

## Wolf response to Blum

Thank you Steve for masterfully weaving for us a magic carpet with the warps and wefts, rags and rans, of our musical topics. Thank you also for honoring my request to share your fieldwork. In the end, as we take on the geographic challenge of peeking across the regional borders of South, Central and West Asia, we ought still be able to talk about actual instances of music-making and not just the lenses (or headphones) we use to make sense of it. Your work on the Khorasani bakhshis reminds me of sung poetry's importance in all the regions we study. Each speakable unit—each bol, each sol, each harf and each kalima—has a place in the musical traditions of those who speak Hindustani and related languages, and Tamil and Persian, and many other tongues. Words, syllables and vocables, and the patterns they make, are also the product and subject of theorization by musicians in all these traditions. They inform the musical choices of singers and instrumentalists all the time.

We don't need to zoom in so far to find the comparative significant of the Bakshi's art. As we back up we can take in broader units of meaning. Stories and responses to parts of them, for instance, have long served as the conduits through which different populations have forged and recognized their connections with others. And music has held more than one kind of significance in any given instance, moving the bard's story forward, diagetically animating the characters' actions in a play or movie, and counterposing sung or spoken words in many instances. We might think of music in India's many Ramayanas, West and Central Asia's many Kuroghlus, and the many Layli-Majnuns that join South, Central and West Asia. One prominent way for musicians like Bakshis to tell stories is to sing a portion in verse, perhaps difficult to understand, and then explain or comment on it in prose.

Known as prosimetrum, this cross-culturally widespread form may even have roots in India—at least according to Victor Mair, who traced this format for presenting Chinese Buddhist texts to the Indian subcontinent, where it is found in the earliest extant dramatic texts.

Making the listener in some sense *understand*, often by the way they *feel*, is often a key skill for musicians, whether or not they are storytellers. It is no coincidence that the listener has a named role in many traditions of storytelling in South Asia. There is no story without a listener, a saying goes in India; and so too for music. Likewise, all knowledge arrives from somewhere—even if it is that which is “heard” (śruti) from the gods and not merely what is “remembered” (smṛti) from other humans. No knowledge, then, exists without some kernel that was transmitted. So it should be no coincidence that the *prompter*, like the listener, has a distinct and often named role in a performance.

Prompting may be heard aloud as in the Shah jo Rag of Sindh, Peiling Huang discusses, or be embedded more subtly into performance, as in Sufi *qawwali* and Shii *nauhah*.

The roles of prompter, performer, and listener intricately link the performance act with teaching. Although not always identified as such, the organization of performance in many parts of South, central and west asia often includes the structural equivalent of, if not an actual, *shāgird* or *śiṣyā*. Just as the disciple learns orally from heart-to-heart or hand-to-hand by repeating musical phrases of the master as precisely as possible, so too does the accompanist, from South India to greater Khorasan and beyond, repeat, respond to, or reflect musically upon the musical phrases of a musical leader or partner in a performance. The main artist is not a mere prompter, and the responder is not a mere disciple, but I hope

you see that a continuity of roles links the traditions of our regions. And as the student grows, hopefully, into a competent musician, mimesis transforms, hopefully, into creativity.

The differing colonial situations of the regions does not seem to have affected these roles tremendously—or so it would seem. However key actors in Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asia have encouraged monumentalism in the forms of notated compendia and grand orchestras. Such fetishizing of notation and massive staging have almost eliminated the spontaneity and intimacy of the genres that have historically carried and surrounded the texts of Persian and Turkic poetry. Musicians like Sirojiddin Juraev, today's featured performer from Tajikistan, has been left to rediscover improvisation after it was almost completely wiped from the map in the classical repertoires of Northern Tajikistan, the Farghana valley, Bukhara and even Khorazm. Ted Levin, by the way, has been a key player in encouraging Sirojiddin and others to free themselves of the ossified musical objects they've received.

Although state action may have reduced the avenues for spontaneity, and the conditions under which learning is possible, it has not done away completely with a fundamental unit of transmission, master to student, in any of our regions. Even in traditions where musicians just “pick up” the music from their environment, there will likely be key moments of feedback, where an elder or more experienced musician praises or corrects a novice. We need not name the elder a pir or a guru, but he or she still teaches.

