



## RESEARCH CENTRE FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MUSIC & DANCE PERFORMANCE



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### *Newsletter 2*

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#### *Welcome...*

Welcome to the second newsletter of the AHRB Research Centre for Cross-Cultural Music and Dance Performance. Newsletter 1 set out the plans for each of the seven research projects; some projects have begun this academic year, and some will be phased in over the next few months. In the pages that follow, we report on progress, and give you a taste of the research outputs that are likely to come over the next few months and years. Much of the research is *in progress*; three new audio CDs, for example, are recorded but not yet ready for release, and we will have to wait some time before the first book-length publications will appear.

You will find reports from the Director and Associate Directors, detailing what has been happening in each of the three collaborating departments and institutions: the department of Music at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), the Department of Dance Studies, part of the School of Arts at the University of Surrey (UniS) and the School of Arts at Roehampton University of Surrey (Roehampton). There is also an open invitation for short-term research fellowships at SOAS; similar announcements have been made by UniS and Roehampton, and it is our intention to continue to offer short-term fellowships for at least the next three academic years. Supplementing the reports, Dr Andrée Grau (Roehampton) discusses her recent fieldwork at the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Dr Janet O'Shea (UniS) offers a report on the development of Project 7, and Dr Keith Howard presents excerpts from interviews with two performers who have been in residence at SOAS, Chartwell Dutiro and Yarjung K. Tamu.

The AHRB Research Centre websites, now fully functioning at SOAS and Roehampton, and under development at UniS, give a full overview of our activities. We are currently building our mailing list, so please let us know who you are. We are, of course, interested in hearing from anybody who would like to be involved, in any capacity, in the research programme! The seven integral projects are listed below, but we want to alert you to the development of additional research strands that connect to the Research Centre, and in this issue there is a preliminary note concerning Ms Cheng Yu's project to build a new version of a Chinese instrument that was last played a thousand years ago, the five-string *pipa*, and to commission and perform new compositions for the instrument. The seven integral projects comprise:

- *Resident Performer-Researchers*. Residencies will be offered to expert Asian and African performers. Performers will collaborate on specific research projects. We anticipate welcoming more than 25 performer-researchers over the first five years.
- *Documentation*. A series of ten audio CDs, fully documented in extensive booklets and five CD-ROMs with 108-page booklets, with links to the Centre website.
- *Music Analysis* explores the validity of applying Western analytical techniques to Asian traditions by developing jointly owned, collaborative accounts of four repertoires.

- *Interpreting and Reconstructing Dance and Music Heritage* uses computer imaging, graphics and Labanotation to document, analyse and interpret Indonesian dance heritage, and explores *gamelan* within the heterogeneous context of contemporary Britain
- *Transformations in African Music and Dance Performance* is a collaborative study by resident performers, ethnomusicologists, dance anthropologists, and movement analysts.
- *The Performance of Ritual in Asian Music and Dance* delineates changing criteria and modes of presentation in locally and internationally staged Asian ritual performances.
  - *New Directions in South Asian Dance: Postcolonial Identity Construction* explores how dance practices inform postcolonial and immigrant identity formation, based on contemporary British, Indian and Sri Lankan practice.

Keith Howard, Director

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## Report from the Director

### *Resident Performers*

Considerable work is underway within Project 2: *Documentation*, Project 3: *Music Analysis*, and Project 6: *Transformations in Asian Ritual Music and Dance*. To date, this has involved six resident performers:

#### **Toraj Kiaras (Iran/UK).** In residence October 2002 – January 2003.

Mr Kiaras worked primarily with Prof. Owen Wright, but also with postgraduate students including Simon Cassell, giving detailed interviews on his background, training, and life story, and on aspects of improvisation in his music. He gave a performance on 16 November 2002, as part of a celebration of the mystical poet Rumi, at the SOAS Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre. The performance, organised and sponsored by the Iran Heritage Foundation and the Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies, SOAS, featured Rahmatollah Badi'i, Mostafa Shams, and others, and was recorded. Additional musicians joined Mr Kiaras in February 2003 at Moat Studios, where a studio recording was made, and this has now been mastered for release on the SOASIS label.

The 16 November performance also included readings of poetry by Rumi, translated into English by Leonard Lewisohn and Robert Bly, with improvisation by Ahmed Mukhtar. These were expanded into a complete performance at St John's Smith Square, with sponsorship from Iran Heritage Foundation, and it is hoped that the recording of this event can eventually (subject to finding funding!) also be released on CD. Robert Bly, who gave the readings, is an American writer and poet who was nominated as the 2000 Distinguished Artist by the McKnight Foundation.

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#### **Chartwell Dutiro (Zimbabwe/UK).** In residence January – March 2003.

*Taanerimwe*, the CD featuring Chartwell Dutiro and his band, Spirit Talk Mbira, was issued in October 2002 on the SOASIS label, and Chartwell's research project aimed to produce a book to accompany the CD. Dr Keith Howard conducted a 15,000-word extended interview, now transcribed, in January, to provide background information for additional work. Chartwell then worked with five postgraduate students: Manuel Jimanez, Theodore Konkouris, Penina Patchett, Thomas Preston, and Paphutsorn Wongratanapitak, each of whom tackled one element of his music and identity (political background, language, model/variants of songs, spiritual elements, etc). Many other scholars, musicians, arts administrators and so on who have been associated with Chartwell and his work have agreed to write segments of the book: Annie Mentor (WOMAD), Will Mentor (Spirit Winds), Netsayi Chigwendere, Anna Mandeka, Rachel Levay (Ingoma), Chris Timbe and others at the Zimbabwe College of Music, Tony Perman (University of Illinois), Nick Clough and Jane Tarr (University of The West of England), plus members of Spirit Talk Mbira. Several of these have been invited to work for short periods at SOAS.

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#### **Gulem dem Abbas, Kamil Abbas (China/Netherlands).** In residence February – March 2003. And, **Abdulla Barat (China).** In residence during May 2003.

Uyghur music forms one part of *Project 2: Documentation*, and these three musicians worked primarily with Dr Rachel Harris. The research involved interviews, joint research on repertory, and recordings, using the new music studio installed as part of the AHRB Research Centre at SOAS. Interviews were also conducted by two postgraduate students, Shih Yin Wang and Athanasia Tsekou. The project links to documentation of the Asian Music Circuit's tour of Uyghur musicians, and will result in a small book to accompany a CD of solo recordings by Abdulla Barat. The musicians held a day workshop in Uyghur instruments and singing styles for SOAS students, which was a great success.

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## **Yarjung Gurung.** In residence February – April 2003.

Planning for this research, which incorporates elements of both *Project 2* and *Project 6*, began in Autumn 2002. In February 2003, Yarjung Gurung travelled to Pokhara, Nepal, and assembled eight shaman ritual musicians from a number of hill villages to rehearse a repertory of shaman music. Dr Keith Howard travelled to Pokhara two weeks later, after the shamans had spent considerable time in intensive rehearsals, and after meeting officials at the Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh, the Tamu/Gurung shaman association, accompanied Yarjung and the eight musicians to Bhaktapur, where he supervised the recording of the repertory in the Department of Music, University of Kathmandu. The work was documented through photographs and on video, assisted by Dr Richard Widdess. The resulting album has been pre-mastered, and the final mix was prepared on 8 June 2003. Back at SOAS, Dr Keith Howard undertook an extended interview with Yarjung. Yarjung then worked with two SOAS postgraduate students, Eleanor Gussman and Rolf Killius, to produce booklet notes for the recording and to develop an overview of Yarjung's spiritual practices, and with Dr Simon Mills on music notation. A CD will be released on the SOASIS label in 2003, then Yarjung will return in 2004 to work with other scholars on the accompanying book.

### ***Publications***

Ashgate Publishing at the end of February 2003 agreed a provisional contract for the publication series of small books and CDs arising out of the research with resident performers. The first two manuscripts will be delivered to the publisher by the end of 2003.

### ***Website Links***

In November 2001, before the official opening of the AHRB Research Centre, Dr Keith Howard organised a symposium of the 'Cultural Diversity in Music Education' group. This formed part of the proposal to the AHRB for the research centre, since it prepared groundwork for the music projects now underway. Materials from the symposium are now available on the web, and links are in place on the SOAS portion of the Research Centre website. The relevant web pages are:

<http://www.cdime-network.com/cdime/conference/0301101252362028>

<http://www.cdime-network.com/cdime/conference/030110125854820928>

The Roehampton website is now available. Thanks are due to Dr Alessandra Lopez y Royo for making this happen.

### ***Additional Activities***

In December, Dr Keith Howard attended an AHRB research day titled 'The future of the monograph'. This was particularly relevant to Research Centre activities. On 7 April, he attended an AHRB research day on European research funding, with a view to accessing additional funds for the Centre. Work is underway to expand the activities associated with the AHRB Research Centre, and to this end grants have been applied for to support research by performer-scholars. Cheng Yu, a renowned Chinese-British *pipa* player, has now received support from Women in Music and the Arts Council of Great Britain to commission a new five-string *pipa*, based on an instrument last used in China more than 1,000 years ago, to commission three women composers (one British, one Chinese, one Korean) to write pieces for it, and to prepare performances and recordings.

