University of Alberta

Sounding the Impact:
A Case Study on the Social and Cultural Work of Music in the Context of the Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Ethnomusicology

Department of Music

Spring 2012
Edmonton, Alberta

Abstract:

The Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society (ERMS) is a volunteer organization that supports Indian classical music, mainly through the act of organizing formal concerts. As a society that is centered on supporting a genre of music that is closely tied to a particular geographical location that is physically and culturally distant from its immediate surroundings, the ERMS occupies a delicate space within Canadian society. As a result, the organization has adapted in order to prosper in its environment. These adaptations, viewed through the multifaceted lens of the individuals who make up the ERMS, shed light on what kind of an identity the ERMS seeks to project and ways in which the society might be viewed as a type of community. As a result of the understandings gleaned from this exploration, I argue that the ERMS offers a compelling example of music's ability to forge social solidarity in culturally diverse contexts.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the current president of the Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society (ERMS), Nikhil Rao, along with his fellow board members, for their willingness to take part in this project. These individuals already volunteer much of their time to the ERMS, and the time they devoted to my project is deeply appreciated. I am also indebted to all of the individuals who took the time to share their knowledge, insights, and perspectives with me in personal conversations and formal interviews. Although I cannot name them all here, their contributions are invaluable and form the core of this thesis.

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Federico Spinetti, who taught me most of what I know about the discipline of Ethnomusicology, and Dr. Regula Qureshi, who, with much patience, introduced me to South Asian music and culture. I could not have asked for two more knowledgeable and supportive advisors. I am also grateful to Dr. Yasmeen Abu-Laban for her guidance and suggestions, and to Dr. Michael Frishkopf for his contribution in chairing the defense committee.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their constant love and support, and above all my husband, Ryan, who has encouraged me every step of the way.

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Introduction

I was first introduced to Indian classical music in the vague context of a World Music course in the second year of my undergraduate music degree at the University of Saskatchewan. Although many types of music are noted for their potential to promote a sensation of place that transcends the immediate physical environment of its listeners, I was struck by the way in which the Indian classical music that was played during class seemed to envelope me into this kind of an atmosphere in a way I had never experienced before. What most stood out to me was the sensation that I was not experiencing the music in the personal, isolated way that I was used to. Rather the music's atmosphere seemed to envelope everyone together in a more inclusive way. It seemed to me that if someone coughed, a car was heard driving past outside or even when someone else in the room spoke above the music, the spell of the atmosphere was not broken. In this way this music immediately struck me as much more participatory in nature than any other music I had previously been exposed to. This perspective is one that has had a significant influence on the research and interpretations that inform this thesis, as does the fact that, as someone new to Indian classical music, I have very limited knowledge of the complex technical aspects of this music, and no understanding of the languages in which it is sung (when it is sung). It is my hope that the unavoidable blind spots and limitations that result from this will be made up for in the unique perspective I am able to bring as someone new to, but interested in Indian classical music, looking on, in many ways from the outside in.

In this thesis I explore the unique connections that a group of Indian classical music enthusiasts in the locale of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, have with this genre of music, and, in light of this common interest, with one another. The Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society (ERMS) is a volunteer organization that exists for the sole purpose of supporting Indian classical music and dance in Edmonton, mainly through organizing live performances throughout the year (because of the close connection between Indian classical music and Indian classical dance, from this point on I will use the term "Indian classical music" to refer to both). The majority of ERMS members and participants come from a

South Asian background, and at first glance one might assume that the activities of the ERMS could be summed up as an attempt to maintain a piece of home in Canada. I will argue that the interactions within and around the society tell a story that is much more complex. The ERMS is different from other ethnic organizations that are centered on particular geographical regions and have fairly clear-cut boundaries, most often enforced through the use of a particular language.[1] Rather the ERMS membership and audience base spans a broad and culturally diverse range of many regions and is unequivocally national.[2] The ERMS has not drawn impermeable boundaries to identify itself as a South Asian society for South Asians only. In fact, the organization has sought to reach beyond the South Asian community in Edmonton in order to obtain funding, publicity, and a broader base of audience members and supporters. These interactions have undoubtedly played a role in shaping the society over time, as it has reacted and adapted to its surroundings. But how is a society that is centered on supporting a genre of music that is so closely tied to expressions of Indian nationalism able to thrive in the context of Canada? How are notions of authenticity and the safe-guarding of tradition reconciled with the inevitable changes and adaptations that must take place in an environment that is "foreign" to the music? These questions cannot be answered without delving into the numerous perspectives of the individuals who make up the ERMS, their personal connection to and views about the music, the ways in which they experience ERMS performance events, and how they connect to and position themselves within the society. Central to this exploration is a consideration of the extent to which the ERMS might viably be considered a community, and, possibly, what kind of a community it might best be understood as. Can the ERMS be understood as a diaspora community? How

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[1] For example, there are several organizations in the Edmonton area specifically for individuals with connections to certain regions of India and South Asia, such as the Edmonton Tamil Cultural Association.

[2] The ERMS also includes members and participants from other South Asian nations, notably Pakistan. The interaction between the society's diversity and its emphasized connection to India will be discussed later.

has the society been impacted by and responded to the policy of multiculturalism in Canada? How have manifestations of difference been negotiated amongst the organization's diverse membership and attendees? In attempting to understand, in detail, the unique position and internal interrelations of this particular group, this project offers the possibility of gaining new insight into the dense web of perplexing, often conflicting, interactions and negotiations that inevitably exists in a nation populated by a people with multiple cultural backgrounds and heritages.

I first became aware of the ERMS in September 2010 when, upon sharing my personal interest in Indian classical music as part of an introduction of myself to some fellow classmates, I was invited to a concert by Manikarnika Kanjilal. The society was founded in 1983 (partially in connection with the initiatives of the Raga-Mala Music Society of Calgary, though the two societies have been entirely independent for many years).[3] The society is funded through membership dues, commercial sponsorships (commercial sponsors are given advertisement space in ERMS program booklets and brochures), and donations, and has also received funding through government grants. Most recently the ERMS secured a lucrative funding agreement with the Alberta Liquor and Gaming Commission.[4] The organization is headed up by a board of directors consisting of a president, a general secretary, a treasurer, an assistant treasurer, and three to four members at large, and also includes the position of 'past president'.[5] This group is responsible for contacting artists and making all of the arrangements necessary for organizing concerts, raising funds, handling finances, promoting awareness of the society etc. An annual general board meeting is held, usually in February, each year wherein members are made aware of the board's activities and decisions, and suggestions or concerns can be voiced.

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[3] Jagannath Wani, ed., *Living Rooms to Concert Halls, Raga-Mala Journey: 1975-2004* (Calgary: Raga-Mala Music Society of Calgary, 2004) 20. "Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society," http://www.edmontonragamala.ab.ca/, accessed January 31, 2012.

[4] Mita Das, Subhash Karkhanis, Bhupen Parekh, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[5] Mita Das, discussion with the author, July 25, 2011.

It is important to note that this thesis should be understood as situated within the time span of April 2011 to January 2012. While there is reference to past trends in programming, nature and composition of membership and audience/volunteer involvement, organizational goals and targeted audience, this project is largely a snapshot of an organization that has the potential to change considerably over time. What makes this particularly true about the ERMS is the major influence that the president and board of the society has on defining elements such as the recruitment of members, programming decisions, and decisions regarding what major goals and objectives will be pursued, and how.[6] Regarding the recruitment of members, longtime ERMS member and past president Mita Das explained:

> The president that was there before me, he comes from a [particular] region and when he was a president lots of people from his community became members... because he was promoting there [saying], 'oh how come you're not coming to our shows?' or 'how come you're not a member yet?' so every president kind of does that.[7]

Similarly, each president and collection of board members inevitably has a varying set of views on what goals and objectives are important for the society to achieve. These may involve financial goals, attendance goals, or dedication to either traditional programming or a broader range of styles and musicians in the annual program, to name a few examples brought up by past ERMS presidents.[8] The president of the ERMS during the time of this project was Nikhil Rao, who seemed to be very sensitive to concerns about maintaining an organizational commitment to traditional Indian classical music, but also expressed an interest in involving some broader and more contemporary interpretations of the genre in the

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[6] Mita Das, Kumud Acharya, Atanu Das, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[7] Mita Das, discussion with the author, July 25, 2011.

[8] Atanu Das, Papiya Das, Bhupen Parekh, Kumud Acharya, Mita Das, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

programming. Nevertheless, the programming put on by the ERMS during this project remained safely within the bounds of the traditional.

It should also be noted that the limited timeframe within which this research took place did not allow for exhaustive interviews. The individuals whose comments informed this thesis (whether in the context of formal interviews or personal conversations) span a wide range of ages, and levels of involvement with the society. They include individuals with a variety of linkages to South Asian culture (individuals who were born and raised in various areas of South Asia or South Asian diaspora communities, second and third generation South Asian-Canadians) as well as individuals with no perceived South Asian background at all.[9] In addition to formal interviews my research is based on observations made while attending concerts (which I did regularly during the research phase of my project), volunteering, and sitting in on an ERMS board meeting. While I refer to theories and research from secondary literature in my discussion of the ERMS, my goal during this project was to focus solely on the ethnographic data I collected during the early stages of research. In this way I sought to limit the influence that previously developed theories and research would have on my interpretation of my observations.

I secured ethics approval for this project, through the University of Alberta, prior to beginning research.

[9] It should be noted that I was not able to formally interview any board members current at the time spanning my research aside from the past president Mita Das. A formal interview with Brad Bowie, who was serving on the board as a member at large at the time of this thesis, is also included, however, this interview was conducted in 2008 by Sabreena Delhon.

Chapter 1. Indian Classical Music – History and Background:

Music and Nationalism

The genre of music that is known as Indian classical music today was profoundly shaped by the period leading up to and following India's achievement of independence from its colonizer, Britain, and consequently its formation as a nation-state. Because this time period was permeated by India's quest for independence and subsequent project of nation-building, it is my assertion that a discussion of Indian classical music cannot take place apart from a parallel discussion of nationalism. In fact, I argue that a contextualized exploration of the development of Indian classical music throughout this period will reveal that this genre of music and Indian nationalism, in all its varied forms, types and manifestations, are tightly interlinked. For this reason, I have chosen to preface my discussion of the history of Indian classical music with an overview of some basic definitions and theories that have informed current understandings of the concept of nationalism. For this discussion I will be relying heavily on the work of Anthony D. Smith, particularly his recent book devoted solely to the concept of nationalism.

In the introduction to *Nationalism* Smith declares:

> The cultural and psychological importance of the nation, and hence of nationalism, is... profound. The ubiquity of nationalism, the hold it exerts over millions of people in every continent today, attests to its ability to inspire and resonate among 'the people' in ways that only religions had previously been able to encompass.[10]

Similarly, in his well-known publication, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson states that "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time."[11] Having established nationalism as a significant world

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[10] Anthony D Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Polity Press 2010), 2.

[11] Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities [electronic Resource]: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006), 3.

force, both authors proceed to spend pages upon pages wading through the muck and mire of a notoriously contested and ambiguous discourse, plainly admitting that even an attempt to provide an acceptable definition for the term 'nationalism' is a risky undertaking. Anderson makes the revolutionary assertion that official nationalism emerged in the nineteenth century through the union of early ideas of 'nation' and that of empire. He describes this as a combination of "naturalization" (the notion that certain groups of people naturally belonged together beneath a common, overarching identity, predicated mostly upon a common language – a conception largely brought about by the invention of the printing press) and the "retention of dynastic power."[12] With such an interpretation of the origins of nationalism, it is clear why Anderson defines nations as "imagined communities."[13] As he argues, there is nothing inherently 'natural' about the collectivities formed through dynasties, nor was the establishment of the idea of the nation as a strategy for maintaining and extending power, with the help of novel technologies, organic. Whether one accepts Anderson's ambitiously revolutionary definition of the nation or not, it is clear that there are a multitude of forces at work in sustaining the profound influence of nationalism across the globe, and music is certainly among them.[14]

As Smith argues, the mobilization of nationalism is centered on a concern for the well-being of the nation. He states that a nation's well-being is generally viewed by nationalists as dependent on three properties: autonomy, identity, and

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[12] Ibid., 6-7.

[13] Ibid.

[14] While Smith and Anderson have very different views on the establishment and development of the nation-state (Smith is often interpreted as a primordialist, and Anderson as a constructivist), I am referencing discussion from both of them in order to establish a foundational description of nationalism as it relates to Indian classical music. I feel that the extent to which their arguments appear in this thesis, both scholars are useful in providing this foundation, and that their individual stances on the development of the nation-state does not directly affect the current discussion. For explanations of their views in detail, see Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant and Republic* (Toronto: Blackwell Pub, 2008), and Anderson (2006).

unity.[15] He provides that approaches to these goals, views of what their realization would mean, and the amount of importance allotted to each will inevitably vary amongst different nationalisms. Yet, he maintains that these properties provide a useful framework for general analysis. The goal of autonomy is perhaps the most straight-forward of the three, though it can certainly vary in interpretation and perceived importance.[16] Music's connection to this facet of the nation largely overlaps with the second goal of asserting a unique and authentic identity. Smith defines national identity as:

> The continuous reproduction and reinterpretation by the members of a national community of the pattern of symbols, values, myths, memories, and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the variable identification of individual members of that community with that heritage and its cultural elements.[17]

Nira Yuval-Davis notes that this "continuous reproduction and reinterpretation" of who is in the community and who is not forges inextricable connections between the nation and deeply ingrained, often hegemonic forces of exclusion, a process in which music is absolutely involved.[18]

Regarding the nation's need for unity Smith explains:

> The nationalist ideal of unity seeks not some 'objective' cultural uniformity, but a social and cultural union of families and of individual wills and sentiments. The nationalist does not require that individual members should *be* alike, only that they should *feel* an intense bond of

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[15] Smith (2010), 9.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 20.

[18] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation," *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 16, no. 4 (October 1993), 624. Yuval-Davies is discussing exclusion in the context of gender. This focus could certainly have relevance for a discussion about nationalism in India, however, such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, and therefore her argument is applied here in more general terms.

> solidarity and therefore *act* in unison on all matters of national importance.[19]

Music often inspires these intense feelings of unity, whether it is consciously employed for this purpose or not.

The topic of music and nationalism has received considerable attention from music scholars with a vast array of research interests and approaches. Ethnomusicologist John Baily writes about the influence of music on the process of nation building in Afghanistan. He explores how nationalists in Afghanistan used music in their efforts to establish unity among the people living in the territory, while various sub-cultural groups simultaneously used music to deepen already highly differentiated and diverse cultural/ethnic divisions.[20] Musicologists Susan Fast and Kip Pegley highlight the use of music in reasserting national consolidation in the United States in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, noting particularly the assertion of "black-white" unity suggested by an emphasis on gospel choirs in the benefit concert titled *America: A Tribute to Heroes*, which took place on September 21, 2001.[21] One of the most recent and in depth explorations of music and nationalism, however, is Philip V. Bohlman's *Music, Nationalism, and the Making of New Europe*. In the context of the European Union wherein attempts to assert a unified identity for "the New Europe" have come up against the national projects and sentiments of the region's comprising countries, Bohlman argues that: "Music is malleable in the service of the nation.... There is... no single place to experience the interaction of music and nationalism."[22] These multiple points of contact

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[19] Smith (2010), 29.

[20] John Baily, "The Role of Music in the Creation of an Afghan National Identity," in Martin Stokes, ed., *Ethnicity, identity, and music : the musical construction of place*, Berg ethnic identities series (New York: Berg 1997).

[21] Jonathan Ritter, *Music in the Post-9/11 World*, ed. J. Martin Daughtry (Routledge, 2007), 114.

[22] Philip Vilas Bohlman, *Focus: Music, Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe* (Routledge, 2011), 5-6.

between music and nationalism in "the New Europe" involve national anthems, unofficial national songs, the original composition of dedication music to mark national achievements or moments of national significance, marching bands, events such as folk festivals or the Eurovision song competition, and collections of national music.[23]

Regarding national collections, Bohlman emphasizes the significance of what he calls "musical museums of the nation."[24] He states: "Just as nations put music in museums, they employ music to "museumize" the nation-state – in other words, to preserve and present the very elements needed to realize nationalism through performance in the course of an ongoing history."[25] This concept of "museumizin" is linked to the process of classicization in which a particular type of music is regarded as more valuable and legitmate than others. It gains the aura of "high-culture", and its status is affirmed by aesthetic arguments about its inherent artistic superiority. Bohlman explains how a collection of Jewish folk songs in Russia crossed over from low-brow to high-brow, crediting its installment as a museumized national monument for its achievement of classical status.[26] Here, Bohlman points out, the aesthetic ideology of music as autonomous so tied to the tradition of Western classical music, can be seen working hand and hand with the nationalist project.

> Music helps make the nation by altering our perception of time. More skillfully and subtly than other forms of artistic expression, music finds its way into the temporal boundaries where myth and history of the nation overlap to create complex myths about what we want a nation to be and what it is.[27]

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[23] Ibid., 1-11, 109-111, 115-116.

[24] Ibid, 15-17.

[25] Ibid., 17.

[26] Ibid., 59.

[27] Ibid., 14-15.

It is the perceived autonomy of music that allows it to so subtly transcend temporal boundaries, bringing the nation along with it.

Bohlman makes clear that, while at times music is deliberately employed to create national myths in a "top-down" fashion, at others the process occurs much less consciously, and does not emerge from the lofty circles of intellectuals and elites. He carefully distinguishes between these two realms of music and nationalism with the terms "nationalist music" and "national music." Bohlman defines national music as music that "reflects the image of the nation so that those living in the nation recognize themselves in basic but crucial ways."[28] This kind of music represents something "pre-existent and quintessential – culturally prior to the nation," while nationalist music dispenses with notions of antiquity to focus on the nation in modern terms in order to represent "cultural boundaries that have political purposes."[29] Nationalist music also embodies a strong sentiment of competition; the assertion that "our music is better than yours, therefore our nation is better than yours."[30]

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[28] Ibid., 59.

[29] Ibid., 87.

[30] Ibid., 85-86.

Music, Nationalism and Classicism in India

As Kamala Visweswaran attests, the pre-modern history of South Asia has been the subject of intense debate. One of the most widespread theories about the nature of the early social formation is that the fertile Indus Valley was "originally" inhabited by Dravidian peoples. These people were gradually pushed South by two invasions from the North: an "Aryan invasion" first, and a 'Muslim invasion' second.[31] Visweswaran points out that this theory has been strongly challenged by current scholarship, yet it has somehow managed to "persist in popular and national imaginaries as a means of demonstrating that what seem to be hardened and exclusivist identities today were also present in the past."[32] Thus, whether this theory is accepted or not, the cultural and linguistic divide between North India and South India that it seeks to explain have been realities in India for many centuries.[33] Music also reflects this divergence. The Indian classical tradition is divided into two basic genres: Hindustani (North India) and Carnatic (South India).

The earliest texts discussing Indian music are the Vedas, which may have been written as early as 1500 B.C.E., but the extent to which these writings relate to any existing musical practice is a point of contention. Most scholarly attention to early Indian musical practices centers on Northern India during Mughal rule when wealthy princes would offer patronage to Hindu musicians who would live and perform in their courts. It might be expected that nearly two hundred years of British colonial would have had an influence on the musical traditions of South Asia. However, as Janaki Bakhle explains, British influence in this area was

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[31] Regarding an alternative theory, Visweswaran writes, "the current consensus is that there was probably a gradual migration of Central Asian or Aryan peoples into the Indian subcontinent over the centuries." Kamala Visweswaran, *Perspectives on Modern South Asia: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 13.

[32] Ibid., 14.

[33] For a more detailed description of the cultural and linguistic divide between North and South India, see Visweswaran (2011), 12-15.

limited. The limited musical exchange between Britain and India has been blamed on the immense dissimilarity of Western European and South Asian musics.[34] However, in the years leading up to, and following India's achievement of independence, a significant change in the world of Indian music did occur. The major difference was that a particular genre of music in India came to be seen as "simultaneously classical and national," and was consequently entitled 'Indian classical music'.[35]

The rise of national sentiment in India is often linked to the 1857 rebellions, but many other contributing factors have been pointed out as well.[36] In his recently re-released book *Dependence and Disillusionment*, Sudhir Chandra credits economic issues and motivations with a major role in the development of an Indian national consciousness, which, in his view, was initially almost entirely predicated on a dichotomy of "imperial interests" versus "Indian interests."[37] In describing the gradual emergence of nationalism in India, he concludes: "The Indian self-image in 1858 was that of an assemblage of so many nationalities and castes."[38] Yet by 1885, Chandra explains, this self-image had been considerably modified to accommodate the belief that India had the makings of a nation.[39]

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[34] Janaki Bakhle, *Two Men and Music [electronic Resource]: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 3. Among the foundational differences between Western European and South Asian music is a dissimilar focus on melody that is based entirely on individual ragas, collections of notes similar in some ways to scales, and the gradual exploration of a raga as a foundational element of a performance. Concepts foundational to Western European music such as chords, harmony and modulation have no place in traditional Indian classical music.

[35] Ibid., 4.

[36] Sudhir Chandra, *Dependence and Disillusionment: Emergence of National Consciousness in Later Nineteenth Century India* (Oxford University Press 2011), 177; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, First Vintage Books Edition. (New York; Toronto: Vintage Books, 1994), 132-161.

[37] Chandra (2011), 177-179.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 186.

Several decades later, Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the foremost leaders of India's independence movement, was still striving to make autonomous nationhood a reality. In 1946, one year before he would become the first Prime Minister of India, Nehru wrote *The Discovery of India*, a major work in which he described his own view of "the Indian national consciousness" while also arguing for some foundational ideological shifts that he felt were necessary in order to "carry India into the modern age of scientific discovery and socioeconomic progress."[40] In a section given the heading "India's Growth Arrested, " Nehru asserted that in "the earliest days" India was built upon two foundations: one that revered "the unchanging, the universal, the absolute," and another that upheld "an appreciation of life and the changing world."[41] However, he wrote, "[i]n later years the dynamic aspect began to fade away, and in the name of eternal principles the social structure was made rigid and unchanging."[42] With this argument Nehru was able to endorse a progressive, modernizing outlook without directly challenging or rejecting those influences and values that were seen as hearkening back to the 'ancient roots' of Indian culture and society. In fact, he claimed that it would be more in alignment with the values of early Indian society to embrace certain changes than it would be to insist on maintaining static traditions. The result is a simultaneous reaching back and reaching forward for material that can contribute to the forging of a national identity, national unity, and, as a matter of course, national autonomy. The rhetoric of nationalism can be detected as it expertly fuses together views of the past with notions of a glorious national destiny, framing it all in the context of the present.