Despite the continued possibility for intimacy in teaching and learning, the rise of conservatories and the heavy-handed choreography of roles on the concert stage in central and south asia have nevertheless altered the landscapes of performance. Two summers ago the Tajik government was preparing to host a summit of Central Asian heads of state

and Vladimir Putin. In typical fashion, all the roads in the center of Dushanbe were shut down for repair without prior warning and no provisions were made for detours. Meanwhile, the office of the President of Tajikistan called Sirojiddin on the phone every day—no advance planning—to rehearse with an orchestra so that they could present a perfect shashmaqom performance for their august guests. Or so I thought. Actually, they were rehearsing to make a perfect recording, which would be played live while the orchestra mimicked the actions of playing and singing. Only if the power went out would the visiting dignitaries hear the live performance that they thought they were witnessing. Or more likely they were complicit, and expected a recording in this role. Roles and Technologies seem productive topics for contemplating relations across our 3 regions.

We all know of ways in which technology has affected the transmission and performance of music in our respective regions. One of the key differences technology has introduced to the once-common master-disciple encounter concerns the control of information. The master would normally choose and apportion what a student could take in according to what the student could memorize and execute during a lesson. Now, unless the master forbids recording, students may choose the size of a chunk to repeat, and they may eliminate the noise of variations: no problem coming back the next day and finding that the master plays the lesson a little bit differently.

Then there's phenomenon of musicians learning from recordings and calling themselves disciples of musicians whom they've never met. The recorded master may have even died before the student was born! A single Karnatak music concert these days, in contrast to twenty years ago, might provide a kind of snapshot of several banis all at once. Raga A performed in the style of artist X, raga B performed in the style of artist Y, and

perhaps one more style. A new aesthetic made possible by technology, once frowned upon, is now accepted and even celebrated. In Tajikistan, in the cities and hinterlands, musicians talked to me about their so called ustads and eventually I learned to ask whether they had actually sat personally before these masters. I learned that many musicians had not. They were shogirdon-i pinhoni--secret disciples. The legitimacy of learning this way links implicitly with the hidden side of the zohiri-botini distinction in Islamic philosophy, the recognition of manifest and hidden sides of human knowledge that are accessible in different ways. Ismailis of Badakhshan in Tajikistan and Northern Afghanistan are particularly interested in exploring the knowledge buried deeply in their poetry, their instruments, and the visible structure of their everyday. Learning on the sly is nothing new, as Michael Herzfeld describes in his ethnography of Cretan craftiness, where apprentices are expected to “steal with the eyes.” The idea of being a secret disciple also resonates with many stories, far preceding the advent of recording technology, in which musicians and sages, Hindu and Sufi, have claimed discipleship from dead masters who transmitted their knowledge through clandestine, extra sensory channels.

This excursus on stories and transmission taps into only a few facets of what Steve rightly points out as an obvious aspect of ethnomusicological study: musical practice in the flow of history. I’d like to turn to another aspect of history now, and ask a question that may or may not be useful for further discussion. In short, “What endures?”

I ask this to follow up on Steve’s mention of Harry Powers. Some of his work might be regarded as a response to this question. What, in the histories of music and societies, can be recovered from the past by examining the present, or any series of snapshots over time? The question is relevant to us because thinking about what endures in time, however

transformed, is closely related to the question of geographic connectedness. The question of what endures provides possible points of departure for thinking about our large geographical region as a whole.

Harry Powers, Gerhard Kubik, John Blacking, Lawrence Picken, Alan Lomax and many others have been optimistic at the possibility of reading history from musical residue. Harry found the *names* of musical units critical in this regard. Indeed, Steve Blum and I share Harry's enthusiasm for investigating names and naming. For Harry, the common names of melodic entities such as ragas were the corners of a musicologist's treasure map. Common raga names, he proposed, could be hints of a once commonly held musical structure, distorted in time by a variety of processes including melodic drift. For Harry, what endured was often contour and melodic function: listen past the overt pitch differences to hear the historical relation of North and South Indian Todi. Steve Blum's analytical take on names, compatible with Harry's, takes us on a different journey, not looking for buried treasure but watching the jeweler at work. Steve asks us to consider names as evidence that a musician wished to transmit knowledge. You name something so that you can point it out, ask your student to repeat it, tell your student she has done executed it superbly. My own interest in names has concerned the conceptualization of repertoires: the stories of melodies in Kota life; the question of what numbers mean in the names of South Asian drumming patterns and strumming patterns in Central Asia; the rich metaphors in the names of Muharram repertoires. For these reasons and many others, the names of musical entities matter, and because they endure despite changes in the entities to which they refer, and because they turn up in all sorts of places, they are wonderful points of departure for comparative investigation.