-popularized stereotypes and ever-common discrimination, it is imperative to act out our duty as facilitators of inclusion and connection, of bridge-building, of understanding that which is different. The question is how? How do we find and sustain a balance of openness, curiosity, respect, and reverence? How can we use music, art, and other common grounds to create those coveted creative connections to others? For some reason, the experience in Nepal contained the right balance, the right people, the right experiences to create something truly intense and serene. It was revealed to me once again that music is a moving power not only in my life but also in the world around me. This was evident in the joy I saw in the faces of the musicians and people around me. It was evident in the stories told about personal lives and of national tragedy. It was evident in the way our shared experiences through music changed our whole group, both those that had traveled from far and those that we met there.

This is the reason that I feel the passion I do for music education and for the vocation of music in general – to help change people's lives for the better, to impart positive experiences, and to fashion a better world for ourselves and for those who will come after us.

"Music has physically carried me from country to country and from people to people; it has emotionally supported me in the mountains and valleys of life."







"Just Play"

Venla Ilona Blom

GLOMAS student, Sibelius Academy, Finland

> On reaching for the unknown with the musical skills and intelligence that one carries…
>
> On reaching for the unknown by jumping into the cold water with open ears and confidence…
>
> On reaching for the unknown and working inside a new tradition by letting go of presumptions and trusting one's inner knowledge…
>
> On reaching for the unknown by using emotional intelligence as the essential connecting force…

I travelled to Nepal with enthusiasm, curiosity and excitement. I had prepped myself for being ready for anything and decided to go there as myself, no strings or emotional baggage attached. I had decided not to stress about making it "beneficial" for myself but to actually explore and inhale something new. For once, I wanted to travel without thinking, "I need to get something meaningful out of this that will lead into something productive." No, not this time.

Working as a western-trained musician in a traditional village in the outskirts of Kathmandu, Nepal, you ask yourself questions. Where does a true musical connection manifest and what are the essential tools needed for creating a common musical understanding? Do we need to understand in order to connect? Do we want to understand or connect? Does introspective analysis rule out the essential experience? In order to understand, is it more essential to know or feel? Is the main focus in connecting on a deeper human level or exchanging and sharing musical ideas? And what is it that makes us feel connected? I wanted to use my time in Nepal to question and challenge myself, to find things to relate to, and to deepen my understanding of what I know or thought I knew.

Sometimes surrounding chaos can manifest as a sublime inner serenity. The first challenge I had to face had to do with performing in a local festival, Echoes in the Valley, in Kathmandu, the afternoon after our arrival in Nepal. We Glomas students from the University of Arts (Sibelius Academy) were supposed to present our music as the University of Arts "Collective", but unfortunately half of our team were stuck in Abu Dhabi. We had to pretty much create a set full of music in half an hour with band members that had never played together before. This, however, turned out to be an excellent starting point for the musical process when I reflect back on my time in Nepal as a whole. It is situations like these that make you test your knowledge, nerves, skills, and creativity as a musician, as a co-worker, as a performer, and as a human, and for me this ended up setting the whole theme for the trip: "just play!" As I stood on stage, ready to perform in the heart of Kathmandu, I felt more excited to play that I had in a long time. Suddenly, I was happy that I was standing there in front of a big audience, with my percussion instrument (which is not my main instrument at all), surrounded by new musicians, ready to play something that I had never played before. I inhaled the dusty air, listened to the crowd cheering, felt the warm sun burning on my face, closed my eyes and started moving, started playing, started dancing. I smiled and danced throughout the whole concert and for the first time in a long time, I didn't care about how I sounded, how I looked, how I moved, I just played my ass off and sang my heart out. This concert didn't represent perfection, it represented joy and communication in the purest possible way.

We travelled to Manamaiju, located in the outskirts of Kathmandu to spend some days with the local people to learn about their culture, make music together, and interact with the community. We arrived by minivan in the town center and were right away going through several ceremonial rituals. As they placed the red scarf around my neck and greeted me with such humble and honest enthusiasm, I felt I was already part of them. The power of letting people in, opening your community or culture with an actual will to share, was something that I truly discovered there. It is so common that people get too protective about their roots and surroundings and it leads to thinking: "you are not one of us, you wouldn't understand". This is what I focus on avoiding all the time in my current work as an international musician; instead of being narrow-minded or possessive about my knowledge and roots, I want to have the genuine will to understand and the will to share.

In Manamaiju, we were divided into musical teams, and we started working with the local musicians right away during the first afternoon. I can share here some of the things I remember crossing my mind during the first session:

> Wow, this is an exotic rehearsal space. Never sat in a room like this before, it is just a room, without anything, just stone walls and floor and some hay carpets. It is an actual room, but not a room that you live in, I wonder if someone actually lives here. But it's cool, it doesn't matter, it is perfectly fine, we won't get wet if it rains and it is not too warm. This is okay. I like it actually.
>
> Wow, those flutes sound out of tune. Are they supposed to sound like that? They play totally out of sync with each other, is it supposed to be played like that? That old man with those little cymbals, what is the rhythm he is playing? I can't really follow the meter, okay wow, now they are speeding up like crazy, okay it is supposed to be like that? Umm, okay so the melody goes how again? Oh shit, I can't follow the rhythm he is playing with the big drum, I have to ask, shit I can't remember his name, shit. Okay, I will ask us all to clap the rhythm, that way we all learn and I don't look like an idiot who can't follow a simple rhythm, except that it's not simple, or is it?

These were just some thoughts, but it points out several interesting things that describe very well the brain of a western-trained, Scandinavian musician who is used to certain ways of both living and understanding music. I have been working and studying in a multicultural environment for several years and I have broadened my musical thinking quite a lot in that time. However, this experience very clearly demonstrated to me that learning the tools to think-outside-the-box is not yet the same as having the full experience of really stepping outside the box.

After the confusion that we all shared during the first day and the first hours of playing together, working on the second day really made us develop as a group. I remember that I started to find a true connection with Ramesh, the main drummer of our group. I realized that since we were now both playing percussion, all I needed to do in order to learn this music was to connect with him and let the music lead. I stopped analysing and started playing, following the theme I had set for myself as I mentioned before ("just play!"). I had decided that I would be playing mainly percussion on this trip, mostly because I wanted a break from using my main instrument – my voice – and also to challenge myself to take on a different musical role. I felt strong and very relaxed with my drum, I almost felt that my vocalist identity got a little break and the little drummer girl finally got the stage all to herself. I heard later, after doing several performances with my drum, that it is very uncommon in Nepal for girls to play percussion or drums and that the young girls in the village had been very positively inspired seeing me do it. Also, several guys told me how inspiring it was to see me move with the rhythm as I played the drum and how my excitement in the music and the instrument really shone through.

Last evening in the village… the whole community gathers in the town square

and we perform with our Manamaiju groups as well as with the Uniarts collective [Sibelius Academy band]. Again, the joy and the communication, two main factors that made the whole evening so emotional and meaningful for me. I remember sitting there on the ground, on the stage, in a pitch-dark Nepali night, next to Ramesh, looking at him as we played the Newari tune we had worked on, seeing his smile, fully experiencing the musical and human connection we shared there, playing my drum with no fear. Also, when we played our Scandinavian tunes with the Uniarts collective, I felt tremendous unity between us. The joy of music and people coming together, like I had never experienced before.

I was extremely proud and happy to perform at the Cultural Diversity in Music Education (CDIME) conference in Kathmandu with the Manamaiju musicians only hours after leaving Manamaiju. It was an emotional moment for the whole group since none of the guys had ever actually stepped foot in or even close to Annapurna, the exclusive Kathmandu hotel where the research conference was taking place. The caste system is still going strong in Nepal, and this was very clear to me in this particular situation. I was very proud to stand next to them there, in front of the international research community and be one of them, one of the musicians.

> Okay, right now, right here, I am a musician. I am not trying to be anything else. I have spent several days in the rural areas, feeling connected with the local people, having the greatest musical experiences and I am gonna live that a little now. Besides, this is a conference about music education and as far as I know, I am a student and a musician, so this is what I represent right now.

On my very last day, we travelled to Banepa to do a workshop and a performance. We gave a workshop for around 25 Nepali guys and one girl, all in their teens or a bit older. We focused on rhythms and circle singing. This was the first workshop that my fellow Glomas student Megan and I had done together, and as we went on, I decided to let things float at their own pace and observe how the dynamics were in the group and between us as instructors. Usually, I am the one taking charge a lot, but this time I felt the urge to leave more space for Megan and just play along. This was a very good exercise and observation for me, since me being too much in control can sometimes prevent progress in the long run. The whole workshop group seemed to enjoy themselves, and our performance afterwards was a very good experience.

Being so far from home, in such a different environment, I found so many new things about myself and had so many moments of true presence. I valued seconds, I valued minutes, I valued words and sounds, I valued smiles and I valued tears. As I sat on a motorcycle, driving back to Kathmandu from Banepa, knowing that it was my last evening in Nepal, I remember thinking about the true connection. It

was pitch-dark. Ramesh, my driver and my dear friend, was driving on bumpy roads, the stars were shining all over us, and he asked me to sing something to him. And right there, as I sang a Finnish folk song, I felt more home than ever, but also more connected to the song than I had ever been. The connection that I had managed to build between my analytical observer-self and my deep inner-self had never felt more clear or strong than at that moment. Then, I knew, I was ready to leave.

"Sometimes surrounding chaos can manifest as a sublime inner serenity."



Participants from children's workshop.

