



# Performing Modernity

Musicophilia in Bombay/Mumbai

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**TISS Working Paper**

**3**

TISS Working Paper No. 3

January 2015

**PERFORMING MODERNITY**  
**MUSICOPHILIA IN BOMBAY/MUMBAI**

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*Research and Development*  
**Tata Institute of Social Sciences**

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TISS Working Paper No. 3, January 2015

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## ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the place of Hindustani art music in the metropolis of Bombay/Mumbai, and its role in the fashioning of public spaces from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1960s. This music began to take root here in the 1850s, and eventually became intimately associated with the city. With the fall of Awadh in northern India in 1857 and the dispersal of the court that had inherited Hindustani music from the Mughal empire, the singers, instrumentalists and dancers began to migrate to the ‘native states’, big and small, seeking new patrons. Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bombay city grew in importance as a major centre of trade and commerce, and markets for entertainment as well as forms of patronage emerged. The city came to occupy a central position in assembling the new structures and spaces of **performance, pedagogy, recording and consumption of this music**. New kinds of listening experience were enabled in a proliferation of new public spaces—the Parsi theatre and the Marathi *sangeet natak* (musical play), the music club, the music school, the *baithak* in a wealthy patron’s home, the music ‘conference’, and the concert stage in places like Laxmi Baug, Brahman Sabha or Jinnah Hall in Girgaum. Musicophilia became an important facet of the metropolitan scene, and although it was not Hindustani music alone that shaped this musicophilia, it formed a significant part of it. The paper suggests that the passion for Hindustani music was strongly linked to the linguistic diversity of Bombay city, and that it was the *lingua musica* which aided the development of the public domain and its cultural vernacular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

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1 In the present research, the city is referred to as Bombay since the records and writings consulted mention it as such in the period 1850s to 1960s, with the exception of the Marathi writings.



## INTRODUCTION

The music I refer to in this paper is variously known as Hindustani classical music, art music, raga music, north Indian music, etc. There are several dimensions to the notion of ‘public’ as it is used in the project. We are looking at: (1) the *formation of new publics* for and through Hindustani music; (2) the *rendering public*—through performance and pedagogy—of a music that was in an earlier period confined to smaller and more elite courtly audiences or to sacred spaces; (3) different types of publicly accessible *built space* and the ways in which it came to be filled with song through dramatic and musical performances; and (4) the creation of *new distinctions between public and private*, inside and outside, home and street, that emerged in connection with the music. In this project, we are assembling a musical cartography of Mumbai that has to be read on the *historical* as well as the *geographical* plane.

My paper is based on archival and ethnographic work as well as a range of primary and secondary texts: memoirs, biographies, writings on Indian music, historical writings about cultural practice, business histories, and histories of colonialism and nationalism. This is supplemented by extracts from the project interviews, and from observations drawn from my “attentive walking” through the streets of the neighbourhoods that are central to the project. While the research document focuses on the place of Hindustani art music in the metropolis of Bombay/Mumbai from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1950s, the two dozen video interviews conducted by me (with singers and instrumentalists, theatre persons, event organisers, music collectors, and students) focus on the post-1950s period (available on <http://pad.ma>).

What is today called Hindustani music began to take root in Mumbai around the 1850s, and eventually became intimately associated with the city. The aim here is not to provide a comprehensive history of Hindustani music in Bombay, but to think through the significance of this cultural practice in the colonial and post-colonial city. In the *research interviews*, I explore this significance through the discussion of key aspects of musical pedagogy and performance, and the trajectories of specific musicians. In the *research paper*, however, the focus is on one important set of connections animating the project: between music, urban space and the self-fashioning of Bombay’s inhabitants.

My larger interest is in contributing to a critical account of the present, which I seek to do by showing how Hindustani music maps onto even as it helps reconfigure public space in Bombay. The journeys of performers, audiences and students take them into different kinds of spaces in different neighbourhoods, and over a century and a half these spaces resonate with the music over which people obsessed. In aspiring to the status of a performer, a singer or instrumentalist under the public gaze, the non-hereditary musician, I argue, was aspiring to *perform* a specific kind of modernity which was called into being—elusively and fleetingly—through performance itself. But it might be premature, if not misleading, to call this—as some scholars would have it—a proto-nationalist modernity, seeking to reconfigure ‘tradition’ as a key pre-requisite of such a modernity. While the proliferation of music schools and the drawing in of substantial numbers of middle and lower middle class people into the practice of classical music was happening in many parts of India, the scale and intensity of this engagement in Bombay, as I hope to demonstrate, was exceptional. And so we need an explanation for this phenomenon that does not simply subsume it under the story of Indian nationalism. We need an explanation that can account for the centrality of Bombay city in this engagement with north Indian music.

The public space of Bombay owes its distinct character to the specific historical conditions that mark the city’s emergence and growth. Significantly, there was no dominant community in this city historically speaking, and no dominant language, since it was populated by speakers of Marathi and Gu-

jarati (Hindu, Muslim or Parsi by religious affiliation),<sup>2</sup> Konkani speakers, Hindustani-Urdu speakers, speakers of Telugu and other South Indian languages, and also Christians (who spoke English and other languages) and Baghdadi Jews (who spoke a dialect of Arabic). A colonial traveller was struck by the linguistic diversity of Bombay in 1832: “In twenty minutes’ walk through the bazaar of Bombay, my ear has been struck with the sounds of every language that I have heard in any other part of the world, uttered not in corners and by chance, as it were, but in a tone and a manner which implied that the speakers felt quite at home.”<sup>3</sup> The linguistic diversity could well be a crucial indicator of other kinds of diversity, an issue to which we shall return.

Social historian David Willmer argues that Bombay’s position as the second most important city in the British Empire next to London is due to its unique history of indigenous trade, commerce and seafaring that existed well before the establishment of British forms of governance in the city. Instead of calling it a *colonial city*, and thus falling into the associated dichotomies of traditional-modern, Asian-Western, or pre-industrial-industrial, he proposes that we call Bombay an *imperial city* in recognition of its specific form of urban development. Since it was a process to which Indians actively contributed, they cannot be seen simply as recipients of British largesse.<sup>4</sup> Thus it would be a mistake to see the kinds of things Indian philanthropists contributed to building—railways, bridges and causeways, concert halls, schools, colleges, hospitals, statues—as dictated solely by British tastes and ambitions. Rather, Indian aspirations about how to configure public space shaped their decisions about what to support financially and politically, and their aesthetic choices—whether manifested in architecture or cultural practices like Hindustani music—drew on the complex and socially diverse repertoire that became available in Bombay city through the in-migrations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Census of 1891, which showed Bombay’s population to be a little over 8 lakhs (0.8 million), also indicated that only a quarter of these were born inside city limits, and that the population was overwhelmingly composed of migrants.<sup>5</sup> About thirty years later, we see in 1921 that 84 percent of Bombay’s population had been born outside the city.<sup>6</sup>

Starting from about the 1860s and going well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bombay came to occupy a central position in assembling the new structures and spaces of performance, pedagogy, recording and consumption of Hindustani music. New kinds of listening experience were enabled in a proliferation of new public spaces—the proscenium theatre which showcased the Parsi plays and the Marathi *sangeet natak* (musical play), the music club or ‘music circle’, the *baithak* in a wealthy patron’s home, the music school, the music ‘conference’, the concert stage in places like Laxmi Baug, Brahman Sabha or Jinnah

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2 Jim Masselos has written about the relevance of geography in the way Bombay developed, basically as a ‘native town’ surrounded by ‘Raj areas’. “By the mid nineteenth century Bombay, with its extended past and growing size, had become a complex entity: its sprawling geography of streets and buildings housed a wide diversity of social groups involved in an equally diverse range of activities. The mix was perhaps more various than elsewhere in India at the time, and continued to be so during the following century with Bombay’s industrial base making it a target for migration from around the country.” Masselos, “Appropriating urban space: social constructs of Bombay in the time of the Raj”, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 14:1, 33.

