Beyond the Classroom: World Music from the Musician's Point of View

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: WORLD MUSIC FROM THE MUSICIAN'S POINT OF VIEW

DR HOWARD SPRING AND DR RYAN BRUCE

Open Learning and Educational Support, University of Guelph
Guelph, ON

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Project Overview

Welcome to Beyond the Classroom: World Music from the Musician's Point of View. In the summer of 2021, we met with, and video recorded soloists and small groups of musicians who are experts in each of the ten musical traditions found in this resource. The videos make up the bulk of this project.

The primary goal of this project is to make a resource available to teachers and students for learning about the ideas, sounds, and behaviors of various musics of the world based on the understandings and practices of the musicians themselves. In this spirit, we let the musicians take the lead during each of the video sessions. Our role was not as subject experts, but rather as facilitators because the musicians are the subject experts. They are the teachers. During the sessions, we jumped in with some questions when we heard something we didn't understand, or that we thought the students wouldn't understand, or that we thought would be of further interest. Other than these interruptions, the musicians were in charge.

A second goal is to include diverse voices as well as diverse musics. The musicians represent a variety of ethnicities, cultures, and musical traditions: Native Canadian pow wow, traditional Ottawa-valley fiddle styles, Cuban percussion, urban Cuban musical styles, *mbira* music of Zimbabwe, Carnatic percussion, Hindustani music, Iranian classical music, Balinese gamelan and West Asian melodic practice (mostly Turkish and Arab music). As well, there is a contribution from women who address issues of gender in their musical tradition.

A third goal is to provide some ideas for activities and assessments based on the videos. We suggest

participatory activities that will engage students while reinforcing aural, intellectual, and embodied knowledge and skills. We provide ways for students to learn some of the underlying performative principles of the music. Our aim is to provide possibilities for how instructors could work with the content. Adapt and build on these ideas as best suits the needs of your group of learners.

Each unit that follows is structured as follows:

1. A brief overview of the musical culture.
2. A short bio of the musicians.
3. A list of terms useful to know before watching the video.
4. A summary of the content of the video.
5. The video.
6. Time cues corresponding to the various topics addressed in the video.
7. Suggestions for classroom activities and assessments

The sessions were recorded during the pandemic and had to be done remotely for reasons of safety. As a result, they are more like live performance recordings than studio recordings made in a controlled environment. They are also more akin to fieldwork in ethnomusicology than a classroom presentation because there wasn't a pre-planned structure for the video recordings. It was the musicians' culture-based, first-hand knowledge that set the tone, content, and shape of the sessions.

These videos can be used not only for classes in ethnomusicology but also in music survey courses, as interdisciplinary content for studies in history, anthropology, cultural studies, international studies, or any subject where knowledge of expressive culture can be useful in understanding the contemporary world.

As a final thought we leave you with this: we do not claim that our choices and suggestions are exhaustive. You may very well find uses for these videos that we haven't thought of. We hope you do. But like any good musical composition or improvisation, the outcome is related to the quality of the input. These videos present exceptional, not-easy-to-find-anywhere-else content that you can use to help create exciting learning opportunities for your students.

Dr. Howard Spring
Dr. Ryan Bruce
Guelph and Hamilton 2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project team would like to acknowledge the contributions of all the musicians who took part in this project and made it possible. Each musician is credited within their specific section of the book and all musicians have granted permission for the use of their materials for this project under the Ontario Commons License – No Derivatives. The musicians who participated in this project include:

All Nation Juniors Traditional Drum Group

- Kevin Myran, leader
- Anthony Gladue
- Wynona Maracle
- Danielle Migwans
- Joey Myran
- Dakota Myran
- Kaelen Pelletier
- Albert Therrien
- Jayden Wemigwans

April Verch
Cody Walters
Magdelys Savigne
Hilario Durán
Moyo Rainos Mutamba, PhD
Rob Simms, PhD
Mohammad Reza Yazdanpanah
Neeraj Prem
Sajan Prem
Trichy Sankaran
Suba Sankaran
I Dewa Made Suparta
Maisie Sum, PhD

Facilitators

Dr Howard Spring, School of Fine Art and Music, University of Guelph

Dr Ryan Bruce, School of the Arts, McMaster University

Open Educational Resource Design and Development

Open Learning and Educational Support, University of Guelph

Funding

This project is made possible with funding by the Government of Ontario and through eCampus Ontario's support of the Virtual Learning Strategy. To learn more about the Virtual Learning Strategy visit: https://vls.ecampusontario.ca.

License

PART I

MODULES

POW WOW MUSIC IN CANADA

Overview

Indigenous music in North America comes from many cultures, regions, traditions, and languages. Although there is some variation in its practices and functions, traditional music is relatively homogeneous among large regions in Canada and the United States: it is mostly based on songs accompanied by percussion, sections that are relatively short and repeated, monophonic singing, a vast repertoire of chants (singing without words), and with strong connections to the natural world, spirituality, and dance. However, details differ between geographical areas based on language families in Canada, with repertoire and some stylistic qualities unique to smaller tribes.

The pow wow is an excellent example of Indigenous drumming, songs, and dance. It is an intertribal event that celebrates unity and diversity, and is an affirmation of identities among Indigenous communities. It has a shared repertory of chants without words, allowing diverse communities to participate since there is no specific language required. Different drum groups also perform in a similar singing style. The music is sung by men and women at the same time, and includes a big drum played by multiple men in mostly synchronous pulses. Women stand at the perimeter as the drum's protectors. Pow wows are flexible in terms of repertoire with a mix of traditional and new compositions to accompany both traditional and modern dances. Many kinds of songs are sung at pow wows including a Grand Entry and Flag Song at the beginning of the event, followed by a number of songs geared to particular stories and dances.