On 14 March, the AHRB Research Centre, in collaboration with the Jewish Music Institute, hosted a lunchtime interview and performance with Maurice El-Medioni. The 75-year old Jewish-Algerian pianist was interviewed by Jonathan Walton and Josephine Burton of YaD Arts, and a recording was made. On 24 March, the AHRB Research Centre, within SOAS, hosted a workshop on the performance of world music in education, featuring Prof. Patricia Campbell (University of Washington, Seattle), Annie Mentor (WOMed) and Helen Evans (Asian Music Circuit).

During the academic year, the AHRB Research Centre Recording Studio has come on line. Featuring a Mackie digital desk and a Mac G4-based Pro-tools system, three training sessions were held for postgraduate students and staff, led by technicians from Digital Village and Mackie.

### *Documentation*

Four postgraduate students have also documented the Asian Music Circuit tour of monks from the Labrang Monastery, Tibet. The participants were Ginevra House, Manuel Jimanez, Njane Muriithi Mugambi, and Shih Yin Wang. They conducted interviews with performers, managers, Asian Music Circuit officials, and audiences at events in SOAS, The South Bank, Southampton and Brighton. This forms part of *Project 6*, and seeks to explore the interface between local Asian musicians and ritualists and British audiences. It had been hoped to document additional tours, but for a number of reasons this has not been possible.

DR KEITH HOWARD

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## **Rai, Latino, & Boogie-Woogie: Maurice El Medioni at SOAS**

Maurice El Medioni visited SOAS on 14 March 2003, where he gave a lunchtime interview and performance. The event was held in collaboration with the Jewish Music Institute. Maurice was interviewed by Jonathan Walton and Josephine Burton of YaD Arts. The event was truly auspicious: it was held on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Maurice's marriage, and Maurice played and sang the first song he had written for his wife, who was present in the audience. An audio recording was made, and YaD Arts have also commissioned a film of Maurice performing at MoMo's, the ICA, and SOAS, and talking to Jonathan. It is hoped that the audio recording can be packaged with transcriptions of the interviews in a future publication.

Maurice grew up in Algeria, in the Mediterranean port of Oran. In the 1930s he lived with his family in the Jewish quarter. Medioni's life took a drastic turn when his brother purchased an old piano at the flea market and brought it home. Within days, Maurice, nine years old, taught himself, without the guidance of a teacher, to play popular French songs he had heard on the radio. As the influences in his life changed so did his musical style. When Algeria was liberated from the French in 1942, Maurice played the piano for the American troops at the US Forces Red Cross Bar in Oran. With Maurice's permission, the soldiers used his piano to play popular jazz and boogie-woogie. By observing the dancing fingers of the soldiers he quickly learned to play these musical styles and incorporated them into his unique style. To meet the requests of the soldiers, he picked up boogie-woogie and Latino numbers. Later, befriending three *rai* singers from Algeria, he was brought into the Andalous music culture, where he introduced the piano into *rai*. Maurice gained popularity in his area and soon became the respected pianist for the 'L'Opéra' in Oran, joining talented musicians from many different parts of North Africa as well as other Jewish artists like Lillie Boniche and Lili Labassi. In 1962, after eight years of civil war, Algeria gained independence from France and most Algerian Jews, including Maurice and his family, were forced into exile: "Life was good in Algeria, but when we left, we had to live hand to mouth. It's very tough to be driven from your country when you don't want to leave. It's not like being an emigrant searching for a better life." After his many years at the top of the music scene in his homeland, Maurice adapted quickly and again reached stardom in Paris, where he remained for many years. Later, the unique musical style of Maurice was recognized internationally and his career skyrocketed. Today, at the ripe age of 75, he resides in Marseilles. He still charms the ears of onlookers, using his left hand to form the eclectic sounds of boogie, jazz and Cuban rhythms and his right hand shaping a unique Arabic style.

JONATHAN WALTON

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## From the Associate Director, UniS

### *Project updates*

Work has begun on *Project 7: New Directions in South Asian Dance: Postcolonial Identity Construction*, for which a report by Janet O'Shea is appended. Planning for *Project 5: Transformations in African Music and Dance Performance* is well underway, involving a collaboration between scholars at UniS and SOAS, a group of resident performer-researchers from both Ghana and Nigeria, and involving fieldwork both in Britain and Africa.

### *Administration*

The AHRB Research Centre at UniS launched its *AHRB UniS Bulletin* with a first edition in January 2003. The intention is to produce and distribute a bulletin quarterly. The bulletin has been developed to keep staff of the School of Arts, University of Surrey informed about ongoing activities.

University regulations require that the AHRB Research Centre UniS web pages be designed by the university web design team. A delay occurred in setting this up, because high demand for web services throughout the university meant that a designer could not be assigned. Ms Johnson-Jones made the case for employing an external agency to design the site, but in April a small team was established to expedite the process.

Monique Loobey ([M.Loobey@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:M.Loobey@surrey.ac.uk)) has been appointed as the UniS administrator for the AHRB Research Centre. She works on Thursday mornings, and can be reached at [AHRB-Research@Surrey.ac.uk](mailto:AHRB-Research@Surrey.ac.uk). Additional Email contacts are: [S.Priston@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:S.Priston@surrey.ac.uk) (research manager) and [J.Kerin@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:J.Kerin@surrey.ac.uk) (multi-media officer).

MS JEAN JOHNSON-JONES

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## Project 7: New Directions in South Asian Dance: Postcolonial Identity Construction — A Report from UniS.

Dr Janet O'Shea attended the International Federation for Theatre Research Conference in Jaipur, India in January, 2003. She presented a paper entitled "National Icon, Global Figure: Bharata Natyam's Gendering of Cultural Identity" to the Choreography and Corporealities Working Group. In addition, her essay "At Home in the World? The Bharata Natyam Dancer as Transnational Interpreter" has been published by *The Drama Review*. In this article, Dr O'Shea addresses issues of transformation in present-day *bharata natyam* through the work of two Canadian choreographers, Lata Pada and Hari Krishnan, in addition to one British company, Angika.

Mavin Khoo, the first visiting artist-researcher for *Project 7*, participated in a research and development period during which he created a piece entitled "Obsessing in Line." This piece explores connections between the classical forms of *bharata natyam* and ballet, examining issues invoked in the history of *bharata natyam* and pursuing them through choreography created for two ballet dancers. Khoo directed a workshop included in UniS' Department of Dance research week. This was followed by a lecture, a sharing of "Obsessing in Line" and a discussion. These events were attended by UniS undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff as well as by members of the wider dance community. The AHRB Research Centre, in conjunction with the Society for Dance Research, co-sponsored a panel presentation on *bharata natyam* dancer and choreographer Rukmini Devi at the Nehru Centre. The panel featured presentations by Rani Moorthy (Rasa Productions, Manchester), Dr. Janet O'Shea (University of Surrey, Guildford), Dr. Stacey Prickett (Roehampton University of Surrey), and Vena Ramphal (SOAS/independent dance artist). It was chaired by Dr. Avanthi Meduri (Centre for Contemporary Culture, New Delhi).

We have accepted applications from three research fellows: Dr. Ananya Chatterjea, Dr. Uttara Coorlawala, and Prof. Phillip Zarrilli. Dr. Chatterjea will conduct research on the classicisation of odissi dance and the resulting mitigation of regional markers within the form. Dr. Coorlawala will research the representation of 'Indian-ness' in early twentieth century Britain, and Prof. Zarrilli will research the use of the Kerala martial art practice *kalaripayattu* in theatrical performance.

DR JANET O'SHEA

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## Report from the Associate Director, Roehampton

### *Administration:*

Dr Lopez y Royo and Dr Andrée Grau at Roehampton, in consultation with Dr Janet O'Shea at UniS, prepared an advertisement for short-term fellowships for *Project 4: Interpreting and Reconstructing Dance and Music Heritage* and *Project 7: New Directions in South Asian Dance: Postcolonial Identity Construction*. It was sent to a number of organisations in both fields and was placed on the Roehampton web site. A number of applications were received, and research fellowships are being offered for this academic year as well as being approved for the 2003-2004 academic year. Roehampton will host the projects of Dr Mandakranta Bose, from the Institute of Asian Research at the University of British Columbia, Canada, and Ms Elizabeth Lea, Director of the London-based company Leadance.

Dr Lopez y Royo, in collaboration with Roehampton Media Services, finalised the Roehampton AHRB Research Centre web page, and it went live in late February. It can be accessed at <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/musicanddance>.

