
LAWO
CLASSICS
PARVAT
HARPREET
BANSAL

Harpreet Bansal's very first glissando — in unison with the subtle drone of the strings sul ponticello and non vibrato — sets the tone in more than one sense of the expression 'listening is understanding'. The sensibility of the musicians' playing becomes my sensibility, and listening intensifies my sensibility and vulnerability. My preconceptions about music and the world are put into question. Music is truly magic. It is the domain where everything normal is different and everything different appears to be absolutely normal. But for the magic to actually happen, music needs to be allowed to be understood for what it is, rather than what one may want it to be. It has to be understood from the inside, so to speak — listened to in a way that allows the act of listening to structure what is heard.

Yet, so often instead we attempt to frame music in ways that do not encourage musical freedom. Is it because we want to reserve that freedom for ourselves? If so, we are on the wrong path because here we are talking about freedom of the music, the kind of freedom that Parvat is exploring for itself.

There are many terms for depicting music that transcends customary boundaries of genre, music that does not conform to the confines of certain musical idioms. Examples are *World Music* and *Crossover*. One may rightfully ask why we need these categories, pointing to the music itself as the main category. Trusting our intuition rather than relying on pre-categorization, is this a viable way forward? It is true that we cannot know anything for certain about the world around us; there is no possible true knowledge about the objects in the world. In the end there is only our impression of them. Listening, however, may go beyond defined categories of conception and allow us to perceive what we are actually hearing. But, then again, what are we actually hearing?

Music theory is one way to define what we are hearing, but it is also a way of differentiating between what is correct and what is not. Theory — theoretical concepts about music — is difficult to discard, and it may not be desirable to do so either. Disallowing theoretical concepts for structuring one's intuition is not likely to be a solution here because the absence of structure is also structure. Moreover, there can be little doubt that theoretical knowledge allows us to experience music in a different way. Any kind of listening helps create structures of perception.

The larger problem with genres such as *Crossover*, however, is that they imply by definition that something is crossed over by something else, one breaking with the norm set by the other. What is normal is crossed over by what is abnormal, creating in turn something that is also not normal. It is easy and tempting then to regard the familiar style as being the norm at the centre, while relegating the foreign style to the periphery. Inside, outside. *Crossover* is in this sense a power structure, a way to protect normality. This kind of exclusion by creation is so common that we do not always react to it. Europe is at the centre of the world, and this central order is maintained in ways that are so intertwined that it is difficult to see the forest for the trees.

But what is it in a certain kind of music that communicates its identity? What needs to be kept intact in a style of music that cannot change without something significant being lost? These are not questions of merely theoretical interest. In a time when almost all kinds of music are available for any listener, what is it that creates difference? What is it that makes us associate this style of music with a certain identity and that style with another? There is clearly more than one aspect at play. Many different kinds of music share the same harmonic structure, yet they remain distinctly different, and a lot of music is based on similar kinds of rhythmic structures without sharing the same relation to timing. One cannot deny that when the second section of *Parvat, 9 1/2,* begins, it is the rhythm that catches your ear and sets the mode. Later in the movement, during the tabla solo, as the music develops through metric modulation over into the lyric melodies played by Harpreet Bansal and Vojtěch Procházka on harmonium, it resists classification. It asks only to be listened to.

Asking questions concerning musical identity and what actually creates musical genre is interesting because it allows us to reflect on what musical styles we are familiar with and how that knowledge feeds into our listening experience. Oddly, it appears to be quite easy to identify a sound as belonging to a particular style or culture. Having watched only one Bollywood movie, I can easily identify the sound of Indian music if I hear it, and, thus, come to the conclusion that *Parvat* is Indian music. Yet this can be deceptive. We have a keen sensitivity to stylistic variations and properties of sound, but this begs the question of what it is the expert listener knows that the non-expert listener does not know, and what it is that helps the expert to better analyze a style of music.

Once again, one may ask why we need these categories: why does the music itself not suffice as the principal category? In an effort to trust intuition rather than pre-categorizations, we might argue with respect to value judgment that all there is and all there should be is the music itself. Either it sounds good or it does not. While this may seem a valid argument with regard to similar kinds of music, it fails terribly for music from other cultures that does not share central aspects of the music known to the listener. This may be the case for someone having grown up in the West hearing Indian classical music for the first time. It differs from Western music in its harmony, its rhythm, in the way its melodic material is developed, as well as in its formal structures. Having grown up with Western music myself, I believe it takes more than one listen before the potential of Indian music is revealed. But — and this is the real beauty in this reasoning — it doesn't take a lifetime of study to understand it either.