Musicians

All Nation Juniors Traditional Drum Group

The All Nation Juniors Traditional Drum Group performs Indigenous songs and drumming in a variety of settings including Pow Wows and Sun Dance ceremonies. Led by Kevin Myran at the Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, the group includes youth and young adults who play traditional songs and new compositions by its members. They meet weekly to practice, and frequently perform for community functions and Indigenous ceremonies in Southern Ontario. They are also the official drum group for the American Indian Movement (AIM) chapter in Ontario, and the Thunderbird Lodge drum group for Sun Dance.

Terminology

An understanding of the following terms would be helpful before proceeding with the Video Content.

- Tobacco offering
- Pow wow
- Lead singer
- Grand Entry
- Big drum
- Grass Dance
- Crow Hop
- Sun Dance
- Flag Song
- Honour beats
- Jingle Dress song
- Sneak Up Dance
- American Indian Movement

Video Content

Kevin describes a selection of typical songs at a pow wow which are demonstrated by the drum group. We see and hear the connections between songs and their stories and dances, with discussion of the roles of men and women, and how the songs are constructed and learned. Kevin often articulates the importance of community, the strong cultural roots of the music, and its political significance with a history of censorship and survival of knowledge, customs and performance practices.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=59#oembed-1

Transcript: Pow Wow Music in Canada

Video Time Cues

0:06 Self-introduction and tobacco offering

2:17 Grand Entry song

5:55 Explanation and story of the big drum

11:12 Song demonstration

14:50 Explanation of other types of drums

15:44 Drums, hiding ceremonies, and gender roles

19:15 Story of the pow wow/role of the drum

23:18 Grass Dance song before the Grand Entry

27:10 Drums and sticks from this drum group

30:52 Learning and example repertoire of songs

32:26 Structure of a pow wow song/drumming technique

34:38 Crow Hop song demonstration

38:13 Explanation of the Sun Dance

40:55 Grand Entry flags and Flag Song demonstration

46:44 Drumming styles and honour beats

49:19 Roles of singers and drummers

55:00 Description of differences between songs

1:00:20 Social conduct among drummers

1:01:53 Singing/drumming function in the community

1:04:37 Story/demonstration of a new Crow Hop song

1:08:48 How the new song was collectively composed

1:10:10 Singing chants vs. using language

1:10:48 Jingle Dress song, story and performance

1:15:24 Sneak Up Dance, story and song

1:19:37 War dances: Grass Dance

1:28:28 New composition with words by Jayden Wemigwans

1:31:27 Jayden describes the song

1:33:43 AIM Song description and performance

1:41:38 Members of the drum group

Suggested Activities and Assessments

Terms

Create a limited-access wiki of the terms and their definitions listed in the Terminology section above. Students can work individually to create their own "wiki" as text files, or in teams (e.g., through a course website). Students research the meanings, and if relevant, the history of these terms.

Participation

Participatory activities may not always be appropriate for the classroom. Indigenous cultures—especially musical practices—have a long history of impersonation and stereotyping.

i. **Game show: Quiz**
   What dance is this?
   The instructor plays a different songs performed in the video along with a short description of their context (i.e., for a Grand Entry, Flag Song, Crow Hop, Jingle Dress, Sneak Up, or Grass Dance). Students identify which dances they belong to, and explain why they came to that decision.

ii. **Debate**
   The All Nation Juniors Traditional Drum Group shows us the importance of music for community building. In what other communities does music function the same? How does that compare to Indigenous music in Canada?

Research

Assign students to research one of eight geographical regions in Canada: 1) Northwest Coast, 2) Western Subarctic, 3) Plateau, 4) Plains, 5) Eastern Nomadic, 6) Eastern Sedentary, 7) Maritime, and 8) Arctic. How does traditional music from the assigned area compare to the pow wow music in this video? Students will post their answers in an online discussion forum, and complete a review of another posting from a different assigned region. Students are graded on their original research and the peer review.

CANADIAN FOLK FIDDLING

Overview

Fiddling in Canada is known by various names according to tradition, region, or cultural area. Designations include Country, Folk, Celtic or Old-Time fiddling; Scottish, Cape Breton, Ukrainian-Canadian, French-Canadian, Acadian, Newfoundland, Ottawa Valley, Down-East, Aboriginal, First Nations, Inuit, or Métis fiddling. April Verch comes from the Ottawa Valley but demonstrates a number of these styles in the video.

Fiddling has a continuous history in Canada dating back to the 17th century and remains an important instrumental folk tradition. It was the principal medium of social dance music in rural Canada until around the middle of the 20th century. Many Scottish, Irish, English, French and American pieces which first came to Canada in the 18th and 19th centuries are still widespread in various forms, often modified by local practice. Until recently they were transmitted aurally with little formal teaching or notation. Media, immigration, new compositions, and lately music notation, have augmented this repertoire. Formal teaching has also started to play a role in recent years. Changing performance contexts including dances, contests, and concert performances have affected many aspects of the music. Nevertheless, folk fiddling based on traditional practices is still very much alive.

Musicians

April Verch

April Verch is best known for her Ottawa Valley fiddling and stepdancing, but she also plays other regional Canadian styles as well as American "old-time music." She was born in the Ottawa Valley in Northeastern Ontario and started learning stepdancing at the age of three and fiddling at the age of six. She eventually went on to study at Berklee College of Music. Along the way, she won the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Championship and Canadian Open Old-Time Fiddlers' Contest at the ages of 18 and 19 respectively.

