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**IMPROVISATION VERSUS REPRODUCTION, INDIA AND THE WORLD**

**Abstract:** India has been particularly resistant to the infiltration of Western culture. Conversion to Christianity has been quite ineffective, and many other Western ideas, values and institutions have only been appropriated to a limited extent. Music is no exception and over the past centuries a controversy has arisen about the superiority of Indian versus Western music. Indian musicians and musicologists have championed improvised music as part of a living oral tradition, whereas Western music has been derided as a dead tradition of replicating written scores. This discourse may be seen as a reaction to earlier attempts of ‘proving’ the superiority of Western music with its imposing symphonic orchestras. At the same time, Indian music (and jazz) may well have been instrumental in the ‘rediscovery’ of improvisation in Western classical music.

**Key words:** improvisation, composition, India, orchestra, tradition, colonialism, modernity

Mr Bush, Mr Blair and Mr Singh, the respective heads of state of the USA, Great-Britain and India were received in audience by God. Being in a particularly generous mood God proposed to grant each of them a wish.

Mr Singh commenced: ‘Our country has been culturally very rich for ages but economically lags behind the USA. Please make our country equally wealthy!’

God replied: ‘All right, but it takes 50 years.’

Mr Singh started sobbing softly. ‘Thank you, you are very kind, but it will not happen in my lifetime, I will not be there to see it!’

Now it was Mr Blair’s turn: ‘My country is culturally not as rich as India and economically less powerful than the USA. Please improve our situation on both accounts!’

God granted his wish, but said it would take a couple of centuries.

Mr Blair broke into tears and said: ‘But this will not even happen in the lifetime of many of my successors then!’

Next Mr Bush brought forward his wish: ‘My country leads the world in every way, but culturally we are still underdeveloped. Please give us culture to match that of India.’

God started crying uncontrollably, upon which Mr Bush asked somewhat disgruntled: ‘What is the matter? Did I say something wrong?’

‘Well, you see - I’m afraid’, God said, ‘that your wish cannot be fulfilled even in *my* lifetime.’<sup>1</sup>

**I. A short colonial history**

The colonial domination of India had its foundation in military power and political scheming, played a considerable role in the economic inequality of the country, and was the basis of an extensive construction of cultural superiority of the West. This idea of superiority extended to all manifestations of culture and ranged from the superiority of Christian monotheism to the political system of democracy, from the economic system of capitalism to science and the arts. Music was no exception. Europeans’ observations of

<sup>1</sup> The story was told to me by Mr Arvind Parikh, the prominent sitar player and disciple of Vilayat Khan. I do not know

the Indian music they heard were far from favourable.<sup>2</sup> Indian music was generally described as disorganised sound, i.e., noise.

These rather blunt indicators of the inferiority of Indian music were gradually rationalised by a number of ‘objective’ arguments, among which figured prominently the absence of harmonisation and the lack of written music, or, ‘real’ compositions. Indian music consisted mainly of a single melodic line and the musicians apparently were not following any predefined program or plan. The development of the ‘genius and greatness’ ideology, the idea of the emancipation of music, the concepts of authentic and absolute music all proved useful tools in corroborating the superiority of the Western music system. Written scores made it possible for a large group of musicians to work together in perfect harmony and to produce an impressive wall of sound that was the very epitome of civilisation and modernity. These well-organised orchestras were the reflection of a well-organised society that had its roots in the Roman legions which had so effectively colonised most of Europe.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a number of efforts toward ‘harmonising’ Indian music, while at the same time bringing the necessity of introducing music writing to the fore. As the grip of Western nations on their colonies became challenged, the colonised nations needed to prove their ability to sustain independence. Modernisation was essential. In most nations this consisted mainly in copying Western culture. Any nation worthy of entering modernity needed to have its own orchestras and its own conservatories. Many of them simply adopted Western classical music as their standard. Other countries created hybrid orchestras of Western and local instruments. In yet other countries local traditions were reorganized into semi-modernized folkloristic companies.