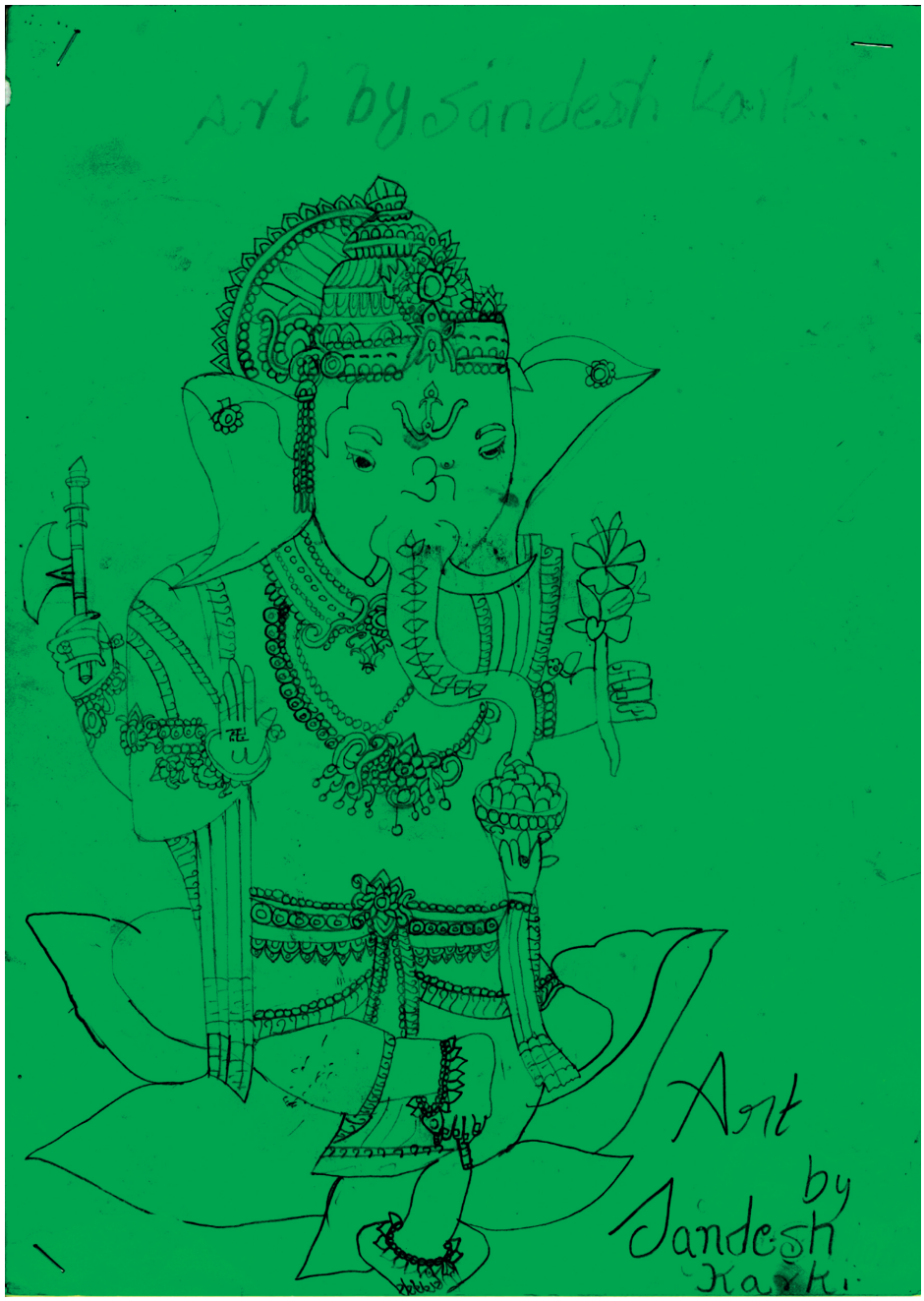
Children's Games: Weaving Together Teaching Approaches in Third Space

Katja Thomson

PhD student, Sibelius Academy, Finland

-morning walk through the village

As we walk through Manamaiju village to the beautiful, green, airy spot with a view over hundreds and hundreds of houses in the valley below, people greet us with smiles and welcoming gestures. It is early in the morning at least for us who are not used to starting lessons before eight. Our host families have gently woken us up after the less subtle roosters that start their sunrise drills dutifully and punctually at the crack of dawn. The waking up of the village. That was something I tried to absorb and let settle in me. The comforting and repetitive little patterns that create a sense of serenity while fizzing with exciting possibilities. As a community, we start to construct a day that is still fresh and unknown. We simultaneously construct and unravel, create and discover. The routines and patterns of a new day are different from the big city, the compactness of events is manageable to the human mind and body. Surrounded by the welcoming houses, friendly people, and peaceful animals, it would be easy to forget that at any given point we could tap into the internet and carry on existing in all the parallel worlds offered to anyone willing to surf the web long enough. For a fleeting moment, I have a strong sense of how the village way of life continues and nurtures the community while the human urge to explore beyond the familiar is ever present, thrilling, and uncontrollable.


Art by Sandesh Kark.
Art
by
Sandesh
Kark.

Our first workshop with local children and our fearless, innovative hosts, is about to start. The air is filled with curiosity and a feeling of adventure – and massive yawns from sleepy children and tired travelers alike. I wonder if the communication today will consist of purely physical and musical gestures, or whether we might use verbal communication. Many pairs of attentive eyes follow us, the visitors, as we get ready to form a large circle with all the children and adults in it. The warmup games are unleashed and the interaction takes its own, audacious course. We have a plan but expect to improvise with it, let our international group find its unique groove and express the dynamics and ideas that emerge. We share the leadership amongst us and look for impulses from the participants. At times, these impulses can be subtle, and they may even go unnoticed.

The children's inquisitive spirit and willingness to interact with the visiting musicians is tangible. Some of the activities we have planned are specifically based on the idea that subgroups devise musical material with the underlying aim that every participant contributes something through voice or body. We make noise, jump, sing, dance, and laugh a lot. I forget to think about the language; very few spoken words are needed.

-sharing teaching and learning approaches

When a community seeks to preserve or revive its culture and traditions, it faces the complex value questions of what exactly needs preserving, and how. In Manamaiju, we witnessed a fascinating drive to keep old traditions not only alive but also connected to the new generation's aspirations and global outlook. Global networks actualized in the form of face-to-face gatherings like this offer opportunities for exchanging knowledge and developing teaching approaches that draw from different educational philosophies and traditions. In our workshops with Manamaiju children, a lot of information was exchanged without explaining the methods or framing them within any particular educational philosophy. The encounter could be described as an educational *third space* where the participants bring their different histories, meanings, understandings, and values. In this third space, each of us translates the situation through our own experiences, which in turn may produce new approaches to teaching and learning.

Breaking music into components that can be taught separately and away from the music's original context is an educational approach that prevails in today's Western countries. To give a practical (if slightly extreme example), it is typical for an orchestra or choir to start a rehearsal from halfway through a piece of music, and then keep practicing details and different sections before merging the elements and hearing the piece as it is "meant to be". The rehearsal practice of "starting in the middle" can

also dominate in settings where no sheet music is being used. This approach could be critiqued as a blind devotion to efficiency that in the context of traditional music may fail to recognise the very nature of that music, and perhaps interfere with music's deepest, spiritual dimension. On the other hand, separating and presenting the musical components in "small portions" may spark motivation, promote accessibility, and act as a gateway to a tradition that requires years of studying to master. Unanswered questions about authenticity and purpose remain, however. Once doors to new directions are opened, a musical community is more susceptible to the visions and choices of its individual members.

Exploration into how musical traditions are manifested in communities around the world, and experiencing how music is an integral part of social activities and rituals in these communities, yields alternative perspectives for Western music education. Paradoxically, being immersed in different traditions can invite us to consider our own traditions, many of which have at least partly disappeared.

The Manamaiju third space – a meeting point of different musical traditions – poses the question of whether exchanging educational approaches can strengthen the revival of traditional music. Is it possible to weave in new teaching and learning approaches without losing the essence and purpose of the traditional music, and compromising its integrity? Can new music educational influences support the process of preserving unique musical communities and cultures, or do they pose an inevitable threat to the depth and survival of these traditions? Could, for example, master-apprentice approaches continue to thrive side by side with educational methods based on group interaction and composition?

What we saw in the village was an immense appreciation for Newari music and traditions, as well as for the music and teaching approaches brought by us. The simultaneously calm and vibrant village seemed an example of a community where ancient traditions co-existed with innovative artistic initiatives and possibilities provided by the internet and rapidly developing communication technology. The host team we got to know and collaborate with were an inspiring example of this kind of creativity and ability to look ahead while cherishing their heritage. It is as if their attitude served a crucial purpose in dealing with societal changes: sometimes steady, sometimes rapid.

"Is it possible to weave in new teaching and learning approaches without losing the essence and purpose of the traditional music, and compromising its integrity?"

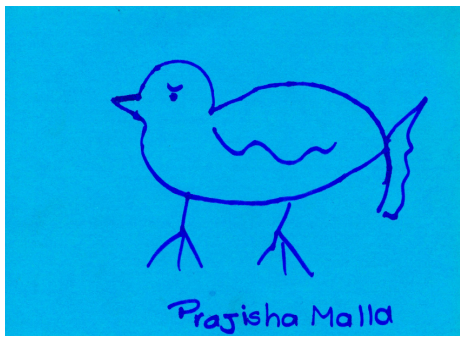


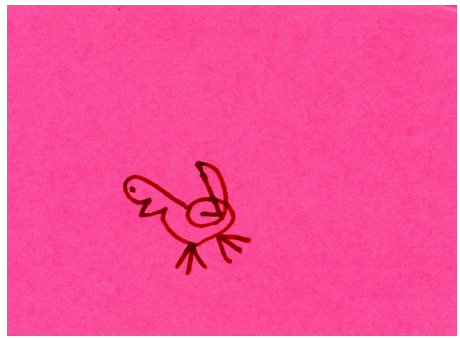


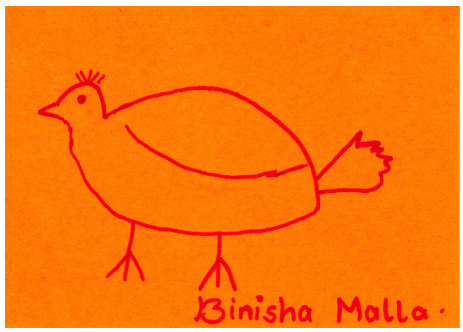
"Music is the thread that has the ability to connect us all, no matter the origin, the culture, the language. This is why it is such an important medium to develop. Our job as musicians and as music educators is much more vital to global bridges and integration than some let on."