### *Research:*

Dr Lopez y Royo, following her shift in research focus in the UK from *baratha natyam* to *Odissi*, has begun to work, on a weekly basis, with the Odissi group of dancers in Bedford, led by Sanjeevini Dutta of Kadam. This will be linked to her fieldwork in India in the summer at the Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneshwar. Dr Lopez y Royo has also started to work with Australian choreographer Elizabeth Lea, who is using South Asian dance forms in her work. This has involved a number of collaborative practical sessions at Roehampton and at Jackson's Lane Community Centre, Highgate, to explore the *karana* technique within contemporary dance practice. Dr Lopez y Royo gave a talk at the Nehru Centre on contemporary dance in India on 12 October 2002 and on 14 November she gave a seminar as part of the Roehampton Research Seminar Series entitled *Contemporary Dance in India and the work of the Dancers' Guild*.

Dr Andrée Grau carried out fieldwork at the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts in Ahmedabad India, from 28 November 2002 to 4 February 2003. She looked at the various activities of the institution, and observed the Darpana Performance Group when it toured New Delhi. During her stay in India, Dr Grau attended *Story Telling in the Digital Age*, a conference organised by the Harvard-based Media Lab Asia and the Ahmedabad-based National Institute of Design. Dr Grau gave a lecture to the animation students at the National Institute of Design on the cultural dimension of movement. On 3 April she gave a seminar entitled *Political Activism, Art, and the many Histories of Indian Classical Dance: Some Preliminary Remarks on Fieldwork at Darpana Academy of Performing Arts* for the Roehampton Research Seminar Series.

As part of Roehampton Dance Diary Series, on 9 October 2002 Mavin Khoo, who is Project 7's first Artist in Residence, presented *Issues of Classicism within the Structures of Bharata Natyam and Ballet*, a performance followed by a lecture demonstration. On 4 December 2002 Dance Diary hosted a performance by *Lila Bhawa*, a London-based Balinese dance group directed by Ni Madé Pujawati, who will work with Dr Lopez y Royo as part of Project 4. Both events were sponsored by Roehampton Dance Programmes.

As part of the desire to broaden funding for research activities, Dr Lopez y Royo and Dr Siobhan Strike, biomechanist at Roehampton, who will be involved in motion capture for



recording purposes in *Project 4* and *Project 7*, submitted a proposal to the Arts Council/AHRB to bring an animator to work with them. The application is part of a new scheme encouraging collaboration between the sciences and creative arts.

On 1 May, a panel discussion on Rukmini Devi and her important role in dance and the arts was held at the Nehru Centre, London, in conjunction with the Rukmini Devi Photo Exhibition. Chaired by Dr. Avanthi Meduri (Centre for Contemporary Culture, New Delhi), the panellists were Rani Moorthy (Rasa Productions, Manchester), Vena Ramphal (SOAS/independent dance artist), Dr. Stacey Prickett (Roehampton) and Dr Janet O'Shea (University of Surrey).

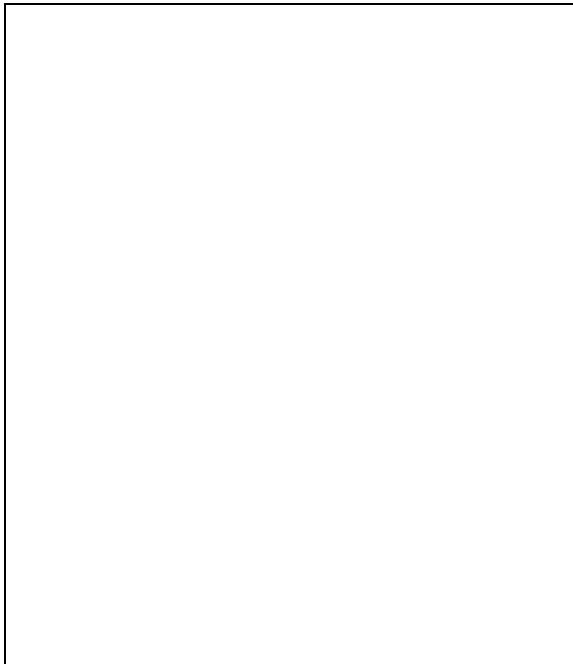
***Training:***

Dr Lopez y Royo and Dr Siobhan Strike attended a course on BodyBuilder software at Vicon's headquarters in Oxford in November 2002. The training was supported by a grant from Roehampton School of Arts' Staff Development Committee.

***Resident Performers/Workshops:***

In April and May, the first resident performers were welcomed to Roehampton and UniS. Mavin Khoo, Sheens Chundee, Benny Maslov and Anthony Kurt worked on Project 7, coordinated jointly by Dr Andrée Grau of Roehampton and Dr Janet O'Shea of UniS. On 18 June 2003, Mavin Khoo and dancers will lead a workshop titled 'From Classicism to Neoclassicism' at Roehampton University of Surrey, from 11 am to 2 pm. The workshop will involve an exploration of classicism in movement, and is designed for dancers and dance students with any dance background providing they are trained to a good standard. The workshop is sponsored by the AHRB Research Centre. There is no charge for attendance. Those who wish to attend should send a brief resumé, indicating dance experience and interest by 12<sup>th</sup> June to: Mavin Khoo, Dance Department, Roehampton University of Surrey, Froebel College, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PJ (tel. 020 8392 3380). The workshop will be followed by a sharing during which Mavin Khoo and dancers of his new company will present work in progress inspired by his own exploration of what constitutes classicism in dance. Mavin and the company members will engage in discussion with participants.

DR ANDRÉE GRAU



Mavin Khoo and Company (photo Eric Richmond)



Dr Andrée Grau visited Ahmedabad in the State of Gujarat, Western India, from the end of November 2002 to early February 2003. As part of Project 7, *New Directions in South Asian Dance Postcolonial Identity Construction*, she observed the activities taking place at Darpana, the performing art academy started in 1949 by the *bharata natyam* dancer Mrinalini Sarabhai and now directed by her daughter Mallika Sarabhai.

## **Political Activism, Art, and the many Histories of Indian Classical Dance: Some Preliminary Remarks on Fieldwork at Darpana Academy of Performing Arts**

Project 7 deals with the construction of identities, aesthetic (identity of the dance work) as well as personal and social (identity of the dance practitioners). It explores the concepts of tradition and transformation within South Asian Dance practices and investigates how the past is re-interpreted in the contemporary South Asian dance discourses of Britain and of the subcontinent as part of a process of postcolonial identity formation. I am very much aware that any North-South relationship is about commodities, armaments, and of exploitation of resources and of labour, in order that the North can continue to live comfortably, more than it is about discourse, language, art, and identity, even though these latter are the mainstay of my work. I am also aware that discourse, language, art, and identity are also, in part, about economics and that economics have an effect on artistic production.

Looking at her position as an artist, Arundathi Roy, for example, discussed how:

Nowadays in India the scene is almost farcical. Following the recent commercial success of some Indian authors, Western publishers are desperately prospecting for the next big Anglo-Indian work of fiction... Ambitious middle-class parents, who a few years ago would only settle for a future in engineering, medicine, or management for their children, now hopefully send them to creative writing school... Now where does all this lead us? (Roy 2001:195)

Going to India was not going to the roots of what we were investigating in Britain. Indeed since one of the conclusions of the *South Asian Dance in Britain* research project, which I directed in 2000-2002, was that many artists situate their work within a *British* rather than *Indian* context and saw themselves as belonging to a transnational world, one could argue that there was no need to go to India at all!

Bringing India and Britain together in a sort of cause-effect way, in my view, smacks of 'nativism', a romantic notion that not only sees minorities within diasporic contexts in metropolitan countries as more developed versions of people living in so-called 'third world' countries, but also perceives the latter as a source of authenticity, where individuals looking for their roots can go to. I am not saying that there are no links between contemporary India and contemporary Britain; undoubtedly, colonialism and its aftermath is an unavoidable connection, but it affects people in different ways. It can make someone like Hanif Kureishi say in the 1980s 'I was brought up in London. It's my city. I'm no Brit but a Londoner' (Kureishi 1987: 67). British Asians may have reasons to feel discriminated against or to despise the notion of Britain because of its imperial past and imperialist present, but their experience is simply not the same as that of people living in the subcontinent today. Nonetheless, the convenient boundaries of 'diaspora' and 'home', for example, need to be challenged. Diaspora and home are not separate entities and any line of division between them is artificial and thus permeable.

Going to India was in part about elusive, not really formulated issues of place and space, which have been in my mind since I started to work among the Tiwi of Northern Australia in 1980, of metaphors of belonging and of lived experience, of multiplicity of identities and of overlapping physical worlds, and on how dance is linked to all these things. As an anthropologist, I am primarily interested in the social construction of reality; in how people make sense of the world they live in; in how they cope with the paradox of feeling both unique yet able to situate themselves within social and political networks; and in how they deal with the tension between agency and socio-historical forces. Knowing about Mallika Sarabhai as a social-activist feminist dancer/choreographer, I was interested in how she situated herself and her artistic practice within a political state, labelled by some as fascist. I was also interested in

how she dealt with her goal of social justice and the fact that she comes from a wealthy and influential family and is part of an elite.