As a full-time professional musician, she toured with Canadian country music legend Tommy Hunter and Celtic pop band Mad Pudding as a backing fiddler. She formed her own band in 2000 which was nominated twice for Juno awards. Since then, she has traveled to four continents, performed in fourteen countries, and played in many kinds of venues from tiny pubs and festival workshops to legendary stages such as the Kennedy Center and Ryman Auditorium in Nashville. She also participated in the Opening Ceremonies for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver.

More recently she has teamed up with American old-time music legend Joe Newberry. They have played many of the Bluegrass Festivals and Celtic music festivals in North America and Europe.

For much of her professional life she has taught. She has released two books, one of the original fiddle tunes, the other a Canadian fiddle method book.

Cody Walters

Cody Walters is originally from Kansas. He plays string bass, banjo, and rhythm guitar. He joined April's band in 2007 as a bassist but then became her partner both musically and otherwise (they were married in 2018).

Terminology

An understanding of the following terms would be helpful before proceeding with the Video Content.

- "Crooked tune"
- Cross tuning
- Stepdancing
- Clawhammer
- Musical ornament

- "Clean"/"Raw"

Video Content

April and Cody demonstrate and discuss various Canadian and American fiddle styles and techniques using traditional repertoire, as well as originally composed pieces. April also demonstrates and discusses stepdancing in the context of fiddle music. Topics such as the role of media, the relationship of fiddling styles to social dance and stepdancing, regionalism, and the role of composers are also addressed.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=30#oembed-1

Transcript: Canadian Folk Fiddling

Video Time Cues

0:00 Introduction to April Verch and Cody Walters

0:39 Outline of what they are going to do

0:57 Introduction to pieces they are going to play

1:16 "St Anne's Reel" and "Whiskey Before Breakfast"

4:00 Discussion of Canadian fiddle style

5:25 Discussion of regional fiddle styles

6:07 Discussion of Ottawa Valley fiddle style

6:59 Role of Don Messer's TV show on Canadian fiddling

10:00 "Thomas Memorial Waltz"/social dancing

13:45 Learning to play fiddle

17:50 Relation between social dancing and fiddle styles

20:25 French-Canadian composition/"Crooked" pieces

24:40 Quebecois vs. "Old Timey" Canadian style

28:24 Demonstration of said differences

29:30 Discussion of Metis fiddle style

30:30 Typical and Metis versions of "Arkansas Traveler"

32:31 Keeping time with feet in Metis tradition

34:00 Stepdancing and "crooked" pieces

37:00 "Red River Jig"

39:15 Musical ornaments and variation

46:25 Musical expression

49:08 American style

53:37 Banjo "clawhammer" style

54:55 Comparison of Canadian and American fiddle styles

55:38 "Cross tuning"

1:03:40 American fiddle-style techniques

1:05:01 "Firewood" (original) in Old Timey American style

1:10:06 Regionalism, individual styles, role of composers

1:11:45 "Clean" vs "raw" styles

1:15:28 Stepdancing and recent changes

1:20:59 Performance of stepdancing

1:22:47 Discussion of dance shoes

1:23:32 "Cauliflower" in Canadian style

1:26:30 Relationship of stepdancer to fiddler

1:29:43 Original composition in Ottawa Valley style

1:33:20 "Air"

Suggested Activities and Assessments

Terms

Create a limited-access wiki of the terms and their definitions listed in the Terminology section above. Students can work individually to create their own "wiki" as text files, or in teams (e.g., through a course website). Students research the meanings, and if relevant, the history of these terms.

Participation

i. **Tracking musical form**
April discusses "crooked" pieces, that is, pieces characterized by asymmetrical formal units. To hear and perform this underlying organizing principle, students need to be able to track measures through the pieces demonstrated in this video.
   a. Instructors play the musical examples, tap the beat, and count the meter and the measures out loud.
   b. Students count along with the instructor while listening to one of the video performances.
   c. Students count the beats and measures without the instructor.
   d. Individual students clap and count without the instructor.

ii. **Quiz: Game Show**
Is this piece "crooked"?
The instructor chooses one of the video performances and asks students to determine if it "crooked" or not.

iii. **Debate:**
Is there a Canadian music? Is there a Canadian fiddle style?

Research

North American fiddle styles are related to European styles. How? Did the original European styles change after they were brought to North America? Why and how?

AFRO-CUBAN MUSIC

Overview

Rich, rhythmically-based music practices combined with singing and dance are not uncommon in the Caribbean and South America. They are the results of various degrees of syncretism with West African music and dance. The shared history of slavery in this part of the world, in the context of European colonialism, helps tie this vast area together. Nevertheless, there are regional differences due to various kinds of responses by musicians, which are informed by diverse socio-cultural and historical circumstances. Afro-Cuban music is a case in point.

The Afro-Cuban music discussed in this video is rhythmically complex and associated with various religious chants and dance. The music's connection to religion plays an important role in the retention of Afro-Cuban identity. Traditional Cuban rhythms associated with African-based religions – along with Western historical denigration of these religions – contributes to the importance of these instruments and practices as markers of traditional identity.

Musician

Magdelys Savigne

Born in Santiago de Cuba and based in Toronto, Canada, Magdelys Savigne is a percussionist, singer, and composer. She was classically trained in orchestral percussion at the University of Arts in Havana, Cuba. She learned to play the *batá* (which she demonstrates in the video) in the streets of Havana with some of the major exponents of the instrument. She composed and arranged for many bands and performing arts companies in Cuba. After moving to Canada in 2014 to record and tour with the well-known jazz musician Jane Bunnett and her Juno-award winning band *Maqueque*, Magdelys founded her own musical project OKAN. This band won a Juno in 2021 for the best world music album of the year. She has performed in venues and festivals all over the world such as The Blue Note and Birdland jazz clubs in New York, the Miami Jazz Festival, the Montreal Jazz Festival, the Kennedy and Lincoln Centers in New York, Koerner Hall in Toronto, and the Sydney Opera House. "Mags" has been playing percussion for over 20 years and has been featured and interviewed many times on various radio and television outlets including the CBC, Jazz FM91 and CIUT 89.5FM.