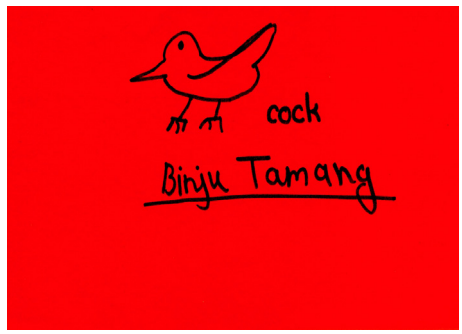
Birdsong

One of our activities during the children's workshop had each child invent a bird character with their own unique birdsong, based around whatever we could think of: doves, owls, chickens, roosters, ducks and, of course, songbirds. Everyone drew a picture of their bird to play musical games with, such as trading pictures/sounds with a partner, singing bird duets, and combining songs together. Some children wanted to draw cats and make cat sounds, too, which they did. - DJ.









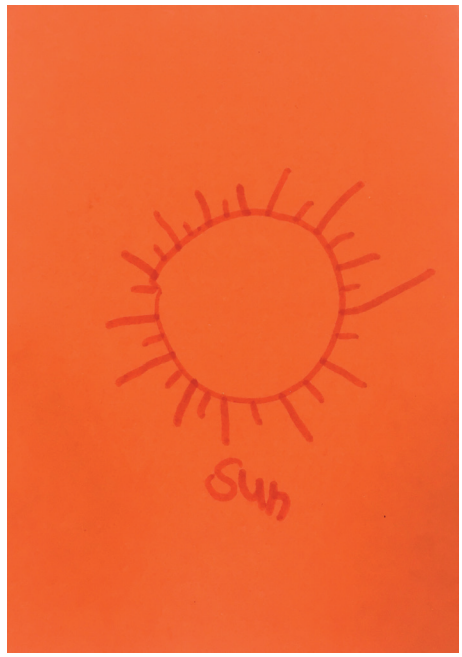





bird
Rina tamang.


Angella Rai


Prajisha Malla

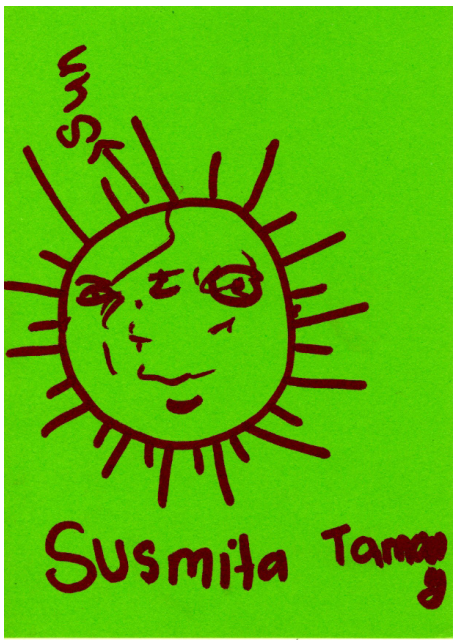

Sun

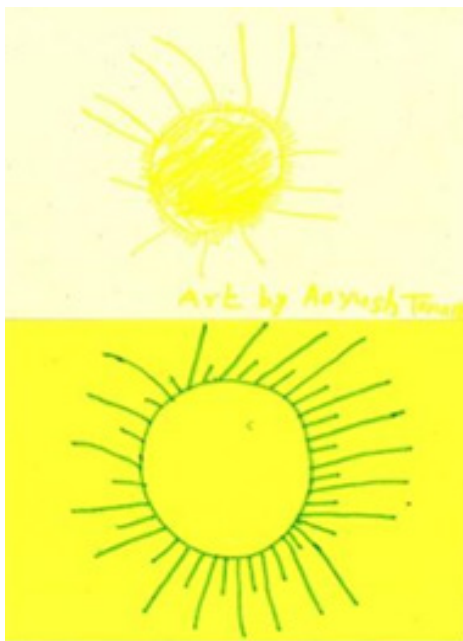


"Very few spoken words are needed."

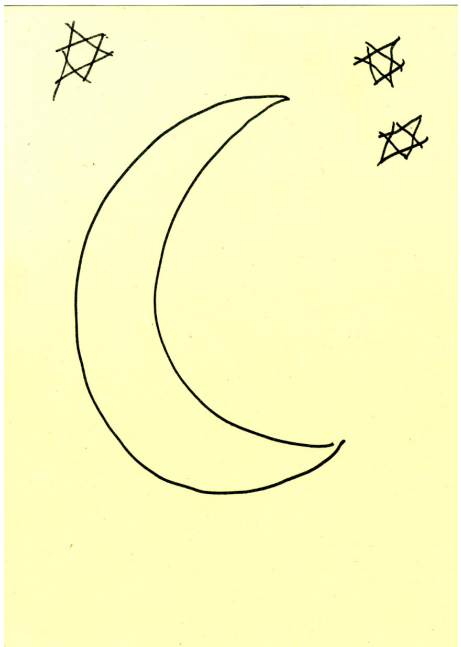
Suns

Another children's workshop activity involved leading the group in singing high and low and moving up and down by conducting with rising and setting suns and moons, birds and cats. – DJ.

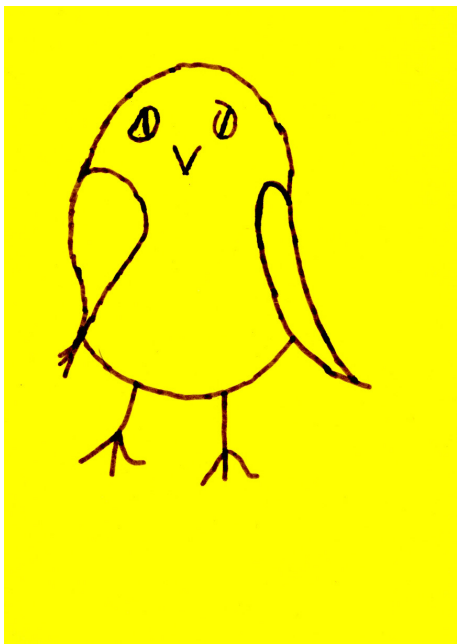


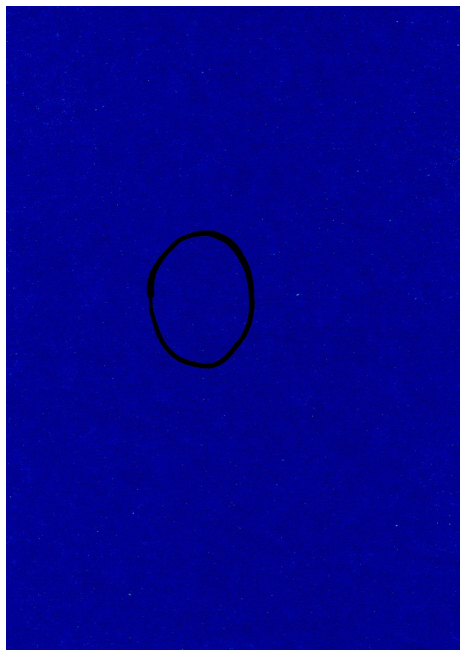












note: the drawing at bottom right above was the last to be handed in after the morning's children's workshop with birdsong games. The student was asked what it was meant to be, and he explained to someone who could translate that it was an egg.



Hari Narajan Maharjan, Manamaiju music guru and grandfather to the author, Ramesh Maharjan.

Guru

Ramesh Maharjan with David Johnson.

Ramesh Maharjan, Manamaiju musician and Confluence organizer
David Johnson, editor and participant

Hi Ramesh! How are you? Could I ask you and your family some questions for our book now? We are getting ready to publish it this summer and I'd still like to get a chapter collecting you, your dad and your grandfather's reflections.

We could do it like this: I send you some questions here on fb and you could answer for yourself and also translate for your family. What do you think?

I'd like to start by asking you to describe your experiences of the Confluence workshops. What was fun and what was challenging? Were there any special moments that stand out?

Sure, sir dats very great news to hear about

About your question, it was a very memorable one, I got the chance to meet very talented and equally friendly music professors and students.

About the workshop we tried to innovate our old traditional music played with your great instruments like kantele, viola, mandolin played by Rob, and many more, I forgot the instrument played by paivi ma'am

The most fun part of that workshop was traditional folk songs that are shared between both. And the challenging was could our musicians learn some of your folk songs or not? That was challenging for sure, the next thing is could we meet up to your expectations concerning collaboration.

The special moment was that music when it came out to the public whatever we did in those workshops that was mind boggling

There are lots more moments where we share the daily routine doing children workshop to the newari food tasting, and those small gigs are unforgettable sir

I get more excited as well in this workshop that 3 generations (me, my father and grandfather) share the stage performance with you all. That's the proud moment to me n my parents and grandparents as well.

My parents and grandparents n their ancestors have spent their life in these traditional music and culture. Those workshops days were the Golden event for me and my parents as well

It was unforgettable for me, too! I never heard your grandfather's name. Everyone always just introduced him as "guru"! What is his name?

Hari Narajan Maharjan

Do you know if Hari's father was also a music guru?