### **Darpana Academy of Performing Arts**

*Darpana* means 'mirror'. It is part of the name of an ancient treatise on dance, the *Abhinaya Darpana*—*abhinaya* referring to expression, conveyed through the movement of the face, eyes and neck—a treatise often invoked by scholars and dancers. Mrinalini often talks - in a somewhat clichéd sort of way - about 'dance being a mirror of the soul' or of 'the universe being mirrored in every individual'.

*Darpana* is physically enchanting – in its true sense of 'casting a spell'. Everywhere one looks, one's eyes fall onto some beautiful painting, sculpture, or carved tree. After the noise and pollution of the street, entering *Darpana* is like entering a haven of peace. It is a haven with guards at the gate, however, where only the invited can enter. *Darpana* comprises a theatre, spaces for classes and rehearsals, a library, a café, rooms for the music and drama faculty, as well as administrative offices. All this on ground level. The first floor is the domain of Mrinalini, with her office overlooking the theatre, overlooking the Sabarmati river and of Mallika who lives there when in town, her apartment extending into an office.

*Darpana* is separated by a garden from Chidambaram, Mrinalini's modernist home, designed in the 1940s by her sister-in-law, Gira Sarabhai, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright. The villa is named after the South Indian temple dedicated to Siva, famous for its sculptures of dancers. In a way, *Darpana* is a stage, where everyday life is transformed into a highly orchestrated performance. It is light and open, but full of invisible boundaries and behavioural codes. Much life in India is restrictive in this way, and there is no doubt that *Darpana* has a quasi-feudal feel about it. Yet both Mallika and Mrinalini are extraordinarily open. The way I was welcomed into their homes and their institution, was able to sit through all rehearsals, discussions and so on, this even though they did not know what I would do with the information gathered, is quite extraordinary and in great contrast to similar Western dance institutions.

### **Mrinalini and Mallika Sarabhai**

Talking with and about Mrinalini Sarabhai, 'taste', 'grace' and 'beauty' are recurrent themes. Although she acknowledges the artistry of Balasaraswati, one of the grande dames of the Indian dance renaissance - representing the 'hereditary lineages' – she is also critical of her: 'She flirted with men in the audience', 'she blew her nose in public', 'her costume clashed', in a word she offended her sensitivity because she had 'no taste'. Rukmini Devi - the other grande dame, representative of the revival 'Brahmin lineages' - in contrast had 'impeccable taste', 'everything she did was beautiful, the costumes, the jewellery everything'; even though she was not, in Mrinalini's eyes, necessarily such a great dancer, having started dancing late.

When Mrinalini performed in the UK in 1949 Arnold Haskell described her as 'having grace, strength and personality' and as having 'remarkable taste' (1949). This is true not just of her artistic practice but of her life generally, as Lynton (1995: 100) has noted. To me *Darpana* is the physical representation of her 'remarkable taste'. Spending time with her, talking with her informally and through focused interviews, I could not help thinking of Pavlova – it is worth mentioning her, the significance Pavlova has had within the Indian dance renaissance (cf. For example Gopal (1956) - and the way she has been described, how in her life stage and life seemed part of a continuum, rather than belonging to different spheres of experience.

Talking about working with the Sarabhai often seems like name-dropping. Apart from Frank Lloyd Wright, Indira Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru, Gandhi, Bose – to cite a few - have all been involved with the family. Maria Montessori was brought to India so that she would train teachers to educate the Sarabhai children in the 1920s. As they grew up they became involved in science and the art. I mentioned Geera, the architect. Another of Mrinalini's sister-in-law the musician Geeta Sarabhai worked with John Cage; Le Corbusier was invited to design the house and furniture of another. In 1940 Mrinalini's sister, Lakshmi was in command of the Women's brigade of the Indian National Army, the militant group organised by Subash Chandra Bose. Family houses are full of art from well-known international artists.

I mention these names not so much to gossip, but because the family undoubtedly belonged to a cosmopolitan elite. Mrinalini went to school in Switzerland when she was young,

then she attended Shantiniketan, the school set up by Rabindranath Tagore. She trained with legendary teachers such as Meenakshisundaram Pillai. Bringing together artistry, money, and international contacts meant that for years she and her troupe acted as cultural ambassadors for India and this has followed onto Mallika. Her five years in Peter Brooks' company performing the *Mahabharata*, her fluent French, and her affinity with aspects of French culture, means that she too can be used as a 'cultural ambassador'. The family is undoubtedly surrounded by a mystique linked to a glorious, now quasi-mythical past. In a country that loves hierarchies, where every event seems to have chief guests and VIPs, they are often invited to add a touch of a certain kind of glamour.

Looking both at the public and financial position occupied by Mrinalini and Mallika, there is no doubt that - compared with other dancers - they have been and are in a highly privileged position. This has allowed them to create the kinds of works they want, not being entirely at the mercy of sponsors, even if these days family money cannot pay for *Darpana* anymore as it did in the past. Looking at the choreographic output of *Darpana*, there is no doubt that most of the works have a social message, be it positions of women, poverty and the harshness of street life or current violence. Even when Mallika performs traditional repertoire in either kuchipudi or baratha natyam she always selects texts to dance to that are slightly unconventional, to the point that people often think that she has written them and are surprised when she says 'no it is actually a 15<sup>th</sup> - or whatever - century poem'. In this way most of the performance work of *Darpana* could be labelled "issue based". Indeed she argues 'being in the kind of situation I am, coming from the kind of family I come from, speaking my mind as I do, I don't think one has the luxury of being apolitical' (in De 2002).

### **The many histories of Indian classical dance**

Dealing with the history of Bharata natyam in India one often hears the stories of Rukmini Devi and Balasaraswati and of what they did in Madras. Dance scholars and practitioners have polarised the two, creating dichotomies. For example: 'Brahmins versus non-Brahmins, middle-class versus hereditary practitioners, Krishna Iyer versus Rukmini Devi and so on' (Meduri 2001). Yet as Medhuri notes

The new polarities...glossed over the important fact that the four founding figures Krishna Iyer, the Madras Music Academy, Balasaraswati and Rukmini Devi – were in conversation with each other in the heyday of the cultural revival of the 1930s and 1940s (Meduri 2001).

Looking at how the dance was taken to the rest of the country, Mrinalini is seen as having brought it to the North generally and to Gujarat specifically.

Rukmini in the South and Mrinalini in the North and the work each did in training others fuelled the revolution in the way dancers were regarded by society (Lynton 1995: 146).

Another account says:

Hailing from a distinguished family in Kerala, Mrinalini is a legend in her own lifetime. It was due to her unstinting efforts that Bharatanatyam, a Southern form, became popular in Gujarat (Prasad 2002).

Mrinalini herself has said 'In those days nobody danced in Ahmedabad and in North India people had hardly heard of Bharata Natyam' (in Gaston 1996:75).

Yet this is not quite true. Having heard that The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda—a city only two hours by train from Ahmedabad—had started the first dance programme in India in 1950, I became curious. I found out that over the centuries there had been many alliances and marriages between Baroda's kings and distant princesses. Dancers were often part of the dowry as dancers, poets and musicians were status symbols for the royal courts and maharajas had as many artists as they could afford. In 1880 the Maharani Lakshmi Bai (Chimnabai I) of Tanjore was married to Baroda's Maharaja Sayajirao III Gopalrao Gaekwad, an enlightened prince who after ascending the throne established the Baroda College as one of his first public acts. It was later absorbed into the university that bears his name. Chimnabai I was knowledgeable in *baratha natyam* and *carnatic* music, and brought a troupe with her, comprising two dancers, two *nattuvanars* (leaders of *baratha natyam* concerts), and two teachers (Khandwani 2002). Others followed later: *nattuvanar* Appaswamy and his dancer wife Kantimati, who had studied with Kannusamy and Vadively, two members of the Tanjore Quartet. After the death of

Appaswamy in 1939, Kantimati and their son, Kubernath Tanjorkar, left Baroda to teach in Lucknow, and then worked in film in South India until Maharaja Pratap Singhrao Gaekwad called the family back to Baroda in 1949, to teach in the Music Department in the Palace Kalavan which was later absorbed into the Maharaja Sayajirao University (Gaston 1996: 158-160). Later Kubernath Tanjorkar opened his own school. So what we have here is a tradition of very distinguished baratha natyam dancers and teachers, members of a family considered an offshoot of the Tanjore Quartet *bani* (stylistic schools; Gaston 1996: 159), already established in Gujarat by the time Mrinalini sets up her own academy. Yet there is a sense that what she did was new.

