

Wren T 2014, 'Talking in Tongues: Negotiating Archetypal Models for Musical Development in Intercultural Music Making', *Eras*, vol. 16, no.1,

pp.115-129



<http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/eras/>

Talking in Tongues: Negotiating Archetypal Models for Musical Development in Intercultural Music Making.

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Abstract | *This paper examines some of the circumstances surrounding the creation of the hybrid intercultural music project, Ultimate Cows. A concert was performed at the Encounters: India festival in Brisbane in 2013, and featured the results of a collaboration between master percussionists Guru Kaaraikudi Mani and Ghatam Vaidyanathan Suresh from the South Indian Carnatic tradition, and musicians including violinist John Rodgers, percussionist Tunji Beier, and myself, a guitarist, from the Brisbane jazz and new music scene. The ways in which the intercultural work was conceptualised, developed, and received are explored with reference to the composition and collaborative process. The discussion reveals aspects of the ways in which musicians relate to culture, and the ways that culture is performed in intercultural hybrid work. In line with the critical theory around hybridity, Ultimate Cows is proposed as symptomatic of hybridity's pervasiveness, a natural consequence of musicians' desire to extend their practice through interactions with the musical Others that they encounter. The discussion of power and perspective is acknowledged as central to the discussion of hybrid works, and the various ways that difference is made manifest with reference to the musical work No Can Do. The compositional development of that work is shown to simultaneously explore and reconcile archetypal musical structures from Carnatic and jazz musics, and explore some of the inherent problems that are consequently implied for the works' reception. In the process it uncovers differences in musical approach, perception, and the notion of acquired cultural archetypes, which affect the way that musicians orient themselves to the music in performance.*

Talking in tongues is the idea that someone could spontaneously speak (or play music) in a language previously unknown to them (*xenoglossia*), or create a new language by combining bits of other languages. The new language is potentially sacred, opening a door to other worlds, but could also be gobbledygook. As a jazz musician who spends a lot of time working with musicians from other musical traditions, it is a metaphor that resonates with me, as I often feel like I would like to spontaneously bridge worlds by being able to play in a different musical 'language', but feel that often I am musically talking at cross-purposes. In my work with Carnatic and jazz musicians, I aim to be bi-lingual, or 'bi-musical' but even if I succeed it is unlikely that the audience in an intercultural performance will be familiar with more than one cultural form.¹ This means that even the successful intercultural work can be problematic in terms of its reception.

¹ Mantle Hood, "The challenge of bi-musicality," *Ethnomusicology* 4, no.2 (1960): 55-59.

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This paper explores notions of hybridity through an ethnographic description of a particular hybrid music project. It does so by examining the ways that musical systems intersect, the way that a performance is constructed by people with different cultural frames of reference, and the potential ways that the music can be heard to relate to archetypal musical models of development.

The *Ultimate Cows* concert was held at the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University on the 16 May 2013 as part of the *Encounters: India Festival*. It was significant in my practice as an intercultural musician, for the way it developed a cohesive and compelling musical statement by allowing the musicians to contribute equally to the musical fabric. These artistic and social goals have become increasingly important in my practice as it has moved from a jazz practice influenced by Carnatic music, to a hybrid practice formed by my exposure and studies in jazz and Carnatic musics.

The music performed at *Ultimate Cows* effectively summarised the musical journey I have taken since my exposure to Carnatic music, and provided an opportunity to play with some of my greatest musical influences: Carnatic percussion practitioners, Guru Kaaraikudi R. Mani and Ghatam Vaidyanathan Suresh. It is an experience that has made me think afresh about hybrid music, about the balance between playing one's own culture, and playing beyond one's culture, and, of the difficulty of producing a singular musical statement from divergent musical practices.

Hybridity

Marwan Kraidy defines hybridity as “an association of ideas, concepts, and themes that at once reinforce and contradict each other”.² This definition captures the problematic yet fascinating nature of hybrid cultural work. ‘Hybrid’ in the musical context is synonymous with ‘fusion’ a term preferred by Carnatic musicians, but one that is loaded for many westerners through association with specific types of fusion music, such as smooth jazz. In the current context, hybridity refers to the musical product of the interactions of a group of musicians associated with two musical systems: Carnatic and jazz musics. The term ‘culture’ is used to denote “traditional (historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values”.³ This derives from the cultural anthropological understanding of culture as being “the totality of and the motive for all social interactions.”⁴ While the fluid and changing nature of the concept of culture is acknowledged, an understanding of different archetypal structures that exist between musical systems is useful and appropriate to the discussion of intercultural music, as “culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further

² Marwan Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2005), vi.