In most countries one could still find a couple of traditional artists who tried to stick to their metier as closely as they had learned it in a lineage of many generations, but they were exceptions. Deep into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Western observers, in particular comparative musicologists and ethnomusicologists, lamented this situation, obsessed as they were with authenticity. In the last decades of the past century a change occurred in this attitude because ‘the people ... refuse to folklorize their underdevelopment to compensate the technical limitations’.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays ‘hybrid’ is no longer a synonym for disgusting. On the contrary, the interaction between ever deeper levels of hybrid forms is thought of as the global cauldron from which new ideas keep bubbling up.

One of the greatest examples of hybrid music is the hugely variegated afro-American stream. In fact, most of the music that we come across in today’s world is a product of this interaction. Jazz, pop, R&B, blues, bossa nova, samba, salsa, reggae and highlife are just a few genres. Moreover, this enormous stream is again interacting with musics from the Middle East, India, East Asia and Southeast Asia to create yet another explosion of new hybrid forms.

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its origin.

<sup>2</sup> Wim van der Meer and J. Bor, *De Roep van de Kokila* (Chapter 3), Martinus Nijhoff, 's-Gravenhage, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Referring to Caetano Veloso in: Hermano Vianna, *Música do Brasil*, Ed. Abril, 2000.

**II. Improvisation as a discourse against Western superiority**

I hope this introduction, which may seem not to have much to do with improvisation, has not put the reader off. There is a reason for it which is that Indian classical music has become something of a champion of improvisation. And yet, curiously, in the discourse of Indian music theorists and practicing musicians there is, traditionally, no concept of improvisation. In fact, the idea of improvisation in India is a construction that has arisen as a reaction to the onslaught of ideas about the superiority of Western music. The two major issues that set apart Western classical music from any other music, a long tradition of elaborately written scores and large orchestras that would play such scores in perfect collaboration, were frontally attacked by the very discourse of improvisation. Interestingly, in the early defences (or exultations) of Indian music, improvisation does not play a major role. The great Ananda Coomaraswamy for instance, in his beautiful article written in 1917 makes interesting observations on improvisation, but does not stress its importance:

Since Indian music is not written, and cannot be learnt from books, except in theory, it will be understood that the only way for a foreigner to learn it must be to establish between himself and his Indian teachers that special relationship of disciple and master which belongs to Indian education in all its phases: he must enter into the inner spirit and must adopt many of the outer conventions of Indian life, and his study must continue until he can improvise the songs under Indian conditions and to the satisfaction of Indian professional listeners. He must possess not only the imagination of an artist, but also a vivid memory and an ear sensitive to microtonal inflections.<sup>4</sup> The raga may be best defined as a melody mould or the ground plan of a song. It is this ground plan which the master first of all communicates to the pupil; and to sing is to improvise upon the theme thus defined.<sup>5</sup>

The context in which the first quote on improvisation crops up here is particularly interesting as the article refers to the idea of a *foreigner learning* Indian music. I have italicized both ‘foreigner’ and ‘learning’ since each of them has relevant implications. The specific mention of a foreigner implies that for a non-Indian there would be some conscious or unconscious barrier to knowing Indian music, which lies in the idea of improvisation. Secondly, to understand this improvisation one must enter into the master-disciple relationship. We see here, in a few powerful brush-strokes, a picture of some fundamental characteristics of Indian music that set it off from Western music; it cannot be learnt from books, it is based on improvisation, it can only be transmitted in the master-disciple relation and it requires imagination, memory and sharp hearing at a level that may be unique to the Indian tradition.