Terminology

An understanding of the following terms would be helpful before proceeding with the Video Content.

- *Batá*
- *Clave*
- Polyrhythm
- *Cajón*
- Call-and-response
- *Orisha*
- *Iyá*
- *Itótele*
- *Okónkolo*

Video Content

During this video, Magdelys discusses her background, the role of gender in Afro-Cuban drumming, as well demonstrating the central instrument of Afro-Cuban drumming, the three-drum set, *batá*. She also demonstrates various rhythms and chants and their relation to Afro-Cuban deities. She discusses the instrument's make-up and playing techniques, their connection to religion and social practices, the role of improvisation, the music's connection to dance, polyrhythms, syncopation, and the role of the *clave* (the instrument and rhythms). She ends the session with a discussion of the *cajón,* another important percussion instrument used in Afro-Cuban music.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=5#oembed-1

Transcript: Afro-Cuban Music

Video Time Cues

0:06 Self-introduction, gender, and the drums

5:54 Women and percussion

6:46 Demonstration of drums; names each one

7:50 Demonstration with singing

9:36 Technique on each drum

10:55 *Batá cajón*—'touring' *batá*

11:26 Tuning the drums

12:00 Call and response—each drum pattern

13:58 How the rhythms of the drums fit together

14:28 Real *batá* (religious)

16:14 Making the drums

17:44 'Artistic ' *batá*

19:27 Discussion of religious and musical syncretism

22:15 Rhythms, chants, stories, and deities

24:00 History of slavery/religion/languages & ethnicity

25:20 Musical examples related to deities

28:55 Learning *batá* for each of the 21 *orishas*

32:35 Interlocking. Call-and-response

34:18 The role of improvisation

35:25 Music and language/call-and-response/dance/chants

37:22 Music, singing, and dance

38:28 Polyrhythms

43:35 Syncopation

43:58 *Clave*

49:30 *Clave* rhythms in performance/internal clave

53:19 Side view of *batá* in performance

56:00 Different sounds on the drum

58:24 Polyrhythm

1:01:48 Performer's perception/listener's perception

1:06:25 You need to know when to come in

1:07:05 *Cajón*: origins in Spain or Peru

1:11:20 Counting "nines" in different ways

1:12:51 *Cajón* is "Spanish," not "African"

1:15:00 *Clave* and moving beat one

1:16:40 Gender: *batá* and *cajón*

1:18:40 Learning *batá* and status of *batá*

Suggested Activities and Assessments

Terms

Create a limited-access wiki of the terms and their definitions listed in the Terminology section above. Students can work individually to create their own "wiki" as text files, or in teams (e.g., through a course website). Students research the meanings, and if relevant, the history of these terms.

Participation

i. ***Clave***

   a. Central to Afro-Cuban music is the *clave,* both the rhythm and the instrument. Ask each student to perform two versions of the *clave* rhythm and to count them (as demonstrated by Magdelys) as they do so. Consider breaking learners into small groups or into video conferencing breakout rooms.

   b. Madgelys demonstrates various rhythms on the *batá* using the variations of the *clave* rhythm (see the **Video Time Cues** section above). At one point she articulates the *clave* rhythm while playing various rhythms. Ask students to perform the *clave* rhythm while Magdelys performs rhythms on the *batá.*

   c. Ask half of the class to perform some of the basic rhythms while the other half performs the appropriate clave rhythm.

   d. What's wrong with this *clave?* Demonstrate *clave* beats, face-to-face or online, some correctly, some incorrectly. Students must determine: is the demonstration correct or not? And, if it is correct, is it the 2-3 or 3-2 *clave*?

ii. **Polyrhythm**

   Also important to Afro-Cuban rhythm is polyrhythm. In this case, the polyrhythm is three-against-two or -four, as demonstrated by Magdelys. Count to six and have the class clap every two counts ending up with three claps in six beats. Count to six and have the class clap every three counts ending up with two claps in six beats. Have half the class perform the three counts with the other half performing the two claps in six beats. Make sure they are all together on beat one. Now switch halves.
   The following diagram illustrates:

iii. **Quiz: Game Show**

   Name That Drum
   Madgelys demonstrates each drum separately (see the **Video Time Cues** section above). Play the

Table: Afro-Cuban Polyrhythm

Two groups of three	X			x		
Beat	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Three groups of two	x		x		x	

example of each drum and test students on identifying which drum is being played. Each drum has its own sonority and pitch range.

iv. **Debate**

Afro-Cuban music is the same as West African music in every way that counts. Not everyone may agree about what "counts" in West African and Afro-Cuban music, or in which ways and the degree to which these traditions are the same or different. Suggested topics relate to sound, behaviour, and concepts.

Research

Magdelys refers to the role of women in Afro-Cuban music. Cuba claims to be a revolutionary Marxist state. Why aren't women equal in Cuban music? Are they equal in other spheres of society? There are several assumptions being made in the way this question is framed. The objective is to open a conversation about these assumptions.

CUBAN URBAN MUSIC

Overview

The Caribbean, and particularly Cuba, has produced some of the most internationally influential urban popular music to come out of Latin America. This music is heavily indebted to the strong African presence in the region and the interaction of African and European musicians.