3 Captain Basil Hall, *Fragments of Voyages and Travels (Vol III – pub Robert Caddell, Edinburgh, 1832)*, 11.

4 For a recent discussion of the economic modernity of Bombay and the creativity of its traders, see Lakshmi Subramanian, *Three Merchants of Bombay: Doing Business in Times of Change* (Delhi: Allen Lane, 2012). Earlier scholars who have addressed the issue of economic leadership include Christine Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India: Politics and Communities in Bombay City 1840-1885* (Delhi: OUP, 1972) and A.D.D. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics: Rising Nationalism and a Modernising Economy, 1918-1933* (Delhi: Manohar, 1978).

5 Full text of the Census of India 1891 here: [https://archive.org/stream/cu31924023177268/cu31924023177268\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/cu31924023177268/cu31924023177268_djvu.txt) (Accessed on April 16, 2014).

6 Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, “Peasants and proletarians in Bombay city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries”, *History, Culture and the Indian City* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 59.

Hall in Girgaum, and the *Ganesh utsav* pandals. Musicophilia became an important facet of the metropolitan scene, and although it was perhaps not Hindustani music alone that shaped this musicophilia, it formed a hugely significant part of it.

## MUSICOPHILIA AND MODERNITY

I argue that Hindustani art music in its many forms provides the affective basis of the shared modernity taking shape in Bombay in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This affect is created through listening together, and listening to each other, and through the culture of ‘appreciation’ (the *wahwah mandali*) that develops in the city.<sup>7</sup> The affect is manifested in the linguistic zone that develops around Hindustani music, where people speaking many different Indian languages and coming from different social and religious backgrounds converged in singing—and listening to—a form of northern Indian music that presented its compositions primarily in dialects related to the Hindustani language.<sup>8</sup> I argue further that an understanding of the musicophilic modernity of Bombay is relevant to any account of the emergence of a public domain in a colonial society, and to the transformation of that domain in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. And I want to propose that the nature of that public domain was deeply coloured by what I have called above the performance of modernity evidenced in Hindustani music. The kind of articulation of modernity made possible through Hindustani music in Bombay may help us understand how and through what modalities and in what directions other domains of cultural and social experience were also being transformed. Historian Janaki Bakhle has suggested that this modernity was tied to a particular vision of religion and nation—that successful pedagogues like Vishnu Digambar Paluskar were instrumental in forging and popularising a ‘sacralised’ Hindu music which could be called properly Indian, in the name of India viewed as a Hindu nation. While this argument has been forcefully made by Bakhle, it does not seem to offer an adequate account of the growth of Hindustani music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup>

In the Mumbai Music project<sup>10</sup> we have taken a somewhat different tack: firstly, this involves discussing performance, practice and pedagogy rather than the public utterances or writings of the music ideologues V.N. Bhatkhande and V.D. Paluskar, who are key protagonists of Bakhle’s book. For instance, as Amlan Dasgupta has argued, if we look at the *bandishes* or compositions sung by ‘Hindu’ ideologues, we see a good deal of explicitly Islamic content;<sup>11</sup> and in my own experience of learning music, I can recall several of the *bandishes* in the Gwalior *gayaki* which seem similarly ‘Islamic’ and have been sung and passed down by generations of Hindu singers; similarly, it is an even better known fact that not only did Muslim *ustads* routinely sing compositions about Hindu gods, they also sang in the Hindu temples, and there is a strong collective memory of such singers among those who follow

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7 This phrase was used by eminent sitarist Arvind Parikh in describing the space in front of the musician that was reserved for aficionados who responded enthusiastically and with discernment to the performance. Interview, February 16, 2014.

8 As Ashok Ranade points out, V.N. Bhatkhande’s pioneering collection of *khayals* had 1800 compositions, spanning Marwadi, Brijbhasha, Sindhi, Punjabi, Persian, Maithili, Bhojpuri, and several other languages/dialects. Interview with Ranade by Deepak Raja, Aug 19, 1998: <http://swaratala.blogspot.hk/2007/04/ashok-ranade-dhrupad-represents.html> (Accessed May 6, 2014).

9 Bakhle, *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005).

10 The Mumbai Music project is anchored by Tejaswini Niranjana and Surabhi Sharma. It aims to provide a platform for research and documentation, in audio and video form, relating to the history of Hindustani music in Mumbai city. Further details can be accessed at <https://pad.ma>.

11 Dasgupta, “Rhythm and Rivalry” (a review of Janaki Bakhle’s book, *Two Men and Music*), *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 9, 2006: 3861-63.

Hindustani music.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, we look at some of the friendships and mentorships in Hindustani music involving Hindus and Muslims. For example, Paluskar's student B.R. Deodhar's most intimate interlocutors were two Muslim singers, Sinde Khan (a 'fakir') who became his revered teacher and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan.<sup>13</sup> Deodhar's relationship with these musicians lasted nearly thirty years in each case. The prominent *tabla* player and music composer Nikhil Ghosh had Ustad Ahmed Jan Thirakwa living in his house for nearly ten years during the late fifties and early sixties; sitar player Arvind Parikh and Ustad Vilayat Khan, apart from being student and teacher, had a deep friendship over half a century until the latter's death in 2004. These are just a few examples among dozens that abound in the stories told about friendships between musicians in Bombay and elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> All this complicates the picture enormously, and the story of the assembling of a 'national' music that is also Hindu is probably neither uni-directional nor the kind of finished process Bakhle and others make it out to be. What these intimate relationships across religion and social class might signify is how musicophiliacs in Bombay tried to create the conditions that would allow them to shape their lives in performance. Through new systems of patronage and cross-class relationships with musicians, they sought to draw 'traditional music' into modern public space, ensuring that it became a crucial part of urban experience.<sup>15</sup>

With the fall of Awadh in northern India in 1857 (the year of the Great Rebellion, the First War of Indian Independence, the Great Mutiny) and the dispersal of the court that had inherited Hindustani music from the Mughal empire, the singers and instrumentalists and dancers began to migrate to the 'native states', big and small, seeking new patrons.<sup>16</sup> Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city of Bombay grew in importance as a major centre of trade and commerce, and new markets for entertainment as well as new forms of patronage emerged. Musicians and other performers started moving to Bombay from the princely states or from other parts of the Bombay Presidency, either to settle down in the city on a permanent basis or to maintain a connection of some sort (with patrons, colleagues, relatives), which would permit their frequent visits. They came to Bombay for concerts and other kinds of performances, for recordings, and to teach students. Most of these hereditary musicians formerly employed in royal courts in northern and then central and western India were Muslim, although a few were Hindu too. The Hindus would have been first-generation in Hindustani music, although their families may have been otherwise involved in music—usually as *kirtankars*, and were likely to have received *taleem* from Muslim *ustads* in one of the princely states.<sup>17</sup>

12 I am indebted to Amlan Dasgupta for reminding me of this fact. Examples of Muslim musicians singing in temples abound in the biographical and autobiographical writings on Hindustani music. See, among others, Alladiya Khan's *My Life* (Calcutta: Thema, 2000) and Balkrishnabuwa Kapileshwari's *Abdul Karim Khan – The Man of the Times* (Bombay: self published, 1973). Muslim *ustads* still perform at the Ganesh utsav celebrations in Mumbai today.

13 Deodhar on Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's death in 1968: "With his death, I have lost a dear friend and a brother (I feel grief as though I have lost a brother)". B.R. Deodhar, *Thor Sangeetkaar*, in Marathi. (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1993). I thank Rutuja Lad for assistance with Marathi translations.