### Overlapping spaces

Observing rehearsals and daily interaction, I was fascinated to see how the same physical space can be very different to different people at the same time, in the sense that daily space can be shared, although if the protagonists belong to separate spheres of experience, they may not even be aware of each other occupying the same location. One can easily think of space belonging to different people at different times and therefore having many meanings: space is always polysemous.

Before going to India I had never really thought of overlapping physical spaces and people inhabiting overlapping worlds that simultaneously use the same geographical location without interacting with one another. What struck me during this visit was how servants often are 'invisible'. They are like 'shadows'. Observing children coming to *Darpana* during the weekend, I was struck that they did not seem aware of the existence of Kalpana, a woman cleaning the theatre, even when she entered their kinesphere. Clearly such spatial habits are acquired young. It reminded me of the individuals in Japanese theatre, such as Noh or Kabuki, who bring props or help the actors change their costume on stage. These too are invisible, though for different reasons.

I was also interested in how spaces were viewed by different people. Because of Mrinalini's mystique people get drawn into her vision and describe what she has created rather than what they see. *Darpana* is indeed extremely beautiful, secluded as it is amidst garden and trees. Artists performing at the *Natarani* theatre often told me how much they loved coming to *Darpana* because it is such a 'beautiful and spiritual place', 'because it is in the middle of nature', or 'because it has such a special atmosphere'. Yet when one sits in the theatre and looks across the Sabarmati River, what one sees are the chimneys of factories. What the artists see is the vision of the creators of *Darpana*, rather than its everyday reality.

DR ANDRÉE GRAU

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## AHRB Research Centre for

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## RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

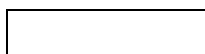
Applications are invited for short-term research fellowships, tenable at the Department of Music, SOAS, between September 2003 and July 2004.

Proposals are invited to conduct research that contributes to or complements four Centre research projects based at SOAS. These are:

- *Documentation*. A series of ten audio CDs, fully documented in extensive booklets and five CD-ROMs with 108-page booklets, with links to the Centre website.
- *Music Analysis*. Exploring the validity of applying Western analytical techniques to Asian traditions by developing jointly owned, collaborative accounts.
- *Transformations in African Music and Dance Performance*. A collaborative study by resident performers, ethnomusicologists, dance anthropologists, and movement analysts.
- *The Performance of Ritual in Asian Music and Dance*. Delineating changing criteria and modes of presentation in locally and internationally staged Asian ritual performances.

Fellows may elect to work with resident performers and research staff at SOAS, or may devise projects that involve collaboration with additional performers of Asian or African musics. Fellows will have a PhD or an equivalent qualification, and will be appointed to work in residence at SOAS for various periods during the academic year. We envisage that the average residency will be two weeks (full time) or four weeks (half time). Stipends will be offered at Point 6 of the university scale (currently £19,681 + £2,134 London Allowance annual salary, pro rata).

There is no application form. Applications must be received no later than **30 June 2003**, and should include: a two-page proposal, a c.v., and the names and contact details of two referees. You are invited to discuss the research fellowships and proposals with the Centre Director (Keith Howard. [kh@soas.ac.uk](mailto:kh@soas.ac.uk); 020 7898 4687) or the Centre Administrator (Sareata Kelly. [musicanddance@soas.ac.uk](mailto:musicanddance@soas.ac.uk); 020 7898 4515). Further information on the AHRB Centre can be found at <http://www.soas.ac.uk/centres/centreinfo.cfm?navid=454>.



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## Chartwell Dutiro: In Interview

Chartwell Dutiro joined the AHRB Research Centre as a resident performer-researcher from January – March 2003. Here are excerpts from an interview between Chartwell and Keith Howard conducted at the beginning of his residency; the full interview, together with articles by his research colleagues and associates, will appear in the forthcoming book *Taanerimwe*, coupled to the CD of the same name.

*Tell me about your name. You were born with a different name.*

My name is Shorayi in Shona, which means, “You can under-estimate me if you wish”. This is a typical Shona way of giving children names. I had this name maybe for two years only. I grew up in a place called Glendale, near Harare, to the west of the village where I come from, because this is where my father was working as a caretaker at a golf course. He was also taking care of an Anglican church where the white people used to go. There was also a Salvation Army hospital near Glendale in a place called Howard—in fact there is an institute there called the Howard Institute. So far as I remember, I had an accident when I was three years old, something to do with an accident involving fire. I got burnt, and I was taken to this Salvation Army hospital. There was an English doctor in the hospital who said to my mother: “Oh! That’s a lovely boy. I think he must be called Chartwell.” My mother was very happy, since it wasn’t anything bad for an English person to give me an English name. So, since that time Shorayi, my original name, has not been on my birth certificate, because all the civil laws that were in place specially for Africans meant you were not given a birth certificate at the time you are born, but maybe got a certificate when you started your primary education. So, I was never known as Shorayi again.

*How did you learn the mbira?*

My brother, Chikomborero, had moved from the village to a place in the Mhondoro tribal trust land called Mubayira near Musonza—that’s where his wife comes from and also his friend William. He went there because he was working on a mill, a grinding mill for maize for the community. He learned the *mbira* there from Mubayiwa Bandambira—the one that Paul Berliner talks about in *The Soul of Mbira* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). My brother learned *mbira* from Bandambira and many others while he was in Mubayira, and when he came back to our village he brought three *mbiras* with him. But before even he brought these instruments back, on my mother’s side one of my uncles called Patrick had an *mbira* and he had been teaching me to play a little. But I really picked the instrument up after my brother brought those three *mbira* from Mbayira. He was a good player, and my brother played with William and a few people around the community.

It’s very hard for me to actually know why I had to pick up the *mbira*. It’s almost like I feel I’ve been chosen, because my age was perhaps between four and five. The thing that is actually very hard for me to remember is going anywhere where I had very intensive lessons or anything like that. There wasn’t anything like that, but you pick little things up from here and there and as you hear things happening it all comes together. It’s almost like being a musician in that environment is not a one-person thing, it’s to do with everybody and it’s communal. Even people who can’t sing well can tell you something important about music. I imagine being on my mothers back when I’m very young, and she’s singing, and this music is coming into me from her back. Or I imagine I’m sleeping on the floor and there is a *Bira* happening, and the music is coming through the ground into my body. I do remember that when I was young we slept in a hut where there was a drum, but the thing I will never forget, and which even my brother will never forget, was that this drum was not a drum you could play at any time...it was in the house where we were sleeping, and I woke up in the middle of a dream in the middle of the night and I just played a rhythm on this drum that I didn’t know but that other people knew. I sometimes wish that somebody had recorded it, but we didn’t have any technology then. I played the drum for about ten minutes, and I woke my brothers. Nobody could stop me. The people in the village heard the drum and everybody was talking about it,

but I just went back to sleep and nobody talked to me until the next morning. Music is like that; I could not put it down. It was like being chosen, it was beyond my control, it was inevitable.

At the time I began to play *mbira* there was also my younger brother, Charles, who has since died, and my big brother, Chikomborero. There were three of us playing, but, apart from my big brother, people could hardly see us when we played because the gourd was so big! They gave us nicknames like Karimudemhe, “the little boy in the gourd”. I think the words “being chosen” are right to explain why I became a musician. Everything fell into place. You know, the morning after I had played the drum, people came up to me and said: “Do you remember what you did?” I replied: “No”. “How did you manage to play it?” “I don’t know”, I replied. So, my brothers had to explain what had happened. It was a very spiritual experience for me. I think this is the point where you can’t tell exactly what happens. When somebody gets possessed—I’m trying to avoid this word, since even spirit mediums can’t always tell when somebody is possessed—it is an experience that they can’t forget. With me and that drum, it wasn’t my rhythm, and it wasn’t my intention; it just happened.

Later, I was inspired by the music of Thomas Mapfumo. So much so, that I decided that his was the band I was going to join. Around that time there were a lot of ‘boy bands’—I’m sorry to use the word, but I’m trying to describe the bands that were coming out of the townships around Harare. Townships were just urban version of the tribal trust lands where I was born. People were just put in the townships, and most of the people were just working people, working in houses, guarding, cooks, taking care of the white people’s children. Every evening, they were bussed out of the city where they worked back to the townships where they slept. Thomas Mapfumo’s band was not the only township band at the time. He was living in Mbare. Oliver Mtukudzi was a township boy too, living in Highfield. There were also bands that were playing in hotels such as the Miekles Hotel where the Harare Mambo Band that Tom Turino wrote about in *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000) were based. And these were bands that around the time I am talking about were influenced by jazz and rock and roll. Thomas Mapfumo was actually a rock and roll singer. You know, these bands, while they were living in the townships, were sponsored by companies such as British American Tobacco (BAT), the soap company Lever Brothers, and the breweries. Breweries built beer halls in the townships, and in those beer halls a lot of people would end up getting drunk. This was all part of the strategy.