Various important Cuban genres evolved during the 19th and early 20th centuries, including the *danzón,* derived from the European *contradanza*. Both are demonstrated and discussed by Hilario Durán in the video. Originally, the *danzón* was performed by large orchestras of European percussion, wind and stringed instruments, or European salon instrumentation—flute, piano, bass, violins—accompanied by Cuban percussion. By the end of the 19th century, however, Afro-Cuban and European musical elements had been combined in the *danzón*. Black *danzón* bands added greater syncopation into the more restrained European style, and often concluded a piece with a rhythmically animated section comprising improvised solos. This improvised section resembles the *montuno,* the second more animated section of one of Cuba's most influential of genres, the *son***.**

The Cuban *son* is an Afro-Hispanic genre with two major sections. The first section, like so much Latin American *mestizo* (ethnically or culturally mixed) music, is in strophic form with a sequence of verses, or verses and refrain. The second part is the *montuno* section, which exhibits African musical principles more clearly. The *montuno* involves call-and-response singing over a short harmonic ostinato (short continually repeated

phrase). The performance becomes more rhythmically animated, and instrumental improvisation comes to the fore. Hilario Durán demonstrates these features of a *montuno*.

The instruments used to play *sones* earlier in this century combined European or *mestizo* stringed instruments such as the *tres* (a small Cuban guitar variant with three courses of two or three strings each) with Afro-Cuban percussion. The rhythmic underpinning was the *clave* pattern. By the 1930s, the *son* had become the most popular dance genre in Havana, and it was soon to have a major impact internationally in the 1940s and 1950s.

Another important source for Cuban popular music was the Afro-Cuban *rumba guaguanco*. It shares features with and parallels the development of *son* yet sounds more directly African because of the instrumentation. By the late 19th century, *rumba guaguanco* was performed by a lead singer and chorus accompanied only by drums and rhythm sticks. Like the *son*, the *rumba guaguanco* has two main sections. Typically, after a brief vocal introduction, the main verses and chorus refrains are sung in the first part followed by a *montuno*: a call-and-response section in which the chorus repeats a single melodic phrase in alternation with the lead singer's improvisations.

From core styles such as these, Cuba has given birth to a whole range of genres that have had a profound effect internationally including the *mambo*, *cha-cha-cha*, the *bolero*, and later styles of *rumba*. The *clave* pattern can be heard in popular music styles throughout the world.

Also, from the lineage of the *son*, *salsa* music has currently become one of the most widely diffused urban popular styles in Latin America. Originally developing in Caribbean diaspora communities of New York, *salsa* has spread to cities throughout North and Latin America with centres of activity in Miami, Los Angeles, Caracas, and Cali.

Musician

Hilario Durán

Cuban born Hilario Durán grew up in Havana in a musical family. He began working as a professional musician in Cuba's Los Papa Cun-Cun Ensemble and in a variety of musical formats. In the 70's, Durán was chosen by star Cuban musician, Chucho Valdés as his successor in Cuba's most modern big band, Orquesta Cubana de Música Moderna. He has toured worldwide and performed with Dizzy Gillespie and Michel Legrand, among many others. For nine years he was pianist/keyboardist, arranger, and musical director for the well-known band led by Arturo Sandoval. He immigrated to Canada in 1998 and lives in Toronto.

He is a Grammy-nominated and multi-Juno award winner, a Canadian National Jazz Award winner, and the recipient of the 2007 Chico O'Farrill Lifetime Achievement Award from Latin Jazz USA for his outstanding contributions to Afro-Cuban Jazz and Latin Jazz. He teaches at Humber College in Toronto.

Terminology

An understanding of the following terms would be helpful before proceeding with the Video Content.

- *Clave*
- *Danzón*
- *Contradanza*
- *Son*
- *Montuno*
- Strophic form
- *Tres*
- *Timba*
- *Bembe*

Video Content

Hilario discusses his career as a musician in Cuba and discusses and demonstrates some of the major urban popular music styles in Cuba, as well as various forms and practices such as *montuno, clave, contradanza, danzón, rumba,* and *timba.* He also describes changes in Cuban popular music.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=36#oembed-1

Transcript: Cuban Urban Music

Video Time Cues

0:06 Musical influences and training

7:30 Learns classical music at National Conservatory

9:00 Played clarinet in Cuban military band

10:10 Festival competitions with regional military bands

11:19 Played Cuban, classical, original compositions

11:44 Meets many musicians

12:10 Left the band in 1973

12:40 Played in professional band/Original pieces/*Rumbas*

13:00 Leader/Orally dictated original music to musicians

14:03 Main genres: *son montuno, rumba*

14:49 "El Manisero"/"The Peanut Vendor"-*son-pregon* style

16:34 Demonstrates "El Mamisero"