Even his grandfather was a guru and musician

Is your father now called guru in Manamaiju, too?



Music guru Ganeshman Maharjan, father to Ramesh Maharjan

Yeah sir, since 10 yrs he let fellow musicians to learn music. He is guru in flutes percussions, mens Quar (Dafa bhajan)

That's the Dafa I played in with him!

That's the mini form of dafa

What more do you need to make a full dafa?

In Dafa we require two percussions cymbals like Taa n Jhyali that you bought in Nepal and the group of vocalists

Wish I had sung then. I wanted to, but it seemed like we were just supposed to play instruments without singing! Next time! You also teach music. Do you also have the title of guru? (sorry to ask so many questions! If you're busy we can talk later, too!!)

No sir it's my pleasure to answer your questions

I was engaged in a call sir



I do teach for young followers but me myself is not called as guru

Can you explain for me why, what the difference is?

Cause I've to teach a batch of young followers then only will I be titled as guru

Do you intend to do that?

Of course sir but my job n engineering didn't give me the chance to do that, very soon I will do that

Something that touched me deeply was when your father taught us the Newari greeting, zozolepa



He explained it as meaning two things meeting and being one, like the left and the right hand, the man and the woman…

Dad is just like a researcher in Newari tradition and culture. He likes to research some old history of our tradition

How would you explain zozolepa?

I don't know much about this sir, we youngster just know that it is a gratitude done to whom you respect

Thanks, Ramesh! Is it alright if I print this conversation as it ap-pears on fb? I thought it would be interesting for readers to see how the book gets made.

My pleasure sir

Great! Namaste, zozolepa, and bye for now!
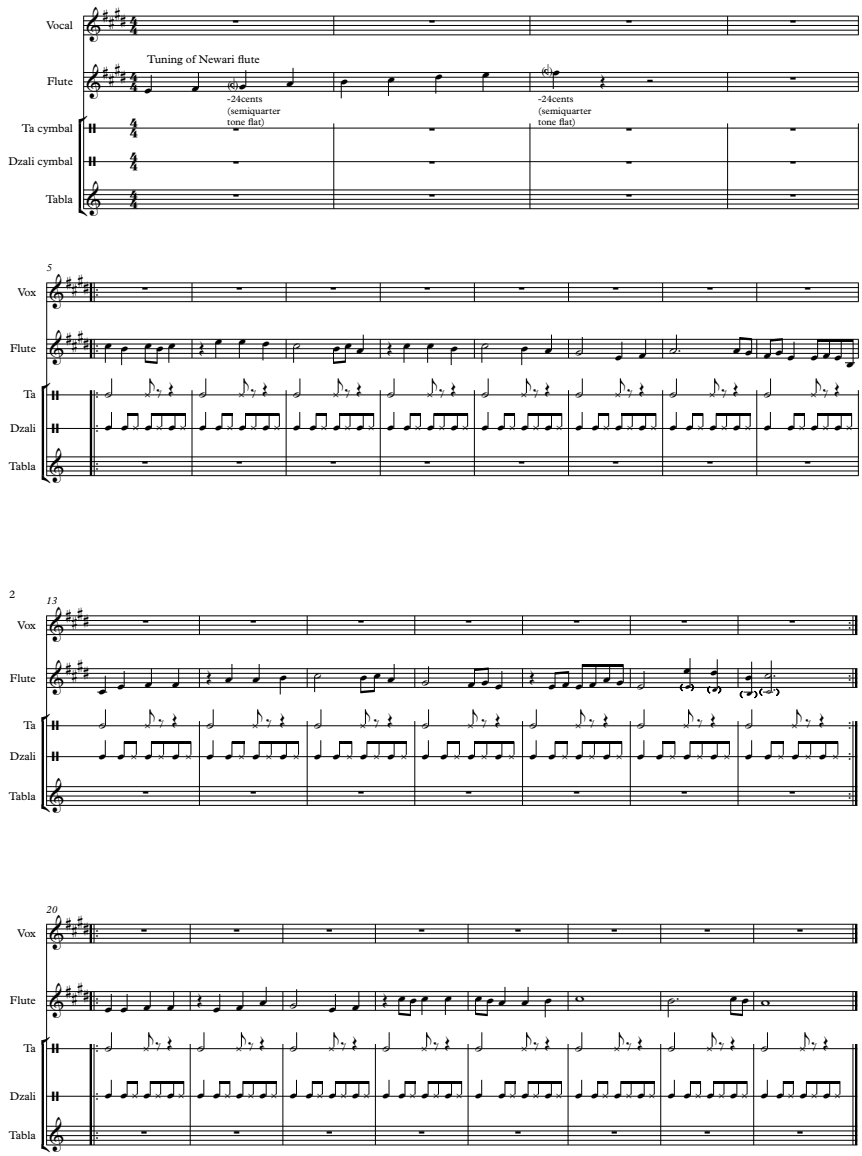
Soovaya: (thank you) sir

Soovaya



Ramesh Maharjan playing a two-handed drum

Autumn Season Newari Song



Newari Autumn Song - transcription from the Dafa by Roope Aarnio, university lecturer (Sibelius Academy, Finland)

Transcribing Newari Music

Roope Aarnio

Senior lecturer of folk music, Sibelius Academy, Finland

In anticipation of my trip to Nepal, I was interested in experiencing a variety of musical thinking and musical living. I hoped to discover mechanisms underlying the musical thinking of Newari people. Without knowing the music style or any of their songs, I decided in advance to focus on finding some principles of how local musicians think about and perceive music, how they analyse and describe the music they make. Also, I was curious to learn about how they pass it on and teach it to others.

There were limits to how much we could learn during our stay. We stayed only four days in Manamaiju village, which is very short time to get even a smallest picture of anything. We were very polite towards each other, and there was a language barrier between us and the local musicians. Also, I´m very aware of the fact that the Newari population is huge (more than 1,300,000 people) and consists of a wide variation of different local cultures. The population of Manamaiju is just a little bit over 4,500 people. So, the perspective we have comes only from a few families and musicians in that area at that time.

At first, it was a cultural shock to hear those Newari tunes played by our hosts. It felt hopeless when we tried to catch the melody or the structure of the music we heard. Rhythm pattern or time signatures were recognizable, which was a relief, but the melody sounded impossible to understand. It was full of ornaments and micro-intervals, and the two flutes were playing heterophonically with slightly different lines and embellishments.

The role of different instruments in our nine-person dafa ensemble was very clear. Taa was the most important part, since it was keeping the tempo and marking the first beat of each bar. The jhaali cymbals were playing a basic rhythm pattern – the pulse or the groove of a time signature. The two tika one-handed drums played the rhythmic part, which seemed to be composed or arranged separately. Both drum

players played the same rhythmic variations at the same time, while the flutes were playing the melody.

In advance, I thought that in the Newari culture the position of instruments would be almost holy and sacred, or that the attitude towards the instruments would at least be very respectful. Instead, their attitudes seemed to be just very practical. For example, the one handed drum: they said that it's actually just like the two sided dha that was cut into two halves, much lighter to hold and easier to play! Same thing with the flutes. They said that the reason they are using flutes is that it is too exhausting to sing those melodies over and over again. A practical approach.

The approach to Newari music seemed to begin very much from rhythm and melody, but also from lyrics. Every song was connected to a certain festival, time, season, celebration, event, etc, of which they have quite a few! There was no harmony part in the music that we heard, no drone or chords or second voice. Just a heterophonic melody and a rhythm part.

One characteristic feature of the Newari music we experienced was the rhythmic shifts of density towards more intense feeling. This was accomplished by changing the time signature, basic groove, or just by speeding up the tempo. That usually happened a couple of times during the performance. The typical performance started with a short *alap*, that was like a short phrase of the melody played in rubato feeling, before starting the tune in a tempo. When the tempo was set, the percussion players joined in, and they played the song through a few times before shifting to the next level by changing the tempo, time signature, or basic groove. These shifts and transitions from one part of a tune to another, happened with eye contact and head-nodding, so that it wasn't set in advance how many times each part was going to be played. After a few shifts of density, a tune finished with a little slowing down right before the end.

A funny situation happened when we played a set of Finnish polskas for our Newari hosts. First, they were very interested, video recording us and taking photos with their phones, but after a while they seemed to get a little bit bored. After our performance, they asked why we stuck with the same tempo and rhythmic feeling all the time. We explained that it is music for dancing, and that's why we have to stay in a same style, dance type, or rhythmic feeling during the whole tune. "Why?" they asked again, and said that their music is also for dancing. Our fancy chords and harmonies were just not interesting enough to them, compared to the feeling that comes through rhythmic modulations.

"Our fancy chords and harmonies were just not interesting enough to them, compared to the feeling that comes through rhythmic modulations."





Ganeshman Maharjan makes the “namaste” gesture of thanks during a workshop rehearsal.

Zozolepa: Playing Jhaali in the Band

David Johnson

PhD student, Malmö Academy of Music, Sweden

I have come to realize in retrospect that a defining aspect of my experience in *Confluence* was of being a double outsider: both a stranger to the Newari music and musicians, but also to the music and musicians from the Sibelius Academy. As a lone doctoral student from Sweden, charged with editing this book about the *Confluence* events, I arrived in Kathmandu without any obvious musical role to play in either the Finnish students' band or in the Newari workshop groups, although I am a guitarist and had decided at the last minute to pack my steel-string guitar – just in case.