14 Interview with Nayan Ghosh, February 17, 2014.

15 It is not my contention that inter-religious intimacy was not fraught with social tensions. N.M.Kelkar relates in his Marathi biography of Bhaskarbuwa Bakhle (Mumbai: Karnatak Prakashan Samstha, 1967) how the Brahmin Buwa had to move from Girgaum Naka where he lived in a Hindu-dominated chawl to Papermill Lane where his neighbours were Christians and *kalavant* women because of objections to his house being visited by Muslim singers. Kelkar, 147.

16 The evolution of Hindustani music from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is described by Madhu Trivedi, "Music Patronage in the Indo-Persian Context: A Historical Overview", in Joep Bor, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, Jane Harvey and Emmie te Nijenhuis (eds.), *Hindustani Music: Thirteenth to Twentieth Centuries* (Delhi: Manohar, 2010), 65-93. Here we obtain a detailed picture of music and courtly life before Awadh lost its prominence, and its musicians and dancers began to leave.

17 The centrality of Bombay to the story of Hindustani music is quite evident in this concise account by Joep Bor and Allyn Miner, "Hindustani Music: A Historical Overview of the Modern Period", in Bor et al (eds.), op. cit., 197-220.

## STUDYING MUSIC IN BOMBAY

The most immediate student constituency in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century consisted of upper class and upper caste men (Hindus and Parsis from the new professional class: lawyers, accountants, doctors, journalists), upper caste Hindus from impoverished backgrounds with a familial connection to devotional music, and women from the *devadasi* (also known as *naikin* in Goa) or *kalavant* background.<sup>18</sup> These women had moved to Bombay from Goa and acquired patrons amongst the Gujarati merchants, especially from the Bhatia sub-caste, who often lived with the women and paid for their lessons from the *ustad*. The Goan women were a substantial presence amongst those who apprenticed themselves to Hindustani music. For example, when the Muslim musician brothers Nazir Khan, Chajju Khan and Khadim Hussain Khan came from Moradabad in the north and settled down in Bombay around 1870, they are said to have trained nearly 50 to 60 Goan singers.<sup>19</sup> Not all of them became as famous as Anjanibai Malpekar, the star pupil of the Khan brothers, but they did perform publicly for a living.<sup>20</sup> [The Khan brothers were trained by their father Dilawar Hussain Khan and also received instruction in the Rampur Sahaswan *gharana* and the Dagar *gharana*, but established their own in Bombay by the 1890s—the Bhendibazar *gharana*, with its own distinct features.] There was a famous Goan singer called Bablibai, who was Natthan Khan Agrawale's disciple<sup>21</sup>, and of course there were the most famous of them all: Alladiya Khan's disciples Mogubai Kurdikar and Kesarbai Kerkar. There are apocryphal stories about actors from the Marathi theatre who would accept invitations to perform with their companies in Bombay so as to get the opportunity to meet the great *ustads* and seek discipleship.<sup>22</sup> Yet another distinctive kind of singer was the *tawaif* (a woman performer from the courtly tradition) who was part of the same post-1857 migration that brought the *ustads* to Bombay and other places. *Tawaifs* set up *kothas* or establishments in Bombay in and around the Grant Road—Lamington Road area where they sang, organised musical evenings, and played host to visiting male musicians (two very famous Muslim singers who frequently stayed with the *tawaif* Gangabai opposite Congress House off Lamington Road in Girgaum were Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, who initially played *sarangi* in the *kotha* to accompany the female singers, and Amir Khan). It has been remarked that not enough credit is given to the *tawaifs* for carrying forward through their own *taleem* and their support for practitioners the musical lineages that found such welcome in Bombay.<sup>23</sup> *Tawaifs* were often not acknowledged by *ustads* as their real pupils—they were taught by *beenkaars* and *sarangi* players who had assimilated the music

18 For more details see Aban E. Mistry, *The Parsis and Indian Classical Music: An Unsung Contribution* (Swar Sadhna Samiti, Mumbai: no date) and Jennifer Post Quinn, "Marathi and Konkani speaking Women in Hindustani Music", Phd. Thesis, University of Michigan, 1982.

19 For an elaborate list of female singers who obtained taleem from various *ustads*, see Jennifer Post Quinn, op.cit., 1982. Aneesh Pradhan mentions these *ustads* who taught Goan singers: Sher Khan (Agra) (1805-1862), Mohammed Khan (1870-1922) (son of Natthan Khan of Agra lineage), Haider Khan (Sahaswan – Badayun – Gwalior). Pradhan, "Changing facets of Indian music in a colonial situation, 1818-1947", PhD dissertation, University of Mumbai, 2001, 65.

20 Details in Mohan Nadkarni, *The Great Masters: Profiles in Hindustani Classical Vocal Music* (Delhi: Harper Collins, 1999). Essay on Anjanibai: 127-130.

21 Mentioned in N.M.Kelkar's 1967 biography of Bhaskarbuwa Bakhle, op. cit.

22 Pradhan, op. cit., 48. Pradhan is one of the first scholars to examine the place of Hindustani music in Bombay, and his work is pioneering in its pulling together of diverse material and for the research possibilities it opens up.

23 Interview with Nayan Ghosh, February 17, 2014. In this interview Ghosh details his father Nikhil Ghosh's forays with his guru Amir Husain Khan into the houses of the *tawaifs* in the 'forbidden areas' near Grant Road for musical evenings which were typically held on Fridays (*jumme*). Famous Muslim musicians used to gather and perform at these events sponsored by *tawaifs*, and listened to and corrected aspiring musicians. There were also challenges (*dangal*) resulting in serious fights between musicians over a particular aspect of musical performance or interpretation. Nayan Ghosh says that the *tawaifs* used the money they obtained from rich patrons to encourage musicians. "These", he quotes his father as saying, "were the real *devis* who saved our music and kept it alive".

of the great singers while accompanying them during their performances.<sup>24</sup> In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of the film industry in Bombay, women performers from *tawaif* backgrounds found new employment in the Hindi-language cinema. Parallely, *kalavant* women singers from Goa and their descendants became important figures in the Marathi *sangeet natak* or musical play.

## THEATRE AND HINDUSTANI MUSIC

The history of the musical theatre in Bombay is closely tied to the 19<sup>th</sup> century emergence and growing popularity of Hindustani music. Whether it was in the Parsi theatre (Gujarati, then Hindustani/Urdu) or the Marathi-language, *sangeet natak*, audiences encountered melodies from art music especially through ‘lighter’ genres like the *dadra*, *hori*, *ghazal*, *qawwali*, and *thumri*.<sup>25</sup> While the Parsi theatre or the *sangeet natak* did not usually provide a performance platform for ‘classical’ music per se, the songs—often more than 60 in each play—were *raga*-based, both Hindustani and Carnatic, and helped cultivate a taste for classical music in the theatre audiences. Several musicians were closely associated with the theatre, as trainers, composers, actors and even directors. Film scholar Ashish Rajadhyaksha points out that the theatre industry was “the biggest, most visible, and most commercial of the cultural economies” of the time, and that “one might almost see it as the Bollywood of the late 19th-early 20th C.”<sup>26</sup> Thus the significance of the theatre’s intimate connection to Hindustani *raga* music cannot be emphasised enough for our argument about music and publicness.