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<sup>4</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, ‘Indian Music’, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Apr. 1917), 164-165.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

### III. Improvisation and Western music

As Robin Moore argues (1992), improvisation gradually disappeared from Western art music between the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in symphonic music. This process was accompanied by an ideology that actually came to condemn improvisation as something undesirable.<sup>6</sup> In fact, even interpretation became undesirable for many 20<sup>th</sup> century composers. Of course, a written score, however detailed it may be, will always require some form of interpretation. Recording technology would apparently increase the level of unaltered transmission, but as Bruce Ellis Benson has shown, composers now fall into the trap set by themselves. Stravinsky for instance, supplemented his compositions with recordings to make sure any future execution would be 'correct'. However, several recordings that were made under his own guidance are quite different from each other.<sup>7</sup>

The extreme obsession with the correct execution of works of (usually dead) composers raises very serious questions. As Moore puts it:

No one denies that art music of earlier centuries is played today differently than when it was first composed; the fact that we as a culture desire so strongly to allow as little change as possible to occur, however, begs further explanation. Why should unvarying restatement be desirable? Could the present attitudes about performance have arisen if art music were a more familiar and comprehensible part of the lives of its public? The evidence suggests that it would not have. Although the performance of classical repertoire without variation brings countless music lovers satisfaction, how much more might an aesthetic which allowed for spontaneity and creative musical reinterpretation satisfy both performers and audiences?<sup>8</sup>

Evidently, the strict adherence to the written score is a ritual that enforced the core of Western culture. It has everything to do with copyrights and authenticity. Moore suggests that the rigorous separation between art music and popular music in the West is not beneficial for art music itself, as it tends to become ever more alienated from society.<sup>9</sup> This immediately brings to mind some of Adorno's ideas, in particular his vehement attacks on jazz.<sup>10</sup> Adorno still looms large in the humanities and musicologists keep ruminating on his ideas, but fortunately jazz and pop never looked back. There is a curious relationship between the notion of edifying the people through art music, the criticism of jazz & pop, and the oppressive nature of strict execution. Again in the words of Moore:

Contrasted with these [non-Western] traditions, our current approach to the performance of Western art music may seem surprisingly restricting and rigid. Especially in the interpretation of canonized, largely 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup> century derived

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Wim van der Meer, 'Improvisation and the margins of musical creation', *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society*, Vol. 37, 2007, 12-22.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Ellis Benson, *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue, A Phenomenology of Music*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, 70-72.

<sup>8</sup> Robin Moore, 'The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music: An Interpretation of Change', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, Vol. 23, No.1 (June 1992), 80.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Theodore A. Gracyk, 'Adorno, Jazz, and the Aesthetics of Popular Music', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No.4 (Winter, 1992), 526-542.

repertoire our schools and institutions tolerate little deviation from the guidelines of the score. Similar attitudes restrict the performer's interpretation of many modern works...

Written documentation supports Ferand's position on the importance of improvisation in every musical era of the Western classical tradition excepting the present. Even well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century it is clear that improvisation remained an indispensable ability for most professional musicians.<sup>11</sup>

Moore proffers the democratization of art through the rise of a middle class that plays music from a score without 'really understanding it' as one of the main factors in the decline of improvisation. The case he makes is very strong and when he cites Leopold Mozart one cannot but think of Indian masters:

Many imagine themselves to have brought something wonderfully beautifully into the world if they befrill the notes of an Adagio cantabile thoroughly, and make out of one note at least a dozen. Such note-murderers expose thereby their bad judgement to the light...<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, in India improvisation depends wholly on the continuity of tradition. Persons who try to improvise without being profoundly drenched in the tradition will always remain note-murderers. The famous story of Narada, the minstrel of the Gods, when he was still a young musician is a good illustration. This story circulates widely in India and I do not know of its precise origin, but will copy it here from a website on Indian music that attributes it to the Adbuta Ramayana:

Once upon a time the great rishi Narada thought ... that he had mastered the whole art and science of music. To curb his pride the all-knowing Vishnu took him to visit the abode of the gods. They entered a spacious building, in which numerous men and women were weeping over their broken limbs. Vishnu stopped and enquired of them the reason for their lamentation. They answered that they were the ragas and the raginis, created by Mahadeva; but that as a rishi of the name of Narada, ignorant of the true knowledge of music and unskilled in performance, had sung them recklessly, their features were distorted and their limbs broken; and that, unless Mahadeva or some other skillful person would sing them properly, there was no hope of their ever being restored to their former state of body. Narada, ashamed, kneeled down before Vishnu and asked to be forgiven.<sup>13</sup>

It is an interesting contradiction that Adorno, in the Marxist tradition, would be expected to champion the democratization of art. Yet at the same time, the democratization of art has divorced it entirely from the people and in a sense destroyed one of the most fundamental mechanisms to keep music 'alive', which is improvisation. This partly explains the split in which Adorno was caught, and dominates the crisis in which Western art music has been plunged. First, the opposition between popular and art music drew away half of the life from art music. Second, the *tradition* of Western art music became a frozen museum-piece in which

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<sup>11</sup> Robin Moore, op. cit., 62.