Here's the point: when exposed to music foreign to that of one's own culture, an extra effort must be made to not let the new musical experience merely create a sensation of musical otherness. Without this extra effort, there is the risk that one's perception of the music — which may seem pleasant enough — is stuck in a relational otherness to the more familiar music. It is this, I believe, that leads to categories such as *World Music* and *Crossover*. They are not so much genre specifications as lines of division between what is *normal* and what is *foreign*, between self and other. But if, instead, the act of listening leads to our engaging in the other kind of music in a way that avoids the structurality of the difference, focusing instead on what the *musical* differences and similarities may have to offer, then there is much to be learned.

Parvat invites us to participate in this kind of listening. The music is easily recognizible as both Indian *and* Western. It is not Indian-sounding Western music, nor vice versa. It is not a crossover of styles, nor is it merely a mixture of styles. We have an intertwining of different kinds of musical logic achieved in a number of ways. Formal structures commonly heard in Indian music are utilized and applied to the orchestra seemingly without effort. Orchestration techniques recognizable from Western music traditions are used and woven into Harpreet Bansal's violin playing, itself a mixture of East and West in tradition and practice. The resulting idiomatically intoned melodies are explored as irresistible musical objects resisting classification.

The enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant's notion of the free play of the cognitive faculties comes to mind here in a probably incorrect, but nevertheless pleasing interpretation: the music on this CD makes me think that the kind of cognitive appreciation Kant talks about is not only possible, here it is a reality. I can freely delve into this music as if I had never heard music before, while, at the same time, understanding and scrutinizing it in new ways. It compels me to cross boundaries I had never seen, and learn to disregard those I thought needed to be upheld. It makes me understand *free play* in a new and freer way.

– Henrik Frisk (PhD),
musician, composer, professor,
Royal College of Music,
Stockholm

HARPREET BANSAL
COMPOSER / VIOLIN

Harpreet (b. 1980) was born in Oslo to Indian parents. She started learning ragas with her father, Guru Harbhajan Singh Bansal, when she was two years old.

She later studied European classical music at the Norwegian Academy of Music and went on to study North Indian classical music at the same institution under the tutelage of Ustad Ashraf Sharif Khan and privately with Dr. L. Subramaniam.

Harpreet has enjoyed a long and diverse freelance career, leading her own projects as well as collaborating with outstanding musicians of various genres. She composes music for her own ensembles like Harpreet Bansal Band and Harpreet Bansal Trio, and she is regularly commissioned to compose for Western vocal and instrumental ensembles, orchestras, and, recently, a children's theatre production. She has made several appearances on Norwegian National TV and Radio, and she has appeared as a soloist with such ensembles as the Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Trondheim Soloists.

Harpreet's music straddles the border between raga, jazz and Western classical idioms in what has been called 'a unique and radical approach to the raga genre.' She has received glowing reviews in the Norwegian and international music press, and her second album *Samaya* was nominated for Spellemannprisen (Norwegian Grammy Awards) for 2018. With her band she has also released the albums *Chandra* (2015) and *Movements* (2020) on the Jazzland/OKWorld label. *Movements* received the prestigious NOPA (Norwegian Society of Composers and Lyricists) award in 2021.

Vojtěch Procházka – harmonium

Sanskriti Shrestha – tabla

Norwegian Radio Orchestra

Jan Martin Smørdal – arranger

Jon Øivind Ness – arranger

VOJTĚCH PROCHÁZKA
HARMONIUM

Vojtěch Procházka is a Czech piano player, composer and improviser. He studied jazz piano, North Indian classical music, composition and improvised music in Oslo, Paris and Prague. He explores contemporary jazz with the Czecho-Slovak band Vertigo (7 albums and 3 'Best Jazz Album' awards), North Indian ragas with Harpreet Bansal, improvised music with Krekso, PIO, ex-Bergljot and traditional Czech brass music with FSKC Drancy. He's also a member of impro-song group Mikoo and the garage-jazz group Freetown Quartet. Vojtěch also composes music for theatre and film and creates live music for silent movies. His main instruments are piano, keyboards, Indian harmonium and electronics.

SANSKRITI SHRESTHA
TABLA

Sanskriti Shrestha (b. 1990) is a Nepalese tabla player based in Oslo, Norway. She comes from an illustrious family of music professionals, and started her musical career at an early age as a solo performer, renowned for her impressive technique. Shrestha has collaborated with numerous artists across a wide range of genres and has developed an innovative style of playing. Along with being a creative musician, she is also an imaginative band leader and an adventurous composer.