This process can also be seen at work in the new national and nationalist approaches to music. In summing up the views of Theodor Adorno "the major theorist of music as ideology," David Lelyveld writes:

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[40] Omar Dahbour and Micheline Ishay, eds., *The Nationalism Reader* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 13.

[41] Ibid., 248.

[42] Ibid.

> [M]usic exemplifies the theory of mediation, the processes by which consciousness interprets actuality and motivates action. Music, unless it is a deliberate act of dissent, may become part of the common sense of a society, accepted as part of a natural and unalterable condition of being.[43]

Thus both "the formal characteristics of music," and "the social context in which it can exist," take on significance in understanding the ways in which music can shape interpretations of reality.[44] With these theoretical assertions in tow, Lelyveld discusses the establishment of All-India Radio and its continued use after India's achievement of independence. He cites the British establishment of radio in India in the early-mid twentieth century as the first and only instance of significant imperial interest in Indian music. The project was not even primarily concerned with music, as the desire to control the political content of news broadcasts and radio talks was impetus behind it, and continued to be the central focus until independence.[45] In spite of this seeming disregard for the music itself, Lelyveld insists that the broadcasting of Indian music on the British-run All-India Radio broadcasting networks exerted a strong colonial influence on both the formal characteristics of the music and the social context in which it took place. The improvisational style of Indian classical music was avoided in favour of pre-composed music that could accommodate programming schedules, a practice that also necessitated musical notation, which, earlier, had not been a part of Indian musical practice. The absence of a live audience also imposed a drastic change in the dynamics of performance.[46]

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[43] David Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant: Administering Music on All-India Radio," in Carol A. Breckinridge, ed., *Consuming the Nation* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010) (2010), 112.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 113-114.

[46] Ibid., 114-115.

When All-India Radio was taken over by Nehru's government in 1947 intentions to reject British influence were clearly expressed, yet "many assumptions [presumed by the British] about the nature of radio broadcasting remained unchallenged."[47] According to Dr. B. V. Keskar, who served as Minister of Information and Broadcasting from 1950 to 1962, the main offense the British had committed against Indian music was their neglect of it.[48] Keskar warned that such neglect promised devastating results. He saw music as a powerful force in "regulating" emotions and maintaining social order.[49] Thus, while the British government employed radio as a tool to negate the influence of the independence movement, Keskar and others used it in their attempts to override what was, in their view, the detrimental influence of cinema music and other 'low-brow' forms.[50] Efforts were also directed toward weeding out the 'impure' Muslim influences in Indian classical music.[51] Ironically, Keskar's mission to save the musical heritage of India from a state of decline that he viewed as the result of British ignorance and neglect, unauthentic Muslim influence, and the rise in popularity of inferior musical genres, continued in the same direction that the previously implemented methods and strictures of British musicologists and radio "experts" had pointed toward. This direction could be described as moving toward classicism and standardization, ideals that have been central to the traditions of Western classical music.

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[47] Ibid., 118.

[48] Ibid., 116.

[49] Ibid., 118.

[50] Ibid., 120-121.

[51] Ibid., 117. Hindustani Indian classical music was developed from the musical traditions of court musicians who served Muslim Maharajas during the Mughal Era. These musicians were widely known as Muslims themselves. Attempts to purge Indian classical music of their inevitable influence were largely focused on excluding professional musicians who were often Muslim. Lelyveld argues that Keskar did this in the context of AIR by favouring musicians with formal education over those who had learned in the traditional context of a particular *gharana*.

A new focus on musical theory was one clear indicator of this shift. Under Keskar's management an audition system was introduced to All-India Radio, which involved a performance component and a theoretical component, requiring potential staff musicians to answer a number of questions about formal music theory, a discipline that was decidedly new to South Asian music. Moreover, the practice of favouring pre-composed music for radio performance was continued, which meant that musicians were required to read music. As a result, musicians who had graduated from (and could afford to attend) music academies were preferred to more traditional musicians who had been trained in the context of a *guru-shishya* relationship.[52] In this way these developments directly challenged the fundamental distinction that had previously existed between the professional musician and the amateur musician, bringing the performance of Indian classical music out of the private context of princely courts and into the public sphere.[53] In light of this new approach, Indian classical music took on an aura of sophistication and respectability, and became an object of national pride. Moreover, this approach is in perfect alignment with Nehru's call to return to the foundational principles of Indian culture by embracing change, and even underscores his more contentious claim that "the West has much to teach us."[54]

Although All-India Radio was undoubtedly a noteworthy force in developing post-Independence Indian nationalism, Lelyveld highlights its lack of success in creating a "national cultural hegemony."[55] According to Bohlman's terminology the project of All-India Radio would be identified as nationalist, since it was in effect a 'top-down' attempt to shape and control public views of the Nation.[56] However (in addition to the unquenchable popularity of film songs),

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[52] Ibid., 119.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Dahbour and Micheline (1999), 249.

[55] Lelyveld (2010), 123.

[56] Bohlman (2011), 87; Lelyveld (2010).

the vast diversity of India proved to be as challenging for the native elites that inherited its government as it had been for the previous colonial rulers.[57] Among the challenges that this diversity has presented, the issue of language looms large. "In India alone, there are twenty-two officially recognized languages included in the eighth schedule of the Indian constitution and several hundred dialects."[58] An extensive range of cultural and religious differences permeated (and continue to permeate), the country as well.[59] But, the difficulties that these differences presented did not deter a host of leaders from striving to carve out a unifying national identity. Among them, three prominent figures turned to music as the key to achieving their goals: Rabindranath Tagore (1860-1941), Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (1872-1931), and Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936).[60]

The legacy of Tagore stands out in many ways as both exceptional and contradictory. Proudly celebrated as an eminent national icon to this day, and even referred to as a "musical nationalist", Tagore was the primary composer of both the official Indian national anthem, *Jana gana mana*, and the semi-official national song, *Vande Mataram*.[61] Yet, he staunchly opposed the concept of the nation-state along with the projects and sentiments of nationalism.[62] In his 1917 essay "Nationalism in India," Tagore insists "India has never had a real sense of nationalism.... it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India

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[57] Lelyveld (2010), 123.

[58] Visweswaran (2011), 4.

[59] Ibid., 4-9; Alan Marriott, "Nationalism and Nationality in India and Pakistan," *Geography* 85, no. 2 (April 2000): 174-175.

[60] Partha Chatterjee, "Tagore, China and the critique of nationalism," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011): 271; Bakhle(2005), 96, 137.

[61] Chatterjee (2011), 271; Charles Capwell, "Music and Nationalism," ed. Alison Arnold, *South Asia: The Indian Subcontinent*, The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 436; William Radice, "Keys to the Kingdom: The Search for How Best to Understand and Perform the Songs of Tagore," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 1100.

[62] Chatterjee (2011), 271.

by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity."[63] Tagore referred to the processes and political organization behind nation-building as "the machine," a mechanism that "imposed a set of disciplinary constraints and collective demands that were too narrow and coercive to allow for the full range of diversity of human life."[64] In this way, according to Tagore, the machinery of nationalism destroys diversity, "turning everything into a homogenous mass.... the colourless vagueness of cosmopolitanism."[65] In place of the nation-state therefore, Tagore advocates for the concept of "*samaj*" or "natural communities."[66] He contrasts the nation-state with *samaj* by arguing that the primary goal of nations is to accumulate territory and material wealth, while the central focus of his natural communities is social harmony.[67] Moreover, *samaj* requires every inhabitant to foster a personal and quotidian relationship with the community, while at the same time playing an active part in shaping and creating it.

Thus, natural communities are organically *created*, wherein human relationships and diverse cultures are allowed to develop and interact gradually and naturally, while nations are mechanically *constructed*, their network of cultures leveled into uniformity wherein citizens interact with one another in an artificial and impersonal way.[68] Partha Chatterjee identifies this dichotomy of construction versus creation, so prevalent in Tagore's arguments, as a clear

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., 282.

[65] Ibid. 274. For Tagore, "cosmopolitanism" meant that the diversity of regional cultures would be eclipsed, reduced to their common elements within the large-scale context of a national culture.

[66] Ibid., 273, 275.

[67] Ibid., 274, 281.

[68] Ibid., 274.

indicator of the foundational influence of romantic aesthetics on Tagore's philosophy.[69] Chatterjee explains:

> For Tagore, a fundamental condition for the efflorescence of free human life was the guarantee of the aesthetic freedom to be creative without any heed to utility or interest. A political process dominated by the pursuit of individual rights, group interests and the will of the majority is inimical to the requirements of creative freedom.[70]

This notion of creative freedom as a necessary condition for the achievement of "the ideals of humanity" and "social harmony," in contradistinction to the destructive mechanical process of construction inherent in nation building resonates with Tagore's connection to music. Already in 1926 Tagore had composed over five-hundred new "tunes." In an interview during that time he described his compositional process with the statement, "I have invented freely."[71] In his writings on music, Tagore often complained that musicians' insistence on restricting creativity with rigid traditions and "classical rules" was corrupting the art of music in India.[72] Though much of his work was directed against the processes of modernization, in this instance he points to the need for music, and all other artistic forms, to progress and "modernize."[73] Surprisingly, in his attitudes toward music, Tagore expressed the same desire to emulate the West as Nehru did in *Discovering India*. He advocated an adoption of "the professionalism of Western classical music," by Indian musicians and their supporters.[74] For Tagore, this would involve the development of critical music scholarship, increased standards of training and performance, and the establishment of public

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[69] Ibid., 281

[70] Ibid., 282

[71] Radice, (2008), 1095.

[72] Ibid., 1099.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

music education.[75] These are the same goals pursued by the more genuinely nationalistic figures of Paluskar and Bhatkhande, though the motivations behind them are not only different, but conflicting. As the work of Paluskar and Bhatkhande demonstrate, attempts to adopt the professionalism of Western classical music rendered Indian music a powerful tool in forging national identity and unity. Thus, in spite of the fact that he denounced the project of nation-building, the work of Rabindranath Tagore, and particularly his music, were subsumed into the service of the Nation.

The efforts of Vishnu Digambar Paluskar in "rehabilitating" Indian music focused heavily on public music education, as well as the popularization of the *bhakti* movement.[76] As the patronage of music offered by princes and wealthy land owners underwent a drastic decline over the course of the twentieth-century, the support of the rising middle-class of India became a matter of necessity.[77] Public music education would provide members of the middle class with access to music in ways that had previously not been possible, while, through the *bhakti* movement Paluskar sought to challenge perceptions of music as an erotic, morally questionable, secular form of entertainment.[78] The *bhakti* movement identified music as spiritual in nature, meant to be practiced by individuals from all walks of life as a personal act of devotion, rather than being dominated by professionals who offered it up as frivolous entertainment. While attempts to bring music into the public sphere may seem to stem from secular motivations that are categorically opposed to the religious sentiments of the *bhakti* movement, Paluskar motivations were unequivocally religious. Even within the format of public education, he emphasized what he believed to be fundamental connections between Hindustani classical music and the Hindu faith. As Bakhle explains, this

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Capwell (2000), 433.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Bakhle (2005), 138.

emphasis can still be seen in the schools established by Paluskar, "with the prominence of prayers, chants, key deities, and Puranic mythology."[79]

Another aspect of Paluskar's approach to public music education that was somewhat unconventional in terms of Western models of public education, was his adaptation of the *guru-shishya* relationship. This relationship was "modernized" and incorporated into the context of public education by retaining the sacred status of the teacher or guru in relation to the students. Though music was not taught in a one-on-one format, students were encouraged to develop an attitude of reverence and devotion for their music teacher that would last for their entire lives.[80] In discussing Paluskar's decidedly religious approach to Indian classical music and the project of public music education, Bakhle argues:

> The intertwining of music and dance with the divine—and with a so-called traditional guru... can be seen as a determined move against colonial assertions of Western national superiority. It can also be seen as a consciously nationalist effort to recuperate and recover, for use in the colonized present, a precolonial sense of music, religion, and cultural life.[81]

Thus, Paluskar's pioneering work in the establishment of public music education in India, and also, his contribution to the *bhakti* movement, not only challenged the colonial power of the British Empire, but sought to construct a religious national identity. Consequently, as David Lelyveld has pointed out, Paluskar's mission to bring music into the public realm may be understood as restoring a Hindu musical heritage to the Hindu people (who largely comprised the middle class that Paluskar was reaching out to), while, by the same stroke, wresting it from Muslims (who largely comprised India's professional musicians and primary practitioners of classical music).[82]

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Lelyveld (2010), 117.

Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande is perhaps the most widely acknowledged national icon of Indian music. Even more than Tagore and Paluskar, his contributions validated the concept of Indian classical music as, not only a definitive genre, but the pinnacle of Indian musical heritage. Bakhle's study of Bhatkhande's lifework reveals his understanding of Indian music as a secular, modern, and scholastic art form. [83] Although Bhatkhande was a self-proclaimed Hindu and displayed, on a number of occasions, anti-Muslim sentiments, he rejected Paluskar's belief that Indian classical music was connected to religion.[84] Rather, he viewed this art form as inherently national. Thus, as a matter of principle, Bhatkhande refused to identify Indian classical music with any one particular group over another within India, whether religious or otherwise.[85] He also rejected the notion that Indian classical music embodied an Indian heritage that had survived from antiquity. Instead he insisted that Indian classical music was a modern genre, with a genealogy of no more than two-hundred years.[86] However, it seems that, more than these first two points, Bhatkhande's main concern was the scholastic nature of Indian classical music.

As Bakhle puts it, Bhatkhande had "an obsession with textual authority."[87] At the root of this obsession lies a concern that was also close to the heart of the nationalist project in the years leading up to India's independence: authenticity. As Anthony Smith points out: "For the nationalist the only answer [to what is the self] is to be found in the concept of *authenticity*. To be 'truly' ourselves means to find the 'authentic' elements of our being..."[88] For Bhatkhande, this necessary attribute of authenticity was not to be found in laying claim to an ancient heritage,

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[83] Bakhle (2005), 98.

[84] Ibid, 99.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Smith (2010), 32.

but in embracing modernity as an integral part of the Indian identity, and with it, especially in the case of music, all the trappings of historiography, philosophy, and theory; a scholarly discourse that facilitated a process of standardization, giving rise to a new found unity, as well as legitimacy. To this end Bhatkhande discovered (and manufactured) a large number of manuscripts relating to the history of Indian classical music (thereby single-handedly carving out a previously non-existent space for the Western tradition of musicology in the context of Indian music), wrote treatises on performance practice as well as music theory, established a system of musical notation, and started up a series of India-wide (one might even say 'national') music conferences.[89]

Interestingly, while Bhatkhande wrote some of his treatises in his own local, vernacular language of Maharati, he wrote many others in Sanskrit. Sanskrit is the classical language of ancient India, used by scholars and priests to access ancient texts. Bhatkhande's choice to write new works in this ancient language was in effect a deliberate move to bestow upon these writings a scholarly aura akin to that of the countless Latin manuscripts that Western musicologists had been pouring over for the past several decades.[90] In the act of creating a body of literature on performance practice and musical theory, Bhatkhande sought to stamp his work with the legitimacy of an Indian scholarly language. In order to even contemplate a discipline of written musical theory, however, Bhatkhande had to first invent a system of notation, since Indian music only existed as an oral traditon. Bhatkhande's notation system became one of his most enduring contributions to Indian music. Paluskar introduced is own form of notation around the same time as Bhatkhande, however Bhatkhande's system gained much more widespread use.[91] Almost all systems of musical notation in India today are based

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[89] Sobhana Nayar, *Bhatkhande's Contribution to Music: A Historical Perspective* (Popular Prakashan, 1989), 275; Bakhle (2005), 97.

[90] Bakhle (2005), 101.

[91] Nayar (1989), 272.

on Bhatkhande's model.[92] Beyond providing the means for developing a theoretical discourse, musical notation enabled an unprecedented degree of standardization, bringing Bhatkhande's dream of a national classical tradition one step closer to realization.

The project of standardizing and nationalizing Indian classical music was taken up directly in the series of All India Music Conferences organized by Bhatkhande. The first of these conferences was held in 1916 in Baroda. Modeled closely after musicological conferences in the West, the proceedings were open to the public with the opportunity to present research and participate in meetings and debates restricted to scholarly and academic figures.[93] On the agenda for the first conference was: the unification of the North and South Indian classical music traditions, the creation of a uniform system of ragas that would be "scientific and systemic," the development of an India-wide system of musical notation, the improvement of instruments "according to modern science," while still preserving their "national identity," the crystallization of an authoritative musical canon, the establishment of a "performance academy" for Indian classical music, and the creation of scholarly journals to facilitate the distribution of academic studies and research on music, while also strengthening and unifying the scholarly community.[94] The second All India Music Conference was held two years later in Delhi (1918), and a third the following year in Benares. The fourth conference was not held until 1924, and the fifth, held in 1925, would be the last All India Music Conference that Bhatkhande would organize.[95] Similar to his series of conferences that inconsistently ran for less than a decade, Bakhle argues that the majority of Bhatkhande's aspirations for Indian classical music were never fully

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 284.

[94] Ibid., 286.

[95] Both the fourth and fifth All India Music Conferences were held in Lucknow. Ibid., 287-288.

realized. She discusses his failure to effectively unify Hindustani (North) and Carnatic (South) Indian traditions, and to replace the authority of "unreliable" ancient texts such as the *Vedas* and the *Natyasastra* with his own manuscripts and treatises.[96] Nevertheless, his work was not without impact. While the means through which Bhantkhande hoped to establish the authenticity and legitimacy of music generally did not take hold immediately, Indian classical music eventually came to attain this status nonetheless. Moreover, during this process it also came to be viewed as both 'high, classical art' and 'national' in character. A major way in which Bhatkhande contributed to this process was in making the music more accessible to 'outsiders'. As Regula Qureshi argues in her article "Whose Music?" the establishment of a "documentable history" for Indian classical music allowed those who were not familiar with South Asian music to understand it in more concrete ways, thus imbuing the music with an identity that could be acknowledged from 'without'.[97]

The widespread quest to assert and affirm a national identity in the last years of colonial rule and early days India's nationhood also involved the resurgence and classicization of many forms of traditional Indian dance. During colonial rule dance traditions underwent a decline, and were targeted by British authorities as immoral, particularly in connections with perceptions of sexuality.[98] However, the mid-twentieth century witnessed a dance "revival" and "Indian classical dance" was taken up as a celebrated symbol of a decidedly anti-colonial Indian nationalism. In many ways this process mirrored the classicization of instrumental and vocal music, particularly regarding attempts to appropriate the art-form for the middle-class. Matthew Harp Allen discusses the example of

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[96] Bakhle(2005), 99.

[97] Regula Qureshi, "Whose Music? Sources and Contexts in Indic Musicology," in *Comparative Musicology and the Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).

[98] Leela Venkataraman and Avinash Pasricha, *Indian Classical Dance: Tradition in Transition* (New Delhi: Lustre Press Pvt., 2002), 7; Lakshmi Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy: A Social History of Music in South India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 115-132.

dance reform in Madras: "Through the decade of the 1930s a stream of non-Brahmin dancers from the traditional community were presented at the Music Academy, the most prestigious public performance venue in Madras.... These performances proved instrumental in encouraging 'middle-class' women... to see and then to study dance."[99] Through this process of appropriation, elites sought to "divest the devadasi [traditional temple dancer] of her artistic heritage and reclaim her repertoire for the nation as part of its cultural heritage."[100]

As Bakhle posits, the ideology of classicism that gave rise to Indian classical music was inherently modern and national.[101] Yet, in many respects it could also be seen as colonial. In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said discusses at length the underlying influence of colonialism that has consistently coloured anti-colonial and independence movements across the globe. Citing the arguments of Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* he writes, "orthodox nationalism followed along the same track hewn out by imperialism, which while it appeared to be conceding authority to the nationalist bourgeosie was really extending its hegemony."[102] He claims that this hegemony was present not only in the realm of state politics but in culture as well, something he terms "culture *as* imperialism."[103] As has already been discussed, the format and approach of radio programs by the Indian government was very similar to the British model of pre-1947.[104] However, colonial influence can also be seen in the classicization of Carnatic and, particularly Hindustani music in the years leading up to

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[99] Matthew Harp Allen, "Rewriting the script for South Indian dance," *TDR: The Drama Review* 41, no. 3 (Fall, 1997), 65. *Literary Reference Center*, EBSCO*host* (accessed March 22, 2012).

[100] Subramanian (2006), 132. Allen also discusses the contestation of this appropriation. See Allen (1997), 66 ff.

[101] Bakhle (2005), 3.

[102] Said (1994), 273.

[103] Ibid., 264.

[104] Lelyveld (2010), 118.

independence, in spite of the music's connections to a growing anti-colonial nationalism. Bakhle describes how, over the course of the nineteenth century a succession of colonial authors led by Orientalist scholar Sir William Jones produced "a canonic understanding of what Indian music needed in order to become genuinely classical. According to these writers, music needed three things: nation, notation, and religion. These colonial authors invariably assumed the presence of all three in the Western context as evidence of aesthetic and organizational superiority."[105] Traces of this mindset can be found in Tagore's quest for professionalism, Bhatkhande's concern for scholasticism, and Paluskar's insistence on the connection between music and religion. The connection of these intellectuals and their anti-colonial projects to what might be called an imperial cultural hegemony renders them befitting of Said's description, as:

> ... people who, while fighting for their communities try to find a place for themselves within the cultural framework they share with the West. They are the elites who in leading the various nationalist independence movements have authority handed on to them by the colonial power: thus Mountbatten to Nehru, or de Gaulle to the FLN.[106]

In many cases (as in this one), acting nationalists may not themselves have received any authority from the colonizer, and so, more than seeking a place for themselves within "the cultural framework they share with the West," are searching out a place for their communities, nations, or even artistic traditions within that cultural framework. But, as Bakhle warns, this by no means indicates that Indian classical music is simply "the result of colonial mimesis."[107] In fact, in stark contrast to the music of many other former colonies, Indian classical music did not take on any significant outside influences in terms of "the fundamental form of the music." Bakhle explains that Indian classical music "has stayed at the

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[105] Bakhle (2005), 10-11.

[106] Said (1994), 263.