You see, I was invited along as a researcher and educator, and it was never quite clear during our preparations for the journey to Nepal whether I was expected or even invited to participate as a musician during these events. So when the opportunity did in fact present itself (and it did, dreadfully quickly), the temptation to chicken out was particularly strong for me, having such good excuses! After all, my work as a doctoral student, combined with my obligations at home as the father of two small children, had forced me to shelve my guitar almost entirely for the previous two years. The 'fight or flight' instincts that often kick in for me when I am asked to step outside a comfort zone and onto the stage were therefore especially intimidating, and had to be confronted on many occasions during our time together in Nepal. Happily, instead of opting out, I had the good luck to find a place in the music we made together over the course of five intense days in Manamaiju and Kathmandu. This is how it happened…

The night I arrived in Kathmandu, alone, I get a text from Vilma, the Sibelius folk musician and researcher who had been coordinating our travel plans. Turns out, the students from Sibelius Academy who were booked to perform at noon the next day at a folk music festival in central Kathmandu are stranded en route from Europe.

I was a songwriter, right? she asked. That must count as "Canadian music" (I'm originally from Canada), right? Could I play some of my tunes and put together a set with the two students who had managed to arrive from Finland? Had I brought along my guitar?

As Venla also recounts in her chapter in this book, we did in fact put together an hour of music. Besides the obvious challenge of playing a concert with unfamiliar musicians and no common repertoire, three things were very difficult. First was the high altitude sun at noon, which burned me tomato-red immediately, and would probably have incapacitated me without the kind loan of festival organizer Munir's OBEY baseball cap, which didn't leave my head for the next four days. The second, of course, was finding the strings of the guitar again after being away from it for so long. Coming off the stage, I noticed the deep gashes across all four fretting fingers of my left hand already forming, which turned progressively bluer throughout the week, forming welts that didn't heal up until well after I'd flown home again.

The third challenge was this: being asked to play something that in some way represented my musical culture, my heritage, or my home. In a way, it was this challenge from the Kathmandu show that was the easiest to fake, but the hardest to really find an honest and satisfying answer for: an immediate initiation into core questions of intercultural musical awareness for musicians like ourselves – perhaps for any musician.

Since, however, the show must most definitely go on, I faked it and played a couple numbers. I also faked a Swedish polska with Megan, who despite being an American raised in Tanzania, obviously knew a hundred times more about such things than I did, though I was a certified Swedish citizen and resident of Malmö for nearly two decades. I also taught the rest of the band to play a Canadian folk song, "Red River Valley", which did actually come from around where I grew up on the prairies in Canada. Since it was so very well known where I came from – truly a folk song for us – I was naively surprised to find that the other musicians weren't familiar with it. Maybe I did have some stores of homegrown musical culture to share with the wide world after all? Singing that song, looking out at the Nepali faces filling the ancient square, I could feel a certain sense of myself as some kind of culture-bearer. More than anything, perhaps, I sensed in a new way how such culture-bearing might be a noble and significant kind of musicianship – if only it were me!

That night, on the eve of our travels to Manamaiju, the rest of the real Sibelius band arrived and settled in at the hotel. Discussing their set list and plans for the workshops, I keenly felt again that I didn't have much of a role to play, despite everyone being so friendly and inviting. Nevertheless, when we arrived in Manamaiju the next morning, no one seemed aware or concerned with my particular circum-

stances, and I signed up for the workshop group that sounded most interesting to me, just like everybody else. I chose the flute Dafa, imagining we'd get to try the bé flutes ourselves. In the actual event, it became clear that there were no extra Newari instruments, and that the Manamaiju musicians had hoped to share each other's music and prepare a couple songs using a mix of their instruments and our instruments to play in a concert/festival event in the town square on our last night in town. Did I have my guitar? I did, but I soon realized I had even less of an idea of what to do with it than usual.

The next three days spent learning to play together were both exhilarating and exhaustingly confusing. The sessions were led by Ganeshman, the village flute guru, and the Sibelius mandolinist Roope and I (especially me) struggled to figure out the heavily ornamented flute melody and make left-hand fingerings that could accommodate the trills. We tried to discern a harmonic structure that we might follow, playing chordal, fretted instruments in Western tempered tunings, both of which seemed entirely out of place and maybe comically ugly to the Newari music style. All the while, without a common language, we felt painfully unsure of what our hosts and fellow musicians wanted or how they were feeling.

After several hours of playing, we decided to quit for the day, and Roope and I had an intense release of questioning, reflection, and negotiation together on the way out of the temple (though we sat shoulder to shoulder during the Dafa, we talked together only afterwards when we were packing up).

> We are here to learn from them, not to change or add to their music;
>
> Once you've heard it with harmonies, can you unhear it?;
>
> This music is precious and fragile…

We considered how the mandolin or guitar could compare to the harmonium, an instrument that had also been seen as a hostile invader a couple hundred years earlier; in the end, we agreed that we had to decide what we stood for as musicians, what was at stake, what sounds or aspects of the emergent mix of instruments and cultures we liked, what we wanted to achieve, and how. Mostly, we tried to figure out what it was our hosts wanted from us and how to make them happy. As a musician, I'm often hung up on trying to meet someone else's expectations and playing what I think someone else wants to hear, but was this the place to do my own thing or go with the flow? What was the nature of my freedom here? After all, once again, it seemed I was being asked to play 'my' music and 'my' culture. Did that mean that whatever I played would be right?

That night, I went to hear the Housewives' Choir rehearse, as they did every night, we were told: an innovative initiative to keep traditional song repertoire alive through this culturally unusual ensemble of middle-aged women from the village. Packed into a tiny backroom of an apartment block complex, the Manamaijuans sat in a square with their backs against the walls of the space, singing in unison, with plaintive, piercing voices over harmonium and tabla. The sound was raw and beautiful. I recognized the Taa and jhaali cymbals, too, which were being freely passed around to anyone who wanted to try. They were necessary for the musical structure as I was beginning to understand – especially the taa, the "God of the instruments" – so, really, we were all obliged to pick them up and play if the person playing them got tired or bored or had to leave. I watched and listened and made some recordings, played and sang a bit. And I was tired. Later, I tried skyping with my kids, but the connection was so poor, the best we could do was send emoticons back and forth to each other.

Day two in our Dafa began with our hosts explaining that they had chosen a new song to teach us, since the meter of the one from the day before might have been too tricky. Roope tried to protest that we (he) did understand the tune and that it was fine, but it seemed that the decision had been made. The new tune was more approachable, I thought, and we started in again trying the same learning methods as the day before: listening to the flutes, trying to copy the melodies on our instruments, figuring out a harmonic structure and a progression. The raga-like structure started to make more sense to me, and I was transported in real rapture, feeling for the first time in my life the exhilaration of gradual, collective acceleration in a long musical composition. Also, I started to sing along and, as always with singing, got caught up and enjoyed myself. When the question of another song to play came up, I wondered if they could teach us a love song, and we began learning "A Flower for the Woman, a Flower for the Man…".

Again, though, the euphoria was accompanied by deep confusion and insecurity. Our group was joined by Roshan, Prakash, and some of the other Confluence producers, who listened intently and offered suggestions to Roope and me in English, to Ganeshman and the other local musicians in Newari. It seemed maybe that they were concerned and worried, and I wished I could understand their body language. What did that side-to-side head shake signify?

"The sound was raw and beautiful."





We agreed to start again from the beginning, and to try to find a more natural thing for the guitar to do. I continued with all my focus strained on Ganeshman and his flute melody, as I had since we'd started. Then something in the tika drum part caught my attention for some reason, and it bent my focus over to my right, across

the circle – first my ears, then eventually my eyes – and I looked up to see both tika players staring right into my eyes, playing their ostinato so emphatically, it was clear as a bell what they were saying: "play this here, play this here, play this part, play this here". My mind flipped, and I realized that the drum part was no ostinato at all – it was a counterpoint melody of its own that I hadn't heard, but that was the natural place where the guitar would fit. I switched allegiances and started copying their hands, letting my pick imitate the flips and accents of their fingers over the drum heads. There were big, beaming smiles all around – that I could understand. Now that I'd lifted my gaze, I could see that everybody in the group was leading us and teaching us, and I could hear how the cymbal section – the jhaali and the taa – were also telling us what to do and playing off of us. We finished the song, and everyone said a heartfelt "namaste" to each other, bowing and pressing the hands together in the praying gesture we'd learned to do already the day before, although now it felt natural and genuine in a much truer way.

This triumph behind us, the work began again. I asked to hear the drum part on its own, and Roope asked if there was a way to sing the drum part. Ganeshman began chanting the drum part in vocalese syllables, keeping time in the Newari way, with the open/close hand clapping gesture that fit with all the Newari music we had heard. I scribbled down the words of the chant frantically in my notebook with the intention of studying it on my own later that night, sometime, somehow.

That evening at the Housewives' Choir, I listened happily, watching the percussion passed around, and comparing in my mind how I had heard them played earlier in our Dafa. I watched until the taa was free, and decided to reach for them and try it out. I imagined Ganeshman's hand clapping – open, shut, open – and started playing the gesture on them as I'd seen the ladies doing. It fit! I looked over to Man, whom I knew from our dafa group, and he gave me the head shake with a smile, which I thought almost certainly meant approval this time. I must have been playing for several minutes when I heard the woman sitting across from me whisper to the tabla player something about "taa", and I understood from her gestures and facial expression that it almost certainly didn't mean approval. She was saying something like "that isn't taa" I realized, as I looked down at the instrument in my hands to see that it was in fact the jhaali. I smiled at her and made a go of trying to switch to the cha-cha-cha jhaali rhythm, but thankfully the song was soon finished and I meekly passed the cymbals along.

The music was beautiful, though, and I soon let my embarrassment go. I was playing along and enjoying when I noticed Man explaining how to play jhaali to one of the women who was getting her hands all tangled up with them. All of a sudden, he made a gesture without the instrument in his hands, like washing your

hands of something, showing also that the cymbals had to be held loosely, as though playing with bare hands only. I made sure to grab the jhaali next time they were free to try the gesture, and felt giddily satisfied. It sounded and felt really good. I was making music I could hardly comprehend, but I knew everything I needed to know for it to work just fine right then.