³ A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (p.181) cited in John R. Baldwin et al. *Redefining Culture* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006), xv-xvi.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

action.⁵ I would like to add to these definitions that culture is constituted by the interactions of individuals, and that it is the actions of culture-bearers, such as musicians, that renew and redefine our understanding of what constitutes culture. The interplay between individual culture bearers and the culture at large is a central concern of my investigation of intercultural improvisation.

Kraidy also elaborates on the ubiquity of hybridity in modern life, which “points to the emptiness of employing hybridity as a universal description of culture.” He implores us to “situate every analysis of hybridity in a specific context where the conditions that shape hybridities are addressed.”⁶ Similarly, Martin Stokes has made a call for work that contributes to our understanding of musical hybridity by focusing on local instances.⁷ My discussion on hybridity will therefore examine a specific context as a way of unpacking some of the issues around hybridity. Understanding intercultural hybridity is important because of its pervasiveness, and because the writing on post-colonialism, hybridity and Orientalism reveal the inherent power imbalances that can pervade hybrid encounters.⁸ These power imbalances have prompted some to propose rules for ethical engagement with Others.⁹ Beyond an imperative to illuminate power imbalances in intercultural projects and to construct meaningful and equitable experiences for collaborators, there remain aspects of intercultural collaboration that require interrogation at a technical and disciplinary level.

Culture and Intercultural Music

In music, the fundamental differences between musical traditions require compromise, but, though many intercultural musicians have been confronted with intercultural dissonance, few have an in-depth and readily applicable knowledge of the specifics of more than one musical system. The subject of this discussion, the *Ultimate Cows* concert, was perceived to be successful by the artists and the audience, despite being comprised of culturally distinct musics. While there exist similarities between jazz and Carnatic, notably their emphases on virtuosity and the balance of composition to improvisation, many of the fundamental precepts regarding pitch and rhythm are different. In the following, the specific musical differences are explored alongside a discussion of the way different cultural groups apprehend the cultural work.

The musical materials of *Ultimate Cows* metamorphosed throughout the creative and collaborative phases of the project, the collaborators interacting in various ways to affect the form of the eventual work. Even at the point of performance, the work was highly flexible due to improvisation, which, it can be

5 Ibid., xvi.

6 Marwan Kraidy, *Hybridity*, vi.

7 Martin Stokes, “Music and the Global Order,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, no. 1 (2004): 47-72.

8 See Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed., (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

9. For example, Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Marwan Kraidy, *Hybridity*

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argued, acts as a discursive methodology for exploring cultural difference. Any analysis that we make of the music as performed is then a kind of decoding of the play of musical systems that occurred during performance. Like Michael Desson, I “argue that this kind of intercultural improvised music is itself a form of theorising about culture”¹⁰, and that it is in the music itself that some of the most fascinating elements of this cultural negotiation is played out.

Notions of culture are developed in the literature around hybridity as being comprised of the overlapping polities and affiliations of individuals.¹¹ While it is useful to acknowledge the pervasiveness of hybridity, we must be aware that intercultural work remains a fascinating concept, partly because it demonstrates the differences that exist between cultural groups. The balance between the individual and their culture is important to an understanding of hybridity. In terms of the discussion of intercultural music, we must consider the contributions of individual artists as being a negotiation between acquired and shared cultural practices and individual responses to cultural materials.

This paper demonstrates that hybrid intercultural music can be analysed in terms of its multiple subjectivities, and that new approaches to musical hybridity can effectively engage these multiple perspectives and the discourse on power as a way of informing and inspiring new work. While it is acknowledged that the dual perspectives of a Carnatic musician and a jazz musician could lead to fruitful dialogue, the constraints of space limit the present discussion to a single viewpoint, an ethnography of the experience of creating and performing the work.

Carnatic, jazz, and Carnatic-jazz

Since 2005, my practice has been split equally between Carnatic and jazz music: I listen to, and practice, Carnatic and jazz music; I devise hybrid performance techniques. I also devise ways to perform with Carnatic musicians, and with mixed Carnatic-jazz ensembles both here in Australia and in India. As I continued to learn and practice both styles, hybridity became inevitable and, increasingly, the way in which I expressed myself musically began to reflect my two major influences. The challenges for performers in intercultural hybrid contexts are many, and often difficult to resolve. Historically, there are a smaller number of projects involving Carnatic and Jazz relative to other intercultural hybrids, which may indicate that there are particular problems to resolve between these musical systems. On the other hand, the high level of musicianship in these cultures has also meant that hybrid projects, such as *Shakti* (1975-77), tend to feature highly skilled musicians performing at a high level of musical complexity.

10. Michael Desson, “Improvising in a Different Clave,” in *The Other Side of Nowhere*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 174.

11. Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*; Marwan Kraidy, *Hybridity*; Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (London: New York: Routledge, 1994).