Even before him, some of the jazz bands had imitated the *mbira*, but not in a commercial way. It was Thomas who started to use the Shona music in commercial recordings, first using guitars to imitate the *mbira*. His first song of this type came from the traditional repertory, and with this he made his name. He didn’t change the *mbira* musical language. Other musicians took other types of traditional music. Oliver Mtukudzi took singing styles, like *dandanda*. He was more like the leading musician who brought the styles to the attention of musicians, though, and his sound was always like an individual’s sound, whereas Thomas Mapfumo tried to fit around other musicians. For example, there was a guitarist called Jonah Sithole who has now died; he was the main guitar player working with Thomas. He would sit down with a recording, and recreate all the sounds of an *mbira*, including a little bit of the buzzing and even the overtones created by plucking. He did this on his guitar. Thomas would hear, and he would say, “I’m going to sing this”. The musicians, except for one, didn’t know how to play the *mbira*. But we are talking here about the guitar as an instrument coming from the West, a foreign instrument to Zimbabweans, but one that had a magical quality about it for us.

*You play traditional Zimbabwean music, but are now based in Britain. How can you promote your music, and how can it be developed?*

What would be good would be to inspire people in Zimbabwe. To empower the musicians, so that they can have a voice to describe what happens in their music, even if this means they will describe it in their own language. There is nothing that has been written down that tells you exactly what happens in the music, whether in English or in Shona. The device of actually documenting the structure of the music has never been given to the musicians themselves. We, as ethnomusicologists, go and ask the musicians what they are doing, but there are difficulties with this approach. Often, people tell you what they think you want to know. I think the way to go forward here is to serve the creators, not concentrate on the tradition. We often think that tradition will not change. If we think about ceremonies for the ancestors, people say they continue to be performed the same as they always have. Within this way of thinking, I am able to say that I play the same, and don’t change things, yet I know that I don’t play the same way as my father did. These days, there are *Bira* ceremonies in Harare, whereas they only used to happen in the villages. Like this, different generations consult their ancestors through



ceremonies held wherever they want to hold them, and including whatever people they want to. So, what we have today is still communal music as it always has been, but the community is bigger. Much bigger, because you can nowadays find *mbira* in Seattle, San Francisco, Oregon, New York, and London.

What I've been doing here for the last eight years is amazing to me, but it might be considered threatening by traditionalists, or even by some academics. I have faced negative discrimination, but given to me as if it is positive, when I've been told I'm working with Western musicians who are not Zimbabwean. To me, the Western musicians I have been working with are amazing, since they have mastered the music better in many ways than some of the Zimbabweans I know. There are two things that we should consider here. The guitar is not an African instrument, although it has a tremendous identity amongst Africans and with African music. Because of this, you don't find many Africans who can understand it in the same way as those brought up with it in the West can—this is a bit like the *mbira*, as a Shona instrument not a Western instrument, but in reverse—so if we accept that an African can master the guitar, then surely a Westerner can also master the *mbira*. Why don't we allow these things to mix together in the pot? Western musicians can go to Africa with their Western knowledge of African instruments and inspire the Africans. But the most difficult thing I have to face is being asked how much the music has stopped being African because the band I work with has a lot of English musicians. To some people, because there are white people in the band, there is a problem; some would even say that an African cannot lead a group of white people. So, if I am the only African with a group of whites, according to many people it must be that the whites are telling me what to do. They can't see that I can be the leader. An Indian came to me and asked me this same question, although phrased slightly differently: "How much have these whites changed your music?" And I had to reply: "Not at all; they've added something to it".

*How do you work with the members of your band, where you have horns, guitarists, percussionists and so on, not just mbira players?*

We work by hanging around together. This is the same concept that I would use in Zimbabwe. When I was teaching here in London, what I did with the *mbira* first of all was to give students exact parts that could be used on the *mbira* or on the guitar or bass. They learnt these as loops—this is one thing that is interesting about the *mbira*, because there is a loop in every song that suggests different notes in a scale, not really like anything Western, and so nothing that you can really offer a comparison for, but appropriate pitches that come in a song. What I tried to do, then, was to inspire the musicians I was working with to get the simple progressions that fit with the instrument before I allow them to add anything around it. Then, we try to get out of it, so that you give space for the *mbira* to do what it should do and you, on the guitar, go somewhere else. Again, the metaphor of an onion would be appropriate, with many layers, one thing built on another. The hard thing I face when teaching Western musicians is that a lot of them want to do one thing and then stop to analyse what they have just been taught. The toughest situation I face, even today, is finding ways to encourage people to get out of the habit of playing and stopping. They should carry on, so that even if they miss the notes they haven't missed the timing. The song is looping round and round. If you miss the melody, you say, "OK, next time I'll get it right". And the second time you may still miss it, but the third time it is there. What you have is a swing that is important rather than a lot of correct notes, and you need to fit each little part to the swing. If you miss one note, you need to realise that the song continues, so you mustn't lose the progression of the melody, the tempo, and the swing. It is very hard for musicians used to Western music. Actually, Zimbabwean people have the same problem. So, the most important thing to do is to hang around together. It is rather similar to the way jazz musicians operate.

I want to point out the different teaching methods, though, between how I learnt and how I teach. My brother, when he taught me, didn't start with one hand like I do here, but played everything. It took time for me to work out everything he was doing. I, though, break things down. For instance, with *Karigamombe*, I break it down into four chunks, and show how these four give us the cycle—1, 2, 3, 4—and once students have learnt the left hand, I show them how the right hand comes in, alternating—left, right, left, right—and then we bring in the index finger. These days we've got things like tablatures, and I sometimes encourage students to write the music down in a way that they can remember. If they can remember the progression of the song because of tablature, for me that is alright. All these things, if I compare them to the way I was taught when my brother was playing, are different. In my learning, sometimes when I walked around behind him to try to see how my brother was playing, he would turn away from me. He didn't want me to see what he was doing with his fingers, but wanted me to get the

sound in my head. It's like saying that you've got to have a good ear and a good memory at the same time, both good hearing and good rhythm.

They teach differently in Zimbabwe now, as well. It's like a circle. I teach students here, and sometimes they go back and sit with people in my village and teach the songs I taught them back to my own people. Did I come to London to teach people who go back and teach my people? No, but for me, this is something that inspires me, because Zimbabweans are inspired by whites playing their music. People have dreams: this is how things are passed down. Even if one generation forgets the music, the next generation will have a dream and rediscover it. I have to believe that the *mbira* has a big community. It goes to different cultures just like the guitar, violin, or piano. Now is an exciting time, because the *mbira* has gone to different cultures, to America and to Europe, and even to camps in America. There is something very particular about the sound of the *mbira*...

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## Yarjung K. Tamu: In Interview

Yarjung K. Tamu joined the AHRB Research Centre as a resident performer-researcher from February – March 2003. Here are excerpts from two interviews conducted with him by Keith Howard on 14 and 21 March 2003; the full interview, together with articles by his research colleagues and associates, will appear in a forthcoming book; the CD he has recorded will appear in the autumn on the SOASIS label.



Yarjung K. Tamu, left, and Jang Bhadur K. Tamu

My full name is Paidi (Astrologer) Pachyu (Shaman) Yarjung Krömchhai. I am a Tamu or Gurung. I started learning to be a *pachyu* when I was four years old. I continued to study until I was 24, when I went through the final event to become a full *pachyu*. We lived in the village of Yōjku (Nepali: Yangjakot), which is situated in the hills near Pokhara at an altitude of 5,000 feet. My family, from generation to generation and for many years, had all been *pachyu*. We chant our whole history at the beginning of our rituals, and this lists more than 100 ancestors. So many generations in my family had been *pachyu*, and we know of our ancestors as real people. In Nepal, *pachyu* come from four directions, from the South, East, West and North. Different

*pachyu* come from the different directions. We call ourselves Namtithu namtahya *pachyu*; we came from the North. We migrated from a place called Chō, or more completely, Ui Chō Hyula.

I was the only son in my family; I had nine sisters, some older and some younger, but today I am the only sibling who is still living. All my sisters have died. If my father had had four or five sons, he would have wanted to teach all of them to be *pachyu*, although only one of them would have become the *pachyu chiba* (head shaman). That person would be chosen in a ritual, like a graduation, by becoming possessed. Those who are possessed become more powerful *pachyu*, while those who aren't possessed become their colleagues, assisting the head *pachyu* with drumming, dancing, chanting, and so on. We interpret possession as being the time when the gods come down. We call the gods in the ritual, asking them to come into the bodies of the neophytes. The gods choose who they will possess. I am the only son of my father, but my father's brother had three sons, and another of my father's brothers had a son, so there were five of us in my group learning from our childhood to be *pachyu*. I was the youngest, but I was the one who got possessed, so I became the head *pachyu*.