Although the Marathi theatre evolved over three decades from folk dramatic forms such as *lavani*, *gondhal*, *khel*, *tamasha* and others, by 1875—when *Sangit Shakuntal* was staged by Annasaheb Kirloskar, first in Pune and then in Bombay—the *sangeet natak* or musical play became the dominant form of Marathi theatre, and remained so until well after the 1930s.<sup>27</sup> The Marathi plays brought in the use of existing *raga* melodies and also had major classical musicians composing for the stage. *Ustads* were employed in the theatre to train the actors. The Marathi stage drew on the musical style of the Parsi theatre while also presenting original compositions based on *raga* music. Some examples of successful late 19<sup>th</sup> century companies which brought into usage different kinds of music include: Kirloskar Natak Mandali (*kirtan* music and *raga* music in its early years and the influence of the Parsi theatre and the *purab ang* (eastern style) *thumri* and *qawwali* via Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar who became the chief playwright of the Mandali from 1896), Patankar Sangit Mandali (tunes from Parsi theatre and *tamasha* in plays intended for mill-workers), Pandurang Yevteshwarkar’s Waikar Mandali (nearly 50 of the 65 songs in their play *Dyutvinod* were based on classical *ragas* “like *Jaijaivanti*, *Arabi*, *Sindhura*, *Adana*, *Suhag*, *Paraj*, *Vasant-Bahar*, *Bibhas*” and used forms like “*dhrupad*, *tarana* and *sargam*”).<sup>28</sup>

Many singers who later became famous as classical musicians began their performing careers on the Marathi and Kannada stage, including Sawai Gandharva, his student Bhimsen Joshi, Mallikarjun Mansur and others. A major singer of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bhaskarbuwa Bakhle, trained by three

24 We can only guess that in the mid 19th century pupils from outside the family were still not common, and this could be one of the reasons why tawaifs were not acknowledged as carrying forward the *gayaki* of a particular musical tradition. An interesting parallel development was that of men from *sarangiya* families who took to vocal music and excelled at it, with two famous examples being Abdul Karim Khan (founder of the Kirana gharana) and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan.

25 The growth of Parsi theatre has been extensively discussed by Somnath Gupt, *The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development*, trans. and ed. By Kathryn Hansen (Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2005), and Kathryn Hansen, “Languages on Stage: Linguistic Pluralism and Community Formation in the Nineteenth-century Parsi Theatre”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 37, 2 (2003), 381-405.

26 Rajadhyaksha, e-mail communication, April 17, 2014.

27 Details in this section are primarily from Ashok D. Ranade’s *Stage Music of Maharashtra* (Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1986) which is a magisterial account of the Marathi sangeet natak.

28 Ranade, op. cit., 27-31.

renowned *ustads* from three different *gharanas* (Faiz Mohammad Khan, Gwalior; Nathhan Khan Agrawale, Agra; and Alladiya Khan, Jaipur Atrauli), was not only famous as a concert performer, but also as a composer for the Marathi theatre (from 1916) and a mentor of leading theatre singer-actors. Some like Bal Gandharva benefited from rigorous classical training but chose to remain primarily in the theatre, while his contemporary and colleague Master Krishnarao had a career not only on the stage, but also as a performing concert musician and singer on the radio, and as a film actor and composer. The prominent themes of this theatre changed from mythologicals (*paورانیک* stories) to social reform and nationalist issues in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although in the 1860s, directors like Vishnudas Bhave put up plays in both Marathi and Hindi, in later decades this form of theatre confined itself to Marathi only, even as the melodic basis of the music they became famous for remained the Hindustani music originally taught by the Muslim *ustads*. When the talkies in Hindi and Marathi started being made in the 1930s, well-known musicians like Master Krishnarao composed for the films and also sang for them. The connection between Hindustani *raga* music and Hindi and Marathi film songs continued for nearly fifty years well into the 1980s, when it weakened as a result of newer musical influences coming into film composing.

## MUSICAL PEDAGOGY

The widespread appreciation of stage music was perhaps one of the key factors contributing to the clamour for learning Hindustani music that arose in Bombay in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Initially confined to middle-class men and a few other men from relatively under-privileged backgrounds, this learning of music in a formal pedagogic setting became popular among middle-class women by the 1930s, curiously at the same time as the sound film emerged, and the musical play began to go into a slow decline. What were the settings available for those who wanted to learn Hindustani music? Individual musicians who trained a select few in their homes or in small schools co-existed with large-scale new attempts to institutionalise the teaching of Hindustani music, such as Bhatkhande's Marris College in Lucknow (estd. 1926), important for our story because its teachers and students included a number of Bombay musicians, and Paluskar's Gandharva Mahavidyalaya (estd. 1908 in Bombay), or Deodhar's School of Indian Music (estd. 1925). One of the earliest institutionalising attempts was that of the Parsi-dominated Gayan Uttejok Mandali, founded in 1870 by Kaikhusro N Kabraji (Parsi journalist and editor of the leading newspaper *Rast Gofar*, social reformer, singer, actor, municipal councillor) where Bhatkhande, for example, was first exposed to Hindustani music. In terms of smaller schools, we have the example of Balakrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjekar (1849–1926), future teacher of Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, who was in Bombay during 1882–84 and started a *gayan samaj* (music society) in Phanaswadi, with eminent public figures like Mahadev Apte, the scholar B.R. Bhandarkar and the judge M.R. Telangamong as his students.<sup>29</sup> An important feature of this small school was that syllabic notation was used. This was nearly twenty years before Paluskar opened the first Gandharva Mahavidyalaya school in Lahore in 1901, which is often credited with pedagogic innovations such as notation of Indian music.<sup>30</sup>

A number of music-teaching institutions and societies which engaged with music came up in Bombay, starting in 1848 with the Students' Literary and Scientific Society (SLSS), which opened Marathi and Gujarati branches later that year). Dadabhai Naoroji, one of the four founders of the SLSS and a

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29 Deodhar, Thor Sangeetkaar (1993) and Michael Rosse, "Music Schools and Societies in Bombay, c. 1864-1937", in Bor et. al. (eds.), op. cit., 320–21. Also see Kelkar 1967.

30 Rosse, op. cit.

leading nationalist of his day, later became President of the Parsi-dominated Gayan Uttejok Mandali founded by his protégé Kaikhusro Kabraji. Michael Rosse lists 34 institutions across seven decades until the late 1930s, including, in addition to those mentioned above, Bhatkhande's Sharada Sangit Mandal (1917) and Abdul Karim Khan's Arya Sangit Vidyalaya (1918). Although the decline of the courts and the increased mobility of hereditary musicians had already made teaching outside the family prevalent by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and this phenomenon was to be seen quite visibly in Bombay, more and more listeners also had some exposure to Hindustani music in the schools, which began to teach men and women from a broader range of castes and classes than hitherto possible. By the 1930s, women who were not from hereditary musical or performing families were beginning to take up the serious study of music, aided in their ambition by the proliferation of music schools.<sup>31</sup>

Confronted by European knowledge in the modern education system that was formalised after 1835, Indians responded in two ways, both of which are relevant for the discussion about music in Bombay: historians and theorists like Bhatkhande, for example, pulled together and codified 'Indian knowledge' about music and attempted to represent it along the same parameters as Western knowledge, with an emphasis on rendering the music teachable to larger and larger numbers of people; others connected strongly to conventions of performance [*mehfil*] and traditions of 'practice' [*riyaaz*] coming out of a different way of training [*taleem*] based primarily on oral transmission. The schools built their pedagogy on older methods of teaching even as they developed elaborate notation systems. And it was not unknown for a music school-trained singer to shift subsequently to a guru/*ustad* for individualised *taleem*. However, oppositions between the scholar of music and the performer emerged during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, V.N. Bhatkhande (1860–1936), B.R. Deodhar (1901–1990) or Ashok Ranade (1937–2011) were music scholars who could also perform on the public stage, but they did not see that as their primary occupation; there were some performers like Abdul Karim Khan (1872–1937) who contributed to discussions on notation systems, or later performers who played an important role as teachers in a modern pedagogic setting (for example, Nikhil Ghosh (1919–95) in his Sangit Mahabharathi school), but such musicians were rare. A more significant divide in the performative space was between those musicians who were part of a *gharanedaar* (usually Muslim) and therefore hereditary musical background and those who came from the more pedagogically-oriented tradition of Srikrishna Ratanjankar, B.R. Deodhar, Dinkar Kaikini, and others. Then there was a third category of musicians, who did not come from hereditary musical families but had obtained *taleem* in such settings or from those who had learned from the great *ustads*. This kind of musician looked down on the 'school learning' singer as someone who did not maintain the purity of a *gayaki* (style of singing, usually associated with a *gharana*) but learned bits of everything, often to obtain an academic degree or its equivalent.<sup>32</sup>