In my experience, performing in Carnatic-jazz contexts requires deliberate and conscious decision-making during performance. Yet, it also requires musicians to be highly attuned and reactive to what is happening in the moment of performance. The degree to which conscious thought is employed, or intrudes on performance, may be linked to familiarity with materials and musical system. But aspects of Carnatic practice also require a different kind of conscious planning to execute than I would ordinarily employ in a jazz context. One such case involves the Carnatic devices called *moras* and *korvais*. These are rhythmic devices (compositions, or set pieces) based on additive phrases and can be considered the rhythmic equivalent of harmonic cadences. A *mora* or a *korvai* is a rhythmic cadence that develops and resolves tension by combining phrase lengths that move away from the underlying beat, and then resolve back to an important beat in the *thalam* (metre) via logical development. Carnatic scholar David Nelson refers to them as “designs in the fabric of time”.¹² There are grades of complexity between these devices, some of which are easier to execute than others.

While complex rhythmic materials are a part of Carnatic practice, complexity can often be tempered in different performing situations. Carnatic percussionists will frequently choose materials based on their perception of the audience’s preference for complexity, and the ability of the other musicians to keep *thalam*.¹³ On the other hand, many writers have noted the specificity of music to culture and what constitutes musical ‘simplicity’ is not necessarily consistent across cultures.¹⁴ If a simple musical gesture is based on a culturally specific notion, in an intercultural context it could easily be misunderstood by musicians from a different background. For the performers, there are multiple fine adjustments to be made, both in terms of performance practice, and in the way the musicians relate to one another.

In intercultural music, the musicians and the music culture they come from have different relationships to hybrid experimentation. In jazz, hybridity is considered by most to be integral to the formation and development of the idiom, while in Carnatic music, hybridity is considered acceptable, but is kept at arm’s length, outside the continuation of the tradition. Jazz is often defined in terms of its hybrid beginnings; the ‘melting pot’ of New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century has become jazz’s cliché. Jazz continues to be defined and shaped by the influences that it incorporates, leading to a multitude of sub-genres. Its relationship to Latin music, for example, can be thought of as co-evolutionary, each tradition periodically informing the other. The instruction and discourse around Carnatic music, on the other hand, as in many other aural traditions, tends to emphasise tradition over innovation,

¹² David Nelson, “Mrdangam Mind” (Ph.D. Wesleyan University, 1991).

¹³ In Carnatic music the main artist maintains the *thalam*, or metre, through a sequence of hand gestures and claps during a percussion solo.

¹⁴ Jeff Todd Titon, *Worlds of Music* (Belmont, CA: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2009); Gabriel Solis & Bruno Nettl, *Musical Improvisation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Huib Schippers, *Facing the Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

employing conservatism as a necessary method that “stops or slows down random or ‘faddish’ change”.¹⁵ However, innovation certainly occurs within Carnatic music, and the great players have extended the form through innovations on traditional forms. Hybrid experiments have also been common, although their influence on the central tradition tends to be downplayed in my experience. Experimentation, such as adding harmony to Carnatic compositions, is more likely to be labeled ‘fusion’ than considered as legitimate contributions to the tradition.¹⁶ Indeed, ‘fusion’ is readily claimed by musicians to draw attention to their creative contribution.¹⁷

Since the 1970s there have been many recorded examples of Indian-jazz hybrids, but most of these are based on North Indian Hindustani music. Perhaps due to the greater role of improvisation in that tradition, jazz musicians have tended to find more common ground for interaction. Exposure to Hindustani music has extended the palette of jazz improvisation, most notably in the modal experimentation of John Coltrane and those that later emulated him. Fusions with South Indian Carnatic music are fewer in number. Notable exceptions are the highly experimental and conversational jams recorded between David Brubeck and Palghat Raghu (1967), and the earliest recorded Indian-jazz recording, one that has only recently come to light, between the drummer Joe Morello and mridangist, Pallani Subramania Pillai.¹⁸ The work of Shakti (1975-77) is also a notable exception. The group re-formed from 1997-2006 as Remember Shakti and performed a fusion of North and South Indian music with Western music. Two final examples are the collaborations between Guru Kaaraikudi Mani and the Australian Art Orchestra, and New York saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa with Carnatic saxophonist Kadri Gopalnath.¹⁹

An account of my first rehearsal with a Carnatic musician illustrates well the way in which acquired cultural archetypes are implicated in musical exchange. When I first sat down to play with Brisbane mridangam player, Eshwarshanker Jeyarajan, in the garage of my New Farm flat in 2006, I had little idea of what to expect. I did not, as an experienced jazz musician with a lot of practice playing unusual rhythms, expect to lose the beat almost immediately. A Carnatic mridangam player commonly doubles rhythmic ideas as they happen, providing a rich rhythmic interaction with the ‘main artist’, and requiring the melodicist to maintain an authoritative relationship to the rhythmic cycle and be able to resolve their ideas to it. When performing in a jazz context, I had been able to negotiate rhythmic cycles with great flexibility due to the depth and duration of my acquisition of that musical system. If I began a rhythmic

¹⁵ Huib Schippers, *Facing the Music*, 47.