[107] Bakhle (2005), 19.

center of the classical arts in India, never challenged in any significant way by music from outside. The fundamental form of the music did not so much actively resist colonial influence as stay indifferently impervious to it."[108] Nevertheless, it would also be imprudent not to recognize the colonial influence that has left its mark on the performative, and social contexts in which the music is practiced, just as it would be to discount the influence that nationalism and anti-colonial sentiment have had in shaping how Indian classical music has been, and continues to be perceived and practiced. The work of intellectuals and iconic figures such as Tagore, Paluskar, and Bhatkhande, and the influence of government initiatives in media through All India Radio functioned to establish and promote nationalism in top-down manner, in the fashion of Bohlman's "nationalist" brand of music. But there is also abundant evidence of grassroots cultivations and expressions of nationalism, and even instances of direct resistance to the forms and practices of nationalism promoted by the leaders and intellectuals that I have just described.

One prominent instance of this resistance has come from the professional, hereditary musicians of Indian classical music, who were intensely negatively affected by the invention of a system of musical notation and theory, the institution of public music education, and attempts to deepen connections between the music and the Hindu religion. For these musicians, Indian classical music was, by definition an aural tradition. The way the music was learned, performed, and understood was centered on this aural quality. Music was a skill, knowledge base, and ultimately, profession that was passed down from *guru* (teacher) to *shishya* (disciple, or student) in a lengthy, intensive, and intimate one-on-one process. Usually a musician would take on one of his children as his student though there were occasional circumstances in which a student outside of the family would be taken on. Different families would vary in the techniques and musical practices they employed, leading to the development of a large number of schools of musical practice commonly called *gharanas*. A competitive (in some cases perhaps even hostile) rivalry held among these *gharanas*, and each was careful

[108] Ibid., 15.

not to give away their trade secrets. The push for 'Western professionalism' and standardization that came with the classicization of Hindustani and Carnatic music had no place for such variation and secrecy. Sobhana Nayar writes about Bhatkhande's futile efforts to convince professional musicians to share their knowledge and techniques with him. He could not even persuade professional musicians to attend the All India Music Conferences, unable to pacify their fears that their secrets would somehow be extracted from them in the course of the event.[109]

As has already been discussed, in the years following independence the audition system of All India Radio discriminated against traditional, professional musicians by requiring skills such as the ability to read music, and knowledge of a standardized system of music theory. Lelyveld argues that these requirements effectively excluded most traditionally trained musicians from the employ of All India Radio.[110] However, throughout the latter half of the twentieth-century there were professional musicians who did cooperate with efforts to standardize, institutionalize, and modernize music, though in many cases it is likely that this cooperation was motivated by nothing more than self-preservation. With the increasing decline of princely patronage, and the establishment of public music education, which was equipping members of the middle class for the performance and practice of music, support for traditional, hereditary musicians was running dry, and their role in Indian society was quickly becoming obsolete. At a general level, though, professional musicians and nationalist intellectuals represented opposing views, and conflicting goals. As Bakhle writes:

> Music's practitioners were not automatically treated as the rightful authors of [music's] future, but had to battle for their right to determine the nature of music's modernity with nationalists, who were determined to leave them out of the conversation.[111]

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[109] Nayar (1989), 284.

[110] Lelyveld (2010), 119.

[111] Bakhle (2005), 3-4.

In spite of their efforts, nationalists and musicologists were not able to entirely drown out the resistant voices of professional musicians. The persistence of the traditional *guru-shishya* method of music education (as opposed to Paluskar's model), even today is a testament to this, as is the continued presence of *gharanas* and hereditary musicians in the sphere of Indian classical music.[112] While they were not able to escape from, or stop the influence of modernizing, nationalizing forces, professional musicians did not submit to these forces passively, but rather played an active role (or to acknowledge the diverse range of musicians and *gharanas*, several active roles), in shaping performance practices, social contexts, and common perceptions of Indian classical music.

In addition to traditional classical musicians, Indian musical nationalists confronted a challenge from a quite different source: that of Indian popular music. Lelyveld recounts the struggle of All India Radio to assert the superiority of the classical genre over that of film songs emanating from the rapidly growing Indian film industry. This music lacked the potential to become 'classicized', and thus, could never become a venerated national art form in the manner of Hindustani and Carnatic music. Moreover, these songs, along with the films they came from, used the Urdu language rather than the accepted 'national' language of Hindi. And, to make matters worse, this genre of music was rife with influences from Western popular music in its rhythms, melodies, and, to a greater extent, instrumentations and orchestration.[113] These characteristics caused popular music, and especially film songs, to be viewed by the musical nationalists at All India Radio as "the great enemy," of Indian classical music and Indian nationalism alike.[114] While

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[112] Ibid., 215-256.

[113] Lelyveld (2010), 120.

[114] Ibid. However, popular music was also used to further nationalist agendas. Peter Manuel discusses the use of popular music for this purpose through the media of radio and long-playing records, as well as the decentralization of this mode of disseminating nationalist propaganda that emerged with the new technology of the cassette tape. See

very different in source and motivation, the oppositions formed by professional musicians and the proponents of popular music demonstrate the unavoidable reality that in the midst of the search for identity and unity that nation-building entails, the lines that must be drawn will always prove to be as exclusionary as they are inclusive, no matter where they fall.

A particularly significant facet of the nationalism that emerged in India in the years following independence was its, at first underlying, then increasingly explicit affiliation with the Hindu faith. Although President Nehru expressed a desire that the lines defining India's national identity not fall in tandem with religious boundaries, the partition of Pakistan was the first major herald of the religious connections that would hold sway over nation-building projects throughout South Asia. The rise to power of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1998 marked the beginning of what some would describe as a more explicit Hindu national and political space.[115] Yet, Hindu nationalists have been enlisting music for their cause from the earliest days of India's nationhood and as a result Indian classical music has long been enmeshed in a volatile nationalist discourse of authenticity that has contributed to pitting religious faiths against one another, particularly the Hindu and Muslim faiths. Anthony Smith discusses how the concept of authenticity in the context of nationalism tends to meld with notions of truth, along with myths of origin and descent, a combination that is startling in its power to evoke emotional response.[116] It mobilizes an impassioned search for 'pure' and 'unmixed' expressions of the indigenous, which must, upon being re-discovered, be isolated and preserved, rescued from all 'foreign' influences, so that, once again, the culture might represent what is "our very own, and nobody

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Peter Lamarche Manuel, *Cassette Culture: Popular Music and Technology in North India* (University of Chicago Press, 1993).

[115] Anna Schultz, "The Collusion of Genres and Collusion of Participants: Marathi Rastriya Kirtan and the Communication of Hindu Nationalism," *Ethnomusicology* 52, no. 1 (Winter 2008).

[116] Smith (2010), 32.

else's."[117] Likewise, Edward Said associates this drive to "return to" authenticity as being bound up with the very concept of culture:

> ...culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought.... In time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state; this differentiates "us" from "them," almost always with some degree of xenophobia. Culture in this sense is a source of identity, and a rather combative one at that, as we see in recent "returns" to culture and tradition. These "returns" have produced varieties of religious and nationalist fundamentalism.[118]

Said's depiction of culture as a "society's reservoir of the best that is known and thought" resonates deeply with the tenets of classicism. In achieving the status of "classical" music, Hindustani and Carnatic music were inducted into India's national reservoir of culture. This music in particular became the centre of a movement of 'returning' to authentic Indian culture. In some instances, such as the All India Radio project, this meant asserting the superiority of Indian classical music over popular music genres. In others, it meant highlighting connections between Indian classical music and the Hindu faith, and ridding it of Muslim influences. While this quest to return to Hindu roots sought to re-shape musical traditions in the mould of the authentic, the movement itself was informed and inspired by music.

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[117] Ibid.

[118] Said (1994), xiii.

Indian Classical Music in Pakistan

As this discussion has focused solely on India, I would like to conclude this section on the history and background of Indian classical music with a brief note on Pakistan. As will be discussed in more detail later on, there are some individuals involved in ERMS who view Indian classical music as exclusively tied to India in terms of its current national status and geographical boundaries. Others, however, view Indian classical music as having much broader connections with the nations and cultures that comprise South Asia and the Indian sub-continent. In my interactions with the ERMS and its supporters, Pakistan in particular was referenced for its strong connections with Indian classical music. Hindustani music has certainly been a dominant musical genre in Pakistan. Regula Qureshi writes, "Radio Pakistan and the ruling immigrant elite centered in Karachi, as well as the Punjabi elite in Lahore, at first served as a hub of patronage for classical musicians, mostly of Indian but also of Pakistani Punjabi origin."[119] Radio Pakistan was modeled after All India Radio. It promoted mostly Hindustani classical music, while also including rural channels that featured folk and "light" music. While radio and wealthy elites upheld the genre of Hindustani classical music in the early years of Pakistan's nationhood, a focus on Islamic orthodoxy has since posed a growing challenge to the patronage and support of this music and its musicians. In contradistinction to art music, the chanting and singing of religious texts, known as recitation, has become well-established as a prominent form of musical activity in Pakistan (though a deliberate distinction between recitation and music is usually made). A genre called *qawwali* which is also religious in its content and function, has also had a strong presence throughout Pakistan. These genres of music are much less controversial and more widely accepted within conservative interpretations of Islam than Hindustani music. Although Hindustani classical music in Pakistan was not taken up as a

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[119] Regula Qureshi, "Music, the State, and Islam," ed. Alison Arnold, *South Asia: The Indian Subcontinent*, Garland Encyclopedia of World Music (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 746.

revered form of authentic national culture in the way that it was in India, its presence and influence cannot be discounted, even as the sharp decline in patronage and support for classical music in Pakistan is taken into account. As Qureshi explains:

> Hindustani music... was the classical music of Pakistan and served the elite across the country. The many outstanding classical musicians came from a traditionally mobile professional class of hereditary performers, the greatest of whom included Nazakat Ali, Salamat Ali, Sharif Khan Poonchwala, Bundu Khan, Asad Ali Khan, Roshanara Begum, and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. Their music was widely broadscast and recorded. Nevertheless, soon after Pakistan's capital was moved from Karachi to Islamabad—a newly constructed city too expensive and distant for musicians from the South—classical music went into decline, especially in Karachi. Except for a few new arts councils with sporadic classes, the lack of institutional support (music education and concert organizations) continued to leave art music largely dependent on dwindling feudal and personal patronage.[120]

[120] Qureshi (2000), 746-747.

ERMS Views on the History and Background of Indian Classical Music

In light of this complex historical discourse, I was interested to find out what relevance this view of the background of Indian classical music had with regard to the approach the ERMS took toward Indian classical music. It is important to note that, due to the limited scope of this project, I was only able to interact with a limited number of ERMS members and participants, and therefore the views that I encountered, while they are interesting to consider in the context of the society, should not be taken to be representative of the society as a whole.[121] During my project, I interacted with individuals who were new to the society and thus only involved peripherally, as well as individuals who were heavily involved administratively. However, very few of the individuals I interacted with were serious musicians themselves, and many had a very basic understanding of the technical and artistic subtleties of Indian classical music. It is likely for this reason that there were no references to musical notation or a codified music theory associated with Indian classical music in my discussions. The closest that discussion ever came to the topic of music theory were comments about the correct inclusion and sequence of notes in ragas, but this alludes to a more general theoretical principle in Indian classical music, rather than the systematic music theory that Bhatkhande attempted to standardize and implement across India.[122] The names of Bhatkhande and Paluskar did not surface once in general discussions about music, while, in casual conversations about music education in India, Bhatkhande was often cited as instituting public music education in India.

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[121] The term "member" will be used to refer to individuals who hold official memberships, which are procured by paying annual fees, while the term "participant" will refer to individuals who attend concerts and are involved with the society but do not hold these memberships.

[122] "Unfortunately by the way, I cannot uh, how should I say, I am not a student of classical music, so I wouldn't be able to figure out which raga is this, except for maybe one or two popular ragas, but I won't be able to say well, in this raga he is missing this note, or that or whichever it is (laughs)." ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

Paluskar was never mentioned. This serves as a minor example of how historical memories are not uniform and why the existence of multiple and alternate histories should be acknowledged. Numerous kinds of connections can be drawn between events and historical figures, while some can be emphasized and others downplayed in accordance to various views, interests, or purposes. The name of Rabindranath Tagore was brought up almost exclusively in the context of discussing music that he had composed, which seemed to me to suggest that, at least for those ERMS members and participants I spoke with, Tagore's legacy was his music, and nothing more.[123] He did not seem to be remembered or valued for his anti-colonial and anti-national philosophies. In fact, one interviewee described his music as strongly influenced by Western classical music: "Tagore songs are sometimes again influenced by Western classicals."[124] In this conversation Tagore's music was approached as decidedly marginal in terms of Indian classical music.

The influence of the radio in promoting Indian classical music and enshrining the genre within national culture was one aspect of the music's background that seemed to have had a direct impact on many of the members and participants of ERMS. In casual conversations, when ERMS participants discussed how they first came into contact with Indian classical music, or how they became interested in it, a number of interviewees, mostly individuals who had grown up in India, included exposure through the radio in their answers.[125] In several casual conversations ERMS participants also identified their mother as a

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[123] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011. ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011. It should be noted that Tagore's legacy has a strong regional element. His works were strongly rooted in Bengal, and continue to have have a major support-base there. His works are not widely known throught India, largely due to the language barrier of his works (most of his compositions are settings of his poetry and are written in Bengali).

[124] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[125] The radio was also mentioned in this context in one of my formal interviews: "...my father and my mother used to listen to classical music at home on the radio..." ERMS participant, discussion with the author,

major part of their introduction to classical music, usually through her singing and harmonium playing.[126] This demonstrates the realization of one of Paluskar's main goals: to teach women how to practice music so that they might pass the tradition on to their children.[127] Moreover, Paluskar's quest to bring Indian classical music to the middle class appears to have been fulfilled, as almost all of the ERMS participants I interviewed indicated that they either played an instrument or sang Indian classical music (or light classical), for their own enjoyment.[128]

In terms of the history and background of Indian classical music, no one that I spoke with seemed to consider the genre as emerging from a time period leading up to India's independence. Rather, it was often described as having ancient beginnings, rooted in "authentic" Indian culture: "Traditional Indian music is maybe about five thousand years old or so, and the tradition continues."[129] While the notion of Indian classical music as a mystic, primordial essence and an intrinsic part of Indian culture, so closely tied to nationalist projects in India, did seem to resonate among ERMS participants, the music was also frequently described as being shaped by a variety of influence throughout the course of its long history. "Don't forget that the music is always evolving, so we feel that there is going to be some kind of a fusion also taking place."[130] This history and evolution cannot be separated from the longstanding dispute over whether or not some influences that have contributed to the music's development should be discounted and reacted against. Dhiraj Murthy describes the ways in which Hindutva nationalism mobilized wide-spread efforts to "erase the influence of Muslims in India," which included attempts to discard or occlude the

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[126] ERMS participants, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[127] Bakhle (2005), 138.

[128] "I play the harmonium, and I dabble a little bit in sitar." ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011; "I'm taking sitar lessons myself." ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[129] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[130] Ibid.

significant contribution Muslims had made to the genre of Indian classical music.[131] The inability of Hindutva nationalists to achieve these goals, at least as of yet, is demonstrated in the frequent references ERMS participants made to the involvement of Muslims in shaping and developing Indian classical music.

> Indian classical music has developed over centuries and traditionally has been influenced in the North with the strong dominance of the [Mughal] era while the South Indian classical music remained in its purest form. The [Mughal] and the Persian influence have enriched the music.[132]

This account reveals an understanding of Indian classical music that seems to acknowledge and value the ways in which the music has been altered and shaped over time by varying forces. Yet, the statement "while the South Indian classical music remained in its purest form," shows that, at the same time Indian classical music is seen as somewhat primordial in nature, by virtue of its ability to have a "pure form."

Many other responses in my interviews with the members and participants of ERMS seemed to evoke strong sentiments of the existence of a pure form of Indian classical music, while others directly challenged this idea. The rhetoric of classicism also prompted mixed responses, with some ERMS participants who seemed unswervingly convinced of the superiority of classical music, and others insisting that other kinds of music have equal value, or at least comparable value. The national character that Indian classical music came to take on at the end of the nineteenth, and throughout the twentieth century seems to me to be deeply engrained in the perspectives of the ERMS participants I interacted with. While perceived connections between the music and the nation of India were often not explicitly expressed, the convergence of notions of culture and nation seemed to continuously, even if subtly, surface in conversation, and left me with the

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[131] Dhiraj Murthy, "Nationalism remixed? The politics of cultural flows between the South Asian diaspora and 'homeland'.," *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 33, no. 8 (2010): 1425.

[132] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

impression that the understanding of Indian classical music as a national art form may be the most unified perception about the music that exists within ERMS.

Many of the ERMS participants I spoke with used the term authentic in terms of unmixed genres. For these individuals, the ERMS commitment to authentic Indian classical music simply means presenting that particular genre of music without including different genres or other "non-classical" influences. One interviewee described the reasoning behind such a stance:

> Because of that thought of authentic... that's why they stick to pure classical performances, that's why they don't go into any variety... because they say that there are so many societies who are doing a different kind of music, but at least one society should stick to the old, traditional, classical kind of music, so that at least children come to know that this is what classical music is.[133]

This interviewee expressed that while she understood where "they" (presumably referring to either the ERMS board, or a majority within the society) were coming from, and partially agreed with this reasoning, she also felt that it would be valuable for the society to include a broader variety of music. Whatever the opinion may be regarding this issue, it is seems that this individual has a very clear and definitive understanding of what qualifies as authentic Indian classical music or "pure classical performances" and that she perceives this understanding to be shared widely within the society. Indeed, the majority of ERMS members and participants I talked to seemed to approach the topic of authentic Indian classical music in this way. This understanding seems to echo the discourse of authenticity previously discussed as so prevalent to sentiments of nationalism. A tradition is crystallized and isolated, hidden away in a vault of national culture, only to be displayed as if behind glass, a protective barrier that stops it from interacting with outside forces. In this way the nation preserves what is 'ours' and protects it from being tainted by the culture of an outside 'them'.[134] This

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[133] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[134] Smith (2010), 32.

connection to nationalism also seems to resonate with the goal of teaching children "what classical music is." This statement not only implies that "classical music" *is* something very specific, but also that it must be preserved and perpetuated by being passed down to the next generation. However, there were also a few interviewees who directly challenged the legitimacy of the concept of authentic Indian classical music.

> I don't think there is such a thing as authentic... Some purists might say that nowadays music is being diluted with other things etc.... I mean, yeah, you know, the music is there, it is always going to evolve anyway, and if some fusion things come along then so be it. I'm not hung up about really authentic. It is very difficult to define that term authentic, what do you call authentic?[135]

Another interviewee asked:

> What do they mean by Indian classical music? They really want to work on the authentic, they really want to promote the authentic Indian classical music, the root of Indian classical music, but one has to ask the question, what is authentic Indian classical music?[136]

These ERMS participants argued that Indian classical music could in itself be understood as hybrid in the sense that it has evolved and grown out of a number of diverse influences. One interviewee went on to highlight connections between what others seemed to understand as Indian classical music and other genres such as ghazals and qawwali music, while claiming that these connections are not recognized.

> I suppose if we have a ghazal singer in town, or if we have a qawwali singer or sufi singer who sings completely classical music and they're also quite popular in the mainstream, they won't ask them [to perform in a concert], because, their thinking of classical music is only one way and

[135] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[136] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

> for me I think they need to reopen, revisit, rewrite their own definition of Indian classical music.[137]

Another interviewee expressed a similar opinion, and described a particular situation to illustrate his point:

> I remember one artist, a Canadian artist. She's a ghazal singer, but classical in style, not just pure, right? And we could not, our mandate wouldn't allow to bring her in, whereas her teacher, who is a classical singer and has been a singer in some kind of traditional way. So we kind of supported that and we had a conjoint venture [to sponsor the Canadian ghazal singer]. So anyway, but this very good artist, but not authentically connected to the Indian classical music, causes a problem for us in the sense that, whether we should bring this particular artist or not is a problem. So, we say, 'how is it traditional? Is it traditional, is it authentic?' Traditional in the sense of the *gharana*, and authentic in that the *guru-shishya* tutelage is continued, and then Raga-Mala thinks 'okay that's good'. So [ERMS is] always struggling with those grey lines.[138]

As these statements imply, these notions of authenticity are closely interwoven with the ideology of classicism. For many members and participants of the ERMS, it seems that "what is authentic" and "what is classical" is essentially one and the same. In the situation described above, it seems that one of the indicators that the society has used to determine whether an artist is classical or authentic is whether they come from a recognized *gharana* or have been taught by a recognized *guru* in the *guru-shishya* tradition. In some ways the significance and legitimacy allotted to the *guru-shishya* teaching method seems to point to the continued influence of Paluskar's philosophies, which held this method in high esteem. At the same time, it also seems to speak to the continued legacy of professional musicians themselves. Although the traditional way of life and way of practicing and teaching music among traditional hereditary musicians in India was opposed by much of the nationalizing work of figures like Bhatkhande and Paluskar, as well as government initiatives like All India Radio, their

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[137] Ibid.

[138] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

contributions to Indian classical music were not erased, and in some ways their traditions have been included in 21st century practices and interpretations of the music, as shown by the respect that the ERMS clearly has for the role of the various *gharanas* and the *guru-shishya* relationship.

Yet, my discussions with other ERMS members and participants showed that understandings of what defines classical music are much more complex than its connection to a *gharana* or use of a certain teaching method. Many interviewees referenced an inherent quality of superiority that sets Indian classical music apart from non-classical genres. In an interview conducted by Sabreena Delhon in 2008, longtime ERMS member Shreela Chakrabarty recounted how during university she developed an appreciation for live music, but felt that the mainstream live music that her non-Indian friends attended lacked the quality of ERMS concerts.[139] This assertion that Indian classical music is inherently valuable, even superior to other forms of music seems to echo the ideology of autonomous art that continues to dominate Western classical music. The connection between ideologies of classicism in India and the West seemed to be confirmed by the fact that throughout my interviews, several interviewees drew direct connections themselves:

> The Indian Classical Music appeals to a very small group of people amongst the community, no different from what one would see in India. No different from here. Ask yourself "What percentage of the people take on to the real Western classical such as ballet, operas and symphonies?[140]

> It's no different than for the Western music for example. How many people would be interested in say the classical concerts and ballets, other than rock concerts and other music, which is popular music? And all of the orchestras and opera houses and ballet companies all have to be subsidized, either by government programs, or by the city programs, or

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[139] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_7, accessed May 10, 2011.