<sup>12</sup> Horsley on Improvisation from Grove 1980, 43, cited in: Ibid., 72.

<sup>13</sup> *Hindu music, Hindu wisdom*, [http://www.hinduwisdom.info/Hindu\\_Music.htm](http://www.hinduwisdom.info/Hindu_Music.htm).

innovation was a taboo. Third, new creations became so far removed from the tradition that very few people could understand them.

Adorno was not the only person to criticize jazz. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a fierce fight against the demoralizing, debasing, debilitating and deafening musics of the masses. Obviously this fight is the reflection of a great fear, that of being contaminated by 'low' culture. As Moore puts it:

Conceptions of what true art should be, and how the average individual should relate to it, changed drastically at the turn of the century. Western popular culture and art became at this time, and in many ways still remains, entirely distinct from high art in the minds of the public. The very term popular artist carries pejorative connotations. Our culture promotes the idea that any art form accessible to large numbers of people is in some way inferior to those which are more difficult to understand.<sup>14</sup>

The ideology of people like Adorno was to educate the masses and to raise their taste to that of classical music. Interestingly, in many other cultures, including India, there is no such abyss between high and low culture. Classical Indian music, folk music and popular music all interact and influence each other. There is no disdain or envy, although classical musicians may criticize each other for submitting too much to popular taste.

Ravi Shankar was keenly aware of the potential of exploiting the idea of improvisation as the common ground of Indian music and jazz. After the long period in which improvisation in Western art music had been treated as a very shady idea, improvisation experienced a resurrection. Ravi Shankar, the great ambassador of Indian music in general and of its improvisational character in particular, may have played a major role in this process. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Western musicians of the classical tradition started to take interest in improvisation again. Moore rightly indicates that since 1850 very few studies have been written on improvisation in Western music.<sup>15</sup> In the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this changed dramatically. First a growing number of publications appeared on improvisation in non-Western musics and jazz, and more recently the tradition of improvisation in Western art music has been engendering great interest.

I estimate that Western classical musicians - who had 'lost the art and *métier* of improvising' took more interest in the 'Indian way' than in jazz, even if Ravi Shankar always insisted on the similarities between Indian and jazz improvisation. This may have to do with the split between art and popular musics. Western exponents of art music may have felt more comfortable with the ancient art music of India than with the Western 'light music traditions'.

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<sup>14</sup> Robin Moore, *op. cit.*, 76.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

#### IV. Indian improvisation

It must be pointed out that improvisation is a very different thing in India than in many other traditions. Harold Powers has very lucidly elaborated this issue in two articles.<sup>16</sup> I would even suggest that jazz improvisation and Western art music improvisation of the past had more in common than either had with Indian improvisation. To start with, it must be reiterated that in India there is no separate concept of improvisation. For improvisation (the unforeseen), in the Western sense of the word, stands in opposition to what actually *is* foreseen. This distinction is more subtle in India. Commenting on Nettl's famous 1974 article Powers remarks:

Nettl has rightly observed that there is no necessary distinction between composing and improvising [*sic*] so far as the material and the procedures are concerned, and the oft made distinction between oral composition and written composition seems less significant still in principle, since fixed set pieces may perfectly well be orally composed and orally transmitted. But from the performer's point of view there is a very real difference between what is improvised and what is memorized. The analogy in oral language would be the distinction between speech that is spoken and a speech that is recited.<sup>17</sup>

Powers subsequently explains that one of the problems we constantly face is that there many different musical processes that are all gathered under the single name of improvisation:

Nettl's piece on what is improvised in improvisation touches on the vastly variable improvisability of musics in many other thought-provoking ways. A certain carelessness in terminology, however, reflects a commonplace and disastrously oversimplified understanding of the actual material already available to comparative musical studies in this domain. Nettl's hypothesis is that 'The improviser ... always has something given to work from ... We may call it his model. In some cultures specific theoretical terms are used to designate the model: raga ... and other, basically modal configurations--patet in Javanese and Balinese gamelan music, dastgah in Iran, maqam in Arabic and Turkish music.' The hypothesis is powerful, and surely correct. The instances, however, embody an unexamined cross-cultural generalization, which has time and again provoked frustrating comparisons that in fact cannot be made and obscured illuminating contrasts that can.<sup>18</sup>

In a much earlier article, Powers had distinguished between two main varieties of improvisation:

I would like to distinguish two main manners of improvisation. In one, a given melodic or, in our day, harmonic sequence is taken as a basis and improved upon, by means of embellishments, substitutions, or interpolations; but the original piece, as a whole, is still to be discerned behind the improvised version. I would suppose that many of the existing elaborate versions of certain melody-types in the Gregorian repertory might have arisen in some such way, and that this type of improvisation would have been common in the growing period of Christian music.

<sup>16</sup> Harold S. Powers, 'Mode and Raga', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Oct. 1958), 448-460; Harold S. Powers, 'Language Models and Musical Analysis', *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 24, No.1 (Jan. 1980), 1-60.

<sup>17</sup> Harold S. Powers, 'Language Models and Musical Analysis', op. cit., 43.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

An example from a harmonic system is the improvisation by jazz musicians on stock tunes or chord sequences. Whether precomposed or improvised, this is essentially variation technique. A second manner of improvisation, which I will call ‘free improvisation,’ consists in the permutation of short plastic motifs, combining them in various orders one with another. Probably many of the centonate melodies in the Gregorian repertory arose in some such fashion. From more familiar musical styles one might cite the manner in which cadenzas to classical piano concertos were improvised, since one may suppose that such improvisations were similar in principle to the written-out cadenzas that have come down to us.<sup>19</sup>

One of the most misleading ideas relating to improvisation in Indian music has been to suggest that a musician can freely improvise to the limits of his musical imagination within ‘the rules of the *rāga*’. Those rules would be as simple as a scale, some notes to be omitted, certain obligatory note-orders and the like. In his 1980 article, Powers brings in a completely new view of Indian improvisation, in which he compares it to speech-language and the variation/permutation seems not to really cover this form of improvising. I have attempted to describe this form of improvisation elsewhere, but will summarize it briefly here.<sup>20</sup> This type of improvisation refers to a specific part or section of a performance that is known commonly as *ālāp*. The literal meaning of this term is discourse, which immediately makes clear the linguistic connection. In this musical discourse the musician voices the *rāga*. We could be inclined to say that the musician talks musically about the *rāga*.

The idea of talking *about* the *rāga* would imply that the *rāga* is the subject of the discourse. However, for many musicians it goes a little farther. They feel that a performance is a manifestation of the *rāga*, that the *rāga* itself is the narrator and that the musician is the medium through which the *rāga* manifests itself. Every *rāga* has a unique individuality, a Gestalt, that is treated with great respect. The story of Narada and the mutilated *rāgas* related above is taken seriously by musicians. Musicians engage in a kind of interaction with the *rāga* flowing from an inner logic that is located in a subconscious stratum of the musical mind. Indeed, such an *ālāp* is wholly unforeseen; at every split second it may go into any number of directions. And any direction taken has consequences for the next turn in the track. In that sense it reminds one also of a chess game, in which every move leads to a new set of possibilities that in total are virtually infinite and yet at any stage of the game are dictated by distinct guidelines. Although nothing is foreseen in such an *ālāp* there is also rarely anything truly new. A manifestation of a *rāga* in this sense is like a biological specimen. Every rose is different, and yet all roses are the same. Even each phrase in the