¹⁶ An example of added harmony can be found in R. Prasanna, *Vibrant Aesthetics* (Chennai, India: Inrocco, 1993) CD.

¹⁷ Vaidyanathan Suresh, personal communication, August 3, 2014.

¹⁸ “A Damned Good Show”, *Tajmahal Foxtrot*, accessed September 21, 2014, http://www.tajmahalfoxtrot.com/?page_id=56.

¹⁹ See Australian Art Orchestra & Sruthi Laya Ensemble, *The Chennai Sessions*, CD, (Melbourne, Vic: AAO Recordings, 2008) and Rudresh Mahanthappa, *Kinsmen*, CD, (New York: Pi Recordings, 2008).

diversion in a jazz performance, stretching a rhythmic idea to the point where its relationship to the underlying metre is tenuous, it was a relatively simple matter to regain my position in the metre and form by listening to what the bass player or drummer was playing.

Eshwarshanker had not played with the intention of making me lose my place, nor had he employed a high level of complexity. But, in order to feel secure when performing with Carnatic musicians, I quickly realised that I had to begin a new process of acculturation and acquisition which involved learning to differentiate the strokes of the mridangam and their functions, and acquiring the most basic archetypal phrases that signalled position in the metric cycle. This early experience of difference, when interacting at the simplest level, points to the complexity of developing satisfactory intercultural musical projects. It is not an experience confined to me, as I have witnessed other musicians struggling to identify where the beat was during a mridangam introduction that was intended to set up the groove as simply as possible.

The relationship between accompanists and soloists is one manifestation of the difference between these two musics, as are the specific methods of musical accompaniment: the timbre of individual drumstrokes and conventions of play. The *Ultimate Cows* concert took place eight years after these basic collaborative dissonances were resolved, and provides the opportunity to demonstrate a different set of cultural negotiations taking place.

Collaborative process

The concert was initiated by the author, but the frequency, duration and mode of the rehearsals for *Ultimate Cows* was determined by the most senior musician involved. Guru Kaaraikudi Mani is one of the most highly respected practitioners of Carnatic percussion, and certain courtesies were necessarily extended in order for the performance to go ahead at all. It is unlikely that he would have agreed to the concert if I had not been a student of his for many years, and if I had not asked him in a suitably respectful manner. While historically, there exist colonial tensions between the West and India, in this circumstance, the seniority of the Indian artists, our personal relationship and the respect that was extended to them over many meetings in Australia and India, is a more significant factor, tipping the power balance in the opposite direction.²⁰

Some aspects of the performance were necessarily dealt with prior to the event. For example, I selected repertoire and composed new tunes based on the 'D' tuning of the percussion instruments that Mani Sir and Suresh were bringing to Australia. I was able to include a new composition by Mani Sir, *Longing for Layam* that he had dictated to me at his home in Chennai in January 2013, as well as a composition by John Rodgers called *Viv's Bum Dance* (c.1991) that is potentially the first Australian Carnatic-jazz composition. I also included a piece I composed with

²⁰ A view shared by Ghatam Vaidyanath Suresh, personal communication, July 29, 2014.

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Tunji Beier (*Spilt Coffee*, 2013) and another that I wrote alone, based on a *korvai* by Karaikudi Mani (*4 Speed Korvai*, 2013).

I was the initiator of the project, but at each step I involved Mani Sir in its co-construction and sought his expertise in doing so. Our relationship and roles were ultimately established on his terms: I was to organise the event, and he would ensure that what was performed on the stage was at the highest level. His main interest during rehearsals was to ensure that he, Suresh, and I, knew the materials well enough to perform them “without any doubts”, in Mani Sir’s terminology. In rehearsal this often meant that he would ask me to play certain passages numerous times, while he simply listened. What he chose to play in performance to some extent, he left undeclared: what was important was that he understood the rhythmic structures and could respond to them in a manner of his choosing at the time of performance.

This is quite a different way of rehearsing for me. In any jazz rehearsal I have ever been in, the band has played the tune from beginning to end, mirroring what was to occur in the live performance. By going through materials only as far as understanding the essential elements, Mani Sir had complied with the intention of the collaboration, to leave many of the models for development until the actual performance. To avoid any uncertainty on my part, in the face of such an intimidating presence, I practiced my parts in as many variations as I could: vocally and on guitar, including in various locations on the fingerboard, in a variety of speeds, and while keeping time with my foot. In this way I hoped I would be able to respond to whatever rhythms Mani Sir might come up with in live performance.