[140] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

> by donations, private donations. So it's always a challenge... I mean, I'm not trying to be elitist but, it just so happens that the classical music, although it's everlasting and it's been going on for generations and generations, the percentages of the people that really want to commit to that kind of a thing is not that much, or maybe is becoming stagnant.[141]

> Classical music East or West is always appealing to a smaller audience, not necessarily a class-based audience, but a smaller audience.[142]

> There is a very small percentage of people who are really interested in classical music, and that applies to South Asian people as well.[143]

These statements seem to me to recall the classicist ideology upheld by All India Radio in its initial years of operation, ideologies that were, as Lelyveld argues, modeled after the British Broadcasting Corporation.[144] Notions of classical music as superior to other genres, coupled with the admission that only a minority of people are able to appreciate it, does seem to imply a connection to class. Chakrabarty observes, "what pushes South Asians away from Indian classical music is the perception that it's for upper-class people and that they are not accepted."[145] ERMS members and participants resolutely refute the connection between Indian classical music and the upper-class, a connection that seems to be commonly interpreted as elitism. An alternative explanation provided by ERMS member Val Massey for the relatively small Indian classical music fan-base is that

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[141] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[142] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Don and Val Massey, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_12, accessed May 11, 2011.

[143] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[144] Lelyveld (2010), 118.

[145] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_7, accessed May 10, 2011.

classical music is "difficult, complex music."[146] This would seem to imply that classical music is a medium for intellectuals. However, both Val Massey and her husband Don Massey seem to feel that anyone can come to appreciate classical music, they simply need to have the desire to learn how to listen to the music, and be willing to do the "hard work" that listening to this kind of music requires.[147] Throughout their discussion, Don and Val Massey also draw direct parallels between Western classical and Indian classical music. However, the link between Western and Indian ideologies of classicism do not negate the reality that Western classical and Indian classical musics are profoundly different. In fact, some ERMS members and participants seem to understand both the authenticity and "classical-ness" of Indian music to be diluted by any form of Western influence, regardless of whether it comes from Western classical music, or any other traditions.

> There was Amjad Ali Khan's show in Winspear, and he and his two sons they are there and then he came on stage and he started playing a Tagore song. A Tagore song is, well I mean Tagore songs are sometimes again influenced by Western classicals, so I mean it's not like he's not playing any kind of classical music at all, but he's like he's not playing any raga so to speak, so I find it really weird that he would be playing a Tagore song in a classical concert, with his sons.[148]

This interviewee did seem to acknowledge Western classical music as a 'fellow classical genre' ("it's not like he's not playing any kind of classical music"), yet her statement also seems to reject the relevance of any form of Western music in

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[146] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Don and Val Massey, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_12, accessed May 11, 2011.

[147] Ibid.

[148] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011. While this audience member clearly interpreted this composition as out of place, other audience members saw it differently. One individual informed me that the song was about unity and, since the concert was put on as part of the "Year of India in Canada," was a strategic and even obligatory expression of nationalism. ERMS member, email correspondence with the author, February 2012.

the context of an Indian classical concert ("he's not playing any raga so to speak"). Another interviewee expressed his disappointment about the same concert: "Some of these big artists are sort of being a little bit of a show off. They are not very classical, real classical thing. They try to make it a little more popular for the local people for the Canadians, the Euro-Canadians."[149] What makes this particular statement even more interesting is the fact that it came from the same interviewee who insisted that there is no such thing as an authentic Indian classical music, and that the genre of Indian classical has and will continue to constantly evolve.[150] This seems to demonstrate the complex and ambiguous terrain that one must navigate in seeking to understand how music is perceived by a single person, let alone an organization that is made up of numerous people from varying backgrounds and walks of life. Moreover, it underlines the important tie that music traditions often form with the culture, and even the nation in which they were developed. It seems that, for this interviewee, it is more acceptable to mix classical music with other genres than to involve Western influences. Does this denote a connection between Indian classical music and Indian nationalism, even in the context of Canada?

In an interview Brad Bowie (a longtime member and volunteer of ERMS) described India as "the well, the source" of Indian classical music, "where you get the pure experience."[151] In an earlier interview with Delhon, he and Chakrabarty also explained that consistent visits to India are helpful to "maintain the integrity of the art."[152] "That connection [to India] is really important," Brad explained

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[149] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_7, accessed May 10, 2011.

[152] Ibid.

further, "musicians are still nurtured in that old school way."[153] These comments illustrate a strong perceived link between Indian classical music and the physical location of the country of India, but this connection seems to be defined in terms of culture more than a sense of nationalism. Even Brad's reference to musicians being "nurtured in that old school way," seems to merge a view of the music with an understanding of the Indian culture, the "well" or "source" from which it came, and of which it is a part. Another interviewee stated "if you don't have the opportunity to go overseas and actually experience East Indian culture [attending an ERMS concert is] a really good experience to have."[154] Taking the connection between Indian classical music and perceptions of culture perhaps even further, a University of Alberta student from India described her attraction and connection to the music by saying, "it's very natural I don't know how exactly I can explain what attracts, but it's just like having a natural instinct."[155] Some ERMS members and participants referenced a connection between Indian classical music and notions of Indian culture in ways that seemed to also indicate sentiments of nationalism. This seems particularly true in some of the interviews conducted by Delhon at the ERMS 20th Anniversary concert. One audience member stated, "Raga-Mala has done a good job of bringing the rich cultural legacy of India to Alberta audiences."[156] Similarly, another audience member commented, "The world is watching India. The Indian culture is getting diffused and I think it's important that we continue doing that."[157] These statements seem to resonate with Smith's argument, quoted earlier:

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[153] Ibid.

[154] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[155] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[156] Sabreena Delhon, interviews with ERMS audience members, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_2, accessed May 13, 2011.

[157] Ibid.

> [The] emphasis upon national individuality helps to explain why nationalisms are so often accompanied and fuelled by the labours of intellectuals intent on tracing the 'roots' and 'character' of the nation through such disciplines as history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, linguistics and folklore. These scholarly disciplines provide the tools and conceptual frameworks for finding out 'who we are', ... and perhaps 'where we are going'.[158]

The views shared by these ERMS audience members seem to show that Indian classical music, along with the intellectuals and institutions associated with it, has played a major and largely successful role in asserting and popularizing a set of beliefs about the "roots" and "character" of India. In this way the music has shaped, and even partially come itself to embody part of India's national (and cultural) identity. Moreover, the comments about "the rich cultural legacy of India," being brought "to Alberta audiences," and "Indian culture... getting diffused," while the "world is watching India," seem to me to also allude to "where we are going."[159] In this case, the "glorious national destiny" seems to be a worldwide diffusion of culture, through which India's national and cultural identity will be secured and venerated on the world-stage. In this context, as one ERMS participant noted, Indian classical music is "not only sound, it's not only music, it's also a kind of a very deep roots connection to India, Pakistan, whatever, to their countries."[160]

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[158] Smith (2010), 31.

[159] Sabreena Delhon, interviews with ERMS audience members, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_2, accessed May 13, 2011.

[160] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

Chapter 2. Experience and Aesthetics:

The ERMS and the Performance Event

In addition to the national and cultural connections that Indian classical music seems to have for many ERMS participants, it is evident that many other, often subtler shades of meaning are present that vary from individual to individual. The puzzle of how to understand meaning in music has consistently been complicated by the impenetrable variations of individual interpretations and the myriad factors that contribute to the experience of music and imbue it with countless kinds of significance. Perhaps among the most concrete of these factors are the lyrics of sung songs. For Sharmila Mathur, an accomplished sitar player and past member of the ERMS, lyrics are vitally important to Indian classical vocal music. "It's very important to know the lyrics. If you don't even know what you are singing then that real mood can't come, there can't be that effective singing. So according to me it really matters."[161] Mathur's focus on the need for performers to understand the lyrics they sing is likely a result of her position as director of the University of Alberta Indian Music Ensemble. The students who enroll in the ensemble often have no prior experience with Indian classical music and usually do not understand the languages that they are required to sing. Because of this, Mathur stresses teaching the students the meaning of the lyrics in the songs they sing. The first step in learning a song in the ensemble is to learn the meaning of the lyrics.[162]

The issue of understanding lyrics is especially pertinent in the context of the ERMS, since there are a number of languages in which different songs are sung at ERMS concerts, and it is not necessarily a given that either the singer, or everyone in the audience is fluent in every language that is used. In the context of the ERMS, in fact, there are many audience members who do not understand any of the languages that are used in vocal performances, as Mita Das explained:

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[161] Sharmila Mathur, discussion with the author, July 22, 2011.

[162] Ibid.

> The people from Southern India... lots of them still don't understand the language in north India that the Hindustani vocals are sung in, so, but still they say that you know once you start to listen to it... you kind of enjoy it... so it could be anything, but people find that if they give enough time and slowly they get into it and then slowly they start liking it.[163]

This element of varying levels of understanding certainly has an impact on the experiences that take place during ERMS concerts. Once in a while a vocal performer will give a brief description of a song before performing it, but this only happens occasionally, and the brief description given is highly unlikely to impart the same experience to those who do not understand the lyrics as those who do. When attending ERMS concerts this reality was very clear to me. There were several occasions when vocal performers gave explanations of one or two of their songs before singing them, yet during the performance I was very aware that audience members around me were affected by the lyrics in a way that I did not understand. I particularly remember, in October 2011, sitar player Shujaat Husain Khan sang a poem to a folk tune. He explained what the poem was about, and even translated a few lines into English, and proceeded to sing a simple, repetitive melody. At times, after Khan had finished a line the crowd would collectively gasp in awe, or burst into applause, clearly in response to the lyrics. In moments like those it was a strange feeling to be so certain that I was witnessing something spectacular, but to be completely incapable of taking part in the experience.[164] When I spoke with other individuals who enjoy ERMS concerts, but are not fluent in any of the languages that are performed, they shared similar experiences.[165] Moreover, the ERMS members and participants that I interviewed observed

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[163] Mita Das, discussion with the author, July 25, 2011.

[164] ERMS concert, October 1, 2011.

[165] Roger Levesque, discussion with the author, Fall 2011.

consistently that audience members from "non-Indian backgrounds" seem to prefer, and noticeably attend instrumental concerts over vocal concerts.[166]

While lyrics clearly have a significant impact on shaping musical experiences, it is also important, as Ruth Finnegan argues, to "move beyond the text."[167] Clearly lyrics alone do not dictate the entirety of any musical experience, and language barriers do not result in wholly meaningless experiences. I myself would claim to have had meaningful experiences during vocal performances hosted by ERMS in spite of not understanding a single word that was sung, and I am not the only one to feel this way.[168] Karim Gillani, a Ph. D. candidate in Ethnomusicology at the University of Alberta, argued that South Asian vocal music can be meaningful even for listeners who do not understand the lyrics:

> I remember when I took [a friend] to Abida Parveen's [concert], during the afternoon his head was down, so I [asked] him what happened. He was totally lost, he was gone. It took him five minutes to just come out naturally. He was so engrossed into that particular music. So, I think, you know, music is beyond languages and borders, and somehow you know it has its own ways of interpretations or communications.[169]

Gillani's friend did not understand the languages Parveen was singing in, yet he was clearly affected by her performance. Gillani gave similar examples in the contexts of ERMS concerts, describing the experience as "very intimate, and... really deep. Sometimes you don't understand what they're singing, but you feel it."

The textual element of Indian classical vocal music is also closely intertwined with another significant factor involved in shaping musical

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[166] Mita Das, Atanu Das, Papiya Das, Subhash Karkhanis, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[167] Ruth Finnegan, "Music, Experience, and the Anthropology of Emotion," in *The Cultural Study of Music: a critical introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton et. al. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 189.

[168] ERMS concerts, September 2010-October 2011.

[169] Karim Gillani, discussion with the author, July 13, 2011.

experience: religious connections. As has already been mentioned, much of the Indian classical vocal repertory has close ties to the Hindu religion. Because of this connection, I expected at the outset of my research to find that musical experiences at ERMS concerts would often be very religious for many audience members. However, my interactions with ERMS participants caused me to realize that, for those who desire to do so, it is just as easy to separate religion from the experience as it is for others to incorporate them, and those whose experiences are spiritual in nature do not necessarily connect their spirituality with Hindu beliefs or any other form of religion. In a discussion of musical interpretation, Zdzislaw Mach writes, "Perhaps this is always the case with music, that it leaves behind something beyond any interpretation, a basis for free, or at least, other associations and feelings."[170] This statement seems to encapsulate my experience with the music at ERMS concerts and the encounters of audience members that I witnessed and was told about. Manikarnika Kanjilal, an ERMS member and Ph.D. student at the University of Alberta, feels that Indian classical music is particularly open to "free... associations and feelings," partly because Hindu mythology itself allows for a wide range of interpretations.

> This is, I guess, the beauty of Hindu mythology, that you can explain everything in terms of your love for nature... and you can express just the same thing [as your] love for God. So, God and nature, and maybe sometimes your feelings for your lover, can become the same thing, and so it becomes an acceptable concept for pretty much any religion. So, I guess that helps the whole issue to transcend over just the small religious boundaries.[171]

This possibility of a variety of interpretations allows individual experiences to traverse religious boundaries and also carves a space for secular connections to the music. This space seems to be a very important one. The ERMS participants

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[170] Zdzislaw Mach, "National Anthems: The Case of Chopin as a National Composer," in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford: Berg Publishers), 69.

[171] Manikarnika Kanjilal, discussion with the author, July 15, 2011.

that I interviewed, particularly those who were members and either were serving or had served on the board consistently stressed that ERMS was a secular organization, and that the music was approached accordingly.[172] Thus, in terms of a corporate experience the meaning and enjoyment of the music was understood and discussed as essentially secular, yet this does not seem to oppose or eliminate spiritual perceptions of the music.

Descriptors similar to Gillani's use of "intimate" and "deep," were drawn upon often in my discussions with ERMS participants when asked about their attraction to Indian classical music, along with expressions like 'emotion', 'aura', 'enlightening', 'soothing', and 'empowering'.[173] These descriptions seem to me to evoke a spiritual kind of experience. In some cases interviewees identified a particular religious ideology, usually Hinduism, that connected to this sense of spirituality. But in many others, interviewees seemed to attach the experience solely to the music itself:

> I have had some kind of, I will say *opportunities*, where really I have felt, I won't say the spiritual or whatever, but there are moments where you really truly enjoy the music, you just get lost... listening to this music.[174]

> Indian classical music is mostly like the sounds, you know the repetition of sound, the improvisation of a sound, the improvisation of the talas, the sure rhythm, you know, I think it really goes into your head somewhere.[175]

In spite of the evident spiritual nature of these descriptions, the focus on music as the source of spiritual experience seems to lend itself to the secular position taken up by the society as a whole. This experience of Indian classical music as spiritual or sacred in a way that also easily corresponds with views of the music as secular

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[172] Mita Das, Atanu Das, Papiya Das, Subhash Karkhanis, Bhupen Parekh, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[173] ERMS members and participants, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[174] Ibid.

[175] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

is discussed at length by Religious Studies scholar Donna Marie Wulff in her article "On Practicing Religiously: Music as Sacred in India."[176] Wulff states that "When one studies any Indian cultural form in depth, one comes to realize that the religious and the secular are not discrete realms in India, as they tend to be conceived in the modern West."[177] She explains that in India (and largely within the genre of Indian classical music), to learn, practice, and perform music is seen as a sacred endeavor, viewed in some cases as an act of devotion directed toward a deity, and in others as tapping into the realm of the divine.[178] In fact, Wulff quotes renowned Indian classical sitarist Ravi Shankar's revealing statement: "Our tradition teaches us that sound is God—Nada Brahma."[179]

One of the aspects of ERMS concerts that I find most fascinating is that, in the midst of all of these intimate and personal encounters with music are a wealth of interactions, centered around an exchange between audience members and the performers. As Mathur explains,

> Normally when a good artist is performing he performs according to what kind of audience he has. So, when they are performing in India and there are people who really understand it, they would go into the more intricacies of their singing or playing, and they would do their best to go into details. Here what they do is they try to... make the performance a

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[176] Donna Marie Wulff, "On Practicing Religiously: Music as Sacred in India," in *Sacred Sound: Music in Religious Thought and Practice*, Joyce Irwin, ed. California: Scholar's Press, 1983.

[177] Ibid., 149.

[178] Ibid., 150-161.

[179] Ibid., 153. Wulff traces the philosophy of considering music sacred to the Hindu religion, referencing ancient Hindu texts and practices as ancient as the Vedas and the Vedic chants of poet-seers, however she also argues that the philosophy permeates present day India and Indian classical music artists and enthusiasts regardless of religious beliefs. "The evidence... reveals sufficient congruity between the views and practices of a number of North and South Indian musicians (both Hindu and Muslim).... Furthermore, although orthodox Islamic writers deny the sacredness of music, the Sufis have affirmed this sacredness, and indeed the Sufi tradition has contributed its own understanding of the divinity of music to the composite culture of North India." Ibid., 163.

> little lighter so that even non-Indians can understand, and they are always explaining what they are doing [for] people who don't understand.[180]

Other interviewees similarly linked the quality of a performer to his/her ability to take the audience into account in how and what they choose to perform. This process is one that goes hand in hand with the semi-improvisatory nature of Indian classical music. I felt that I witnessed this process unfolding in very direct ways at times during ERMS concerts. In one instance, during the last piece before intermission a vocal artist held a single note for an exceptional amount of time, which drew loud and widespread applause and praise from the audience. I noticed that in the course of the remainder of the raga the artist repeated the feat five times, none of which prompted much response from the audience. After intermission he sustained a note for an extended time only twice. Later on in the same concert the artist debated out-loud what composition he should perform next, mentioning a number of options. Clearly, in this case the artist was working to adjust his performance according to his audience's preference and tastes, and he sought to do so with the repertoire he chose as well.[181]

The feedback that artists receive from the audience during these concerts comes not only in the audible form of applause and cheering, but also silent gestures, posture, and even eye contact, as Kanjilal explains:

> One of my friends, he's a classical vocalist... likes the hall lights to be on so that he can see the audience, and then when he's singing, you know, there are certain pauses and there are certain things that he is doing... I can't tell you whether he can see from the stage to the very end of the audience, but at least the people who are in the front, you know whenever you make eye contact, it's like you are interacting. Whenever there is somebody who really understands or appreciates what you are doing they are going to show their appreciation in some way or the other. Either you just kind of reach the end of the bol at the same time like with two hand gestures, or something. The artist can pick up if someone in the audience is really getting what he is doing, and it becomes very interactive that

[180] Sharmila Mathur, discussion with the author, July 22, 2011.

[181] ERMS concert, May 7 2011.

> way, you really make eye contact or shake your head or maybe just keep the pace going [by tapping your hand].[182]

Kanjilal's description of artist-audience interactions perfectly describe what I witnessed at ERMS concerts. Audience members would follow the bol patterns, or the cycles of the beat, by tapping their hands or touching fingertips together. They would shake their heads, and often I noticed individuals around me make quiet exclamations that the performer could not have heard, but might have seen. I noticed on a few occasions that the hall lights were not completely dimmed, and at the outset of one concert I witnessed an artist request on-stage that the lights illuminating the audience be made brighter.[183] It became very apparent to me during my first ERMS concert that these audience responses are not merely a part of the concert's atmosphere, but work to shape the performance itself, both in terms of the interaction between the artist and the audience, and in terms of interactions amongst audience members. Thus, audience responses are an active element of every ERMS concert.

Many ERMS participants I spoke with expressed the opinion that, in order to participate in this way, a listener needs a foundational knowledge of the music they are responding to. Gillani explained to me that before he came to Edmonton to study at the University of Alberta he had not had much exposure to Indian classical music.

> It was a different kind of music. You need to develop a sense of that music, you know. At that time I was trying to get some courses from Mrs. Paranjape. She used to teach Indian classical music so I was taking lessons from the Indian Music Ensemble at U of A , and I also used to go to hear her practices... because whenever I went to Raga-Mala's shows, I was enjoying it but I wasn't able to understand what kind of ragas or what kind of modes they were performing because I didn't have that kind of training before.[184]

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[182] Manikarnika Kanjilal, discussion with the author, July 15, 2011.

[183] ERMS concert, May 7 2011.

[184] Karim Gillani, discussion with the author, July 13, 2011.

Gillani felt that without a basic understanding of the musical processes that occurred during a performance, he could not fully enjoy and experience the music. And, as Kanjilal asserts in her statement quoted above, an informed appreciation of the music would inevitably prompt a visible outward response of enjoyment and engagement that the performer and other audience members could pick up on. Of course, not everyone in the audience has this kind of basic understanding of the music, as Kanjilal admits.

> Sometimes the audience isn't, how should I say like... there are certain pauses in classical music where you are not supposed to applause... But there [are] some people who always clap at the wrong time. So what do you do? They are also getting trained. It takes a lot of time [for a composition] to actually end and you know sometimes you mistake a pause for the piece to be ending, so it's kind of... it's an interactive process. It cannot just be one person singing and nobody's like responding or anything, it cannot be like that.[185]

Kanjilal's observation that some audience members' responses demonstrate a lack of knowledge about the music speaks to the plurality of experiences that take place at ERMS concerts.[186] It also points up the reality that these experiences are not entirely separate from one another, but overlap and influence one another. Although the sound of audience members clapping at moments when she feels it is inappropriate inevitably affects her experiences at concerts, Kanjilal did not seem overly bothered by it. Rather, she seemed to understand that it takes time for inexperienced listeners to learn how to appropriately respond to the music, and when, and that mistakes are easy to make. In all of the concerts I attended, during which I often scanned the crowd looking for interactions and responses, and in all the conversations I had with audience members and members of the society, I

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[185] Manikarnika Kanjilal, discussion with the author, July 15, 2011.

[186] This statement also evokes a connection between Indian classical music concerts and Western classical music concerts, where inexperienced audience members also often clap at the 'wrong' time.

never picked up on an air of frustration toward inexperienced listeners. On the contrary, those who were more experienced in the Indian classical music genre seemed to prize the fact that individuals without a background in Indian classical were attending concerts, and many were focused on the goal of attracting more of these kinds of listeners.

What I find even more interesting about Kanjilal's statement, however, is that she moves from discussing the blunders of inexperienced listeners in their responses to the music to emphasizing the importance of audience interaction and feedback. She expresses understanding and acceptance of inappropriate responses, but stresses the absolute necessity of some kind of response: "...it cannot be like that." In essence audience response and interaction is such a central and vital part of the experience of a live Indian classical music concert that it would seem any response is better than no response at all.