The music schools which started functioning in Bombay and elsewhere attracted a wider range of students than those who previously accessed music. One of the main objectives of such schools was to train listeners (*kaan-sens*) who were likely to be numerically more than the ones who went on to become concert-level performers (*tan-sens*). In 1884, the Bombay branch of the Poona Gayan Samaj had more than 30 male students.<sup>33</sup> In 1912, the Gayan Uttejok Mandali had 95 members; in 1911,

31 Eriko Kobayashi, "Hindustani Classical Music Reform Movement and the Writing of History, 1900s to 1940s", Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas-Austin, 2003, 174.

32 Culled from Kobayashi, op. cit., Rosse, op. cit., and Dard A. Neuman, "A House of Music: The Hindustani Musician and the Crafting of Traditions", Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 2004.

33 Rosse, op. cit., 320.

the Lahore Gandharva Mahavidyalaya school [the first one founded by Vishnu Digambar Paluskar] had eighty-one students who took exams. By contrast, the Bombay branch had a total of 792 students on its roster, of whom 88 were women.<sup>34</sup> Figures are not available for all the other music schools that mushroomed in Bombay in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. If we jump a hundred years, and look at the situation in 2014, the big music schools account for at least 3000 students in Bombay. This figure does not include those studying with individual teachers, which would add up to nearly 20 students per teacher. All in all, it is estimated that around 10,000 people are studying Hindustani music in a variety of pedagogic settings in Bombay today.<sup>35</sup>

It is by now almost a common place of critical scholarship that the ‘revitalisation of indigenous music’ was driven by the attempt to rescue it from its traditional practitioners, to re-narrate the story by showing how music was written about in ancient Sanskrit texts, and to “reform...the social context of music”.<sup>36</sup> In his essay on music schools and societies in Bombay, Michael Rosse suggests that the concerned individuals and groups held the view (expressed before their time as well) “that music had fallen into the hands of ignorant, mercenary people and needed to be rescued by educated men of selfless dedication and impeccable morality. The primary objects were to revamp theory so as to make it ‘scientific’, to replace the offensive connotations found in some song texts with suitably moral or devotional ones, and to provide wholesome settings for listening to and learning music”.<sup>37</sup> These could have been the stated or even inferred objectives of attempts to reform musical practice and pedagogy, but is the inference adequate? Is the rendering-respectable of music such an overwhelming concern for a number of diverse people? Is that the main reason why they were engaging with Hindustani music? Is this by-now settled interpretation able to account for musicophilia in Bombay? The rationale for reform, as represented in the writings of music scholars like Bhatkhande, might well be to ‘save’ Hindustani music by bringing it away from the decadence of the older locations of performance, and to spread the appreciation of the music among a wider public—something that would appear as the hallmark of a civilised country, and be a fitting response to colonial criticisms of Indian society. The reform rationale also appeared to have a strong anti-Muslim bias. However, as Eriko Kobayashi argues in a pointed criticism of the ‘critique of reform’ narrative evidenced in Rosse’s and Bakhle’s writings, the standard history of music reform focusses on the *ideology of reform* and not on actual engagements between musicians.<sup>38</sup> Hence the reform *processes*—which often involved long consultations and debate between hereditary musicians and their interlocutors, and sometimes engaged the energies of the former who started their own schools and wrote their own books—“did not necessarily tally with reformist *discourses*”.<sup>39</sup>

There are numerous discussions about music pedagogy in the research interviews, and we see once again in these interviews how the pedagogic impulse connects to the musicophilia of Bombay’s inhabitants. I now come back to a question I had touched upon earlier, that of language and social diversity.

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34 Janaki Bakhle, op. cit., 161. Rosse has slightly different figures: according to him, the Vidyalaya in 1910 had 359 male and 76 female students, and the total later rose to 500.

35 Figure estimated by Amarendra Dhaneshwar, singer and music critic, in personal conversation. April 12, 2014.

36 Rosse, op. cit., 313-14.

37 Rosse, op. cit., 313-14.

38 Kobayashi, op. cit., 168.

39 Ibid, 169, emphases mine.

## LINGUA MUSICA

As Kathryn Hansen points out in her insightful work on Parsi theatre, Urdu and/or Hindustani “was not the first language of many Bombay residents. In 1864, the first official census recorded that Muslims constituted 20 percent of the populace vs. 65 percent Hindus. The Muslims were divided between the mercantile communities (Bohras, Khojas, and Memons) all of whom spoke Gujarati, and industrial workers, artisans, and cultivators, who were primarily Konkani speakers. Among the Parsis, who made up 6 percent of the population, Hindustani may have been employed as a lingua franca in trade, but schooling was in Gujarati and English. In addition, many Parsi boys attended *madrasas* where they studied Persian and Arabic. Acquisition of Persian and the revival of historical ties to Iran could have assisted in fostering feelings for Urdu. As is made clear in the play prefaces, however, knowledge of Urdu was lacking among playwrights, actors, and spectators when the language was first introduced on stage.”<sup>40</sup> The number of native Hindustani speakers had not risen very much by 1881, when Bombay’s population was 773,196, out of which 50 percent spoke Marathi as mother tongue, 28 percent Gujarati (including Kutchi), 12 percent Urdu, and 1 percent English.<sup>41</sup>

Hansen also details how initially the Parsi theatre staged Gujarati-language plays with Hindustani farces occupying a supplementary role. Very soon, as the ambition of the theatre owners and managers grew and the companies began to travel in the Deccan and northwards, it became necessary to shift to Urdu, “the cosmopolitan version of Hindustani”, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to reach wider audiences. The move allowed Parsi theatre to draw on the prestige of Urdu as a language with a strong heritage of “poetry, music, and narrative”, and helped “legitimize [its] theatrical practice through the appropriation of literary traditions”.<sup>42</sup> Hansen’s proposition is borne out by evidence from the advertisements of the time. A notice of January 12, 1871, in the *Times of India* mentions the opening of Kaikhusro Kabraji’s new play *Jamshed* in Gujarati; Alfred Dramatic Company’s *Jehanbux and Goolrookhsar* on April 22, 1871, and Victoria Theatrical Company’s *Bazon and Manizeh* (for gentlemen) on the same day; on May 4, 1872 we have an advertisement for a Parsi Gujarati play *Shahzada Airuch*, accompanied by a ‘very amusing Hindoostanee farce’, by the Bombay Amateurs. *Benazir Badremunir* (1872) was produced in Urdu by the Victoria Theatrical Company, followed by the popular *Hatim Tai* (advertisement of October 21, 1874).<sup>43</sup> In 1873 and 1874 there were competing shows by different Parsi-owned theatrical companies of *Indar Sabha*, Agha Hasan Amanat’s Urdu play of 1853 transformed into ‘opera’.<sup>44</sup>

Writing about how the early Parsi theatre helped renegotiate social boundaries, Hansen interrogates “the notion that the linguistic medium of popular culture is defined by a pre-existing group of speakers who are presumed to constitute its audience or public”, arguing that “the circulation of linguistic forms through popular media itself articulates social boundaries and enables the configuration of linguistic identities”.<sup>45</sup> This is a brilliant insight, one which could be extended beyond the popular culture domain, whether it is the 19<sup>th</sup> century theatre or the 20<sup>th</sup> century Bombay cinema. However, if it is to be brought into our story of Hindustani art music and the public domain, this insight about linguistic

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40 Hansen, 2003, 394.