We had two rehearsals. In the notes I made at the time, I remarked that it seemed as if “the purpose of the rehearsals was more about understanding each other’s aesthetics and processes [rather] than learning materials.”²¹ During the rehearsals, Mani Sir made suggestions as to the specific ways that the compositions should unfold. He often suggested which sections could be repeated and recommended introductions and endings, frequently composing a section on the spot during the rehearsal and singing the parts to me. I had previously witnessed Mani Sir working in this way, notably during an artist residency at the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University in 2011, in which he spontaneously arranged a three-minute student composition into a 45-minute epic during a rehearsal. Because I had witnessed this kind of development previously, I had deliberately composed to allow for those kinds of modifications to be made during rehearsal.

In my composition *No Can Do*, for example, I composed a *korvai* to end the written melody. In rehearsal, Mani Sir suggested that on the third repeat of the *korvai*, we should double the tempo. In this case, the anticipated excitement that would be generated by playing the *korvai* at double speed overcame Mani’s tendency to favour simpler solutions in hybrid contexts, a vote of confidence, perhaps, in the abilities of his collaborators. Mani Sir also decided in which order the compositions were to be

²¹ Personal diary entry, May 12, 2013.

played in the performance. While there was discussion about these artistic decisions during the rehearsal, everyone present acknowledged Mani Sir's authority and expertise to ultimately make those decisions.

Despite the extensive preparation that I had done, and the changes made in rehearsal by Mani Sir, I had made it repeatedly clear in my communications that my aesthetic intention was to create an interactive, even volatile playing situation in which the performers felt free to collaborate and challenge each other, and in which structural changes were encouraged to take place at the moment of performance. Kaaraikudi Mani and Ghatam Suresh embraced this experimental aesthetic, which is not that dissimilar to traditional Carnatic practice. In Carnatic music there is rarely a rehearsal before a concert, so percussionists in particular are expected to be able to apprehend and execute complex rhythmic variations on the spot. However, in intercultural contexts this kind of experimental and responsive aspect is often reduced, the novel context requiring more planning.

One of the major achievements of the project is the extent to which it enabled this highly interactive atmosphere to occur. The open and experimental playing situation that we attempted to invoke for *Ultimate Cows* can only happen with musicians of a sufficiently high level of expertise, and with musicians who have knowledge of the musical systems of those they are collaborating with. John Rodgers had been performing Carnatic influenced music with *Loops* since the mid-1990s; Tunji Beier lived with his guru T.A.S. Mani for three years learning Carnatic percussion; and Kaaraikudi Mani and Ghatam Suresh have extensive experience performing in intercultural ensembles since the late 1980s, including with the Australian Art Orchestra in small (2008) and large group (1996) formats, and with John Kaizan Neptune (2004). In addition, Mani Sir has listened to western music from an early age, including orchestral music and jazz.²²



Music Example 1 (*No Can Do* by Toby Wren)²³

No Can Do

To demonstrate the ways in which specific musical materials evolve and respond to cultural difference, I will focus on *No Can Do*, from the composition stage through to analysis of the performance. The composition embodies the notion of 'swing', a loaded construct that is held by most jazz musicians to be a crucial element in jazz performance, yet elusive to define. While systematic efforts by Keil and Proglor have brought us closer to an understanding of the 'restless energy' of swing, it is

²² Kaaraikudi Mani, personal communication, October 21, 2011.

²³ Recorded during Ultimate Cows Concert, Encounters : India Festival Brisbane, 2013. Toby Wren (guitar), John Rodgers (violin), Tunji Beier, Guru Kaaraikudi Mani and Ghatam Vaidyanathan Suresh (percussion). All rights reserved.

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notoriously difficult for non-jazz musicians to effectively produce, and is often avoided in intercultural work.²⁴

In the case of *No Can Do*, the composition took this intercultural obstacle as a starting point for developing a musical commentary on swing in hybrid settings. The approach used was to create a synthetic swing feel by constructing a motive that would be heard as swing despite being in a new rhythmic subdivision, effectively creating a polyrhythm and potentially diverting attention from its possible failure to swing in a conventional sense. This re-contextualised swing would then become the basis for a *korvai*, an additive rhythmic cadence in Carnatic style.

Examples taken from my notebooks in 2010, reproduced in Figures 1 and 2, show some of the stages of development.