Next day was rehearsal all day, performance at night. We worked through the two songs we'd developed, and it seemed that the general feeling amongst us was that we'd all follow Ganeshman's lead that night and it would work out fine. During a morning break in rehearsal, Ganeshman started playing on one of the tika drums, and I got the idea that I could try the other; sitting across from each other, Ganeshman doesn't give up on me, showing me the same thing again and again, encouraging; he adds a triplet that I can't get, but like Man the night before, he puts the drum down and instead shows me the gesture: like pulling away from something hot and brushing dust off a surface; he's pleased when I get it; meanwhile, the others have returned from their break and are playing along with us on their palms; when I feel I really have it, we embrace – a long hug.

Before we leave the temple, we play through the two pieces one last time as a dress rehearsal. When the second one is finished, we say "namaste". Ganeshman shakes a finger and responds, instead, "zozolepa". He explains, while Man translates, that it is the Newari word for namaste, that it means one hand, two hands: together; like the man and the woman; the hindi and the buddha. It is our last lesson.

Before we get up to leave the temple, though, Ganeshman asks us to play a bit of "our" music for them. Roope's mandolin has fascinated the Manamaiju musicians from the first day, and so he plays some solo mandolin while everybody grabs their smartphones to record video. Then they ask me to play something, and I play and sing them a bluegrass-style waltz I'd recently written. Roope gets behind me and adds the perfect tremolo accompaniment and a solo, though he'd never heard the song before. He and I have a clear common ground in country music – our music.

The square is packed for the concert and there is a real festival energy. People get up and dance and shout to the music and there are smiles all around. After each of the three workshop groups perform their sets, it is time for the Sibelius students to play a closing set together as a climax or finale. Again not knowing the Sibelius repertoire, I am ready to sit out the set, but instead I think to ask the jhaali player from the last workshop group if I can borrow his instrument. I fake my way along through the Sibelius set that mixes music from all around Europe in varying styles. I keep a low profile, adding New Age-y dings and rainmaker effects here and there and singing in the background. But when we get to this evil-sounding minor key *jouhikko* dance tune that had been a popular jam hit the night before, I feel ready

to use the cymbals to lay down a strong groove. I can't be sure that my improvisation doesn't seem silly-sounding, or even sacreligious – to either the Newari, or the Finns, or both – but I myself am convinced that the groove and sound is right, and that the jhaali absolutely rocks in this heavy metal modal tune. As I chang-chakka-chang rather demonically, I look out to find Man in the crowd and he gives me a big double thumbs up – I know what that means. A group of the organizers start a conga line through the dancing crowd doing polska turns. Kristiina finds the perfect momentum and builds into a furious flute solo that brings the crowd up like a volcano.

That's it. As an epilogue, we played the same music for the CDIME conference in Kathmandu the next night, and when the time had come for the Sibelius group to perform, I asked one of the Manamaiju musicians if I could borrow the jhaali for the performance. To my surprise, he clearly didn't want to, and I realized after a moment that it was because they had to leave right away and he was afraid of letting the instrument out of his sight. I arranged to hand them off to Munir who was leaving later, and in the end I got to play them. It was only later, after trying in vain to find a set of Manamaiju-style jhaali and taa for myself to buy in Kathmandu that I got a sense of how precious and rare these instruments actually are, and how privileged we were by our hosts' casual hospitality, who shared with us so openly, as though we were one of them.







Different Language, Same Stories: Connecting People Through Stories and Music

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Storytelling and music. For me, this combination is the key to understanding – understanding other people and cultures and in the end, understanding myself. Music is a universal language that we use to tell stories about love, disappointment, sorrow and joy. We use music to sing our children to sleep, praise the Gods, dance weddings, mourn the dead and to march for peace. The connection between music and stories is a magical power that I think can be experienced even if we don't speak the same language. For me, it is storytelling at its best.

With storytelling we can invite others to visit the history and the present of our own culture and in the best case, to give them experience of something age-old – something that makes you want to learn, hear and see more. Storytelling in music can create a unique experience between the musician and the listener and gives the opportunity to explore not only the different cultures and traditions, but also the people behind the stories.

Before we went to Nepal I had written that I wanted to hear a lot of stories. I wanted to meet the local storytellers and musicians, find out where they drew their stories from, and find out how much of these stories I could understand as heard through their music. I also wanted to find an answer to the question: are we able to create stories and music together without speaking the same language?

Even though we were tired after travelling three days (that included one cancelled flight, one extra night at Dubai, the most terrible turbulence I have ever experienced, and, finally, lost luggage), the very minute we stepped out of the plane at Kathmandu airport, I knew this trip would be a breakpoint in my life. After a brief negotia-

tion about the missing bags, we took a taxi through the chaotic capital to our hotel. Heat, pollution, noise, different smells, cars, motorcycles, bumpy roads, and buildings after buildings, all blended in my head into one big lump that gave me a strange feeling of peace. I remember thinking,"Here I am, and there's nothing I can do but to surrender to the feeling and keep an open mind". I had travelled a lot in different countries and cultures before, but I had a feeling that this journey would be different.

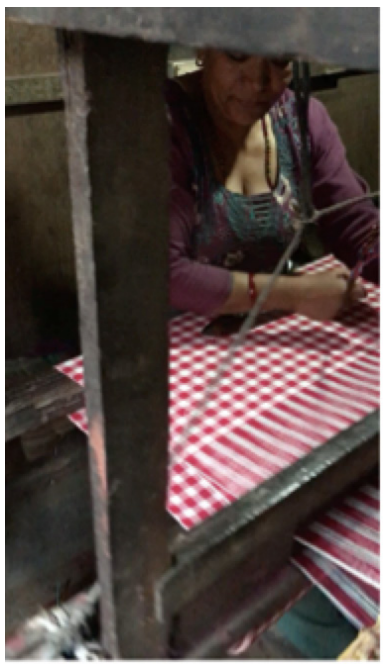
The story of Manamaiju was one of the first stories I heard on this trip. It was told to me one afternoon by one of our local hosts when we were walking around the village. The main attraction of the village is the Manamaiju temple. It is built in the traditional Nepali style with multiple roofs. Mana means a heart and maiju means a lady/girl, and the story goes something like this:

> There was a young girl called Mana with terrible black spots on her face and an ugly visage. She was a fervent devotee of Lord Indra (God of Heaven), and she often meditated on the bank where the two rivers Bisnumati and Mahadev Khola meet. Lord Indra was very impressed and glad of her devotion to him, and asked if she would have a wish he could fulfill. Mana said to him, "I want you to marry me. I want you to be my husband". Lord Indra agreed to marry her but he didn't think she was suitable enough to be presented in heaven because of her black spots. She was transformed into a goddess by Lord Indra and given the power to remove spots and other blemishes from people's faces. She is known as the Goddess of Beauty. According to the legend, Lord Indra himself gave her the name Manamaiju.

I remember this afternoon walk around the village very well and especially the talk I had with one of our hosts, Prakash. It wasn't a typical sightseeing tour. In 2015, the earthquake that hit Kathmandu also devastated Manamaiju. We walked through destroyed houses and temples, but at the same time, we could see how much the villagers had already rebuilt. They had done it all by themselves, brick by brick, young and old people together. And as we were walking with our young hosts through Manamaiju and they were telling us about the history of the village, their culture, and their everyday life, I couldn't stop admiring them. These young people's respect and knowledge about the history of the village and the way they respect their parents is something we could all learn from. They are keeping the traditions and history alive, but at the same time they are bringing in their own personalities and values to develop the culture.

For me, the walk was a very powerful, beautiful, and eye opening experience. I realised that the stories are not just to be heard, but also to be seen. One amazing moment was when we saw a woman weaving fabric; she was sitting in a small, dark

room that could fit only her and the loom. She used the machine very confidently and incredibly fast and rhythmically. It was like the loom was her instrument and she was playing a tune. I knew I had to compose a song around the rhythm that was coming from the weaving, so I recorded the sound a little bit to remember it back home. On our last day in Nepal, as a surprise for all the women in our group, we were given beautiful scarves made from the same fabric what we saw her weaving a few days earlier. And so the story that started from something I saw (and heard) in Manamaiju was later given to me as cloth to wear in Kathmandu, and has now become a song in Helsinki. It is called "The Weaver".



In the end, I found myself in the middle of somewhat larger and more important matters than what I had in my mind before I boarded the plane in Helsinki. The whole trip became a journey into myself, and it widened my musical thinking. With my doctoral studies, I have lately started to think about the meaning and the concept of presence: what does it mean in my music, both in composing and in performing? This question got kickstarted during this trip, and that leads me back to the question I had at the beginning: are we able to create stories and music together even though we do not speak the same language? Hearing and seeing the stories all around me expanded our mutual understanding, and music-making became a more communal thing between us. I was more present than before, and felt that we were now talking the same language. So even if the stories may not be directly perceived in the music – because approaches to making and presenting it are somehow different from what I am familiar with – stories are still the key to deeper understanding of history and traditions. By gaining each other's trust and friendship, the presence in our music-making became stronger, and that helped us create music and stories together.

"The story that started as something I saw (and heard) in Manamaiju was later given to me as cloth to wear in Kathmandu, and has now become a song in Helsinki. It is called 'The Weaver'."



Entering Asan Square, downtown Kathmandu

Negotiating the Global and the Local: The Fragile Location of South Asian Discourses in the Globalized Cosmopolitan Context

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> "…bridges are only useful when they unite two separate landscapes."
>
> (Brenton. D. Faber, 2002)

In the globalized context, South Asian cultures have often been assigned a severely narrow location, categorized as mystic and different as viewed through the Western lens. This vision, even in the post-colonial context, is still heavily sanctioned by colonial discourse in both private and public spheres. However, considering the inevitability of globalization, such cultures need to identify and negotiate meanings to keep afloat. The discourses that need to emerge in such contexts have to carry and simultaneously justify loads of narratives that act as "agents of change" (Faber, 2002), while hopefully causing as little damage to the local context as possible, where by damage I mean the unsavory effects of *othering*: be it because of western cosmopolitan infiltration, overbearing adherence to past traditions that need to be modified with time, or the growing regionalism seen since the end of the Cold War. Meanwhile, all these dangers stand balanced against the vital drive to come closer economically and politically (Otmazgin, 2005, p.500).