19:57 Dance music

20:09 Played in dance halls, radio, television, theatres

21:04 *Montuno*

21:43 Demonstration of *montuno*

22:25 Continues discussion of *montuno*

22:50 *Montuno, clave* and *tres*

25:27 *Clave*

26:50 *Montuno* patterns and practices

29:30 *Montuno* and *danzón*

31:40 Danzón structure including *montuno*

32:45 *Cinquillo* rhythm for *danzón*

35:10 Demonstration of *danzón*

40:04 Discussion of *contradanza*

42:20 Demonstration of *contradanza*

44:21 Repertoire: *son montuno/danzón/rumba/cha cha cha*

45:35 Demonstration of *rumba*

48:14 Sub for Chucho Valdes/Cuban Orchestra-Modern Music

50:46 Repertoire: Cuban/jazz/backing singers/classical

51:43 Learning by ear. Learning to compose and arrange

53:18 Style characteristics of Cuban music

55:10 Post-revolution ban of American dance music & jazz

56:23 Importance of jazz

57:30 Jazz relative to Cuban music in Durán's playing

58:18 Went back to Cuban music years later

58:57 Illegal to play jazz after revolution

59:50 Government changed its policy later

1:00:30 Pop music in Canada in the 1990s

1:01:34 Havana jazz festival but no jazz schools in Cuba

1:02:59 Government supports jazz/support revolution

1:03:31 Fusion between jazz and Cuban music

1:05:00 Late 1960s and later development

1:07:00 *Clave*

1:09:10 Demonstrates at piano

1:10:00 Older three-two *clave*/modern two-three *clave*

1:11:42 *Clave* matches *montuno*

1:11:56 The wrong *clave*

1:12:23 *Montuno* with the two *clave* beats

1:13:40 African music connected to Cuban music. *Bembe*

1:16:08 Subdivisions of beats in threes

1:16:48 Cuban *bembe*

1:18:25 Triplet subdivision of the beat

1:21:30 Fluidity of duple & triple subdivision in *montuno*

1:22:16 Bass lines. History. Demonstrations

1:24:40 Modern bass lines. *Timba*

1:27:10 Interaction between band members

1:28:34 Bass line connection to *clave* and *conga*

1:30:43 Feature of the *montuno* section of a *danzón*

1:32:24 Features of *rumba*/Call-and-response/Improvisation

1:35:10 *Montuno* and dancing

1:35:50 *Montuno* and *clave*

1:36:20 *Clave* inside and outside of Cuba. Controversy

1:38:28 *Timba* as a genre of modern Cuban music

1:40:00 Continual development of Cuban music

1:47:06 Mixing of Spanish and African music. Haiti

1:51:25 Relation to early jazz

1:52:35 Hispanic influence

1:54:20 Demonstration of original piece/Hispanic influence

Suggested Activities and Assessments

Terms

Create a limited-access wiki of the terms and their definitions listed in the Terminology section above. Students can work individually to create their own "wiki" as text files, or in teams (e.g., through a course website). Students research the meanings, and if relevant, the history of these terms.

Participation

i. ***Clave***
   Central to Afro-Cuban music is the *clave*, both the rhythm and the instrument. Ask students to perform the three-two and two-three *clave* rhythm.

ii. **Quiz: Game Show**
Name that form: montuno *or not?*
The instructor plays various examples from the video or other sources, some of which are *montunos*, some of which are not. Students must determine which are *montunos* and why they think so.

Research

Hilario mostly talks about urban popular music. One way to think about popular music is that it is associated with mass media. Although Hilario touches on this in the video, he doesn't provide details. How did mass media in Cuba and outside of Cuba inform the development of Cuban popular music?

MUSIC OF ZIMBABWE: THE MBIRA

Overview

The *mbira* is a lamellaphone, that is, an instrument with plucked metal "tongues" or keys mounted on a soundboard. Sometimes known in the West as a thumb piano, instruments like this can be found all over Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas. It is with the music of the *Shona* of Zimbabwe in Southeastern Africa where this instrument and its music are highly developed. The *Shona* play different kinds of lamellaphones that are associated with various regions of Zimbabwe, each with their own names, playing techniques and scale patterns. The 22-key *mbira* is the most popular. Playing techniques on the *mbira* exhibit several musical characteristics that can be found all over Africa in many different contexts and on different instruments. These include:

1. Interlocking: fitting pitches and beats into the spaces left in another part, or alternating phrases or pitches of one part with those of another to create a whole.
2. Call-and-response: the alternation of leader and chorus or vocal and instrumental parts.
3. An aesthetic preference for dense overlapping textures.
4. Buzzy timbres.
5. Musical form is often cyclic, made up of repeated melodies or rhythmic patterns which vary gradually as

a performance progresses, creating a complex relationship between repetition and variation.

6. Repetition and long performances encourage community participation so that non-specialized performers can be included.
7. Rhythmic complexity often involves polyrhythms, where pulses that are organized in groups of two are simultaneously performed with pulses that are organized in threes. Depending on one's focus, these layered rhythms can be heard in various ways.
8. Improvisation. Music played on the *mbira* is often open-ended in duration and played differently at each performance due to the practice of improvisation. These improvisations are based on a common stock of musical resources.

Musician

Moyo Rainos Mutamba, PhD

Moyo Mutamba grew up mostly in Zimbabwe, immersed in drumming and dance. He fell in love with the *mbira* from hearing his great-uncle play at family gatherings and from recordings of *mbira* masters. He also studied with several *mbira* masters, among them, internationally celebrated mbira players Mbuya Chiweshe, Forward Kwenda, Garikayi Tirikoti and Alois Mutinhiri. Recently, he returned to Zimbabwe for a three-month mbira mentorship immersion. He is in high demand as an *mbira* workshop leader and lecturer.

With a PhD in Social Justice Education, Moyo currently lectures at the School Social Work, University of Waterloo.

Terminology

An understanding of the following terms would be helpful before proceeding with the Video Content.