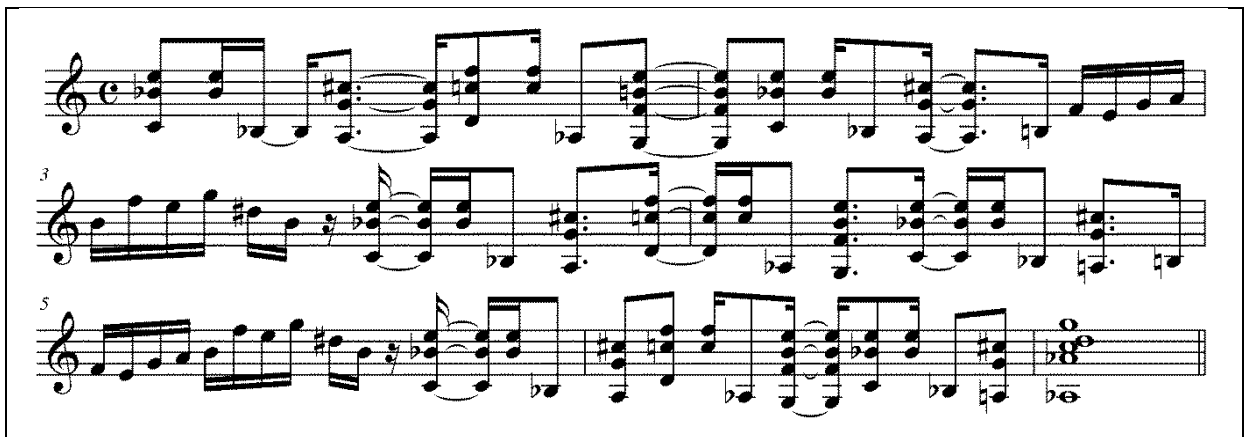


Figure 1. Early sketch of *No Can Do* showing a *korvai* based on the auditory illusion of swing feel.

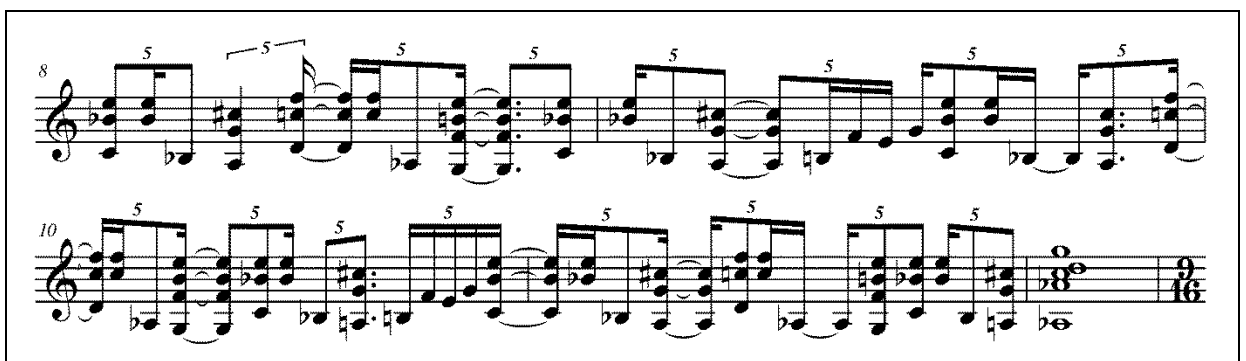


Figure 2. Development of the initial idea showing a variation in a quintuplet subdivision (*khanda nadai*).

²⁴ Charles Keil, "Motion and Feeling Through Music," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 24, no. 3 (1966): 337-349; Elliot Proglor, "Searching for Swing: Participatory Discrepancies in the Jazz Rhythm Section," *Ethnomusicology* 39, no. 1 (1995): 21-54. Other intercultural genres, such as latin jazz for example, have a long history of music making in which the swing rhythm is avoided altogether. In fact 'straight' rhythms for many jazz musicians demarcate the boundaries of the latin style.

Figure 1 shows the apparent ‘swing’ feel, a result of phrasing in groups of three across the beat, and of choosing chords designed to evoke a jazz turnaround progression. Figure 2 demonstrates the same idea transposed into a quintuplet pulse subdivision. The idea of presenting the same composition in different *nadais* (subdivisions) is common in Carnatic practice. In each example the swing archetype is difficult for the Western listener to perceive as being anything other than an authoritative declaration of pulse. That is, the dotted quaver is perceived as the pulse in each example, even when it is played ‘off the beat’ in its second iteration.

The compositions in Figures 1 and 2 are shown in a different form in Figure 3. This numeric representation is commonly used by Carnatic percussionists, and clearly shows the structure of the rhythmic composition.