It is quite clear by now that regions grappling with the push and pull of communal and cosmopolitan forces to find a space in the global scenario have to come out of their shells: to recognize, analyze, and critique internal differences that may exist, to "operate less monologically and mono-culturally" (West, 1965, p.5), and to some-

how break free from the shackles of mindless arguments levied against a process of globalization that is in many respects inevitable and uncontainable. It is equally important to understand the emotional charge of nationalistic discourse aimed at the masses, that comes laden with subtle restrictions that often seek to maintain hegemony by muddling the minds of people already caught in a tug-of-war between the tremendous influence of western cosmopolitanism and a perennially existing regional communalism. In this context, I would argue that in the South Asian context – a massive storehouse of varied cultures existing simultaneously – pedagogical strategies are needed that gradually embrace a more liberal and egalitarian approach to the overall changes that are occurring around the globe. At the same time, we need to recognize the remnants of the colonial era that still occupy a large binding space in its psyche and the dangers of being left behind or 'not being heard' in the context of social/virtual connectedness. In this regard, careful critical attention must also be paid to the discourses and rhetorical contexts underlying music education practices in South Asia today.

Though the term 'Third World' has fallen from favour since the collapse of the Soviet block, I still feel that the remnants of the concept are deeply ingrained in our outlook, and our discourses are caught between discourses of power and resistance, cosmopolitanism and communalism. It was in reference to such conflicting scenarios that West (1965) wrote of "negotiation" as the only option for people who wanted to acknowledge differences and find a way forward (p. 13). Crowley (2006) suggests that such interactions can bear fruit in meetings between cultures where "beliefs that circulate within one ideology can be borrowed for use in another" (p. 75). Through these acts of borrowing, a link may be established "among beliefs within a given ideology and/or across belief systems" (p.75). When these links are shared between people – through any form of human inscription, be it spoken, written, gesture, dance, music, painting – there is a chance of finding a "common place" (p.75).

The identification of a common ground or shared space through music seems like a promising idea when understood in reference to Fritz' (2013) "dock in" model, where all music cultures contain both universal and cultural-specific features that permit the specific music of a given culture to "dock in" and "dock out" of cues that are universally perceived, giving music an innate potential for "cross-cultural perception and interaction" (Fritz, 2013, pp. 511-514). Fritz' concept of "docking" has the advantage of both explaining the dynamics of specific musical cultures while also stressing the fact that adaptation and assimilation across cultural boundaries are the universal norms – especially, perhaps, in the context of virtual connectedness in the digital era. Beliying all hue and cry over cultural invasion and appropriation, the

"dock in" model, "provides a theoretical framework to discuss music cultural intersection, and hopefully, to further our understanding of what music universals are, and how they relate to music culture"(Fritz, 2013, p. 515).

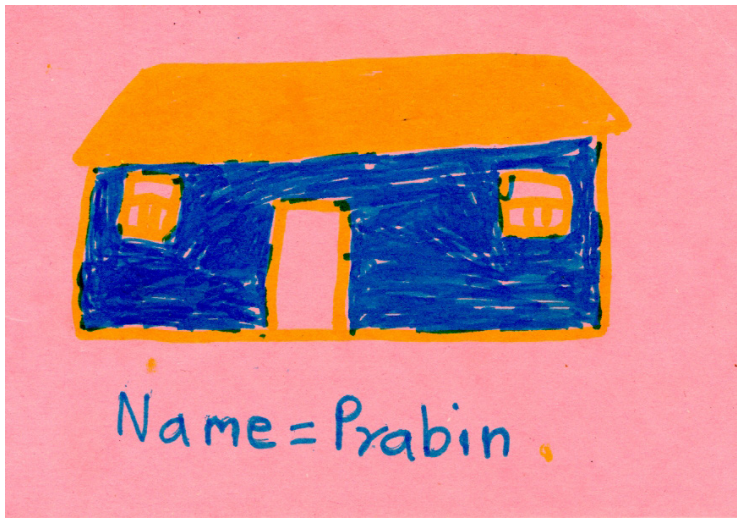


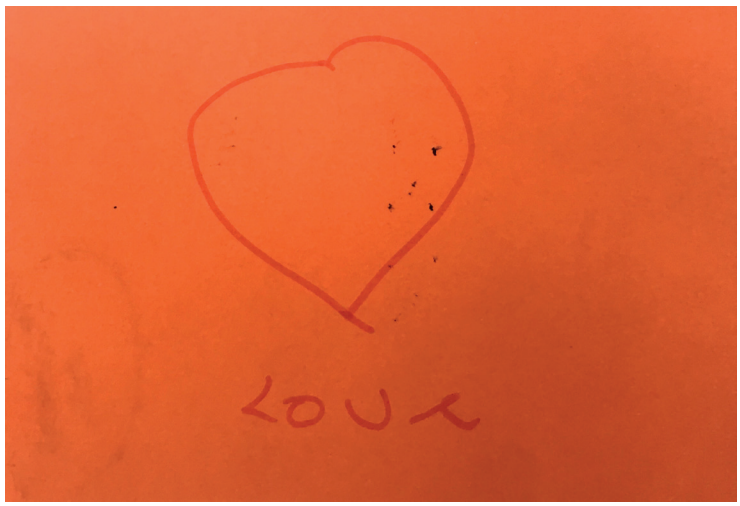
Pedagogically speaking, the ripples created during the process of "docking in" and "docking out" need to be studied to critically understand the narratives emanating from such mergers. These ripples could be a point of departure to help people deal heuristically with the process of globalization in the 21st century, and to rise above the smog that is otherwise formed in the clashing sentiments of traditionally deep-rooted societies when confronted with change. Besides, such an understanding could facilitate a "common place", where those ripples that are created on both sides of the vessel will eventually merge together to co-exist harmoniously.

However, confluence of any sort is easier said than done; shared biases, which are the outcome of perceptions based on "other and self", rise up as hurdles in the identity-building process (Grad & Rojo, 2008, p. 8). This creates a rift that is easily amplified by indigenous values and beliefs and ethnocentric discourses maintained by those in power in the name of assimilation, resulting in a social reality that is always skewed and that needs to be deconstructed every now and then. The aim should thus be not to engage in oppositional discourses, but to move ahead in the process of identifying a shared terrain (Fenton & May, 2003).

Though it would be folly to imagine a classless world unsullied by the desire to

hold power, the possibility of emergent forms of cross-cultural coexistence should not be ruled out, especially given the tremendous social, cultural, political, and economic changes taking place today. In such times of change, music may be expected to play an important role, since, as Bohlman (1993) writes, music is "one of the strongest voices of … resistance" that "demands attention… a means of commanding public spaces, a context for the narration of history" (p.413). Epistemologically speaking, looking at the conflict as it unfolds, although highly political in nature, this ample ground for the emergence of new discourses needs to be explored to identify potential areas of cross-cultural musical harmony.





Such study is complex, and requires an interdisciplinary approach; as Aleshinskaya (2013) points out, "studying musical discourse is, with no doubt, an interdisciplinary matter: it cannot be complete without consideration of social, linguistic, psychological, visual, gestural, ritual, technical, historical and musicological aspects" (p.424). In order to communicate successfully in intercultural dialogue, differences in language, religion, values, attitudes, customs, and norms of a group or society need to be empathized with, understood, acknowledged, and taken as facilitative resources that aid in negotiation between differing and conflicting discourses. This negotiation, if critically done, would pave ways for alternatives that are more accommodating and less alien. It would, in fact, as Bakhtin (1993) argues, provide opportunities for cultures facing each other to see themselves from each other's perspectives and realize the potentialities and semantic depths that can only be revealed by another culture.

The complexities and challenges are, no doubt, immense, as each of the elements of culture mentioned above carries deep-rooted sentimental attachments, and any attempt to uncritically tamper with them would lead to discord rather than accord. These complexities are more prominent in South Asia because of the highly stratified nature of its communal, traditional societies. The starting point for teachers in such complex and challenging conditions, as Dillon (2007) suggests, is to "engage with the inherent politics of culture and of the potential for such activity to be transformative". He warns, "what concerns me is how this can be done ethically and how we can construct embodied understandings rather than filtered and watered-down experiences" (Dillon, 2007, p.14).

Dillon clearly indicates that he doesn't want to fall back into the pit of dominant/colonial discourse. To avoid this, it is vital to guard the learning environment against those discourses that accommodate or become the tools of "appropriation, control, and ultimately marginalization and trivialization of cultures and peoples" (Bellman, 2011, p.413). Utmost care also needs to be taken not to excessively indulge in a "non-musical agenda", but instead to "fashion some critical approaches and vocabularies that do not disfigure their musical-cultural subjects" (p.438).

This kind of pedagogy is exactly what is required of the current South Asian context, where forces of globalization and the subtle but pervasive conflict between communalism and cosmopolitanism are liable to create discord in every aspect of socio-cultural life in the name of economic growth and cross-cultural amalgamation, or in simple words, development. This means critical pedagogy should aim at reconstructing the "master narratives" by imparting "empowering education" to ensure "personal growth to public life by developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change" (Shor, 1992, p.15).