- *Mbira*
- *Hosho*
- Polyrhythm
- Call-and-response

- Interlocking
- Vocables
- *Shona*

Video Content

Moyo demonstrates and discusses the physical characteristics of the *mbira* as well as its repertoire, playing techniques, aesthetics, improvisational practices, and music theory. He describes and provides examples of the vocal aspect of the tradition and its performance contexts. There is also a discussion of the *mbira's* cultural meaning in traditional *Shona* culture, the impact of European and American influences, and more recent uses of *mbira* in urban contexts.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=38#oembed-1

Transcript: Music of Zimbabwe

Video Time Cues

0:06 Introduces himself and shows the *mbira*

1:09 Demonstrates how to play the *mbira*

2:54 Demonstrates how to play the melody

4:00 Improvisation

4:15 Demonstrates each *mbira* part in isolation

6:05 Demonstrates variations

8:11 Playing with others/Call-and-response/Interlocking

9:43 Moyo plays with his son

11:24 Learning how to play

12:40 *Mbira* tunings

16:25 The gourd, other instruments, singing and dancing

19:49 Mbira with a gourd/singing

22:58 Singing

23:25 Discussion of improvisation

28:00 Demonstration of improvisation

30:20 Changing intensity

35:41 Musical groupings/Call -and-response/Interlocking

43:15 Performance contexts/Ceremonies

46:24 Who plays *mbira?*

47:36 Melodic direction/playing and singing

51:55 Repertoire, style, words, Western influence

53:24 Vocables

55:32 Tunings and modes

1:01:06 Demonstration of different modes

1:02:45 Cross-tuning in urban *mbira* music

104:05 Names of modes

106:08 *Mbira* and culture/Ceremony, dance, way of being

1:09:35 *Mbira* and urban music/Thomas Mapfumo

1:13:30 *Mbira* repertoire

Suggested Activities and Assessments

Terms

Create a limited-access wiki of the terms and their definitions listed in the Terminology section above. Students

can work individually to create their own "wiki" as text files, or in teams (e.g., through a course website). Students are asked to research the meanings, and if relevant, the history of these terms.

Participation

i. **Polyrhythm practice exercise**

The instructor repeatedly counts six even pulses. The first few times the instructor claps every two beats creating three claps in six beats, resulting in three sets of two beats each. Then the instructor claps every three beats of the six-beat count, resulting in two claps in six beats, or two sets of three beats each.

The following diagram illustrates:

Table: Music of Zimbabwe Polyrhythms

Two groups of three	X			x		
Beat	1	2	3	4	5	6
Three groups of two	x		x		x	

Next, the instructor divides the class into two equal-numbered groups and has them do the same – one group claps two groups of three, the other, three groups of two. First, each group does their part alone, then the two groups perform their parts simultaneously while the instructor repeatedly counts six beats. Then have the groups switch rhythms. If possible, each group should use a different sound. For example, one group can clap, the other can tap on their desks with a pen or pencil. Next the instructor demonstrates two groups of three in one hand and three groups of two in the other. Have the class try it. Ask for volunteers to try it individually.

Listen to one of the demonstrations on the video. Count it in two, then in three. Have the class try it.

ii. **Quiz: Game show**

Is this in two, three, both, or neither?

The instructor plays various rhythms from Africa, Latin American, and the Caribbean, some of which are polyrhythmic, some of which are not. Students must determine which.

iii. **Debate**

Has Western influence been good for *mbira* music? This debate topic involves an examination of how one defines "good," and the nature of Western influence on *mbira* music.

Research

Moyo discusses the contexts in which one can find *mbira* music (see Performance contexts/Ceremonies in the **Video Time Cues** section above). Compare and contrast the various contexts, those mentioned in the video and others if you can find them.

MUSIC OF WEST ASIA: MAQAM

Overview

The majority of traditional music in West Asia and North Africa is based on a modal system and melody type called *maqam*. Regional, cultural and functional variations of this system can be subtle to substantial. From its roots in the Arabic language, *maqam* appears in Arab music and is a system for composing and improvising from diverse groups including Iraqis, Turks, and Persians, among others. *Maqams* are used in secular and sacred art music, including Islamic rites such as Quran recitation and Sufi devotional ceremonies, as well as popular music traditions. The repertory has been preserved in an aural tradition for centuries and has strong connections between music and poetry. The music can be played solo, in ensembles, as instrumental music, vocal music, or both. As a melodic system, traditional music does not include harmony.

Musician

Rob Simms, PhD

Rob Simms is an ethnomusicologist and multi-instrumentalist specializing in Middle Eastern and West African traditions. He plays *setar* (long-necked lute), *ney* (reed flute), *'oud* (short-necked lute), *kora* (harp), guitar,

and various percussion instruments. His research interests include *maqam* repertoires, *Mande* music (West Africa), improvisation and creative processes. Rob is an Associate Professor in the Department of Music at York University in Toronto, Ontario.

Terminology

An understanding of the following terms would be helpful before proceeding with the Video Content.

- *Maqam*
- Rhythmic mode
- *'Oud*
- *Ney*
- *Tarab*
- *Taqsim*
- *Sama*

Video Content

Rob provides a demonstration of the *'oud* (fretless lute) and *ney* (upright flute) while playing and discussing a variety of *maqams* used in West Asian art music. Some music theory is covered to explain and demonstrate the musical construction of *maqams*, relationships between them, the performance of composed music, and improvised pieces called *taqsim*. Ideas about composition and improvisation are developed, along with musical transmission, while the discussion often returns to concerns of musical meaning, and how the sound is related to feeling, communication, and symbolism with regard to Sufism, Quran recitation, and poetry.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=53#oembed-1