Semiquavers:	9 9 9 (12)	
	8 8 8 (12)	
	7 7 7	(96 pulses total)
Quintuplets:	9 9 9 (4)	
	8 8 8 (4)	
	7 7 7	(80 pulses total)

Figure 3. A numeric representation in the Carnatic style of the first six bars of compositions shown in Figures 1 & 2. Each numeral describes the length of a phrase in a given subdivision.

The semiquaver version occupies a total of 96 semiquavers (24 beats of 4/4). The initial phrase, comprised of quaver, semiquaver, quaver, crotchet (total of 9 semiquavers), is repeated three times. A ‘gap’ figure of 12 semiquavers is played, followed by a reduction of the initial phrase to 8 pulses, another ‘gap’ of 12, and a further reduction of the initial phrase to 7. The quintuplet version is identical, except that the ‘gap’ phrase is now 4 semiquavers only.

Subsequent development took place by extending both the Carnatic and jazz aspects of the idea. This resulted a refining of the numeric proportions of the *korvai* (rhythmic structure) so that the swing feel remained unchanged in each iteration, that is, removing the reduction as well as an incorporation of harmonic references to the other sections of the composition. As shown in Figures 4 and 5, the new version of the *No Can Do korvai* contains a logical expansion of the ‘7’ gap figure, and keeps the main ‘swing’ portion unchanged.

In each case, the additive rhythmic composition takes place over 6 bars of common time (or three cycles of Carnatic *Adi thalam*), establishing tension through phrases that do not relate to the metre, and satisfying resolution when they resolve back to beat one. For the jazz musician, this example provides a challenge, not simply

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for the additive rhythmic structure, but because it uses an archetypal swing rhythm in a highly unusual context.

New Version: 6 6 6 (7)
6 6 6 (7) (7)
6 6 6 (7) (7) (7) (96 pulses total)

Figure 4. New version of the composition, in Carnatic notation, as performed in the concert.

The image shows two staves of Western musical notation for a *korvai*. The first staff starts at measure 36 and includes chords Dm9, G#13, G13, Gm, E7#9, Em7b5, A7#5, and Dm. The second staff starts at measure 39 and includes chords Bbm7#11, A7#5, and Dm9. Above the first staff, the rhythmic notation '666 7 666 77 666 777' is written. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings like accents (>).

Figure 5. New version of the *korvai* in western notation, as performed in the concert.

American jazz drummers, Jeff ‘Tain’ Watts, and Ari Hoenig, are known for metric repurposing of the archetypal swing feel, performing swing ride cymbal patterns in different temporal relationship to the underlying tempo, but it is uncommon for this to be extrapolated to other instruments, and for it to occur within an additive compositional structure. This excerpt suggests that the deeper an association is between a motive and its underlying metre, that is, the more ‘groovy’ it is and the closer it is to a cultural archetype, the more difficult it will be to displace the idea against the metre, and the more disorienting the effect will be.

Perspectives on performance

Performing *No Can Do* raised some interesting ideas and issues. The first thing to note is that it failed to swing like Jeff ‘Tain’ Watts; but this was not necessarily the aim. Keil posits a theory of “participatory discrepancy” to explain the swing feel. According to Keil, who devised a process of systematic analysis to support his theory, swing feel is achieved through the tension between rhythm sections comprising ‘chunky’ (behind the beat) bass players and ‘on top’ (ahead of the beat) drummers. In other words, Keil argues that successful rhythm sections combine ‘ahead’ and ‘behind’ players to create the participatory discrepancies he deemed necessary to the creation of swing. The notion of participatory discrepancies can be applied to the intercultural *No Can Do*. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, a swing feel is implicit to the composition, but, more than

this, a systematic analysis in the manner described by Keil reveals participatory discrepancies peculiar to our specific, intercultural setting.²⁵ In *No Can Do*, a rhythmic tension is perceptible between the more relaxed and 'behind the beat' swing of the western musicians and the driving, 'ahead of the beat' performance of the Carnatic musicians.

Over and above the commentary regarding participative discrepancies, *No Can Do* is likely to be heard quite differently depending on the cultural background of the audience. Intercultural composer, Christopher Adler notes that "for every aspect that is familiar [about the intercultural work] there will be another that is unfamiliar; for every rightness about the work, a wrongness along with it".²⁶