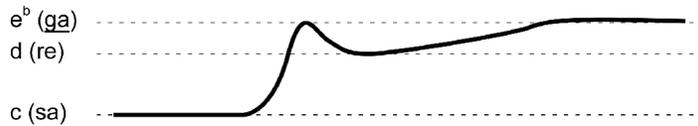
<sup>19</sup> Harold S. Powers, ‘Mode and Raga’, 451-452

<sup>20</sup> Wim van der Meer, *Hindustani Music in the Twentieth Century*, The Hague and new Delhi, Martinus Nijhoff/Allied Publishers, 1980; Wim van der Meer, ‘Improvisation and the margins of musical creation’, *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society*, Vol. 37, 2007, 12-22; Wim van der Meer, ‘Improvisation, Change, Works, and Ragas’, *Dutch Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 13, No.1, 2008, 25-35.

discourse may be unique, as durations and intonations are not limited to quavers, semiquavers, naturals, sharps and flats. There is a very real difference between:



and



Such differences can be meaningful. Great musicians present meaningful differences and they give us the feeling that every subsequent step is inevitable and necessary. The *rāga* is revealing itself in all its glory, it rises from the mist; it disengages itself from its background, which is embodied in the eternal drone. Every single phrase adds a new touch to the picture of the *rāga*, but at the same time every phrase speaks of the very core of the *rāga*. Such a performance can also be likened to a sculpture in the process of being created. Every chop of the chisel must be precise, accurate and correct, or else the whole stone will have to be thrown away.

There are several terms to describe this process. One that is commonly used by musicians is *upaj*, which means ‘created’. Although prefabricated pieces and compositions are also ‘created’, musicians usually refer to *upaj* as created during the performance. In that sense it comes closest to the broad term of improvisation. The essential problem is that nothing (or hardly anything) is really being created on the spot, during the performance. It is all known, it has all been ruminated thousands of times. We may tell the joke in the beginning of this article in endlessly different ways but two things will remain the same: the main framework of the story and the vocabulary with which we tell it. In South Indian music the concepts of *kalpita* and *manodharma* are used to distinguish between what has been created by a composer and what is done during the performance. Again, *manodharma* would then appear to be similar to improvisation. But, as before, it must be remembered that most of what happens during this ‘improvisation’ is pre-fabricated material.

A few other terms have some bearing on improvisation. We have already discussed the concept of *ālāp*, which is really a section of a performance, but at the same time refers to a particular process. Similar terms are *barhat* and *vistār*, the first meaning growth and the second expansion. They are similar to *ālāp*,

but used in different contexts. *Barhat* is a kind of *ālāp* used in juxtaposition with a *bandish* (composition), which is set within a rhythmic cycle. This occurs mainly in the genre known as *khayāl*, in which a very interesting contrast emerges between the free melodic phrases that are totally liberated from the rhythmic cycle and the recurring composition that has adheres closely to the cycle.

The fundamental distinction that that Powers made between music that is precomposed and memorized (or played from score) and music that is made up as the musician goes along in the end is not tenable. Again, the joke from the beginning may help to demonstrate this. Both the framework and the control of language are part of a lower stratum of the musical memory. Similarly, a musician will have some framework in mind which controls the idiom of the *rāga*. Moreover, that which is supposed to be precomposed, is also highly variable. The so-called composition (*bandish*), may appear in such wildly different forms that speaking of 'interpretation' would be to underplay the creative input of the artist. We are then, in the first place, speaking of different degrees of memorizing. As indicated at the beginning of this article, in Western music there has been (and still exists) an obsession with exact replication. The 'great work' created by the 'genius composer' is in the end open to only one interpretation - the true intention of the composer.

In an interesting study Benson laid bare the illusory nature of this way of thinking. More than anything else, improvisation is a form of rebellion against the dictatorial nature of music reproduction in Western culture. This rebellion has come from within, especially in jazz, and received support from outside. Indian music, and in particular Ravi Shankar, played a tremendous role in this process. Ravi Shankar could also achieve this because he teamed with musicians from the most diverging directions in the West: composers such as Philip Glass, performers of classical music like Yehudi Menuhin, jazz giant John Coltrane and, last but not least, the Beatles. Indian music, with Ravi Shankar as its ambassador, has in the process turned the tables on the critics of improvisation. Improvisation is now very much on the agenda of Western classical music again.