Views on Aesthetics within the ERMS

Personal preference and opinions on the aesthetics of music is another area of influence that shapes musical experiences. The opinions and preferences of ERMS participants regarding Indian classical music are not uniform, and seem to diverge with regard to a few key issues. As has already been discussed to some degree, the issue of what is and is not "classical" and/or "authentic," whether there is value in incorporating contemporary elements, elements from other musical genres or fusion is a prominent debate among ERMS concert goers and members. What makes this issue particularly pertinent for the ERMS is the simple fact that the organization is promoting a type of music that is not dominant in the local, or even national music scene of its locale. As Mathur explained, in a statement quoted above, individuals who are more experienced and knowledgeable listeners of Indian classical music tend to appreciate more intricate and complex performances, while, as many ERMS members asserted, simpler, flashier and shorter performances are better suited to those who are less experienced. Moreover, incorporating instruments or styles of music that are more dominant and popular is an acknowledged way of attracting audience members who have not encountered Indian classical music.[187] Consequently, it seems that artists who perform at ERMS concerts and who want to tailor their performance for the audience's tastes need to straddle the line between the experienced and the inexperienced. After attending several concerts I felt that this was often done by directing one half of the concert toward the experienced listeners, and the other toward the inexperienced.[188] Of course each artist is unique, and some may seem to cater more to one group than the other. Mathur clearly felt this way about a concert given by sarod virtuoso Amjad Ali Khan.

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[187] Sharmila Mathur, Subhash Karkhanis, discussions with the author, Summer 2011.

[188] ERMS concert reviewer Roger Levesque also pointed this out in an interview. Roger Levesque, discussion with the author, Fall 2011.

> I have heard Amjad Ali Khan many times in India... so I can compare his concerts in India and here, and the way he's been performing in India is all the steps of classical singing, you know, the first part, going into detail in one raga, and completing all the steps. But what he did here was he did each rag in a very, very short performance... he didn't go in detail of one rag, which is good for the audience that is non-Indian, and this was in Winspear and was full of Canadians as well, so it was good because that short performance of each rag, since it was not detailed, even non-Indians could enjoy and they got the variety.... But for the classical lovers, one detailed piece maybe was required, where we can go into depth and just relax and which can relate to your soul and spiritual contentment is there. So, that was missing. It was a short and fancy performance, but it was nice.[189]

Almost every ERMS participant I spoke with expressed the opinion that traditional hereditary musicians from India (or sometimes any musician from India), are more skilled, and better performers than non-hereditary musicians, or musicians raised in other parts of the world.[190] Ananda Doram, a University of Alberta undergraduate student and ERMS concert-goer shared her thoughts with me on why she feels this is the case:

> I think [it has to do with] the standard and quality [of] the artist. I think if they've been growing up, most of them [musicians from India] are hereditary musicians, they've been growing up with the songs and they're familiar with the rhythms. And like, the sitarist and say, a tabla player would be playing together... and they would be totally in sync and not missing a beat and still following that, you know rhythmic cycle, so that would be I guess technicality... and then also emotionality would be another aspect of it. Some of the artists that come in to Raga-Mala are very moving, and very powerful in terms of the emotions that they can really bring to the audience, and just the atmosphere that they can create with their music is quite moving. So, I think being technical and also having that emotive aspect too, is really important, and just their general knowledge about the music, and how they're performing it.[191]

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[189] Sharmila Mathur, discussion with the author, July 22, 2011.

[190] Mita Das, Manikarnika Kanjilal, Sharmila Mathur, discussions with the author, Summer 2011.

[191] Ananda Doram, discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.

Another key issue around which a multiplicity of preferences, and in some cases opinions, on aesthetics are formed, is the existence of a profusion of regional traditions and sub-genres. Mita Das explained to me her personal preference for a particular kind of Indian classical dance. "The region where I come from, we have a very good classical dance called the Odissi Dance, so that's kind of *my* dance because I know so much more and you know it's a very... I like it better than the other ones, so I have a personal bias."[192] In an interview, Doram shared a similar observation.

> I remember when I went to a classical dance concert with Mani... one of the dancers was from Calcutta, which is where she is from and so she kind of went up to the dancer after and was like 'hey, you know, I'm from your hometown too' and there was that kind of affinity.[193]

Regional traditions and differences come into play regarding views on aesthetics due to varying techniques, approaches and style. The existence of various *gharanas* is an obvious manifestation of this. As a number of ERMS participants pointed out to me, these preferences often become apparent in programming shifts that mirror the tastes of the current president.[194]

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[192] Mita Das, discussion with the author, July 25, 2011.

[193] Ananda Doram, discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.

[194] Mita Das, Kumud Acharya, Atanu Das, Papiya Das, discussions with the author, Summer 2011.

Chapter 3. The ERMS and the Concept of Diaspora

For the past several decades the term "diaspora" has been applied much more broadly to various communities than it had been previously. As Khachig Tölölyan explains:

> Where once were dispersions there is now diaspora. It may seem anachronistic to say so, since the Greek "diaspora" is the older term, and in its restrictive usage has been applied from Antiquity to Jewish, then also to Greek and Armenian social formations. Yet the significant transformation of the last few decades is the move towards renaming as diasporas the more recent communities of dispersion, those that were formed in the five centuries of the modern era and which were known by other names until the late 1960s: as exile groups, overseas communities, ethnic and racial minorities, and so forth.[195]

What significance might this broader definition of diaspora have for understanding ERMS and the nexus of social and musical processes that it facilitates and is impacted by? To what degree could the society be seen as connected to one or several diaspora communities? Could the ERMS be understood as its own form of a diaspora community?

Before considering the specific case of ERMS, I would like to briefly point out the unique position of Indian diaspora in general. This group emerged as a distinctive diaspora collective in the late twentieth century. In her article "Geohistorical Cosmopolitanism," Kate Edwards explains that, during the late 1980s, the Indian government began to formulate "strategies and processes to reframe and enmesh Indians living overseas as members of a transnational 'cosmopolitan community'."[196] At this time, former citizens of India who had emigrated abroad were termed 'Overseas Indians', until the early 1990s when the

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[195] Kachig Tölölyan, "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Statelss Power in the Transnational Moment," quoted in Thomas Turino, *Identity and the Arts in Diaspora Communities* (Warren, Michegan: Harmonie Park Press, 2004), 3.

[196] Kate Edwards, "For a geohistorical cosmopolitansim: postcolonial state strategies, cosmopolitan communities, and the production of the 'British', 'Overseas', "Non-Resident', and 'Global' Indian," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 26 (2008): 453.

term 'Non-Resident Indians' gained widespread currency. Edwards argues that, in 1991 "the idea of an NRI 'cosmopolitan community' was strategically mobilised as a hegemonic state strategy."[197] The motivation behind this strategy, Edwards contends, was at this time purely economic, and as such the result was that "NRIs" "came to lead a, specifically economic, life that straddled two worlds."[198]

In 2003 the relationship between Indian emigrants and their former state developed even further when the Indian government sponsored the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*, or *Overseas Indian Celebration*. The purpose of this event was to "acknowledge the achievements of India's diaspora."[199] However, the event also involved meetings at which recommendations were made regarding "legal (including visa-free entry into India) and social rights (including access to education in India for their [NRIs'] children), which might enable the diaspora to straddle both worlds."[200] Of course with these proposals, the Indian diaspora would be able to straddle two worlds in more than just economic terms. These efforts of the Indian state to promote a continued connection between India and its former citizens certainly strengthens the likelihood of former citizens of India, and even perhaps subsequent generations, including of course several ERMS members and participants, to maintain close ties with India in economic, cultural, and even nationalistic terms. The continued strategy of the Indian government to promote a sense of devotion toward India among its former citizens and their descendents across the globe recently affected ERMS in a very direct way, when, in connection with the "Year of India in Canada" festivities in 2011, the High Commission of India assisted ERMS in bringing a number high-profile artists to Edmonton to perform at ERMS concerts.[201] With these state-driven initiatives, and

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[197] Ibid., 454.

[198] Ibid., 455.

[199] Ibid., 444.

[200] Ibid., 444-445.

[201] ERMS concerts September 2010—October 2011.

the impact they could have on ERMS members and participants in mind, I would like to consider in greater depth the definition of "diaspora." While grappling with the messiness of the term, Mark Slobin states:

> The subtler meanings of "diaspora" acknowledge that this involves more than just demographics. Some sort of consciousness of a separation, a gap, a disjuncture must be present for the term to move beyond a formalization of census data. Once analysis moves into this territory, the terrain gets very swampy indeed. Whose consciousness? Governments, NGOs, advertisers, packagers, self-proclaimed community leaders, refugees, immigrants, third-generation heritage-seekers—and the list goes on.[202]

At least in terms of the ERMS it would seem logical to focus on the consciousness of ERMS members and participants. However, this does not eliminate the complexities of understanding the concept of diaspora, as pinpointing what should be understood as a consciousness of separation or disjuncture promises to be problematic in itself. For this reason, I feel it would be helpful to approach this question in terms of a list of criteria. This will allow me to consider ways in which the concept of diaspora is pertinent to ERMS while also identifying ways in which this connection could be problematic without having to refer to an airtight definition.

In the introduction to *Identity and the Arts in Diaspora Communities*, Thomas Turino seeks to map out just this type of criteria-based working definition of diaspora that is consistent with its broadened usage in scholarship. He takes as his point of departure six characteristics identified by William Safran as key elements that are commonly shared by diaspora communities:

> 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and

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[202] Mark Slobin "The Destiny of 'Diaspora' in Ethnomusicology," in ed. Martin Clayton et. al. (2003), 288.

> therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.[203]

Turino emphasizes that, for him, these six elements represent "a series of characteristics that locate the concept [of diaspora] without dogmatically asserting that all have to be present for the recognition of a diaspora community."[204] A few of these characteristics seem to me to resonate very naturally with what I know and have experienced regarding the ERMS, while others seem problematic and inapplicable.

The quality of members, or their ancestors having been "dispersed from a specific original 'center'" is certainly applicable to ERMS, although several members and participants have come from other areas of the world, particularly Britain and a few African countries. The fact that India is so strongly identified within the society as a common centre of origin even though a considerable number of ERMS members are from other locations abroad seems to very strongly invoke Safran's first characteristic. However, with regard to this characteristic, particularly the condition that members have been dispersed "to two or more... regions," I would say this correlation points to ERMS as being connected *with* diaspora communities, rather than existing as one in itself.[205] Even in this sense, because ERMS is so tied to a particular local community, its connections to two or more peripheral locations are circumlocutory rather than direct. One way in which a case could be made for ERMS's fulfillment of this

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[203] William Safran, *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,* quoted in Turino (2004), 4.

[204] Turino (2004), 4.

[205] Safran in Turino (2004), 4.

attribute, however, is the existence of other Raga-Mala Music societies throughout Canada and the United States. Yet, even these connections are not what they may seem. For the most part the fact that these societies share the name "Raga-Mala" is a coincidence, and regarding the Canadian societies at least, they have no formal interconnections whatsoever, aside from the single exception of the Raga-Mala Music Society of Calgary and the ERMS. These two societies have a more meaningful connection as the establishment of the Edmonton group was assisted through an initiative of the Calgary group.[206] At present, though, these groups are functioning entirely independently of one another.[207] Raga-Mala music societies across Canada/ North-America will contact one another occasionally concerning joint ventures in sponsoring artists' tours across the country/ continent etc., but this is currently the full extent of their interaction.

Safran's second characteristic is much easier to point out within ERMS; that is, the existence of a "collective memory, vision, or myth" about India.[208] This shared memory, of course, centers on Indian classical music and addresses both the history and achievements of India as discussed earlier. Certainly there are varying interpretations of this collective memory and vision within the society, but I would argue that, at their core, these interpretations are similar enough to constitute the "collective memory, vision, or myth" that Safran describes.[209]

The characteristic of feeling unaccepted or unable to be accepted within the "host society" is not one that I sensed at all within the ERMS. Those members and participants that I interacted with seemed to be quite comfortable within Canadian society, and, in fact, the goals listed as part of the society's formal mission statement emphasize interaction with Canadian society and culture. Many members and current and past board members I spoke with affirmed that

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[206] Wani (2004), 20. Subhash Karkhanis, discussion with the author, August 18, 2011.

[207] ERMS member, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[208] Safran in Turino (2004), 4.

[209] Ibid.

interaction and involvement with Canadian society and culture is a goal that ERMS members and participants still stand behind.

Safran's fourth characteristic, regarding that which is commonly called the "myth of return" is, in my opinion, far from clear-cut in its relation to ERMS. Among the several ERMS members and participants I spoke to who had previously lived in India (and, in some cases, Pakistan), I did sense a fond reminiscence of that country as a place, and a strong desire to return, but usually only for a temporary visit. As such, it does not appear that the ERMS is made up of a group of people who view India (and/or Pakistan, Bangladesh) as their "true, ideal home."[210] Of course, there remains the argument that the proviso "when conditions are appropriate," could be brought to bear, but, with reference to my own interactions, this would not seem to me to reflect the views of ERMS participants. While it could be that the alteration of certain conditions within India etc. would make a permanent return more attractive to ERMS participants who, either through ancestors, or directly, have come from there, no one that I spoke with seemed to consider this to be a possibility, even in hypothetical terms. I was never given any explicit reasons for why the individuals I spoke with only desired to return to India temporarily, however, in an interview with Sabreena Delhon in 2008, Ojas Joshi, a prominent local table player, shared his opinion with the simple statement: "It's a hard life, especially as a musician."[211] Though far from explicit or specific, this statement seems to allude to a difficulty to achieve financial/economic success, or perhaps even stability, a struggle that is particular difficult for musicians. Joshi explains further that this is in part due to the sheer volume of people in India, which contributes to an intensely competitive environment for musicians there.[212]

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[210] Ibid.

[211] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Ojas Joshi, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_22, accessed May 15, 2011.

[212] Ibid.

This statement alludes to a conviction, outlined earlier, that musicians from India/South Asia are superior to musicians who are raised and trained in other parts of the world, and particularly, it seems, Canada. This belief is widespread within ERMS, and connected to it is a common practice that I see as a possible altered version of the diasporic myth of return. This is the frequent sojourn of aspiring Indian classical artists to India for the sole purpose of intensive musical training. These educational visits tend to span about one year in duration, and seem to be expected of any young artist who is serious about performing Indian classical music. In Delhon's 2008 interviews with ERMS audience members a young woman shared that she had spent one year in India studying Bharatanatyam (an Indian classical dance form).[213] Ojas Joshi also travelled to India as part of his musical training. Joshi began studying tabla with the highly acclaimed Zakir Hussain after meeting him in Edmonton at a tabla workshop sponsored by ERMS. Joshi began travelling regularly to California, where Hussain taught, and one day was told: "You're ready to go to India."[214] I find Joshi's case particularly interesting because he was already being taught by a world-renowned artist from India, yet it was necessary for him to actually spend time studying *in* India as part of his training. In his interview with Delhon, Joshi pointed out some very practical reasons for this. "It is challenging to learn in Edmonton," he explains, "because there's nowhere to apply it, no one to practice with, and it's just out of context."[215] Similarly Manikarnika Kanjilal explains, "it's

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[213] Sabreena Delhon, interviews with ERMS audience members, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_2, accessed May 13, 2011.

[214]Sabreena Delhon, interview with Ojas Joshi, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_22, accessed May 15, 2011.

[215] Ibid. In the interview Joshi qualifies this statement by explaining that there are some other performers in Edmonton with whom he has been able to practice, and there are some opportunities to perform Indian classical music now and then. However, his point is that there are not enough performers and performance opportunities to support a rigorous training and performance schedule.

easier to do it [learn Indian classical music] in India because there you have better schools and you have many schools there and so many people who can teach you there, you know the bulk of Indian performers have stayed in India, just demographically speaking, so if you really want to learn something you will probably end up going to India and then coming back."[216] However, practical reasons like these are not the only ones behind the view that India is an immensely important place for Indian classical music and its performers. As I have already mentioned, ERMS member Brad Bowie described India as "the well, the source... where you get the pure experience," one of the most explicit expressions I have heard so far of a sentiment that I felt I encountered often among ERMS members and participants, and within the general context of the ERMS.[217]

Safran's fifth characteristic, referring to a commitment "to the maintenance or restoration of [the] original homeland," does not seem to me to be particularly pertinent to the ERMS and its activities.[218] It could be argued that sponsoring artists from India and South Asia qualifies as a form of supporting the homeland, but the motivation behind these sponsorships seem to be more aligned with Safran's sixth characteristic: to "continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to the homeland."[219] As such, I would contend that activities regarding the maintenance or restoration of the homeland would not be connected to ERMS as a society and would therefore not contribute to an understanding of the ERMS as a diaspora community. On the other had, the ERMS is essentially a textbook example of the sixth characteristic, which involves not only a relationship with the

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[216] Manikarnika Kanjilal, discussion with the author, July 15, 2011.

[217] ERMS member, discussion with author, Summer 2011.

[218] Safran in Turino (2004), 4.

[219] Ibid.

homeland, but also an "ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity," which are "importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship."[220]

Thus there are characteristics commonly shared by diaspora communities that seem very befitting of ERMS, as well as some that are problematic and debatable, and even others that appear entirely inapplicable. With the range of pertinence of Safran's characteristics of diaspora communites regarding ERMS added to the equation, I turn now to one last, but without a doubt all-important variable: the extent to which ERMS members and participants view themselves as members of a diaspora. In interviews and conversations the ERMS members and participants I spoke with frequently used the term diaspora to describe those individuals involved in ERMS who have some form of Indian or South Asian heritage (the term was often preceded by the descriptors 'South Asian', and 'East Indian' as well as 'Indian').[221] The term was used by a wide range of individuals in this way including first generation immigrants from South Asia (and other areas), non-first generation individuals with some form of South Asian background or heritage, and individuals with no such background or heritage. As a result, I feel I can safely conclude that those individuals involved in ERMS who have some form of South Asian background or heritage tend to self-identify, and are also seen by other ERMS members and participants, as members of the South Asian diaspora. But what impact does this reality have on ERMS as a society? The demographic that would self-identify and be viewed by others as South Asian diaspora comprises a large proportion of ERMS's participants and membership. It is for this reason that I feel the link between the society and the concept of diaspora should be acknowledged as significant. Granted, this designation by no means encompasses everyone involved in the society, and this also needs to be taken into account.

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[220] Ibid.

[221] Karim Gillani, Ananda Doram, Sharmila Mathur, discussions with the author, Summer 2011.

A closer look at the society's goals and practices in connection with the concept of diaspora should provide a basic understanding of the extent to which, and ways in which, the substantial involvement of the South Asian diaspora has an effect on ERMS. In discussing the goals of the society, many ERMS members and participants identified the function of providing members of the diaspora with a means to maintain contact with South Asian culture as a primary purpose. Doram remarked:

> I think it's important... for the East Indian diaspora in Edmonton [because it provides them with] some access to their culture... music is one of those transportable things; you can take it anywhere and it's so accessible.[222]

Mathur similarly noted:

> It's giving all those... Indians who like Indian classical music, but can't [access it] because they aren't in India... so at least they are bringing some artists for them to listen to... otherwise we'll just end up listening to cds, and we will never get [to hear] live performances. So they are organizing that for them, and they also have the local showcases where people like me who are away from India but like to perform... they give a chance to those artists who are learning here or who have achieved something in music living away from India [to perform]... it's a good platform for them to come and perform, so it's doing good things, it's important.[223]

In addition to providing performance opportunities to artists who either emigrated from South Asia or have taken up the music abroad, Kanjilal explains that ERMS also provides valuable exposure to up-and-coming artists still living and performing in South Asia:

> From an Indian artist's perspective, [the ERMS is] creating a platform to the North American audience, and sometimes they do bring relatively unknown artists and, like newbies, and, like these are people who are

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[222] Ananda Doram, discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.

[223] Sharmila Mathur, discussion with the author, July 22, 2011.

> looking for a break pretty much, and maybe if they can get two or three gigs, then they can... raise the money to travel here and just do the gigs, so yeah, it kind of works.[224]

This aspect of the ERMS's role in the Edmonton community is obviously tied exclusively to a connection with a group of individuals that is commonly understood as constituting the label "diaspora." However, another facet of the ERMS's purpose that is consistently interpreted by members and participants as comparably vital contrarily focuses on individuals who are not regarded as members of the South Asian diaspora. Kanjilal identifies this function near the beginning of the above statement: "creating a platform to the North American audience," that is, introducing individuals to Indian classical music who may otherwise have no opportunity (or cause) to experience it. This type of outreach to the 'non-Indian' (or non-South Asian) community may appear to be a departure from traits and objectives indicative of a diaspora community, particularly in consideration of Safran's third characteristic. However, I feel that it is just the opposite, and serves to strengthen rather than weaken the link between ERMS and the concept of diaspora. Every ERMS member and participant I spoke with regarded the initiative of "reaching out to the non-Indian community" as a form of ambassadorship on behalf of South Asian or Indian culture. This sentiment was described earlier in connection with possible manifestations of Indian nationalism within the society, a sentiment portrayed through statements like: "Raga-Mala has done a good job of bringing the rich cultural legacy of India to Alberta audiences."[225] Other comments of ERMS supporters particularly emphasize the connection between this function of the society and the South Asian diaspora: "Raga-Mala is important because... it's creating a good image for the East Indian

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[224] Manikarnika Kanjilal, discussion with the author, July 15, 2011.

[225] Sabreena Delhon, interviews with ERMS audience members, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_2, accessed May 13, 2011.

community."[226] Other participants refer to this role of ERMS as "putting Indian music on the map."[227] This initiative seems particularly compatible with the unique element of the largely state-motivated relationship with India as home-land that characterizes Indian diaspora world-wide. As Slobin points out, with reference to the work of Ingrid Monson, there is a vast difference between "the general sense of diasporas, which by 2000 has expanded to 'dispersion, exile, ethnicity, nationalism, transnationalism, postcolonialism, and globalization,' and the specifics of a given diaspora..."'[228] The particular sentiment of ambassadorship that I sensed within the ERMS is a major aspect of the Indian diaspora's own specificity or particularity. While Edwards argues that the initial strategy of the Indian government to reach out to its former citizens was economic, she also points out that in recent years that strategy has expanded, with an increased emphasis on culture as its participation in the "Year of India in Canada" would indicate.[229] This ambassadorship is not only perceptible in he ERMS's efforts to attract and welcome members of the 'non-South Asian community', but also in the considerable care and attention given to the society's reputation. Mita Das explained to me in an interview that taking on joint ventures with other societies and organizations involves just as much work as when the ERMS puts on a show by themselves because of the concern about how that event will reflect on the society's name and reputation in the community.

> [The president] wants the standard, you know he doesn't like it to be a run down show... he says that 'if it's my involvement I want the standard to be nice', so sometimes again... it... takes a lot from you because you are trying to improve on everything, because... he says... I

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[226] Ibid.