For someone encultured in the Carnatic tradition, particularly experts, or *rasikas*, the final *korvai* of *No Can Do* shown in Figure 5, may be difficult to comprehend in terms of its pitch. As Gayathri Kassebaum explains, "tonal relationships and melodic movement in Karnatak raga are linear and horizontal in contrast to the harmonic and vertical relationships central to Western classical music".²⁷ The Carnatic *swara* is akin to the western notion of pitch, but it also includes specific ornamentations and may not correspond to the equal tempered scale. Carnatic vocalist, T. M. Krishna says, "[t]he gamaka [ornament] becomes part of the *swara*'s own voltaic energy... In other words, the *swara* does not exist without the gamaka".²⁸ A Carnatic *ragam* therefore "encompasses the concepts of scale, mode, tonal system, melodic motifs and themes, microtones, [and] ornaments".²⁹ In Carnatic music the mood (or *rasa*) is related to the way *swaras* are heard against the tonic drone and developed through subtle variations on the same set of pitches and ornaments throughout a composition. This is, after the lyrics of the composition, the most important aspect of the way music is heard by a Carnatic musician. There is no theory of harmony in Carnatic music and, therefore, no acquired context for relating to the chromatic harmony presented in this section of the work. Put off balance by the unexpected pitch component in the final section of *No Can Do*, the Carnatic listener is therefore more likely to appreciate and focus on the rhythmic elements of this section. This listener is rewarded by the predictability of the figure in Carnatic terms, a traditional *korvai*, repeated three times to finish the work (Figure 5).

For the jazz audience, the swing archetype in this final section is difficult to ignore. Accordingly it is the harmonic progression that is more likely to assume the foreground than the rhythmic elements; a functional progression that clearly outlines a (D) minor tonality with discordant interruptions. There is rhythmic interest in the form of the discordant fortissimo chords that are juxtaposed against the swing feel,

²⁵ Keil, "Motion and Feeling", 337-349.

²⁶ Christopher Adler, "Reflections on Cross-Cultural Composition," in *Arcana II: Musicians on Music*, ed. John Zorn (New York: Hips Road, 2007), 32.

²⁷ Gayathri Kassebaum, "Karnatak Raga" in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 5*, ed. Alison Arnold (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999).

²⁸ T. M. Krishna, *A Southern Music: The Karnatik Story* (Uttar Pradesh: Harper Collins, 2013), 51.

²⁹ Gayathri Kassebaum, "Karnatak Raga."

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but the internal logic of the swing makes it difficult to hear in terms of the semiquaver subdivision in which it is written. Some in the audience may feel that the musicians seem to be tapping their feet at odds with the music being performed. The section is more likely to be heard as a swing feel in a tempo related to the previous tempo. What may become clear (at least by the third repetition of the section) is that the interjections of the Carnatic percussionists are in regularly expanding intervals within the constant metric structure. From this perspective, the musical realisation of Figure 5, in performance, is heard primarily as a move towards harmonic dissonance punctuated by rhythmic unisons.

The combination of techniques at the compositional level have clear implications for the way that the work is understood by the performers and audiences. Different culturally-acquired archetypes of musical meaning that the listener brings to the work impact strongly upon the perceived focus of a particular section. For each listener the experience is potentially different within broad similarities of shared cultural expertise. Any musical engagement is inevitably at the level of prior-acquired models and associations. In the final section of *No Can Do*, the simultaneous play of archetypal structures, a Carnatic *korvai*, and a jazz swing feel, could provide enough discursive cues for listeners from different cultural backgrounds to be able to identify and extend their interpretive frameworks, but could easily alienate listeners of either culture, revealing the inherent problematics of hybrid intercultural work.

Conclusion

While by no means exhaustive, this discussion has illuminated some of the ways in which intercultural music negotiates difference and subjectivity through successive stages of the creative process. First, the positionality or “synchronic web of affiliations and sentiments” of the various groups involved in the creation of the *Ultimate Cows* concert was revealed.³⁰ In doing so, power and difference are acknowledged within the musicological discussion. Second, this paper has shown that a discussion of the products of intercultural work can reveal the ways in which culture is performed and negotiated through an analysis of the musical object. Rather than ignoring issues of power, such an analysis can reveal the ways in which power contributes to the creation of the intercultural work. Third, through the discussion of *No Can Do*, the intercultural work was revealed to be a container for the play of cultural signs: listeners from different cultural backgrounds can have very different understandings of the music being performed. As Christopher Adler observed of intercultural work, unless a listener belongs to both cultures he or she will not be able to grasp the full meaning of the intercultural work.³¹

Finally, the benefits of an analysis that examines cultural archetypes within the intercultural work are that they inform the way in which hybrid works are heard and

³⁰ Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 67.

³¹ Christopher Adler, “Reflections on Cross-Cultural Composition,” 32.

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understood by the musicians and audiences that construct them, re-situating hybrid music as a discursive practice. The implications for creative work are that better understanding of our collaborators' frames of reference can inform the spirit and content of new musical projects, and that consideration of cultural difference, and the relationship between individuals and the cultures with which they are affiliated, can contribute valuable insights to the creative process and the way that hybrid music is heard.

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