The question of critical pedagogy is all too pertinent – especially in the South Asian context (with a few exceptions) – to counteract an endemic lack of epistemic curiosity: that is, "the desire for knowledge that motivates individuals to learn new ideas, eliminate information-gaps, and solve intellectual problems" (Litman, 2008, p. 1586). South Asian students too often are plagued by the paradigm of reproduction of knowledge rather than production of knowledge. As a result, they lack the "necessary epistemological curiosity and a certain conviviality with the object of knowledge under study", giving rise to learning situations devoid of the "necessary intellectual tools that will enable (them) to apprehend and comprehend the object of knowledge" (Macedo, 2000, p.19).

The consequences of cross-cultural/multicultural confluence in any discipline – including music – can easily be poor learning outcomes in such a context. The positive outcomes often assigned to intercultural, interdisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary teaching such as "construction, negotiation, and transformation of socio-cultural identities" (Torres, 2000, p. 3), may not be achieved. Similarly, the potential role of music (or, any form of human expression) to construct new identities while "reflecting simultaneously on existing ones" (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000), may be squandered, as the discourses that need to be constructed, deconstructed and/or reconstructed can become more situated and less fluid, and many times commodified, thus blocking the epistemological openings that could otherwise lead to desired learning outcomes.

Given these challenges, the first step that needs to be taken to ensure meaningful engagement in music is deep understanding of the local rhetorical context: that is, knowledge about the audience, the purpose, and the rhetorical situation governing the speaker or the writer, the listener or the reader, the text, the context, and the culture. This understanding would help learners and teachers of music "to think deeply about what music means in (their and others) lives, and how we can enact a pedagogical process which passes on and sustain that kind of passion for music making and education (Dillon, 2007, p. x)". The aim should be to create a non-threatening environment or a safe house in the music classroom that represents an "exciting learning community" (Hooks, 1994, p.9) .

Utmost care, then, needs to be taken to ensure creation of narratives that instill the spark that will help learners to think outside the box and operate constructively towards the envisaged goal of mutual collaboration (Denning, 2001, p. 160). In order to tackle all the complexities and challenges (the socio-cultural, the socio-political, the socio-economic, and the socio-religious) that can surface during the process of intercultural or cross-cultural amalgamation and learning the variety of discourses that exist in music, critical research to ensure unbiased interpretation, ne-

gotiation, and production is called for. To do so, I would suggest that rather than aiming at overnight cultural confluence which would in fact be waste of time, money, and energy, all the stakeholders in this process should try to primarily understand the power dynamics rather than trying to diffuse them, to ensure a safe house for an envisaged confluence in globalized, social, and virtual spaces.

"Confluence of any sort is easier said than done…"



Intercultural Musical Learning in Higher Music Education: A Way Forward

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The experiences from the Manamaiju multi-dimensional musical workshop serve as an example of intercultural immersion courses in higher music education. Such initiatives, combined with course work and opportunities for reflection, have shown ground-breaking effects on the attitudes and beliefs of preservice music teachers (Emmanuel, 2003). The intensity of similar courses has also proved to be inspiring for accomplished musicians, even between those that at first glance might appear to share little in common (Hebert & Sæther, 2013). Finally – and in this context the most important – intercultural immersion courses call for the slightly uncomfortable question that haunts educators and researchers concerned about the relevance of their work: "are we doing anyone any good?"(Nettl, 2010, p.1).

The "we" in this question can be understood in many ways: i) the rich institutions financing the immersion courses, ii) the network of participating institutions with varying competences and economic resources or iii) the participating music educators and researchers. I will in this text concentrate on the third variation of the "we", since it allows for a reflection on intercultural pedagogic competence, a capacity in need of attention within higher music education worldwide. However, this delimitation does not ignore the issues of power that are perhaps more evident in the first two categories of the "we", since they are interwoven in all efforts to develop intercultural education, as discussed by Westerlund and Karlsen (2017).

Music is an important dimension of human life; it serves as an expression or reflection of societal structures as well as a tool for individuals to develop their agency or their capacity to navigate in the world (Nettl, 2010). As a consequence, research

on music has its roots in many disciplines, with ethnomusicology and music education studying overlapping phenomena (Sæther, 2017). Within the diversity of ethnomusicological research, Rice (2014) sees a new branch related to "times of trouble", encompassing research on such themes as music, migration and minority studies. This same type of research branch is growing within music education. On close inspection, it is possible to see that the main directions within this "times of trouble"-research in the overlapping areas of ethnomusicology and music education are connected together by common methodological issues. These include:

- the development of partnerships between communities and musicians;
- the decreased distance between applied and theoretical research;
- an interest for music as an ecosystem, an attitude that demands paying attention to all genres; and
- an interest in how theories on the nature of music can contribute to research outside the borders of a particular discipline. (Rice, 2014)

The ethical implications of "times of trouble" research in music education are manifold. Based on a review of international intercultural pedagogic practice and results from projects carried out within the Sibelius Academy, seven ethical considerations related to intercultural research and practice emerge (Karlsen, Westerlund & Miettinen, 2016):

1. the possibility for exploitation;
2. the question of whose voice is represented in research;
3. the limits of stress in intercultural learning;
4. language barriers and the limits of mutual understanding;
5. institutional power and dangers of colonialism;
6. the possible politicization of research; and
7. safeguarding the integrity of participants.

This list has the potential to remind institutions of higher music education that they are more than just sites for musical practice and music education, but possibly important future game-changers as producers of knowledge and competence needed in times of social remoulding.

At the Malmö Academy of Music, the change process towards a music teacher education that provides competences needed in multicultural contexts started in the early 1990's. In addition to the total immersion courses developed in Gambia (Lundström, 1992), a course for immigrant musicians was opened and a World Music

School started in collaboration with ten comprehensive schools in Malmö (Gruvstedt, Olsson & Sæther, 2000). Alongside these hands-on educational initiatives, the Academy's research department developed a profile in intercultural perspectives on musical learning. Based on experiences from the immersion courses in Gambia, a study on approaches to musical learning in the Mandinka culture with implications for "borderland" educators and "borderland" researchers (Sæther, 2003) marked the early development of this orientation.

As Lundström (1993) argues in *World Music or multiculturalism or…*, music students need to develop a pluralistic and reflective approach to music. This approach can only be realised when students are able "to shift perspectives between on the one hand their relationship to their own musical background, and on the other hand their relationship to other people's relationship to their musical backgrounds" (p. 36, my translation). Without this dynamic approach, any teaching method or material might be useless – or even harmful.

With continued emphasis on the value of confrontations with the unknown, didactic irritations, and epistemological awakenings (Sæther, 2014), the need to explore and develop intercultural pedagogic competence has gained renewed impetus (Brøske & Storsve, 2013; Westerlund, 2017; Lorentz; 2016, Sæther, forthcoming). Lorentz (2016) defines intercultural competence as a combination of three different types of competence: communicative, social, and civic, and introduces five key phases in the process leading up to the goal (interculturally competent and aware teachers).

In Lorenz' first phase, deconstruction, the learner is to become aware of their own cultural identities and to develop an awareness of the actions, values, and norms that permeate their own culture. Through this, one's own point of departure is clarified, hopefully instilling thereby a more humble approach toward others' identity work. In the second phase, students learn to define and understand intercultural communication, for example, through their own hands-on experiences - such as playing with the musical gurus of Manamaiju. The third phase, ethnorelative understanding, gives the motivation and capacity to accept and live with cultural differences, and to understand the concept of pluralism, even in relation to complex epistemological issues. The fourth phase involves cultural awareness, as students learn to see themselves as cultural products and as social creatures. Here, intercultural sensitivity is developed. Finally, the fifth phase of reflexivity aims at internalising a reflective, intercultural approach towards the world. In this phase, the knowledge gained in the previous phases is used to accept challenges and uneasiness as part of the process leading towards intercultural competence.

In total immersion courses, such as the Manamaiju musical workshop described

in these pages, these types of competences are developed in praxis. Music-teacher trainees, musicians, researchers with groundbreaking and profound hands-on experience, develop together a readiness towards what Illeris (2015) describes as *transformative learning*, a learning that leads to abilities to go beyond what is taken for granted. Such learning is vital in times when changes in life conditions require social adjustments. Coming back to the slightly uncomfortable question about the relevance of our research and educational activities, the answer may be found in the uneasiness that accompanies transformation. Developing musical intercultural competence is not like playing from the score. It takes more listening, and playing by heart.



"Developing musical intercultural competence is not like playing from the score. It takes more listening, and playing by heart."





Clouds

by David Johnson

I am flying,
East to West,
T'ward the sun, and home.

The mountains only seem so big
Because I am so small,

While all around me, Clouds are yawning,
Water. Ice. Vapour. Air.

I am not ready, but I am ready.
A player in the band.

Where there is music, there is peace.

How could I not see
Before
Now

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"Music has no past;
it exists only at the moment when it happens."

"संगीत कुनै अतीत छैन;

यो क्षणमा मात्र अवस्थित छ जब यो हुन्छ."

-John Paynter, British composer and music educator

There exists a tremendous potential for learning and creativity in the moment of confluence when musicians from distant musical cultures meet. Intercultural meetings in music can offer indelible lessons in musical practice and intercultural understanding, foster cultural renewal and development, establish partnerships, and open up exciting new paths in creative music-making.

This book chronicles such a musical meeting between Scandinavian and Nepali musicians, educators, young children, and music education researchers in Manamaiju – the "Village of Musicians" – situated a short journey north from Nepal's capital, Kathmandu. Consisting of written reflections, photographs, music, artwork, and academic essays from over a dozen workshop participants and observers, this multi-faceted account takes readers inside the powerful and transformative experiences of musicians engaged in the unique challenges of intercultural learning. It is hoped that these compelling first hand accounts of people learning and playing together in an intense and inspiring setting will contribute to a growing body of knowledge in intercultural studies, and should be of interest to all readers of World Music and Music Education research, especially those with a particular interest in intercultural pedagogical practices and methodology.

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