[227] Manikarnika Kanjilal, discussion with the author, July 15, 2011.

[228] Slobin (2003), 289.

[229] Edwards (2008), 444.

> don't like... Raga-Mala's name on something that's not a good standard show.[230]

This concern about the society's image may not seem necessarily linked to a sentiment of ambassadorship as connected with the Indian diaspora, and I would agree that this sense of ambassadorship is likely not the only motivation for this concern. However, I would argue that it should be viewed as a contributing factor. In my conversations with ERMS members and participants I often felt that I detected a tacit understanding that associated the society with a particular community within what might be understood as the South Asian diaspora in Edmonton. Shreela Chakrabarty explained to Delhon in an interview, " families I grew up with, they come with a certain value system and usually they come from the same kind of musical background... there's a network that comes with members of the community."[231] Further, as a result of my interactions with individuals involved with, and familiar with ERMS, I would contend that concomitant with this perception is the general correlation between the society and the reputation or image of the South Asian community at large. This perception is clearly articulated in the comment of an audience member, quoted earlier, in response to the question of why the ERMS is important: "it's creating a good image for... the East Indian community."[232]

Nevertheless, the society's connection with the overall South Asian community is not particularly strong. Several ERMS members and participants acknowledged that only a small percentage of Edmonton's South Asian population attends concerts. In all cases, ERMS patrons attributed this lack of

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[230] Mita Das, discussion with the author, July 25, 2011.

[231] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_7, accessed May 10, 2011.

[232] Sabreena Delhon, interviews with ERMS audience members, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_2, accessed May 13, 2011.

involvement to an overall disinterest in the Indian classical music genre within the South Asian community. As Sharmila Mathur put it, "Raga-Mala mainly focuses on classical music... and there's a certain percentage [of South Asians] who like classical music, not the masses... so it's just a small percentage who come to these concerts."[233] In an interview with Sabreena Delhon, Shreela Chakrabarty also acknowledged a rift between the ERMS and the majority of the local South Asian population regarding musical preferences: "Now with the immigrants that are coming, the push is to have more Indian pop music in our city – that doesn't help our cause very much."[234] The ERMS' commitment to the Indian classical music genre thus limits the society's connection to the South Asian community in Edmonton, and the relatively small percentage of those who do attend concerts tend to represent older generations, and individuals who are attracted by the notion of "high culture." The issue of the extent to which the ERMS is devoted exclusively to Indian classical music and how this seems to affect the composition of the society's audiences and volunteers will be discussed in more detail later.

In spite of its limited connection to Edmonton's overall South Asian population, the ERMS does seem to consider itself an organizational representative of that community, a task that is taken very seriously. As a result, a concern for professionalism is a major part of the image that the society seeks to project. This is clearly shown in the current president's insistence that all joint ventures be overseen to ensure that the organization's name is not associated with anything that he considers below a certain standard. Beyond this, the ERMS seems purposely aligned with the concept of high culture. The concept of authenticity once again seems to be applicable in describing the society's desired image. In the context of considering the ERMS as connected to the concept of diaspora, I do not think it is any coincidence that all three of these elements of the

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[233] Sharmila Mathur, discussion with the author, July 22, 2011.

[234] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_7, accessed May 10, 2011.

society's projected image, professionalism, high culture, and authenticity, directly appeal to notions of legitimacy within Western culture. However, these dominant aspects of the image put forward by the ERMS seem to be in increasing contention with a desire to exhibit other characteristics such as contemporaneity and inclusivity (in terms of musicians and musical styles), and cosmopolitanism (in terms of attracting audience members from diverse cultural backgrounds and, for some ERMS members and participants, involving elements of non-Indian music). The ways in which members of the ERMS seek to exhibit these characteristics and negotiate amongst them will be discussed further in connection with the society's corporate identity.

Chapter 4. The ERMS and the Policy of Multiculturalism

The issue of cultural interaction has been briefly touched on in discussion on the extent to which the ERMS as a society seeks to engage with Canadian culture and society, and the extent to which cultural elements outside the traditional realm of Indian classical music are viewed as positive and worthy of inclusion and sponsorship within the society. In her article on "Identity, Diversity, and Interaction" in the Canadian music landscape, Beverly Diamond introduces some of the central issues and factors that guide and facilitate, or inhibit, cultural interaction through the medium of music:

> In every part of the world a complex array of factors determines whether culturally diverse members of a nation choose to interact in the production of music and other expressive forms or else to bound their cultural practices... with a view to maintaining traditions and prescribing norms and values. These factors range from the relative proximity or isolation of the groups to the power relations among them, the competence and agency of individuals within them, and the extent to which their musics (or other art forms) have similar or compatible components (leading to what anthropologists often call syncretism). Where music is concerned, the very importance assigned to musical practices among other modes of expression/action may also determine the extent to which cross-cultural interaction takes place.[235]

Multiculturalism is a central issue here. The policy of multiculturalism in Canada has played a major role in shaping several of the factors Diamond identifies, particularly the extent to which groups are isolated from one another, the power relations at work among them, and the extent to which agency within and among the minorities within these groups has been aided and empowered or subverted and opposed by more dominant groups and, particularly, the state.

Many arguments have targeted Canada's multicultural policy as severely flawed in this regard. For example, the image of the mosaic, which was

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[235] Beverly Diamond, "Identity, Diversity, and Interaction," ed. Ellen, *The United States and Canada*, The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music (New York: Garland Publishing 2000), 1062.

prominently associated with multicultural policy in its early years is now frequently used as an analogy for problems inherent in the policy. In the published report *From mosaic to harmony: multicultural Canada in the 21st century: results of regional roundtables*, in which the performance of multicultural policy in Canada is assessed, Jean Lock Kunz and Stuart Sykes voice concern that multicultural policy in Canada is a long way from translating into effective action. Among the problems identified in the book is a lack of knowledge about the complexities surrounding the concept of multiculturalism. Kunz states: "In this globalizing era, multicultural societies face the challenge of respecting cultural differences while fostering shared citizenship, conferring rights while demanding responsibilities, and encouraging integration but not assimilation".[236] In light of the intense debate that the concept of multiculturalism has sparked throughout four decades of existence, a discussion of the ways in which the ERMS views, has reacted to, and has been influenced by multiculturalism as a concept, a policy, and an ideology would not be complete without a basic understanding of the larger context of the pertinent issues. To achieve this, I will draw on three significant scholarly contributions to the topic: Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel's book *Selling Diversity: Immigration, Multiculturalism, Employment Equity, and Globalization*, Himani Bannerji's collection of critical scholarly articles titled *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender*, and Janice Gross Stein et. al.'s *Uneasy Partners: Multiculturalism and Rights in Canada*.[237]

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[236] Jean Lock Kunz and Stuart Sykes, *From mosaic to harmony: multicultural Canada in the 21st century: results of regional roundtables* [Ottawa]: Policy Research Initiative, (2007).

[237] Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel, *Selling Diversity: Immigration, Multiculturalism, Employment Equity, and Globalization* (Peter Borough: Broadview Press, 2002)*;* Himani Bannerji, ed. *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press 2000); Janice Gross Stein, et. al. *Uneasy Partners: Multiculturalism and Rights in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007).

Abu-Laban and Gabriel summarize the history of the policy of multiculturalism as follows:

> Multiculturalism emerged in the 1970s as a uniquely Canadian policy, a new approach to nation-building generated by the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Multiculturalism policy gave explicit recognition at the federal level to Canadians whose origin was non-French, non-British-, and non-Aboriginal. Thus, the policy served to reconfigure expressions of "Canadian identity" in a way that was inclusive of ethnocultural and racial minorities.. ..from its inception in 1971 to 1993... the policy emphasized the cultural maintenance of diverse ethnic groups through such areas as culture and language... from 1993 to 2001 the business value of multiculturalism was stressed; along with that, there was a focus on enhancing "attachment to Canada."[238]

Much of the criticism directed at official multiculturalism in its earliest phase (in addition to its failure to combat insularity and promote cultural interaction), centered on the superficiality of its cultural focus, which essentially seemed to do little more than treat the various forms of dress, music/art, and food as items to display in the context of an exotic show and tell. These "celebrations of diversity" were problematized by many critics as half-hearted tokens of recognition and respect that did not truly address issues of equality. Abu-Laban and Gabriel also describe a similar objection to this brand of multiculturalism, which was beginning to gain momentum at the turn of the millennium. They describe it as "a new questioning of multiculturalism, which challenges the validity of state spending in the area of culture and cultural maintenance, charging instead that these should be left to private choice and provision."[239] This shift in the policy resulted in "the dropping of core funding to ethnocultural groups," to such an extent that the policy has since "come to be characterized by funding cutbacks." In the place of culture and language came the new emphasis on business and trade.[240] As Abu-Laban and Gabriel explain,

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[238] Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002), 106.

[239] Ibid., 123-124.

[240] Ibid.

> Canadian policy-makers have... imbued multiculturalism with a globalization discourse that throughout the 1990s has served to draw a link between diversity and business prosperity, international trade links, and Canada's global competitiveness. This has involved redefining the private sphere to focus on business and trade, and emphasizing the export of multiculturalism to these endeavours.[241]

These links can still be seen today. The recent "Year of India in Canada" declared by Stephen Harper stands as a particularly relevant example, as the trade relationship between the two countries was clearly at the core of the political maneuver.[242]

If Abu-Laban and Gabriel's discussion of multiculturalism is critical, Himani Bannerji's assessment is scathing. Published just a year before *Selling Diversity,* her book also describes multiculturalism as a product meant to be marketed, but her focus is not on economic connections or international trade relations. At the outset of the book Bannerji quotes Angela Davis' depiction of multiculturalism:

> Multiculturalism has acquired a quality akin to spectacle. The metaphor that has displaced the melting pot is the salad. A salad consists of many ingredients, is colorful and beautiful, and it is to be consumed by someone.[243]

For Bannerji, the act of consuming multiculturalism is the act of being placated, of being tricked into believing that issues of equality are being addressed, when in fact, she argues, the realities of inequality and oppression are merely being covered up with "cultural-historical masks of 'authentic' identities, with the help of which our present day ruling classes seek to win a lasting victory."[244] Bannerji

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[241] Ibid., 124.

[242] "High Commission of India in Ottawa," http://www.hciottawa.ca/, accessed January 10, 2012.

[243] Angela Davis, quoted in Bannerji (2000), 15.

[244] Bannerji (2000), 3.

continuously stresses the "top-down" or "from above" implementation of multicultural policy and "propaganda," referring to it as "official or elite multiculturalism," and a "fascistic use of culture."[245] She defines multiculturalism as "a celebration of difference... disconnected from social relations of power, but... perceived as diversity, as existing socio-cultural ontologies or facts."[246]

While Abu-Laban and Gabriel point out concerns that emerged with regard to the government involvement in the cultural sphere that was necessitated by the earliest manifestations of multicultural policy in Canada, Bannerji highlights a much more insidious function of the policy's heavy emphasis on culture: depoliticization. Bannerji asserts that, through the rhetoric of multiculturalism, voices of political protest were trivialized.

> In this context the proclamation of multiculturalism could be seen as a diffusing or a muting device for francophone national aspirations, as much as a way of coping with the non-European immigrants' arrival. It also sidelined the claims of Canada's aboriginal population, which had displayed a propensity toward armed struggles for land claims, as exemplified by the American Indian Movement (AIM). The reduction of these groups' demands into cultural demands was obviously helpful to the nationhood of Canada with its hegemonic anglo-Canadian national culture. A political discourse relying on a language of culture and ideological constructions of ethnicized and racialized communities quickly gained ground.[247]

Moreover, Bannerji argues that, at its core, multiculturalism gives credence to colonial, and even racist identity constructions. She explains:

> In the multicultural paradigm, where difference is admitted, structural and ideological reasons for difference give place to a talk of immutable differences of ethnic cultures. In both paradigms as the focus shifts from processes of exclusion and marginalization to ethnic identities and their lack of adaptiveness, it is forgotten that these officially

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[245] Ibid., 2, 6.

[246] Ibid., 32.

[247] Ibid., 9.

> multicultural ethnicities, so embraced or rejected, are themselves the constructs of colonial — orientalist and racist — discourses.[248]

Bannerji goes on to connect the problem of reifying colonial identity constructions with conceptions of 'coloured-ness' and 'white-ness'. She underlines the Canadian government's adoption of the term 'visible minority' in connection with the policy of multiculturalism. According to Bannerji, this language stresses "both the features of being non-white and therefore visible in a way whites are not, and of being politically minor players."[249] Aside from emphasizing these aspects of a generalized, colonial, non-European identity, Bannerji insists that the ideology at work within official multiculturalism essentializes the identities of those it is purported to help in even more negative ways, particularly emphasizing connections between "third-world" cultures, and "backwardness." Drawing on the general example of South Asians in Canada, Bannerji draws attention to a tendency to essentialize individual identities with a religious faith common in a particular culture. Thus South Asians are often essentialized as Hindu, or Muslim.[250] She declares:

> Defined thus, third world or non-white peoples living in Canada become organized into competitive entities with respect to each other. They are perceived to have no commonality, except that they are seen as, or selfappellate as, being essentially religious, traditional or pre-modern, and thus civilizationally backward.[251]

In light of her rigorous denunciations, Bannerji concludes that the only way to salvage multiculturalism would be to battle official multiculturalism "from below" with a revolutionary and emancipatory form of multiculturalism, one that, Bannerji insists, is not at all evident in the official policy implemented by the

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[248] Ibid.

[249] Ibid., 30.

[250] Ibid., 6.

[251] Ibid., 7.

Canadian government. "Antiracist and feminist class politics must be its articulating basis," she argues. "It is this which would prevent this popular multiculturalism from falling prey to colonial, racist discourse or to those of ethnic nationalisms. Such a popular framing of culture would not engage in fetishized and essentialized traditions."[252]

In *Uneasy Partners: Multiculturalism and Rights in Canada*, Janice Gross Stein voices many of the same concerns as Bannerji. She describes multiculturalism in Canada as a "shallow... veneer," that has failed to translate into "embedded practice."[253] Like Bannerji she points to the adoption of an alternative form of multiculturalism, though she does not share Bannerji's emphasis on feminism and class politics. The brand of multiculturalism Stein proposes, what she terms "deep multiculturalism," would address "equality rights and cultural difference with explicit attention to the overlay of social and economic inequalities."[254] Stein joins the chorus of voices that criticize multicultural policy's narrow focus on cultural difference and failure to take any kind of action that would have a direct impact on individuals' daily lives. "It is cold comfort to new immigrants," she writes, "that we in Canada are interested in their songs and food when they cannot find jobs. Multiculturalism, whatever else it is about, also has to be about successful entry into the Canadian economy."[255] A second central change that Stein calls for is moving away from attitudes and practices that promote isolated, insular communities, toward the development of open interaction among "cultural communities."

> ... deep multiculturalism builds bridges across cultures, while shallow multiculturalism strengthens each culture within its own boundaries. As things stand now in Canada, each community can treasure its own

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[252] Ibid., 5.

[253] Janice Gross Stein, "Searching for Equality," in Stein et. al. (2007).

[254] Ibid., 19.

[255] Ibid.

> language, its history, its songs, its literature and its religious practices. But one community does not necessarily learn about another, and then multiculturalism can have perverse effects. It can strengthen the fences around each community and, in so doing, help to seal one community off from another.[256]

Stein's essay is followed by responses from a number of other scholars, several of which defend multiculturalism in Canada. In his article titled "Don't Blame Multiculturalism," Haroon Siddiqui states:

> There is no one fixed culture, as Pierre Trudeau said; every culture is equally valid, as long as it does not violate the rule of law. This bedrock Canadian principle, combined with the new breed of highly educated and confident immigrants, has had a liberating effect on newcomers. They are not going to conform to our old-fashioned notions of how immigrants should, or should not, behave. They are not going to sacrifice their culture, religion and ethnicity, let alone their sense of self-worth, to suit majoritarian mores. That Canada enables them— in fact, encourages them— to be who they are, is one of Canada's core strengths.[257]

Similarly, David Robertson Cameron contends:

> Canada, by and large, has made time an ally in its accommodation of cultural pluralism. It has used the time it has been given, not to deny change or to arrest the processes of history, but to allow the forces of social and cultural transformation to work their way into all corners of Canadian life. Multiculturalism points to a set of human encounters in which everyone is changed and from which everyone benefits.[258]

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[256] Ibid., 19-20. Regarding her concerns about isolated communities, Stein explains, "There are some worrying trends in multiculturalism in Canada. Some children, for example, go only to their community schools until they are ready for post-secondary education, worship at community institutions, go to community Summer camps, play soccer or hockey within their own communities, and make friends only with kids who have similar cultural connections. The pattern in Britain is being replicated in some of our communities in Canadian cities. Young people from different cultural communities tell me that they met first when they came to university. Even there, some tell me, student clubs tend to form around cultural and religious communities, and it can be difficult for students to meet and befriend students from different cultures. This kind of evidence, while only anecdotal, is troubling." Stein in Stein et. al (2007), 20.

[257] Haroon Siddiqui, "Don't Blame Multiculturalism," in Stein et. al. (2007), 46.

[258] David Robertson Cameron, "An Evolutionary Story," in Stein et. al. (2007), 93.

In the final chapter of the book, prominent political philosopher and defender of multicultural policy Will Kymlicka addresses the common critique that the policy's cultural focus has trivialized and depoliticized issues of inequality and has failed to take any significant steps to tackle these issues. He writes:

> Critics have often trivialized and caricatured the multiculturalism policy as being exclusively about funding folkdances, but it has a strong political and economic dimension to it, targeting the treatment and representation of ethnic groups within public institutions. In this way, it is one component in a larger policy framework of human rights, anti-discrimination laws and employment equity programs.[259]

In addition to the connection between multicultural policy and other policies and programs that seek to directly address issues of inequality and human rights, Kymlicka argues that, in spite of its "top-down" implementation, and the restrictions that go along with an 'official' policy, multicultural policy has given rise to a widespread attitude of acceptance of diversity and cultural sensitivity that has permeated Canada's private institutions as well as its public and private social spaces. He explains:

> The multiplication and diffusion of multiculturalism policies— what we can call multiculturalism's "long march through the institutions"— have in turn helped to promote a certain kind of multicultural ethos that shapes how Canadians think about and discuss issues of diversity. This ethos has spread far beyond the remit of official multiculturalism policies. Multiculturalism policies apply primarily to public institutions, and most private institutions and civil society organizations in Canada are under no legal duty to become more ethnically representative or culturally sensitive. And yet in many ways it is precisely in civil society that we can see the ethos of multiculturalism at work— in women's groups, church groups, environmental organizations, trade unions and professional associations, businesses, universities, neighbourhood associations, arts organizations and so on. At its best, this multicultural ethos is one of inclusion: organizations reaching out to members of ethnic groups, inviting them to participate, taking their interests and perspectives into account, and reconsidering any norms or practices that

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[259] Will Kymlicka, "Disentangling the Debate," in Stein et. al. (2007), 139.

> are perceived by minorities as unfair or exclusionary. At its worst, this ethos can degenerate into either tokenism or a stifling sort of political correctness.[260]

However steadfastly Kymlicka and others defend multiculturalism, everyone involved in the debate seems to agree that there is certainly room for improvement. Kymlicka admits, "We undoubtedly have racism, economic inequality and disaffection."[261] The issue of social isolation due to cultural divisions highlighted by Stein also continues to loom large. In one of her roundtables centered on the topic of multiculturalism in Canada Jean Lack Kunz came across the suggestion of creating a "Social Integration/Inclusion task force... something that will foster more integration and inclusion. It would bring together people who would otherwise have difficulty getting together."[262] Patrick Jones presents a similar idea in his article "Developing social capital: a role for music education and community music in fostering civic engagement and intercultural understanding."[263] In this article Jones argues that amateur music groups have the potential to play a major role in fostering interaction among individuals who, as Lock Kunz put it "would otherwise have difficulty getting together."[264] Jones states, "Music serves as a perfect mediating space for people of different groups and musicking not only develops a sense of shared identity and intercultural understanding, but also can teach skills for democratic action such as leading and following, teamwork, debate, compromise and so forth."[265] Fiona Magowan

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[260] Ibid.

[261] Ibid., 152.

[262] Kunz (2007), 18.

[263] Patrick Jones, "Developing social capital: a role for music education and community music in fostering civic engagement and intercultural understanding," *International Journal of Community Music*, 3 no. 2 (2010).

[264] Kunz (2007), 18.

[265] Jones (2010), 296.

similarly claims that music can be, has been and is being used as a tool to create connections between people groups and places. She explains how aboriginal groups in Northern Australia have used music as a means to assert their identity and their rights concerning ownership of land by tying themselves as a group to geographical, physical places.[266] Jones and Magowan's arguments show how music can intersect in major ways with the issues and processes related to multiculturalism, which further highlights the ERMS's connection to the topic.

ERMS does not seem to have benefited much from multiculturalism policy in terms of direct impact. The society did benefit from government funding through Canadian Heritage grants for a number of years, which in many respects could be seen as connected to multiculturalism initiatives. While I was not able to gain access to the amounts of funding provided through these grants, it would seem the amounts were not overly large, as, between the government grants, membership dues, ticket sales and donations the ERMS still found it difficult to finance six concerts a year, as Bhupen Parekh, a former president of the society disclosed:

> We had a commitment to provide at least five to six programs in a year, minimum, and that meant that, at that time the approximate cost of each program was about three thousand dollars...Well, this is the thing, because we have to manage at least fifteen thousand dollars in the kitty in order to give five or six programs in a year, and that was quite a bit of a challenge.[267]

Moreover, the Canadian Heritage grants came with eligibility requirements that were not always easy for the society to accommodate, as Mita Das explained:

> We used to get funds from Heritage Canada [the Department of Canadian Heritage] and one of the things was that we had to promote

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[266] Fiona Magowan, "'The Land is *Märr* (Essence), It Stays Forever': The *Yothu-Yindi* Relationship in Australian Aboriginal Traditional and Popular Musics," in ed. Stokes (1997).

[267] Bhupen Parekh, discussion with the author, August 16, 2011.