The training for a *pachyu* is very particular. You know the phases of the moon, from full moon to new moon. First, the appropriate time in the lunar cycle needs to be chosen. But the sun is also important, and we start to train to be a *pachyu* at the time of a partial eclipse. Students learn about dark spells that have lots of danger attached to them at times of darkness, when there is no moon. We learn to fight the gods during the full moon period. When we practice and when we give rituals, we also refer to the lunar cycle, choosing light or dark nights that are appropriate for particular types of ritual activity. If I put a spell on you during the full moon, then you will become more and more weak as the moon waxes and wanes, and you will die at the end of the moon's cycle. Students learn this sort of trick. We learn to heal as the new moon appears, and we later practice healing at this same time, so that the patient will become more and more better as the moon rises to its full period. This is the way a *pachyu* has to learn. When I learnt, I started my training at night, studying in the moonlight. We learnt everything at night, copying the chants, reciting the texts, singing the tunes, learning how to drum and to dance. We learnt literally hundreds of rituals in this way. Our training was continuous. We learnt about herbal healing at night, but then we went out into the jungle in daylight to find the herbs we had been taught about, and then using the herbs we began to practice what we had learnt.

Students are tested at each phase of their learning. Whether they take part in rituals or not depends on how advanced they are. I got my full power when I was about 20 years old, and from then onwards I could do everything. But what the neophyte is allowed to do will be based on what he knows. After some training, a student will be allowed to give a short ritual for a simple healing, perhaps a ritual lasting an hour or two. The head *pachyu* will look after the ritual proceedings from his home, making sure the student does things correctly. Until students have complete knowledge of all rituals, the head *pachyu* will continue to look over them and cover for them if they make mistakes. The head *pachyu* has this tremendous spiritual power, so he watches what is going on in the ritual and sends whatever power is needed to ensure that the rituals go properly. At those times, it is as if the students are practicing their skills under an umbrella, the umbrella of the head *pachyu*. When things go wrong, the very next day when the students meet the head *pachyu*, he will tell them everything that happened in the ritual, even though he wasn't there. Students are taught the ritual knowledge repeatedly, but gradually. When I was 12, my father told me to go and do a one-hour ritual. If the ritual wasn't successful, I would be sent to do it again. By the third attempt, I had to be successful, otherwise I couldn't progress to the next stage of learning. The next year, I was given a three-hour ritual. My father told me to go and do it on my own. Again, it had to be successful for me to pass this stage in my training. The next year, maybe, I was given a six-hour ritual. Each time, I had three chances to make a successful ritual. This was the way we learnt, and this was the way we progressed from one stage to the next in our learning. How would we know if a ritual was successful? Well, perhaps my father sent me to heal someone, but a few days after giving the ritual we got word that the person was still ill. My father would tell me I had done something wrong, and he would send me back to that person's village to give the same ritual again. Once the person was cured, then my father would say I had passed that stage in my training.

The last test is very different. The young *pachyu* is required to spend a whole night sitting on top of a newly dug grave. The person buried would have only just died. And the new *pachyu* has to sit on the grave. The head *pachyu* examines what is going on from his home. At midnight, he will send power colours, and the young *pachyu* has to choose the appropriate colour that shows how much power they have, but might also reveal how scared they are. The

young *pachyu* has to secure the grave, keeping it safe. They have to put a boundary around the grave, so that if a wild animal tries to cross the boundary and enter the space it will be frozen to the spot. The young *pachyu* also has to set up three other boundaries, along the path from the village to the grave, and has to secure each of the three in turn. At the crossroads you have to put a barrier, to stop any spirits passing that point. No spirit is allowed to come near you. When I went through this test, I couldn't sleep all night. Nor could my father, because he was watching from our home. In the morning, before I moved, I had to take each of the boundaries down, allowing the wild animals to go free. So that I could go home, I had to unblock each of the three boundaries I had set up on the path. My father told me that three jackals had come, one leopard, a boar, three mice. He knew everything. And he was satisfied, because I had chosen the proper power colour. He then gave me all his secret knowledge, and passed me as a fully-fledged *pachyu*. He said I no longer needed him anymore. After that test, I was able to perform any ritual on my own. It was a very hard test, very difficult to do. After that test, I was completely free, so I could perform any ritual on my own, or with my father, or with other *pachyu*.

I first came to England in 1979, when I was in the British army working as a Ghurkha. By luck, I got the chance to work with a team from the University of Cambridge led by Alan MacFarland. The team helped with fundraising. I settled in Cambridge, and continue to work in Britain with my foreign friends, returning to Pokhara twice a year, and giving rituals as needed when I return. This arrangement has worked well. There are anthropologists and archaeologists, and other foreign friends, all involved in what we are doing. I meet people here, attend conferences, talk about my culture and continue with my work preserving our *pachyu* rituals. This is my work. And, even if in the future nobody wants to work as a *pachyu*, I will have left some documents for them to look at. This is my contribution, what I am doing with my life. I go back to Nepal twice a year.

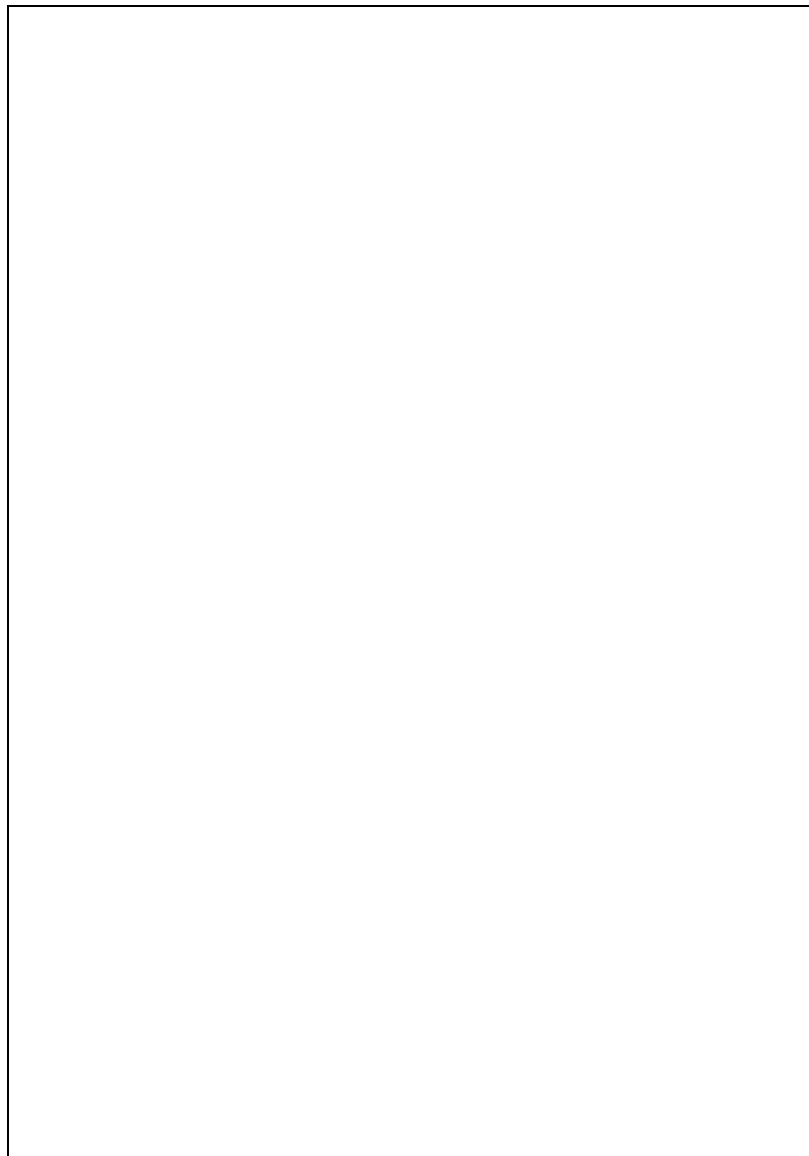
While I can write, see, and walk, I will continue with my work preserving Tamu culture. If it is possible, I will expand my work to document other *pachyu* traditions. But I hope I will be able to write down all the texts I know. For the Tamu *pachyu* tradition, I am hoping to be able to unite all the different ritual variations.

#### *How did you bring the ritualists together for the recording?*

First, back in December, I sent a message to all the ritualists, asking them to come down from their villages and gather at my home in Pokhara in February. February is harvest time, so I had to tell them they would be paid. This made them happy to come to train with me. I chose ritualists who had completed their training, plus one of my students. All the ritualists we worked with are local people, and for many of them this trip was the first time they had visited Kathmandu, but in fact, because we just walked from one bus station to another and then went straight on to Bhaktapur (where we were going to record in a studio), many of them still haven't seen the capital city of Nepal! They had never done anything like a recording before, and they were unsure of why they were doing it. I explained to them what we were trying to do. I told them that our *pachyu* and *khlyepri* knowledge is unknown, and it is good to record it so that others can hear it but also so that we can preserve it for future generations. They then thought that what we were doing must be very important.