41 Figures from the Census of 1881 cited by Meera Kosambi, ‘British Bombay and Marathi Mumbai’, in Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner (eds.), *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture* (Delhi, OUP, 1995), 7-8.

42 Hansen, op. cit., 402.

43 Advertisements accessed from the Times of India ProQuest database between April 3-5, 2014.

44 Hansen, op.cit., 396.

45 Hansen, op. cit., 383.

forms needs to be slightly modified. Instead of saying that the circulation of such forms enables linguistic identities to be configured (which has a certain finality to it!), I would argue that it is precisely the circulation and normativisation of Hindustani musical compositions that allow linguistic preferences to be layered, so that a person engaging with art music in Bombay—whether in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the present—moves constantly between languages in daily interaction that privileges ‘Hindustani’ (which includes all the dialects it subsumes) compositions. It was common in the music schools of Gwalior, Baroda, Lucknow and Bombay in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to have instructors speaking in Marathi to get students to sing in ‘Hindustani’.<sup>46</sup> [This could also be an indication that most of the people who thronged the music schools were either native speakers of Marathi or were fluent in that language, like Konkani or Kannada speakers from the Bombay Presidency region.] I want to extend this idea—of moving between languages in the engagement with Hindustani music—to suggest that one reason why some form of Hindustani becomes the main mode of communication in Bombay (and remains so to this day) is precisely because it is underlaid with the *lingua musica* which had become part of the cultural vernacular of the city by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The very performers who had brought the music into Bombay—Muslim *ustads*, the *tawaiifs* from the north, and the *naikins* from western India—gradually diminished in numbers in the performative and pedagogic space in 20<sup>th</sup> century Bombay. Only a handful still survive into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Muslim singers like Aslam Khan and Raja Miyan (cousins who don’t speak to one another but live in the same building—Ruby Mansion in Forjett Street) do have a number of Hindu students and the occasional Parsi student. Some of the women with *kalavant* genealogies—like Kishori Amonkar (daughter of Alladiya Khan’s student Mogubai Kurdikar and her Gujarati patron), or Hirabai Barodekar (whose grandmother was a *naikin* from Goa, and whose father was Ustad Abdul Karim Khan)—managed to render themselves respectable in the eyes of middle class audiences, and found a significant place on the concert stage; others married upward and gave up singing, or ended up in the *mujra* halls. Kesarbai Kerkar, one of the last great *bai-ji* or *kalavant* singers, had one student, a Brahmin woman called Dhondutai Kulkarni, who until her death in June 2014 taught music in her small flat in Borivli at the age of 86, and was called *bai-ji* by her disciples.<sup>47</sup> The music schools, big and small, still flourish, partly aided by the huge number of reality TV shows dedicated to music and the young boys and girls who want to become the Indian Idol or its regional equivalent. And individual singers continue to teach a small number of students each, through personal instruction. It is no less difficult today, however, to become a concert singer of Hindustani music. The training and discipline required for this is no different than it was when the first Bombay students appeared in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The aesthetic principles of the music and the way people respond to it have undergone small changes, but still bear a close resemblance to what took shape in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. So while the social background of the performers might have changed, the musical styles and pedagogic practices still draw on the musical archive assembled over a hundred years ago when Hindustani music started becoming such a prominent presence in the public space of Bombay city.

I end with a comment by the poet, artist and nationalist thinker Rabindranath Tagore, who complained about Hindustani music, saying “that he want[ed] to sing about his own individual sorrow; but the moment he breaks into Hindustani music, he finds himself singing about universal sorrow. Where,

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46 Neela Bhagwat, personal communication, January 20, 2014.

47 Dhondutai inherited the *tanpura* of Kesarbai, and also the *tanpura* of Kesarbai’s teacher Alladiya Khan. She found an instrument maker who combined the two into one *tanpura*, which she used until she passed away on June 1, 2014. Interview with Dhondutai Kulkarni, February 15, 2014.

he asks, is the place for his personal joys and sorrows in Hindustani music? This is why he says that he wanted to write his own poetry, to compose his own music, and also to sing it”.<sup>48</sup>

The idea of the Romantic individual striving for self-expression and freedom from social bonds was a recurring trope in modern Indian literature as it came into being in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was a trope central to the English education that produced the new middle classes, and the features of the modern person to be brought into being by that education included rationality, autonomy and freedom of choice. Through their musicophilia, the inhabitants of Bombay—where the visual and infra-structural aspects of India’s public modernity were so strongly foregrounded—represent their straining against the logic of capital. Instead of writing about personal joys and sorrows, the musicophiliacs vocalised Hindustani music, where the melodic structures hint at the rigorous discipline of voice and body that enable expression. The private as well as public utterances of this community of musicophiliacs might have invoked the need to compile and codify Indian music to resemble modern forms of knowledge and thus contribute to a ‘national’ tradition, but their lived experience of music could not be explained away by ethnic origin, caste or *jati* identity, national citizenship or linguistic background. The history of Bombay gives us a clue as to how the *lingua musica* took shape, how it defined the public domain in the city as well as the direction of future cultural practice, and how it informed the experience of urbanity in this ‘*urbs prima in Indis*’.

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48 Interview with Ashok Ranade, by Deepak Raja, Aug 19, 1998: <http://swaratala.blogspot.hk/2007/04/ashok-ranade-dhrupad-resrepresents.html> (Accessed on May 6, 2014).

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49 Mehta, 'The Terrain of Home and Within Urban Neighbourhoods: Case of the Bombay chawls', in Neera Adarkar, ed. *The Chawls of Mumbai: Galleries of Life* (Mumbai: Imprint, 2012), 81-88.

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## **ADDITIONAL DATA SOURCES**

### **Interviews in Mumbai**

Arvind Parikh, *sitarist*, February 16, 2014.

Nayan Ghosh, *tabla* and *sitar* player, February 17, 2014.

Interview with Dhondutai Kulkarni, Jaipur *Gharana* singer, February 15, 2014.

Interview with Balasaheb Tikekar, trustee of the Trinity Club, June 24, 2014. Conducted by Tejaswini Niranjana and Surabhi Sharma.

Interview with Nitin Shirodkar, Girgaum resident, June 23, 2013.

### **Personal Communication**

Dharamsey, Virchand, historian of cultural practice in Mumbai, personal communication, October 18, 2012.

Bhagwat, Neela, Gwalior *Gharana* singer, personal communication, January 2014.

Dhaneshwar, Amarendra, singer and music critic, personal communication, April 12, 2014.

Rajadhyaksha, Ashish, e-mail communication, April 17, 2014.

## APPENDIX I

### A Note on Space and Music—Towards the 2015 Exhibition

A key interest of the Performing Modernity (formerly known as the Mumbai Music project—reference given above) project has been to understand the relationship between music and the organisation of built space and of neighbourhoods. The research has been exploring how this kind of arrangement (a) creates certain kinds of audiences, and (b) provides locations for the growth of musical practice through both performance and pedagogy.