> Canadian artists, so we used to have one or two artists... Canadian artists... whoever trained in our music but was from Canada.... sometimes they approach you and that makes things easier. Sometimes you have to go looking, that's harder, and when we had Heritage Canada grants we had to go looking for somebody.[268]

This difficulty was combined with the constantly resurfacing issue of the general disparity in quality and skill levels between Indian classical music artists from India and South Asia and artists from other parts of the world. "The caliber is something you have to... like.... yeah... (laughs) especially if you compare them [Indian classical music artists from Canada] to classical musicians from India, they're not anywhere in that standard."[269] In the early 1990's government funding for cultural organizations was severely reduced, leaving the ERMS in an even more difficult financial position. "We had to watch every dollar coming in and every dollar going out," recounted Subhash Karkhanis, yet another former president of the ERMS.[270]

It was not until 2005 that the society began to tap into another form of government funding through the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC).[271] The AGLC (an agent of the provincial government) provides funding for charitable organizations by allowing them to run casino fundraising events, for which eligible organizations need only provide volunteers.[272] In order to be eligible for the funding, organizations must hold official charitable status (or agree to forward all funds to a recognized charity), be an incorporated society or company, have registered by-laws (which include a dissolution clause wherein remaining funds will be forwarded to a recognized charity), have carried out

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[268] Mita Das, discussion with the author, July 25, 2011.

[269] Ibid.

[270] Subhash Karkhanis, discussion with the author, August 18, 2011.

[271] Nikhil Rao, email correspondence with the author.

[272] Ibid., Eligibility for Casino Licence Form, "Alberta Liquor and Gaming Commission," http://aglc.ca/, accessed January 19, 2012.

activities that benefit "the community at large" for a minimum of two years, and have a structure of governance that meets the approval of the AGLC.[273] These requirements certainly do not indicate a connection to multicultural policy or its initiatives. In fact, it is interesting that the ERMS has found a considerable source of financial support through a government program that is geared toward charitable organizations that support "the community at large," rather than through programs that are associated with the policy of multiculturalism. This seems to justify many of the concerns brought up by Abu-Laban and Gabriel, Bannerji, and Stein, while, at the same time, ironically revealing one example of a resolution to one aspect of those concerns coming from a completely different source, neither hindered nor helped by any facet of multiculturalism.[274] Of course, Kymlicka and others might argue that the attitudes and sensitivity fostered by the ethos of multiculturalism may have played a role in this particular example, but that is a claim that would be difficult to prove one way or the other.[275]

Aside from the area of funding and direct support, however, I feel that the ERMS has been very much impacted by, and continues to interact with, an ethos of multiculturalism. I have formed this opinion partly as a result of what ERMS members and participants had to say about multiculturalism. For example, Manikarnika Kanjilal made the following statement regarding multiculturalism in Canada:

> ...it feels very much like home because you know in India there are so many different states and they each have their own culture, and you cannot really have a melting pot... because everybody's gonna stick to their own individuality and it's beautiful that way. So, I guess it's the same thing here [in Canada] also, you kind of preserve your own identity as well as you become a part of the big thing... it gives a

[273] Ibid.

[274] Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002), Bannerji (2000), Stein et. al. (2007).

[275] Kymlicka in Stein et. al. (2007).

> homely feeling. And it's nothing new, coming from India it feels like this is the way it should be in every country pretty much.[276]

Kanjilal clearly feels that multiculturalism is something positive, and that, far from trivial, it plays a significant role in allowing individuals who come from other countries to maintain their cultural identities without feeling like, or being treated as, outsiders within Canada. Kumud Acharya, a former ERMS president, presents a similar point of view:

> Canada is a multicultural society. You bring your own food, bring your own style of living, bring your language, bring your faith, and bring your music of course, right? So that's all there. So, in that sense it is easy to bring and expose these artists, for these few people of Indian ethnic background. To expose the Indian music to the other local Canadian crowd is what we've been trying to do... and of course it's different... music as well, so people have to develop an ear for it, understanding of it... So, there are problems of course... it's like a cultural value, or cultural thing that you're trying to impose on somebody... just exposure is the only thing you can do. You can't impose on anybody. You have it here, and occasionally ten percent of the population reading from the media will see and 'Oh, let's go listen to this concert, or see this concert'. And, over a period of time I think it has developed, but very slowly.[277]

Like Kanjilal, Acharya identifies Canada's multicultural quality as allowing a valuable freedom to Canadians with ties to other cultures, and he credits this characteristic for the ERMS's ability to promote Indian classical music in Canada with general ease. However, he also describes multiculturalism as largely ineffective in establishing cross-cultural interaction in Canada. But even this critique is qualified by his acknowledgement that a non-Indian audience does seem to be developing over time. The multiculturalism that Kanjilal and Acharya address in their statements seems to evoke Kymlicka's description of an "ethos of

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[276] Manikarnika Kanjilal, discussion with the author, July 15, 2011.

[277] Kumud Acharya, discussion with the author, August 16, 2011.

inclusion," rather than an official policy.[278] Interestingly, every ERMS member and participant that I spoke with on the topic discussed multiculturalism on these terms, focusing more on an ethos than a policy, with only two exceptions (Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty). Moreover, Acharya's statement that the ERMS has been trying to reach out to non-Indians substantiates Kymlicka's claim that the ethos of inclusion arising from multicultural policy is doing real work in Canadian society (although, in the case of the ERMS, his model is reversed, with the organization representing a minority and reaching out to members of the majority).[279] Subhash Karkhanis explained that, very much in line with the ERMS' official mission statement, he sees the cultivation of cultural interaction and an "ethos of inclusion" as one of the society's most central goals, and one that has seen considerable progress. In an email he wrote that the long term goal of the ERMS is to "[p]romote understanding of the fine ancient Indian culture through understanding of classical music and dances and to promote tolerance. The attendances of different ethnicities at the Raga-Mala functions clearly demonstrate that the original vision still remains intact."[280]

Many of the ERMS members and participants I spoke with felt very strongly, along with Karkhanis, that the ERMS has been succeeding in attracting audience members from diverse backgrounds. Doram asserted that:

> [There is a] diverse amount of people that actually attend Raga-Mala's shows. You have one cultural medium and just the amount of people that it can bring out and the amount of people that appreciate it no matter what ethnic background, if they've been raised with it or if they were born in India, or if they have just heard it in the past few years and are just learning about it, I think it can really bring people together.[281]

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[278] Kymlicka in Stein et. al. (2007).

[279] Kymlicka in Stein et. al. (2007).

[280] Ananda Doram, discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.

Not only are non-South Asians attending concerts, they are also becoming members of the society, volunteering, and serving on the board. Former ERMS president Bhupen Parekh recalled serving on a board alongside ERMS members with no South Asian heritage, as well as individuals who made major contributions to the society in other ways.

> I had a fantastic team of board members... some of them also Euro-Canadians.... very dedicated people. I could name a few like Andrew Buhr and Brad Bowie and Greg Dejong and other people who are not executive [board] members or volunteers but they also attend the programs regularly and they're also patron members.[282]

This progress has not come about only by chance, but has in large part been brought about through the concentrated efforts of ERMS members. Major strategies that have been employed by multiple ERMS boards over the past two decades include an emphasis on advertising and publicity through various media sources, a focus on attracting students and youth, connecting with other, more mainstream genres of music, and making an effort to make the concert event comfortable and accessible to individuals who have no previous experience with the genre. Don and Val Massey told Sabreena Delhon that when they first began attending ERMS concerts (during the society's first years in existence) they had to "seek Raga-Mala out" in order to get involved.[283] Val Massey went on to say "if you weren't hanging around the two or three South Asian grocery stores on thirty-fourth avenue, you didn't hear about it."[284] But both agreed that publicity and advertising efforts have since improved exponentially, and the ERMS is reaching out to a much broader audience, noting that the society has gained publicity

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[282] Bhupen Parekh, discussion with the author, August 16, 2011. Andrew Buhr was in fact president of the society at one time.

[283] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Don and Val Massey, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_12, accessed May 11, 2011.

[284] Ibid.

through CKUA and CJSR radio, as well as the Edmonton Journal.[285] Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty also pointed out a significant increase in attendance that seemed to stem directly from efforts to "publicize and get the word out."[286] Chakrabarty was a major proponent of this. An accomplished film-maker and graphic design artist, Chakrabarty has been providing media services for the ERMS for several years. These services include designing posters for advertising, designing brochures, updating and re-designing the website and filming and archiving concerts. As a part of its advertising efforts and an attempt attract students and youth, the ERMS has also given tickets away at discount prices or even for free. For example, Atanu Das, a former ERMS president, recalled an arrangement with CKUA radio in which listeners could call in and win free tickets to an ERMS concert.[287] Similarly, another former ERMS president, Papiya Das, described how the society has given tickets to other music groups such as the Richard Eaton Singers, as well as organizations like the Alberta Ballet for sale at reduced rates.[288] In addition to "getting the word (and the tickets) out" the ERMS has made efforts to make the music more accessible by featuring fusion concerts or artists with ties to other genres. Acharya explained, "During my term we always used to insist, or think of programs that would include the local population, at least one or two programs where we could bring these people in, being associated through jazz or, you know, whatever..."[289] The ERMS has sponsored concerts incorporating jazz elements, instruments from other genres such as the piano and the electric guitar, and has presented Indian classical

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[285] Ibid.

[286] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_7, accessed May 10, 2011.

[287] Atanu Das, discussion with the author, August 20, 2011.

[288] Papiya Das, discussion with the author, August 20, 2011.

[289] Kumud Acharya, discussion with the author, August 16, 2011.

musicians in conjoint ventures with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra.[290] Attempts to make the music more accessible have also involved sponsoring presentations and workshops in the community and at the University of Alberta.[291]

As a result of these efforts ERMS concert audiences are made up of individuals from a considerably broad range of backgrounds, many of whom have no other connections to South Asian culture. Based on this, one could argue that the ERMS functions similarly to Patrick Jones' proposed amateur music group in establishing social capital within its surrounding community. The ERMS members and participants I spoke to certainly seemed to attribute this kind of work to the society. Karkhanis described the ERMS as "promoting cultural harmony amongst the various ethnic communities in Edmonton," and Doram stated that the ERMS is important because it "brings people together."[292] While the act of attending an occasional concert involves a lot less interaction than participating in an amateur music group would, the ERMS members and participants I spoke with placed a strong emphasis on the social interaction that does take place during ERMS concert events. When asked to elaborate on how ERMS brings people together, Doram responded:

> It seems like so many of the families that attend know each other and there seems to be such a communal aspect to it. If one of their friends is performing or up on the mic giving the introduction and talking about the artist they might get a cheer from the audience, and everybody's laughing and, you might get those little comments kind of come up and you can just see the joy that people have for just being there and being able to experience their music first-hand and share those musical experiences with their families and friends, so, yeah, it's really fun to see.[293]

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[290] Ananda Doram, Atanu Das, discussions with the author, Summer 2011.

[291] Papiya Das, discussion with the author, August 20, 2011; Sabreena Delhon, interview with Don and Val Massey, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_12, accessed May 11, 2011.

[292] Subhash Karkhanis, Ananda Doram, discussions with the author, Summer 2011.

[293] Ananda Doram, discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.

Val Massey also stated in her interview with Delhon that "the informal atmosphere and meeting through the music forms the community... the music brings East and West together."[294] Brad Bowie related to Delhon how he initially felt that he was a definite outsider in relation to the ERMS community, and was in fact very anxious about attending his first concert. However, he quickly became more involved with the society by making personal connections while talking with other audience members at intermissions, and offering to help set up the stage.[295] Now Bowie is a pivotal component of the society. At every concert he is on hand to facilitate between musicians and sound technicians, and he has been serving on the board for several years.

This element of the ERMS, along with the argument Jones presents in his article, challenges critiques the claim that a focus on culture reduces multiculturalism to mere tokenism. While, as Bannerji argues, focusing on culture does not directly address issues such as economic inequality, I would argue that cultural organizations like the ERMS can go a long way in challenging engrained imbalances of power. This is an opinion that stems from Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*. Said argues that just as culture has been used as an imperial tool of oppression, so too it can be used to combat hegemonies that have given rise to, and perpetuate inequality. For Said, an effective response to inequality subsists not in implementing official policies or formalized movements but in forging a new way of thinking about and viewing the world. Within this mode of thought a constant critical awareness and commitment to search for multiple voices and perspectives unravels the disguising work of oppressive hegemonies. This new

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[294] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Don and Val Massey, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_12, accessed May 11, 2011.

[295] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_7, accessed May 10, 2011.

mode of thought can give rise to a generation of anti-systemic movements. It is through these kinds of movements, Said argues, that much change and resistance has already been accomplished, and through them imbalances of power may continue to be challenged, even altered. Inevitably they begin with new ways of understanding the world. As Said's quotation of Hugh of St. Victor so eloquently states, one must first "change about in invisible and transitory things, so that afterwards [one] may be able to leave them behind altogether."[296] This approach has incredible relevance for discussions about issues of discrimination and exclusion, and it seems to me to fit perfectly with what is being accomplished through the ERMS. Said is describing a grassroots movement, wherein the boundaries between different cultures and ethnicities are challenged and erased from the ground up, perhaps paving the way for official policies to be implemented with little or no opposition, and less danger of being misunderstood, reacted against, or manipulated in such a way that they no longer achieve their intended purposes, as has been the concern regarding the policy of multiculturalism and other associated initiatives. All of the ERMS members and participants I spoke with were very emphatic about the potential for the cultural form of music to have an immense impact on divisions and discrimination in society. Val Massey told Delhon "music is one of those commonality things, you can talk to anyone about it," while statements such as "music creates understanding," and "music reaches out to everyone," were frequent in my own interviews with ERMS members and participants.[297] Considering the fact that someone like Brad Bowie, who at one time felt, very distinctly, that he was an outsider to the ERMS community, is now so comfortable and so deeply involved with the society, these beliefs about the power of music to "create understanding" and "reach out" are well-founded.

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[296] Said (1994), 335.

[297] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Don and Val Massey, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_12, accessed May 11, 2011. Atanu Das, Papiya Das, discussions with the author, August 20, 2011.

Chapter 5. Identity and Community within the ERMS

Discussion about the ERMS and its connections to the concept and issues of multiculturalism has led me to refer to the society as a community. This in turn leads to the question of what kind of a community the ERMS should be understood as, or if it is appropriate to refer to the society as a community at all. I have already explored at length the extent to which the ERMS might be understood as a diaspora community, and the only conclusion I was able to draw was that the answer is decidedly elusive. Many ERMS participants and members speak about the "Indian diaspora" as a way to describe the majority of those whom the society represents, but these same individuals also point out that there are others who would absolutely not fit the identifier of Indian or South Asian diaspora but are still very deeply involved. Referring to a list of criteria for defining diaspora communities did not do much to clear up the issue, but instead revealed even more complexities and contradictions. When all is said and done, it seems that the ERMS cannot be pinned down as a clear cut diaspora community, but its affinity with the qualities and characteristics of such a community cannot be ignored either. The same problem holds true in attempting to discuss the identity of the ERMS as a community in general. As much scholarly discussion on the topic has consistently affirmed, identities are never fixed and absolute but are, by their very nature, being consistently negotiated and re-shaped. If this is the case concerning the identity of one individual, the situation becomes infinitely more complex in the context of a group like the ERMS, wherein identity is the result of myriad opinions and points of view intersecting with one another, and, in addition to all of these individual contributions to the society's identity, there is the matter of institutional identity which is also continuously negotiated in response to felt needs of the society as a corporate organization and wholistic entity. While this institutional aspect of the group's identity is inevitably influenced by the perceptions and ideals of the individuals who comprise the organization, it tends to operate at a higher level than these kaleidoscopic points of influence, directing and conditioning them more than being shaped by them.

Perceptions of 'Outsiders'

Bowie's description of the anxiety he felt before attending his first concert seems to indicate a perception that the ERMS is strongly tied to the South Asian community, to the extent that those who have no connection to South Asian culture may not be welcome. There also appears to be a perception among South Asians in Edmonton that the ERMS is a community restricted to individuals of a particular socio-economic class because the society is centered on Indian classical music, a genre that is often associated with people who are wealthy and well-educated.[298] Another vantage point to consider regarding the ERMS' identity is that of the media. The ERMS has been represented to the Edmonton public through radio as well as the newspaper. Interestingly, the individuals who are required to interact with the ERMS because they work (or volunteer) for the media sources that have represented the society seem to also enjoy attending concerts, and do not view the society as exclusive in any way. For example, Delhon spoke with a CKUA volunteer who had been a patron of the ERMS for ten years and whose only suggestions for improvement were "more [concerts] more often," and who felt that if more people knew about the society it would have much larger audiences.[299] Roger Levesque, who has been writing reviews on ERMS concerts for the Edmonton Journal for many years, also had high praises for the society. In an interview he emphasized the "high quality" of the artists that are presented. "The caliber of artists is so high," he explained, "it made me wonder if any mediocre artists ever make it out of India."[300] He also credited the ERMS as being "the most prominent organization of its type," (representing an

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[298] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_7, accessed May 10, 2011.

[299] Sabreena Delhon, interviews with ERMS audience members, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_2, accessed May 13, 2011.

[300] Roger Levesque, discussion with the author, October 6, 2011.

ethnic minority) and expressed great respect for the society's efforts to "create a bridge between their community and culture and the average western ear, or person not familiar with the music."[301] Pointing out that ERMS audience members are clearly not limited to South Asians, Levesque asserted that the ERMS has "enriched the cultural life of the city [of Edmonton]."[302] Rather than being defined by ties to a particular culture or ethnicity, Levesque insisted that the community of the ERMS is made up of "those who... love music."[303] When comparing the perspectives of those who have attended ERMS concerts and those who have not, there is a sharp disparity regarding perceptions of the society's inclusivity. It would seem that anyone hearing about the ERMS on CKUA radio or reading one of Levesque's reviews in the Edmonton Journal would be likely to pick up on perceptions of the society as open and welcoming. However, as Levesque opined, there is a large number of people who are not exposed to these perceptions because of a general lack of interest in Edmonton's "cultural scene."[304] Thus many people are unaware of the ERMS, or write it off as not of interest because they simply are not interested in attending a concert that is outside of the mainstream.

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[301] Ibid.

[302] Ibid.

[303] Ibid.

[304] Ibid.

Perceptions of 'Insiders'

This perspective that the ERMS is an exclusive group, not open to the general public, is (of course) not shared by those who are involved in the society. However, this does not mean that all ERMS members and participants have identical perspectives regarding what the society is and what it does and/or should accomplish. Nevertheless, the sense of a community of music lovers, as suggested by Levesque seems to be very strong among ERMS members and consistent attendees. Shreela Chakrabarty related to Delhon in an interview how, during her university career, she was attracted by the unparalleled quality of the music at ERMS concerts, and was thrilled to be able to meet musicians that were her own age. [305] Regarding her own attraction to the ERMS Doram explained, "I've always just grown up with East Indian music in my family so I've naturally just gone to Raga-Mala."[306] Don Massey recalled how he had struggled to find ways to reconnect with Indian classical music in Canada after emigrating from India, but while he affirmed that the music was the central focus for many involved with ERMS, he also pointed out that "some people come just for the samosas," or along similar lines, to be surrounded by the sights and sounds of South Asian culture.[307] For example, Mita Das described why she first became involved with the ERMS:

> Raga-Mala is one group that I would go and say "hi" to people, like you think that, "oh, I know these people." It became a very familiar society that you go to. Nowadays I'm not a very religious person so I don't go to temples often... but over the years you go to a temple after a year or so and you kind of [think] "who are these people" because the

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[305] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Brad Bowie and Shreela Chakrabarty, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_7, accessed May 10, 2011.

[306] Ananda Doram, discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.

[307] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Don and Val Massey, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_12, accessed May 11, 2011.

> population changes, there are so many new people coming in... and you're always finding that you don't know anybody and you're kind of feeling like a stranger, but Raga-Mala Society is something that anytime... when I wasn't in the board when you go there you find so many people you can talk to, so it became a familiar society that you just got to know people over the years. So initially it was that we would just go because it would remind us of our music or you would see some familiar faces and some Indian food it's like something that we did, kind of our Indian cultural outing kind of so that's probably one of the plus parts of this society, and got to dress up a little, you know wear Indian clothes.[308]

Thus while on one hand the ERMS community seems to be defined by a love for music, the close ties to South Asian culture also play a major role in defining the community. At any given concert a large portion of the audience will be wearing traditional South Asian clothing, and there will be an intermission where popular South Asian snacks and tea are served, and much of the conversation that takes place during this time is not in English. I feel that this portion of the ERMS events is particularly significant in establishing a sense of community within the society. Mita Das highlighted the importance of being able to say "hi," and have conversation with others in the society, and this is the time when that kind of interaction happens. While the intermission atmosphere is strongly evocative of South Asian culture, it is far from homogenous in this regard.

Speaking on the practice of wearing traditional dress, Bhupen Parekh observed that "in Raga-Mala people used to dress up more, but now youth tend to pay less attention to dress."[309] A busy Ph. D. student, Kanjilal explained her perspective on the issue:

> My very first Raga-Mala concert I did dress up. I didn't know what to expect, it was my first concert here, [I thought] "okay let's put on a good profile." After that, now I've become a member and I don't care anymore... it takes a lot of time to actually tie a sari, and most of the time I just [think], "okay I can make two hours and I can just go make

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[308] Mita Das, discussion with the author, July 25, 2011.

[309] Bhupen Parekh, discussion with the author, August 16, 2011.

> the concert and come back." So, I've been to a concert in my shorts and flip flops also, (laughter), so nobody noticed, I just slipped in... it's like "oh well, it's only Raga-Mala people."[310]

Kanjilal's decision to dress up traditionally for her first concert because she was not sure what to expect seems to resonate with other outside views of the society, such as Bowie's, for example, it is assumed that the society is not for them because they have no ties to South Asian culture. Along with this assumption come certain expectations associated with ideas about South Asian culture, and perhaps an element of exclusivity as well. However, I also feel that the fact that Kanjilal has not dressed up formally once since her first concert speaks volumes to how perceptions of the society are altered by attending a performance and interacting with other audience members. There does still seem to be a perception of a certain level of expectation within Kanjilal's statement, namely that wearing shorts and flip flops to a concert is crossing some kind of a line, so that she had to "slip in," without anyone noticing. But at the same time, her comment that "it's only Raga-Mala people," seems to imply a level of familiarity and casualness.[311]

On the other hand, Doram expressed quite a different point of view regarding the issue of dress, and accordingly, I would argue, her connection to the society.

> I have one skirt that was made in India with sari material, so I kind of like to wear that [to ERMS concerts] but just with like a regular kind of a western t-shirt... It's one of the occasions when I bring that skirt out. It's silk so it can tear easily so I don't wear it too often but that's one of the places that I do wear it for sure... It's kind of my own western adaptation of the sari... if I did wear a sari I wouldn't really know how to put it together, so I would have to get say Mani or Shreela to help out with that, but if I was just going to get ready, you know on my own, it's just kind of like a halfway point between a sari and western attire so I don't feel like I'm trying to step into their identity too much... I still think I'm borrowing that, you know, it's not my culture but I still think the fabric is really pretty so... it's kind of a halfway point between

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[310] Manikarnika Kanjilal, discussion with the author, July 15, 2011.