Four of the ritualists (Jang Bhadur Krömchhai Tamu, Jaman Sing Krömchhai Tamu, Mota Sing Krömchhai Tamu, Man Bhadur Krömchhai Tamu) came from my village, and others came from elsewhere. This is why the chanting of each was slightly different, and this, actually, is why we had to train together. In my parish, serving the 25 villages around Yōjku, only four people still work as shamans: myself, my cousin's brother and cousin's father, and my young student. My student is actually the son of my cousin's brother and he has been learning for just five years. From Syangja, one additional *pachyu* (Thau Bhadur Chyhagli Tamu) came. I live in Lekhanath. One *khlyepri* (Parsing Mhauchhai Tamu) also came from Yōjku. He is my youngest aunt's youngest son on my father's side. Another *khlyepri* (Deb Bhadur Tu Tamu) came from Parbat, a long way from Pokhara city. I chose him because he knows both *pachyu* and *khlyepri* traditions. If you want to walk to his village, it will take you two days. He is the mayor of his village; I don't know where he was educated; probably it was all in the local vicinity, although he is very intelligent as well as politically active. The third *khlyepri* (Ammar Bhadur Krömchhai Tamu) came from Syangja. When I sent the message out asking the rituals to assemble in February, I asked them to come with their costumes, instruments, and ritual paraphernalia. I have a lot of equipment in my house, and I was able to provide whatever they didn't have that they needed. They came, and in the morning we gave one ritual before practising together

through to the evening. The first chant we worked on was *Serga*. Every *pachyu* knows this in one form or another, but I arranged it to give an appropriate sequence of texts. The way that different *pachyu* chant *Serga* varies, so we had to agree how to sing in a way so that we would match each other. The normal way to sing *Serga* is to split into two groups. One side asks a question and the other side answers; the other side asks a question, and the first side responds. This is the way to chant; you would call it antiphonal. I also had to teach *Serga* to the *khlyepri*, since they don't sing it in their rituals. What we decided to sing was my arrangement, because I have researched *Serga*. Since my father began to teach me, gradually handing over lots and lots of rituals, I kept asking him how the rituals worked and wanted to see proof of their success. When we chanted about landscapes, I asked where the places we were singing about were. He would tell me that to get to a place you would have to walk this or that way, past this and that village, and after a certain period of time you would find it. In those days, I couldn't afford to go and check that these places actually existed; I had no guide, and I had to earn a living. But, when I retired from the army, I had a little money and so I travelled to the places that we had chanted about. I found many of our roots, and some years later, I was able to start a project to undertake archaeological work at the sites. My dream—to find the places that my father had taught me about—was realised. Each place in the Himalayas that we had chanted about was there!



Yarjung K. Tamu (centre, left) and Tamu *pachyu* and *khlyebri*,

*CONSTITUTION FOR*

*THE AHRB RESEARCH CENTRE FOR CROSS-CULTURAL  
MUSIC AND DANCE PERFORMANCE*

1. The AHRB Research Centre for Cross-Cultural Music and Dance Performance (hereafter 'the Centre') was founded on 1 September 2002 as an officially constituted joint Centre between the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (SOAS), the University of Surrey (UniS), and the University of Surrey Roehampton (RUS). It is funded initially through a five-year grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB).

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH CENTRE**

2. The principal purposes of the Centre are:
  - (a) to promote, coordinate, and disseminate research on cross-cultural performance with particular reference to Asian and African traditions, fostering and supporting projects at SOAS, UniS and RUS, and encouraging the participation of scholars from other universities in Britain and overseas in these research projects;
  - (b) to address research questions raised by the performance of sound and movement, seeking a symbiosis between the performance concerns of ethnomusicology and musicology, and exploring analysis methodologies utilised in theatre and dance research;
  - (c) to sponsor resident performer-researchers at SOAS, UniS and RUS, encouraging collaborative research between practitioners and academics;
  - (d) to encourage the development of additional research projects that take further the projects planned within the Centre.
3. The Centre supports group research projects. These operate within the frame of individual strategic plans, brought together under an overall Centre strategic plan that exploits linkages between projects and monitors overall progress. The Centre operates through seminars, workshops and conferences, the publication of written, audio, and audio-visual reports, a website and a newsletter.
4. The Centre sponsors a postgraduate training programme, involving training in recording and documentation techniques, and encouraging postgraduate student participation in research projects.
5. The Centre coordinates activities in designated facilities within SOAS, UniS and RUS.

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE CENTRE**

6. Each Centre research project has one or more named convenor(s) and named researchers.
7. Membership is open to any other members of the SOAS, UniS and RUS academic community, and to any other academics and performers as are approved by the Centre's Management Committee.
8. The Centre may elect to have Research Assistants and Visiting Fellows attached to it, subject to confirmation by the appropriate bodies within SOAS, UniS or RUS.

**MANAGEMENT OF THE CENTRE**

9. The Centre will be run under the financial and administrative management of SOAS. Within SOAS, the Centre will be responsible to the Academic Board (through the Board of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities) and to the Director and Principal for its activities and conduct. The Centre will also be responsible to the Arts and Humanities Research Board, under the conditions of the grant.
10. The Centre will have a named Director and two Associate Directors, ensuring representation by the three collaborating institutions. The Director and two Associate Directors will be members of the academic staff of SOAS, UniS, or RUS. The Director and Associate Directors will serve a term of five years. This term is renewable for one further period of five years. The tenure of the Director or Associate Directors may be terminated by the Management Committee. The senior manager with responsibilities for research in each institution, as nominated by the chief executive (or equivalent) of the relevant institution, will be responsible for nominating replacement members. Appointments will be subject to approval by the Director and Principal of SOAS.
11. The Centre Director and Associate Directors will be responsible in the first instance to the Centre's Academic Advisory Board and then to the Management Committee.
12. The membership of the Academic Advisory Board will be: an external chair or two external joint-chairs, the SOAS Pro-Director, the Faculty Dean, the Centre Director, two Centre Associate Directors, one additional member from each of SOAS, UniS, RUS. The Academic Advisory Board may co-opt additional members. The membership will be agreed with AHRB.
13. The Academic Advisory Board will receive and discuss progress reports on Centre projects, and make recommendations to the Management Committee. It will take responsibility for implementing project targets, agreeing postgraduate training, and monitoring strategy, progress, and the Centre's links with the wider research community. It may take on additional roles, as required by the Management Committee or requested by Centre members.
14. The membership of the Management Committee will be: an external chair, the Centre Director, one additional member from each of SOAS, UniS, RUS, and up to two appointments from the AHRB.
15. The Management Committee will approve a strategic and operational plan and changes to this plan, appointments and changes to Centre personnel, and take responsibility for all budgetary matters and ensuring that targets are met. It will receive progress reports on Centre projects with recommendations from the Academic Advisory Board.

## **REPORTS**

16. The convenor of each project will produce annual reports during the duration of the project. Reports will be considered by the Academic Advisory Board, who will forward them with recommendations to the Management Committee for consideration.
17. The Centre Director and Associate Directors will each prepare termly progress reports. Reports will be considered by the Academic Advisory Board who will forward them with recommendations to the Management Committee for consideration.
18. The Centre Director, with assistance from the SOAS Research Office, will prepare annual reports. These reports will be considered by the Management Committee. After approval, these reports will be submitted to the AHRB to meet the requirements of the grant and will be copied to the respective institutions.

## **CENTRE MEETINGS**

19. The Academic Advisory Board will normally meet three times annually. The Centre Director will send members notice of the time and place of each meeting no less than ten working days in advance. Board members who cannot attend may nominate a representative to attend on their behalf.
20. The Management Committee will normally meet three times annually. The Centre Director will send members notice of the time and place of each meeting no less than ten working days in advance. Members of the Academic Advisory Board may attend meetings of the Management Committee at the specific request of the Committee.



21. Subject to notice to all members no less than ten working days in advance, the Director and Associate Directors, or any three members of the Management Committee, may convene an extraordinary general meeting of the Management Committee to discuss any issues relating to the organisation, purposes, and leadership of the Centre.
22. In the event of disagreement in the Management Committee, the chair will have the casting vote. In the event of disagreement in the Academic Advisory Board, the chair or co-chairs will have the casting vote.
23. Additional formal and informal periodic meetings of the Academic Advisory Board or of the named convenors and named researchers of a group research project may be called.
24. Minutes of the Academic Advisory Board will be circulated to the Management Committee. Minutes of the Management Committee will be circulated to the Academic Advisory Board.

#### **AMENDMENT OF THIS CONSTITUTION**

25. This constitution is subject to approval and periodic review by the Academic Board at SOAS. Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by the Centre's Management Committee, but are subject to ratification by the SOAS Academic Board through the Board of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

This constitution was approved by the SOAS' Arts and Humanities Faculty Board on 12 February 2003 and by the SOAS' Academic Board on 5 March 2003



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PUBLICATION DATE: JUNE 2003

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