The logic of the precinct is such that the space provides cultural recognition of a shared locality for people living there. I have focused in the project on the Girgaum area (broadly defined to include Kalbadevi, Thakurdwar, Jagannath Shankarseth Road, Lamington Road, Grant Road, Foras Road, Kennedy Bridge, Phanaswadi, French Bridge, and stretching up to Forjett Street and Nana Chowk), which was home to the Parsi theatre, the Marathi *sangeet natak*, Hindustani art music, and light genres like *thumri* and *qawwali*. Girgaum was also the earliest location to have music schools, music clubs, concert halls, and *wadis* where musicians were invited to perform. While there are a few heritage buildings like Opera House in this area, it would be more appropriate to envision the whole neighbourhood as a ‘heritage precinct’.

**The Chawl Structure:** Architecture theorist Kaiwan Mehta has written on the *chawls* in Mumbai, stating that it is important to understand the concept of the *chawl* apart from giving a historical or cultural description.<sup>50</sup> The *chawl* originates in colonial India, especially in a growing metropolis like Bombay/Mumbai which is rapidly industrialising in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It consolidates as a housing structure in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in particular in the ‘Native Town’ of Bombay, and should be read along with the codes of citizenship and nationalism in addition to colonialism and industrialisation. Mehta suggests that “the *chawl* then becomes a site where these codes can be read and described; the building then becomes a historical crucible itself of these concepts and ideas”.<sup>51</sup>

As I have described elsewhere in this research paper, **migration** was the most important reason for the growth of the population in Bombay, and this is true as much now as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Mehta notes, the emergence of *chawls* and *wadis* are simultaneous with the influx of new migrant populations who seek to reproduce some semblance of kinship and social coherence in the bewildering urban metropolitan landscape which had an economic as well as spatial organisation very different from the areas from which the migrants came. We get a sense from the short stories of Saroj Pathak, quoted by Mehta, as to the occupants of the new *chawls*: primary school teachers, compounders, shop assistants, bus conductors, pushcart vendors—up to fifteen families living on a floor and sharing a toilet at the far end.

An important insight of Mehta’s is that the *chawl* is “a building and a neighbourhood at the same time”.<sup>52</sup> This idea is very helpful in understanding the historical space of musical performance in the Girgaum area.

For example, if we look at the Trinity Club on Pandit Bhaskarbuwa Bakhle Path (off Mughbat Lane), it is on the upper floor of a *chawl*. The *kholi* was dedicated for the use of musicians by one Bodas, who

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50 Mehta, op.cit, 81.

51 Mehta, op. cit., 81.

52 Interview with Balasaheb Tikekar, trustee of the Trinity Club, June 24, 2014. Conducted by Tejaswini Niranjana and Surabhi Sharma.

worked for the Shaw Wallace Company and was a fan of Hindustani music, and requested Bhaskarbuwa Bakhle in 1907 to initiate musical activities in the *chawl*. So we can infer that the building, which still exists, is at least over a hundred years old. When musicians used to perform in the Club, which is housed in a room approximately 25 ft by 18 ft, the audience used to spill over into the *chawl* corridor outside, and people lined the staircase as well as the street outside listening for hours on end.<sup>53</sup> *Thus the performance space is not limited just to the one room, but expands to include the neighbourhood itself.*

This was true in a space like the **Brahman Sabha** building also, which is off Lamington Road on Raja Ram Mohun Roy Marg in Bhatwadi, and was a major venue for Hindustani music in mid-twentieth century. The other key performance space in Girgaum from about the 1930s was **Laxmi Baug**, also off Lamington Road on Avantikabai Gokhale Road. Another important venue would be the *Ganesh Utsav* of Lamington Road (where the *Lamington cha Raja* presided) where all the major musicians sang during the festival every year.

Our film will show how all these performance spaces combine into a **musical precinct**, where the wider neighbourhood becomes unified through the audiences who go from one performance to the next, especially during the *Ganesh Utsav*. This to-and-fro movement of audiences is an interesting way by which we can trace the circumference of the musical neighbourhood: there are stories of how runners were employed to go between Laxmi Baug and Brahman Sabha, for example, carrying the information of which singer was still tuning his *tanpuras*, which one had already started his or her *alaap*, and so on. This allowed the audiences to rush *en masse* from one venue to the other as the performances progressed.<sup>54</sup>

The Hindustani music audience was largely drawn from the middle and lower middle classes, with the occasional appearances of wealthy merchants and in later years even film stars. The first three categories lived in Girgaum itself, in *chawls*, apartments, or independent houses depending on the social stratum of the resident. While Girgaum was largely populated at its core by Marathi and Gujarati-speaking Hindus, there were also specific areas where Parsis lived (Firoz Dastur, disciple of Sawai Gandharva, lived on Grant Road), and Goan or north Karnataka *kalavant* families in Thakurdwar, as well as courtesans or *tawaifs* of different religious backgrounds on Grant Road and Kalbadevi Road. We also have the small artisanal shops, such as those of the *tabla* makers in Bhaskarbuwa Bakhle Path, where the worker-proprietor and his family live, work, cook and eat in the same tiny space. The diversity of the population is to some extent reflected in the architectural styles and ornamental details where colonial architectural repertoires met motifs and spatial arrangements drawn from communities migrating into the city. More about this is written below.

An early 20<sup>th</sup> century description of a particular kind of performer in the Girgaum neighbourhood is to be found in the *Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island* (1909):

(T)he trained Naikins, the Marwadi, Bene-Israel and Musalman dancing-girls who live in some style in the neighbourhood of Kalbadevi road and Grant road and are engaged to sing in private houses or at public native entertainments. Many of the latter have been well grounded in Urdu and Persian classics and freely spend the comparatively large incomes which they earn in singing and dancing in charity and on religious objects. They are formed into a regular *jamat* or sisterhood, presided over by one of the older members of the class, and in addition to participating in the ordinary festivals of the faith which they profess are wont to give entertainments known as *jalsa*. On these occasions a dancing-girl

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53 Interview with Nitin Shirodkar, June 23, 2013. Shirodkar was quoting his teacher Firoz Dastur's anecdote about the runners.

54 *The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island*, Compiled by S.M. Edwardes (Bombay 1909), 191–92.

will invite all her personal friends in the *jamat* to her house and after feasting with them lavishly calls upon them to sing and dance. This latter portion of the entertainment is open to the public and the money received from those present is regarded as the private perquisite of the organiser of the *jalsa*, who subsequently divides the amount between herself and her *Ustads* (musicians) in the proportion of 10 annas and 6 annas respectively in the rupee. According to her means each dancing-girl supports 3 or 4 musicians, who accompany her songs on the *saringi* and the drum. They are given lodging and food and a certain fixed proportion of the earnings and in return perform various minor services for their patron.<sup>55</sup>

While the *kothas* of old have given way to what are now called *mujra halls*, even these have started disappearing as the ‘dance bar’ began to flourish in the 1990s. But Foras Road and the Congress House area still have active *mujra* halls where song-dance performances by women from hereditary performing backgrounds can be seen.<sup>56</sup>

The *jalsas* mentioned in the Gazetteer were held in *kothas* (described in the interview with Nayan Ghosh cited elsewhere in this paper), and were attended by predominantly male audiences, with the performers tending to be usually Muslim. Simultaneously co-existing with the *kotha space*, and often drawing on the same performers, we have the **concert hall space**, the **music club space**, the **music school space**, the **private wada space**, and the **sarvajanic Ganesh utsav** (the public *utsav* began to be celebrated in Bombay from 1894 onwards as part of a nationalist strategy fashioned by Balgangadhar Tilak, with the first *sarvajanic* Ganesh being installed in Girgaum in the Keshavji Naik *chawl*<sup>57</sup>). This entire range of performance spaces were seen in Girgaum until about the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, with some of the concert halls even functioning until the late 1980s.