Shrestha is considered one of the foremost female percussionists in the Nepalese and Scandinavian music scenes. While promoting the Hindustani tabla tradition, she is also actively working on expanding the use and language of her instrument, taking it to new territories of sound and modern expression.

Sanskriti started learning tabla at the age of four with her aunt Sumitra Shrestha and Teacher Pandit Hom Nath Upadhyaya. She made her first stage performance at the age of six and appeared on an album for the first time with a solo piece at age nine. She holds a Master's degree in tabla from Prayaag Sangeet Samiti – Allahabad, and she completed her Master's degree in Music Performance from the Norwegian Academy of Music in 2017. She has won several awards, recorded extensively and toured internationally since her teens.

NORWEGIAN
RADIO ORCHESTRA

The Norwegian Radio Orchestra is known as "the whole land's orchestra" and is today regarded with a unique combination of respect and affection by its music-loving public. With its remarkably diverse repertoire, this is no doubt the orchestra most heard throughout the land – on the radio, television, and online, and at various diverse venues around the country.

It is a flexible orchestra, performing all from symphonic and contemporary classical music to pop, rock, folk, and jazz. Each year the orchestra performs together with internationally acclaimed artists at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert, which is aired to millions of viewers worldwide. Those with whom the orchestra has collaborated in recent years include the Kaizers Orchestra, Mari Boine, Jarle Bernhoft, Diamanda Galàs, Renée Fleming, Andrew Manze, Anna Netrebko, and Gregory Porter.

The Norwegian Radio Orchestra was founded by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation in 1946. Its first conductor, Øivind Bergh, led the ensemble in a series of concerts from the broadcasting company's main studio, establishing the basis of its popularity and securing its status as a national treasure. The orchestra continues to perform in the context of important media events. It is comprised of highly talented classical instrumentalists and yet its musical philosophy has remained the same: versatility, a light-hearted approach, curiosity for all kinds of music, and an unwillingness to pigeonhole musical styles. Petr Popelka is currently the orchestra's Chief Conductor.

ARRANGERS:

Jan Martin Smørdal (b. 1978), composer and musician, co-founder and member of Ensemble neoN. Smørdal comes from the band scene with a focus on experimenting and improvisation. In the course of the last fifteen years he has become a highly sought-after and very active composer. He works in a wide variety of settings: solo, chamber music, sinfonietta, chamber orchestra, choir, orchestra, and installations. Recurring topics in his works are the impossibility of imitation, as well as the phenomena of swarm formations found in nature. Although he is rooted in the musical milieu of Norway, his music is performed throughout Europe and in the Americas.

Jon Øivind Ness (b. 1968) studied guitar (1987-89) and composition at the Norwegian Academy of Music (1989-1995) with Olav Anton Thommessen, Lasse Thoresen and Ragnar Søderlind as his mentors. Ness won the Norwegian Society of Composers 'Work of the Year' award in 1993 for his orchestral work *Schatten*. He was nominated for the Edvard Prize in 1997, 2000 (2 nominations) and 2002, winning in '97 and '00 for *Cascading Ordure* and *Dangerous Kitten*, respectively. Ness was composer of the year for Trondheim Symphony Orchestra (2002-03), Oslo Philharmonic (2012-13) and Bodø Sinfonietta (2012). Ness's music has been nominated three times for Spellemannprisen (Norwegian Grammy Awards), and he won in 2010 with the CD *Low Jive,* together with Oslo Philharmonic. Ness's tonal language is based on the use of bi- and polytonality developed structurally (or sometimes only coloured) with quarter tones. He tries to approach microtonality from different angles – spectral, untuned, melodic (especially from Arabic traditional music). In recent years he has devoted himself more to arranging music in other genres. His project in 2012 together with Diamanda Gálás and KORK was singled out by *Wire* editor Rob Young as the third-most important international musical event of 2012. Since then he has tried to create artistically challenging arrangements in which classical instruments replace rock instruments using various contemporary music techniques, something which culminated in the Bowie project that he undertook together with Bård Bratlie, Peter Estdahl, Thomas Rimul and KORK in January 2020. He has also arranged/adapted music of Sibelius, Grieg, Sæverud, Clash, Burt Bacharach, Javid Afsari Rad and Harpreet Bansal

HARPREET BANSAL (*1980)

PARVAT (2019/2020)

1 I. **Puria Dunasri**___19:38
Arr: Jan Martin Smørdal (*1978)

2 II. **9 ½**___11:38
Arr: Harpreet Bansal

3 III. **Bhimpalasi**___16:56
Arr: Jon Øivind Ness (*1968)

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