## **V. Conclusion**

The joke about the superiority of Indian culture in the beginning of this article is a typical example of the way Indian people feel about their culture. And indeed, despite many cultures around the world taking the superiority of Western culture for granted and imitating the Western approach to music making, Western classical music had (and has) very little impact in India. In the process of promoting the cause of Indian music and defending it against its critics, improvisation was possibly the most important symbol and one that also became the crux of the crisis in Western music. At the same time, as I have made clear, improvisation in India is probably not the same as improvisation elsewhere. At present, musicians criticize each other for using too many pre-composed materials and having too much of a pre-planned performance, which implies that they continue to place a high value on 'improvising', whatever may be meant by it.

Over the past century, music writing has become more important in India and the transmission of the vast collective consciousness of *rāga* knowledge is being threatened by fast living. Many of the reasons Moore has given for the decline of improvisation in Western music are lurking around the corner in contemporary India. And the recording industry may turn living *rāga*-entities into dead museum pieces, much in the same way scores caught Western musical ideas in a frozen state. For culture to live it must be in a state of continuous flux. As the title of Canclini's famous book suggests, we need strategies for entering but also for leaving modernity. It would seem that writing and reading music, rather than playing and hearing it, have been the essence of entering modernity. We will have to improvise our way out of it.

## САЖЕТАК

Вим ван дер Мер

### ИМПРОВИЗАЦИЈА НАСУПРОТ РЕПРОДУКЦИЈИ. ИНДИЈА И СВЕТ

Током 18. и 19. столећа колонијална власт европских сила над већим делом света била је постепено праћена идеологијом супериорности западне културе. Ово се односило и на музику и на музикологију. Испрва је већина западних коментара о “другој” музици била углавном потцењивачка и неодобравајућа, но постепено је ово негативно мишљење прерасло у програм према којем је извоз западњачких музичких концепата био подједнако подразумеван као и извоз других европских културних продуката попут преобраћања у хришћанство, наметања западног легалног система, па и језика. У процесу стицања независности бројне су незападњачке нације виделе присвајање западних музичких концепција као суштински доказ достизања “модерности”. Упадљив међу овим концептима јесте унапред дефинисана сарадња великог броја музичара који у оркестру изводе симфонијску музику, са последичним елементима попут свирања по нотама, одвајања улога извођача и композитора, употребе функционалне хармоније и обучавање музичара у формалном систему конзерваторијума. У бројним незападним нацијама данас западна музика игра важнију улогу од фолклорне традиције тих нација и то до те мере да је у неким нацијама традиционална музика готово у потпуности нестала.

Зачудо, у Индији западна музика није стекла такав супериорни статус. Током 19. столећа било је покушаја да се уведе западњачка нотација и да се “хармонизује” индијска музика, но они нису били значајни. Одиста, не само да је индијска музика суштински остала ствар усмене традиције, него су јој замисли о оркестрацији и хармонизацији остале потпуно стране. Шта више, и западна музика у целини остала је сасвим периферна у Индији, осим када је у питању апропријација у хибрид индијске филмске музике.

Импровизација је постала кључни елемент у контра-дискурсу индијске музике током 20. века. Као део тог дискурса створена је опозиција између импровизоване и компоноване музике са импликацијом да би импровизација била немогућа у западној класичној музици зато што је ова сасвим замрзнута, пука и буквална реплика записане партитуре, реликвија у музеју музике. Чак тако касно, као 1945. године, Гроувов речник описује импровизацију као примитивно стварање музике. Сада, западни конзерваторијуми и теоретичари класичне музике “поново откривају” значај импровизације. У том процесу “напуштања модерности”, да цитирамо Канклинџа, пример индијске музике је веома занимљив.