A vivid description of the sweet misery of the music aficionado suffering from too much choice during the *Ganesh utsav* is to be found in the Marathi writer Pu.La. Deshpande’s writings:

For music lovers, the ten days of the festival were somewhat difficult. In one little location, Girgaum, numerous singers would sing in different *vadas* (private homes). One Saturday night and so many music performances! In Ambevadi [there was] Mallikarjun Mansur, in another [there was] Kagalkarbua, in Brahman Sabha [there was] Master Krishnarao (Phulambrikar), in Shastri Hall [there was] Rambhau Savai Gandharva, in Tara Temple Lane [there was] Gangubai [known in Maharashtra as *Gandhari Hangal*], in Chunam Lane [there was] Hirabai Badodekar—one would get completely torn and anxious! Who should one listen to? . . . Until about 3:30 in the morning, we ran from place to place and eventually wound up in front of Goodman, Persian-Indian, Mervaan, Viceroy of India, or some other Iranian restaurant and wait for their doors to open to have *brun-maskar* [hard-crust bread with fresh butter]. Staying awake all night listening to music, we needed a nightcap, [which had to be] tea from an Iranian restaurant without which the evening was not complete. And at that hotel, an impromptu music round table conference would come together . . . some would say Rambhau’s voice had reached new heights that night, some would praise Gangubai’s *miyan malhar*”.<sup>58</sup>

55 Anna Morcom, *Courtesans, Bar Girls and Dancing Boys: The Illicit Worlds of Indian Dance*, Gurgaon: Hachette India, 2014.

56 Interview with Nitin Shirodkar, June 23, 2013.

57 Quoted by Janaki Bakhle, in *Two Men and Music* (2005), op. cit., from the Marathi text by Rajaram Humne, *Dhanya Janma Jaabla: Shrimati Hirabai Barodekar yaanche jeevan gane* (Poona, 1980), p.28.

58 Details from Mehta, *Alice in Bhuleshwar: Navigating a Mumbai Neighbourhood* (Delhi: Yoda Press, 2009), 131; *Project Cinema City*, compilation by Paroma Sadhana on ‘Bombay Movie Theatres’; personal conversation with Virchand Dharamsey, historian of cultural practice in Mumbai, October 18, 2012.

The film will track the present-day *Ganesh Utsavs* in the locations listed by Deshpande, to see if elements of their musical history still persist. Although some of the venues—like Brahman Sabha or Laxmi Baug—still exist, they are not used for music performances now, so we would have to find another aesthetic option through which to invoke the historical ambience of these spaces. The Irani cafes mentioned in the account above are not all in existence, and ‘Mervaan’ or to be more accurate ‘B. Merwan’ has only very recently shut down (Grant Road). It is a piquant thought to be able to connect *paani kum chai* and *brun maska* with heated discussions about Hindustani music.

**Bhangwadi:** This was where professional Gujarati theatre flourished in 1905 (Deshi Natak Samaj), attracting audiences from as far as Surat, Baroda and Ahmedabad, who came in special trains for the performances. Large ornate cement elephants, represented as in Gujarati and Rajasthani art and architecture, are perched over the entrance, with the balconies appearing like *howdahs*. The intricate façade, carved by Kathiawari craftsmen, is now dulled. But there are traces of carved windows and galleries invoking the visual memories of the migrants. The courtyard is surrounded by *chawl*-like rooms, which is a typical *wadi* structure. It was called Bhangwadi, because one could buy bowls of *bhang* (opium) here. The theatre inside was called the Princess Theatre (operational from 1905 to 1979). There was also a Shiv Mandir, which has now become a Jain Derasar or temple.

**Brahman Sabha:** The Sabha was established in 1888, but the building looks as though it is from the 1920s or 1930s. Indianising of elements of buildings was prevalent by this time as an important architectural feature. Indian elements include the arch (a stepped arch); small curves, not a smooth one; and deep *chajjiyas* (possibly from Gujarati styles).

**Laxmi Baug:** This is built in a Venetian villa or palazzo style. There is a central door, and a triangular pediment above. From the outside it seems more like a villa than a major performance space. The building, including the interior space, is very well-preserved—there is a central performance area and carved wooden balconies above.

**Pila House area:** This general term, a corruption of the word ‘playhouse’, is used to refer to the Falkland Road-Grant Road area where there were several theatres from the 1850s, one of the oldest being the Grant Road Theatre, which became the Theatre Royal and eventually Durbar Theatre. Edward Theatre, built in the 1880s, is still running, now as a film theatre. Ripon Theatre from the 1880s became Alfred Talkies in 1935, which still exists. The architecture, usually studded with frescoes, has neo-classical tendencies. The proscenium with velvet curtains dates back in style to the 1850s when Indian theatre companies began to adapt the European performance style to local uses. Advertisements from the *Times of India* from the 1880s indicate that apart from staging plays, these theatres were also used for variety entertainments and magic shows.

**Madhav Baug:** This large multi-purpose area near C. P. Tank is interesting for our project because it suggests how migrant communities, in this instance traders from Saurashtra and Marwar, inhabited the Girgaum neighbourhood. Madhav Baug is architecturally textured with intricate building details that combine neo-classical pediments with Baroque balconies and Gujarati elephant heads. The Baug contains a Laxmi Narayan temple with Gujarati decorative stucco motifs and used to also house a sanitarium. There is a flourishing *sari* bazaar in the compound which attracts customers from all communities. Puja items can also be purchased. The Panjrapole which contains abandoned cows and other animals that devout Vaishnavites feed regularly adjoins Madhav Baug and is likely to have been part of the same structure. Madhav Baug is also known as one of the places from which the call for *swadeshi* was issued in Mumbai in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Congress House** and **Jinnah Hall**, off Kennedy Bridge: These buildings are somewhat nondescript and architecturally insignificant. Their importance lies in the activities that were conducted there over the decades. Congress House was a hub of activity during the Freedom Struggle, and it is well-known that pans for making salt were kept on the terrace during Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March and the Salt Satyagraha. Jinnah Hall is still in use today, and was an important performance space for Hindustani musicians [Interview with Nitin Shirodkar, June 23, 2014].

**Framjee Cowasjee Institute:** This is a historically important building in Kalbadevi (opposite Metro Cinema in Dhobitalao), which replaced the tank built in 1831 by the philanthropist Framji Cowasjee (several tanks were filled up after Vihar Lake in 1860 and Tulsi Lake in 1897 began supplying water to Mumbai). The Gayan Uttejak Mandali started in 1870 regularly held its functions in the Framjee Cowasjee Institute. It was also a popular venue for lectures and talks, including those by the Dyan Prasarak Mandali, established by Kaikhushro Kabraji, the founder of the Gayan Uttejak Mandali. The Institute library and reading room is still functional. The hall is often rented out for sales of various kinds. The building is of a large neo-classical villa type. The size, layout and design indicate that it is meant to be a symbolically important building with aspirations to be seen as monumental. There is a large portico, and a pediment. The fact that it has both a public hall and a library space is also indicative of its ambition to be a place where Mumbai's citizens could meet.

The proposed exhibition partially supported by the R.C. Grant is scheduled for mid-June 2015. It is tentatively titled 'Making Music – Making Space'. It represents a first-ever attempt to capture the intimate relationships between urban spaces in Bombay/Mumbai and the music that they inspired, hosted, perpetuated and celebrated. The exhibition is to be held at Studio X, DN Road, Fort, Mumbai, between June 15 and July 7, 2015, and includes architectural maps, projection mapping of musical neighbourhoods, video installations, listening stations for live recordings, and archival as well as contemporary photographs.



ISSN 2320–1894

January 2015

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Published by S. Parasuraman, Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, and printed at Mehta Printing Press, Ghatkopar (East), Mumbai.