[311] Ibid.

> appreciating their culture and letting them, you know also have their own saris because a lot of the ladies wear saris there.[312]

For Doram, it seems that attending an ERMS concert involves a bit of a balancing act between participating in the event and connecting with the community, particularly regarding a dominant association with South Asian culture, while at the same time respecting a tacit boundary of who is and who is not South Asian. Doram's perceptions of this boundary may be shaped in part by her interactions and observations at ERMS concerts, but may also be informed by interactions and observations outside of the ERMS, within her day to day experiences in Canadian society. In their discussions of multicultural policy Abu-Laban and Gabriel and Bannerji point toward entrenched perceptions of the socially constructed categories of race and ethnicity and their associated identities as being surrounded by concrete and impermeable barriers.[313] Jean Lock Kunz's report on multiculturalism in Canada makes similar observations. It seems inevitable that such widespread perceptions would inhibit cultural exchange and interaction, and that attempts to cross these boundaries of identity definition might thus be viewed as deviant and inappropriate.[314] The tendency of diversity within nation-states to ultimately translate into isolated clusters of communities, and thus disunity (along with a lack of civic and political engagement), has been studied and discussed at length by political scientist Robert D. Putnam.[315] It is in response to his work that Patrick Jones has sought to draw attention to the unifying potential of amateur music groups.[316]

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[312] Ananda Doram, discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.

[313] Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002), Bannerji (2000).

[314] Kunz (2007).

[315] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2001).

[316] Jones (2010).

While it is inevitable that the perceptions and socially felt realities and codes of behaviour regarding difference that prevail in the environment surrounding the ERMS will impact, even permeate the society, I would also argue that the ERMS, like amateur music groups, challenges these perceptions in the act of bringing people together through music. As Martin Stokes asserts, "Musics are invariably communal activities that bring people together in specific alignments, whether as musicians, dancers, or listening audiences. The 'tuning in' through music of these social alignments can provide a powerful affective experience in which social identity is literally 'embodied'."[317] It is clear that the people whom the ERMS brings together do not come from a single type of background, walk of life or any one socially constructed category, and the society does forge a sense community among those individuals who attend. In so doing, it cultivates interactions that may not otherwise ever take place. These connections are established among members and participants through the act of listening to music together, or, as Stokes puts it, collectively "tuning-in," and sharing experiences by outwardly reacting to the concert; they are established during intermissions, through conversation and eating together; furthermore, they are established through working together in the unique context of a volunteer organization. There is a host of tasks that needs to be done in the course of organizing each concert, such as "setting up the stage, taking tickets, hosting artists, picking up artists, selling samosas…"[318] This aspect of the society played a major role Brad Bowie's involvement, along with many others, particularly students. Karim Gillani explained how he was able to attend ERMS concerts frequently in spite of having the restricted budget of a university student:

> I'll be honest with you, when I came here I had very limited funding, so I used to volunteer and [the ERMS was] very generous. I have

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[317] Stokes (1997), 12.

[318] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Don and Val Massey, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_12, accessed May 11, 2011.

> [attended] many, many shows, over fifteen shows where I didn't pay any money, even the student price you know. I was volunteering, used to go early, set up the stage, get to meet with the artist as well, all those sort of things. But then you know they never gave me a bad look you know, they always welcome[d me]. Their gestures are always good. [319]

[319] Karim Gillani, discussion with the author, July 13, 2011.

Negotiating Generational Difference

The issue of student involvement is central to one of the principal junctures of difference, and thus identity negotiation, within the society: what type of music and musicians the ERMS should sponsor and promote. As has already been discussed, many ERMS members and participants feel strongly that the society should only sponsor authentic and traditional Indian classical music. Within this group, ideas about what constitutes authentic or traditional Indian classical music are not uniform, and often not concrete, however variables such as style and approach, performance practice, method of training and types of instruments included are drawn upon to form a general frame of reference that is largely agreed upon in defining what is and is not authentic and/or traditional. For some of the ERMS members and participants who feel that the society should be dedicated exclusively to this kind of music, it seems the value of the identity that such an association imparts has as much to do with what traditional classical music is not as it does with what the music is. For example, in defining traditional Indian classical music, one ERMS participant stated: "Classical music would be something that isn't popularized and isn't formulated for the mainstream. It wouldn't be… it's not pop music. When I think of classical I think of a separation from pop music. Pop music is what we are *not*."[320] At first glance, it seemed to me that the philosophy that only music that is authentic, traditional, classical should be sponsored by the society was, by far, the dominant stance within the ERMS. However, after interviewing and interacting with ERMS members and participants, this perception has been completely undermined. It seems to me that just as many members and participants feel that the ERMS should not limit its concert offerings to traditional, classical music. The following statements of ERMS members encapsulate the most common arguments I encountered, related to this view:

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[320] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

> My argument normally is that not many kids are coming, so do something for which kids should come. If they don't come then what kind of a job are we doing? They are not even listening. So, just diversify it a little bit so that if kids come, then they know, if not pure classical, then what classical *based* performances are.[321]

> Some of the young artists now, they try to do a mix of Indian classical with Western classical, and that is something that we… always encourage... And it happens actually, sometimes you'll get somebody to play a Western instrument with an Indian concert so that happens, not to the extent we'd like, but we try whenever we see the opportunity…. Yeah, there are always some very purist, traditional classical people who really don't like the mix. That's okay (laughs). But you know, the creativity, you always have to encourage… whenever the artists are bringing in something new.[322]

> Well, the society is continuing to make differences and improvements… [we need to] make sure that [we bring] different types of artists and bring in the new generation. The thing I find about the new generation of artists is that, because they want to get themselves established, when they come they sing with their heart… I think that the younger generation of the new artists should be coming, and being given the exposure to us.[323]

Inherent in these statements is the assumption (broadly held within the ERMS) that students generally are not attracted to traditional, classical music and tend to be at the forefront of experimenting with new forms, approaches, instruments and mixtures of styles (both in terms of composition and performance and forming a supportive audience/fan-base). Parallel to this is the similar belief that "Westerners" or Canadians with no South Asian heritage prefer more contemporary and westernized musics. At a general level, these assumptions seem to ring true more often than not, yet I cannot resist calling attention to the fact that I came across some striking exceptions within the society. One ERMS participant with no South Asian background shared a definite preference for traditional

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[321] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[322] Ibid.

[323] Ibid.

Indian classical music concerts as opposed to those featuring Western elements or a more contemporary approach.

> I still really love classical music and I still really like to hear traditional rags myself, even more so over popular music,, I still really like traditional, what some people would call 'authentic ragas'. I still really gravitate towards that because it's something that contrasts also with my own culture and it contrasts the pop music that I am surrounded by, so it's nice to hear something different.... .[324]

Similarly I was told by a young university student, "People call me a snob because sometimes I say, 'come on, I came here to listen to this?' It's authentic if you are not mixing up certain forms of music… generally, traditionally speaking we expect certain forms of music…"[325] Observing these two living and breathing exceptions demonstrated to me the complexity of interrelations within the ERMS, particularly concerning the way individual identities are perceived, negotiated and expressed within the society. Both of these participants laid claim to identities that essentially conflicted with regard to the norm, or expectations within the ERMS, and both could choose when and for whom they would enact or emphasize a given aspect of their identity and/or suppress or downplay another. This highlighted the fact that both participants connected with and related to the ERMS community in multiple ways. For example, the identity of a student who is in touch with popular culture (South Asian, Canadian, or both) and popular contemporary music, is something that is less common and, to a large extent, sought after within the society, and is thus valued and appreciated in a particular way. Moreover, under the guise of this identity, an individual would generally not be expected to make donations of either time or finances to the society and would not be expected to understand the subtleties and technical aspects of performances. A conservative traditionalist, on the other hand, would largely be seen as knowledgeable, sophisticated, able to have intimate and intense musical

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[324] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[325] Ibid.

experiences during concerts, and able to critique performances. An assumed aspect of this identity is a lack of interest in the popular contemporary music scene. Therefore an individual attached to such an identity would not be expected to be aware of recent or current trends, artists or genres. This flexible way of expressing one's identity within a framework of strong assumptions regarding particular identities and associated characteristics is a process that every individual inevitably undertakes in the various circumstances of everyday life, including, of course, ERMS members and participants within the context of a concert. It is valuable to consider how the enactments and interactions of these flexible identities, concomitant with widely held assumptions and associations concerning particular identities, ultimately contribute to the projection of an identity for the organization as a whole.

In light of the perceived polarity between non-South Asians and youth and traditionalist connoisseurs, a common view that I encountered regarding the initiative to attract youth and Westerners, was that an effort needed to be made to educate these groups. In an interview with Sabreena Delhon, Val Massey maintained that it is difficult to attract youth to ERMS concerts because they prefer straight-forward, simplistic tunes to the difficult, complex music that the society presents:

> Young people see music as a background that fills in the empty spaces in their lives, but this [classical music] is actually at the forefront… you have to educate young people, so the Ethnomusicology Centre at the Uof A becomes an important link, because there's the formal education and then there's the performance. So, there has to be a connection between societies, the Raga-Mala and the Ethnomusicology Society. That's a vital link; otherwise people don't know anything about the music and artists, so what's the point?[326]

As has already been seen, another common view within the ERMS is that, in order to attract a larger and more diverse audience, the society simply must

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[326] Sabreena Delhon, interview with Don and Val Massey, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_12, accessed May 11, 2011.

feature a broader range of musical styles. This is an initiative that the society seems to have taken up and veered away from alternately throughout recent years.[327] The cause for this vacillation is not difficult to pinpoint. The juxtaposition of authentic versus deviation, stagnation versus creative growth is extremely sensitive, and there are proponents on each side that are passionately convicted in their views. Yet there is one way in which the ERMS seems to have been able to cater to a broader audience without undermining any sense of its conviction to the authentic Indian classical genre, an achievement realized through the form of dance. ERMS members and participants I spoke with insisted that individuals who would not so much as consider attending a vocal or instrumental Indian classical music concert will flock to dance concerts at every opportunity. Having attended ERMS sponsored vocal, instrumental and dance concerts I observed this reality first-hand. The ERMS has also worked with the Society for Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Among Youth, in cooperation with the Indian Students Organization at the University of Alberta. In 2003 the ERMS cosponsored an Odissi dance concert with the organization. However, a shortage of volunteers has left the society largely inactive.

Another approach frequently employed by the ERMS in order to navigate between a commitment to authenticity and a desire to attract a more diverse audience is to co-sponsor events or musicians that do not fall within the generally accepted understanding of the traditional Indian classical genre. In this way, the ERMS is able to gain some publicity among the ranks of a different group of music enthusiasts, while also maintaining some distance from the event, so that its identity as an organization in support of 'Indian classical music' is less likely to be called into question.[328] These strategies of negotiating an organizational commitment to authenticity and classicism with the initiative of attracting younger generations of patrons underlines the reality that the overall identity of an

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[327] Mita Das, Karim Gillani, Ananda Doram, discussions with the author, Summer 2011.

[328] Mita Das, discussion with the author, July 25, 2011.

organization like the ERMS is not merely comprised of a collection of identities of individuals, but also of perceptions and embodiments of "the institution." The entity of the ERMS as an institution becomes embodied through policies, which actively direct and limit individual perceptions of the society. It is through the lens of the ERMS as an institution that the initiative to increase student involvement takes on another layer of significance as a necessary step for survival. No organization can survive if it fails to attract new generations of patrons. The need to assure longevity through future generations of patrons is not the only impetus behind an emerging institutional concern for taking on the characteristics of progressiveness and cosmopolitanism. A need for funding, as well as a desire for local and governmental acknowledgement and approval, add to the appeal of asserting these characteristics as part of the society's identity, from an institutional perspective. At present, however, the ample funding that the ERMS is accessing through the AGLC considerably limits the need to push for the projection of these characteristics. In terms of local and governmental acknowledgement, the most significant motivation for asserting the trait of cosmopolitanism seems to be Kymlicka's ethos of multiculturalism, and while I would argue (as I already have) that there is an institutional aspiration to become an exemplary manifestation of this ethos within the ERMS, this motivation has none of the urgency that the need to recruit new generations of patrons does.

Negotiating Regional Difference

Regarding the issue of differing musical tastes and preferences, the varying opinions relating to the dichotomy between traditional and contemporary, pure and mixed, certainly seems to be the most overt. However there are also other forms of difference amongst its audience members that the ERMS must address. In the course of my interactions within the society, I noted two other significant areas of difference that resulted from diverse regions of origin or heritage and divergent religious beliefs. In addition to the range of diversity represented in terms of South Asians and non-South Asians the ERMS is comprised of individuals with ties to regions all across India and South Asia, as well as various areas that are home to large populations of South Asian diaspora communities including Britain, and a number of African, and Caribbean nations.[329] This reality problematizes the term "Indian classical music" and begs the question, what does "Indian" really mean? The vast majority of ERMS members and participants I spoke with relied heavily on the term "South Asian" and resolved the contradiction of the title Indian classical music by labeling it a misnomer that is simply used because it has become so established, in spite of the fact that most people tacitly understand it to mean "South Asian classical music." In spite of the commonness of this point of view however, I did encounter exceptions. In fact, one individual I spoke with, who was a very involved member of ERMS, was entirely unaware of this frequently used term:

> I don't know what you mean by *South Asian*... some how we have not been able to connect to those people yet. Uh, by the way, one thing you have to remember uh, Muslim countries, except for India, the Muslim religion does not encourage music as such. So, for them even dancing and all that thing is a kind of a taboo, and that's why we have not been able to connect together.... The other ethnic communities like the South Indian communities or other communities, they also bring various artists at times, and if they cannot afford it on their own, and can't have the

[329] Sabreena Delhon, interviews with ERMS audience members, "South Asian Music and Culture in Canada," http://swar.tapor.ualberta.ca/SAMC/web/object.html?id=2007_7_2, accessed May 13, 2011. Mita Das, discussion with the author, July 25, 2011.

> necessary budgets then we cosponsor and get together with them and offer those programs together, so we do have some kind of an association with those people, societies so that we can still bring in those artists and continue with that.[330]

The reference to "Muslim countries," clearly indicating Pakistan, is particularly notable here. While this particular individual clearly felt that the inclusion of Pakistani musicians is a moot point of debate, I also encountered ERMS participants who were very passionate about a perceived exclusion of this area of South Asia from ERMS programs: "If you go to Pakistan the sastria sangeet is the same. It's the same [thing] we call classical music here... But since nine, ten years of my life I have never seen any classical artists coming from Pakistan to perform here in Edmonton."[331] According to some ERMS members there are unavoidable and practical reasons for a lack of representation of artists from Pakistan:

> How it all functions is, it depends on how much personal connection you have. It's not like it can be anybody and just decide to bring this artist over, because it's like a part of a plan, like, that artist must have a North American tour plan in place and then you have to figure out how they can come to Raga-Mala and perform, because then it becomes cheaper to bring the artist in, otherwise if you are paying for them to actually leave the country, come to Edmonton only, then perform and go back, then you have to pay them a huge amount, it's not otherwise worth for them to make the travel.[332]

For others the problem lies in the identity of the nation of Pakistan as an officially Muslim country, since Islamic fundamentalism is often perceived as disapproving of music altogether (as the ERMS participant above has argued).[333]

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[330] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[331] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[332] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[333] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

Negotiating Religious Difference

This problem leads to the final major point of difference within the ERMS that I would like to discuss: divergent religious beliefs. This was an area of difference that I was curious about from the outset of this project because, as I understood it, Indian classical music is closely tied to the Hindu religion. The lyrics of vocal music often invoke Hindu mythology and praise Hindu deities. However, the ERMS members and participants I spoke with did not see this connection as being as overt as I interpreted it. The statement by Kanjilal, quoted earlier, that songs drawing on Hindu mythology can be interpreted in a number of ways, such as expressing a love for nature, a god, or a lover, seems to be a commonly held perception within the ERMS. In fact, everyone I spoke to insisted that the musicians themselves tend to interpret the music in this flexible way.

> Musicians really don't care for their religion because music is their religion. They really don't really know what they're singing, because sometimes they might being singing a Hindu religious song being a Muslim, but for them it's just music. And the same thing goes for Hindu musicians singing a Sufi song... as long as it's music it really doesn't matter. We have a lot of Muslim musicians in our area, and lots of them are instrumentalists so then it doesn't matter, but then even [for] vocalists I don't think it matters because for them, they are whatever the music is, so they really don't care what they're singing.[334]

In this sense, rather than being an overtly religious form as I had understood it to be, ERMS members and participants seemed to understand music as a unique space where religious boundaries, and the associated social taboos are suspended or put aside. For example, Kumud Acharya explained the unique situation many classical musicians occupied in terms of marriage:

> Many artists are Muslim, but they don't state that openly in that sense. They say, I'm a musician first, Muslim second. Similarly for the Hindus, that's what I have found. Even intermarriages, which is kind of a no-no in the normal social structure, between a Hindu and a Muslim, in the music world, the distinction is not that strong, that's what I have noticed....

[334] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

> [musicians] bypass that social constraint somehow, and they get connected through the music and the dance, whereas, Raga-Mala itself hasn't taken any stand whatsoever...[335]

As Acharya implied with the comment "Raga-Mala itself hasn't taken any [religious] stand.." the ERMS is unequivocally a secular organization. This aspect of the society's identity was very important to all of the members, and particularly current and former board members, that I interacted with. For instance, Mita Das insisted "Religion is completely... we keep out of it, because our society is a music society and we really don't want to get involved."[336] This insistence that music is truly beyond contextualization in terms of a particular religious affiliation, or any other social or historical association, references the ideology of autonomous art that has dominated the discourse surrounding Western classical music. In this sense, the ideology of classicism seems to assert itself as a major component of the identity of the ERMS. Moreover, just as the society's classicist stance is enshrined in the organization's policies, the non-negotiable attribute of secularism is also a conduit of ERMS as institution, rather than ERMS as the sum of beliefs and ideals of the society's individual members. However, this commitment to secularism also evokes a particular view of music dominant in South Asian culture, as has already been discussed in connection with the work of Donna Marie Wulff. A clear example of this in the context of the ERMS took place during a concert when the artist announced that he could feel the spirituality of the audience.[337] When I asked a fellow audience member how to interpret this statement, I was told "I don't know, I think that it was... it was just like trying to involve the audience more... I think he liked the audience. It just set the mood and everything was going alright."[338] While the statement initially struck me as

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[335] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[336] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

[337] ERMS concert, September 12, 2010.

[338] ERMS participant, discussion with the author, Summer 2011.

inevitably relating to some specific form of religion, others in the audience clearly had no trouble understanding it in a way that eschewed direct religious references. In this way it seems that ERMS concerts allow a space for personal religious experiences and connections, while avoiding specific religious references that are not open to a broader interpretation. Nevertheless, the possibility seems inevitable that, in a situation like the concert I just described, an audience member might interpret the statement as in opposition to his or her personal beliefs. I never encountered this kind of an opinion or perspective, however, and this kind of occurrence seems to be avoided primarily through an entrenched view of music as transcendent, in such a way that a listener seems to have no difficulty hearing what is performed in whatever way is most pleasing to him or her, regardless of what the 'intentions' of the lyrics or the performer may argued to be. Sharmila Mathur tried to explain this to me in an interview:

> I always love looking at this, that... whatever religion you have... whether you're Christian, Muslim, whatever, Hindu, this relates to your soul and it takes you there, and it doesn't matter whether you normally pray to Christ or Devi or Krishna or some other, whoever, it just connects you there. So, whatever the lyrics are... it's just music... which is a beautiful thing.[339]

[339] Sharmila Mathur, discussion with the author, July 22, 2011.

Conclusion

The complex web of interacting, overlapping identities, perceptions and ideologies within the ERMS is indicative of the society's setting in a nation populated by peoples of a vast range of cultural backgrounds and heritages. This complexity also references the immense diversity of another area of the world which, though geographically distant, is strongly invoked at each performance event and gathering. The ERMS occupies a unique position in Canadian society, and the locality of Edmonton, as an organization founded on the ideal of promoting and supporting a type of music that, in the current dominant discourse of history, is closely linked to Indian nationalism. What is so unique is that, in the context of the ERMS this history is viewed and understood in a way that allows the music to be connected with conceptions of a proudly South Asian identity without directly opposing a sense of Canadian identity. The ERMS has carved for itself a niche in which it connects very closely with a historically Western value of classicism, an ideology that feeds into the value of art and culture in a way that privileges a particular ethos of multiculturalism: an appreciation of the 'timeless' (and superior, classical) art forms of other cultures. Within this niche perceptions of South Asian identity and Canadian identity are not mutually exclusive, but empoweringly *inclusive* and composite. There is no desperate struggle or tug of war between the two, no being stuck in an identity stripping no man's land of being neither fully one nor fully the other. Within the context of the ERMS one can quite easily and comfortably be fully both.

The ERMS is also a place where corporate and personal experiences meet and intermingle. The ability of music to facilitate this process has been asserted by a number of ethnographic studies. Ruth Finnegan writes, "Experience is dynamically cocreated... as people smile at or dance with each other, beat time, move together, construct and reexperience their recollections later—realizations of human sociality that recall Schutz's 'mutual tuning-in relationship'."[340]

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[340] Finnegan (2003), 186.

Moreover, with reference to a study by Simon Ottenburg, Finnegan goes on to explain that music allows for "not only a sense of momentary social solidarity but also for a special sort of inner-individualism... swinging back and forth between full consciousness and daydreaming."[341] Finnegan's description of the development of a sense of social solidarity through musical experience, and the simultaneous personal experiences with which such shared experiences are intertwined is strikingly evocative of what goes on in the context of ERMS concerts. The ERMS is a testament to music's ability to cultivate social solidarity through a shared meaningful experience while, at the same time, allowing for personal, individual interpretation. Through these processes music has the profound potential to draw attention to, or even create, threads of commonality amongst individuals who might otherwise be almost exclusively aware of their differences. What better tool could be asked for in the pursuit of what Robert D. Putnam argues is the only solution for achieving social solidarity in the midst of cultural diversity: "a broader sense of we."[342]

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[341] Simon Ottenburg, *Seeing with Music: the Lives of Three Blind African Musicians* quoted in Finnegan, in ed. Clayton et. al. (2003) , 187.

[342] R. D. Putnam, "E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century," 138, in Jones (2010), 293.

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