Transcript: Music of West Asia

Video Time Cues

0:06 Self introduction

1:33 Description and demonstration of the *'oud*

6:25 Microtones on the fretless neck

9:28 Microtones, *maqam*, Sufism and *tarab*

15:05 Demonstration of *Rast* and the power of music

16:50 Demonstration of *maqam Saba*

18:32 *Maqam*, feeling, and communication

21:47 Cultural exchange in Turkish, Arab, Persian music

23:08 Learning *maqam* and playing/performance settings

30:08 Diversity and relationships between *maqams*

34:26 Significance of *Rast*, *Bayati*, and Quran recitation

37:53 Demonstration of *maqam Bayati*

39:52 Improvisation, *taqsim*, and types of compositions

45:13 Classical composition in *Bayati*/rhythmic modes

49:36 *Taqsim* as a prelude, and heterophony

51:58 Performance after a *taqsim* & audience interaction

57:05 The *ney*, cultural context, *sama* and poetry by Rumi

1:03:59 *Maqam Rast* on the *ney* and symbolism of the *ney*

1:06:58 Learning the *ney*, breath and overtones

1:13:38 Breathy sound as connected to Sufism

1:16:22 Demonstration of *maqam Hijaz*

1:18:25 Demonstration of *maqam Segah*

1:21:56 Improvisation and "personalities" of *maqam*

1:24:07 Demonstration of *maqam Ussak* compared with *Bayati*

1:26:40 *Maqam Husseini* & performance practice on the *ney*

1:30:45 *Maqam Husseini* and comparison to *Bayati*

1:32:03 Demonstration of *maqam Segah* with a drone

1:35:00 Playing *maqam* as a Canadian/relating through music

Suggested Activities and Assessments

Terms

Create a limited-access wiki of the terms and their definitions listed in the Terminology section above. Students can work individually to create their own "wiki" as text files, or in teams (e.g., through a course website). Students research the meanings, and if relevant, the history of these terms.

Participation

i. **Following rhythmic modes**
A commonly used 10-beat rhythmic mode is demonstrated through syllables of "dum" and "tak" followed by a performance on '*oud* (see the **Video Time Cues** section above). Have students repeat the syllables "dum" and "tak" with Rob in the video to learn the mode, then continue to say the syllables during the performance to follow the cycle.

ii. **Singing microtones**
Some *maqams* include 3/4 tones (microtones). Rob demonstrates *Rast* a number of times, including an ascending scale in "demonstration of *maqam Bayati*" (see the **Video Time Cues** section above). Have students sing the notes of *Rast* using solfège syllables. Although this doesn't include any melodic practice of how *Rast* is performed, singing microtones helps students become more accustomed to their sound, and the ability to distinguish different *maqams*.

Table: Singing microtones (*hf = half-flat)

Solfège syllable:	Do		Re		Mi		Fa		Sol		La		Ti		Do
Notes:	C		D		E-hf		F		G		A		B-hf		C
Interval in tones		1		¾		¾		1		1		¾		¾	

- **Quiz: Game show**
  Microtones or not? What maqam is this?
  Instructors play demonstrations of *maqams* or other modes with and without microtones (some included in the **Video Time Cues** section above), and students identify if the mode has microtones or not. If so, which *maqam* is it, and how did you arrive at that decision?
- **Debate**
  The conclusion of the video raises ideas about universals in music. To what extent can we relate to cultures other than our own through music?

Research

Assign small groups to contribute to a document for researching the use, function, and performance settings of *maqams* in West Asia and North Africa. Topics may include Quran recitation, *sama*, *taqsim*, classical music, popular music, and more. Students are encouraged to include if the music is composed or improvised, metric or in free rhythm, which *maqams* are commonly used, and extended discussion of the music's social function.

PERSIAN MUSIC

Overview

Two primary modal systems of traditional music in West Asia are the *maqam* (spanning most of the geographic region and across North Africa), and the Persian *radif* from Iran. Although related in terms of oral transmission, tonal quality, some performance practices, and with some shared instruments and vocal performance practices, the *radif* is distinguished as a repertoire of malleable short pieces (*gushe*) within its own system of modes (*dastgah*). The *radif* is historically more recent than *maqam* and has its own important rhythms and metrical cycles for melodic instruments and percussion.

Like other art-music traditions, the *radif* presents a sophisticated organization of musical materials as a theory, resources for composition, interpretation, and improvisation. It also contains expectations for performance, and is played by soloists, ensembles, and has close associations with Persian poetry. Based on the *dastgah*, harmony is disregarded in favour of exploring the vast possibilities of creating melody.

Musician

Mohammad Reza Yazdanpanah

Mohammad Reza Yazdanpanah is an Iranian musician who is an improviser, composer, performer, and multi-

instrumentalist. He served as a faculty member at the University of Guilan where he taught classical repertoire, *radif*, and improvisation on tar and setar. He is equally comfortable playing a range of styles based on folkloric, traditional, and classical Persian music with recordings, and publications on teaching the *radif* for tar.

Reza moved to Canada in 2019 for graduate studies at the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation at the University of Guelph, and continues to work as a performer and educator in the region.

Terminology

An understanding of the following terms would be helpful before proceeding with the Video Content.

- *Tar*
- *Setar*
- *Tombak*
- *Daf*
- *Radif*
- *Gushe*
- *Dastgah*
- *Pishdaramad*
- *Daramad*
- *Chahar Mezrab*
- *Avaz*
- *Tasnif*
- *Reng*

Video Content

Reza introduces Persian classical music by explaining how he came to hear, love, and learn the tradition in Iran. He uses the fretted plucked-stringed chordophones of *tar* and *setar* to demonstrate and discuss the *radif* with examples of its *dastgah*, *gushes*, concepts for their performance, and ways they are organized in the system.

The topic of composition and improvisation is developed as it relates to performing the *radif,* playing in free rhythm, and with rhythm and metre. Typical concerts are explained and demonstrated, namely the succession of pieces, their tempos, rhythm and metre, composed and improvised pieces, and instrumental and vocal genres. The video concludes with examples of singing, the *tombak* (goblet drum), and the *daf*—a percussion instrument in Kurdish folk music and later adopted by the Persian classical tradition.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=57#oembed-1

Transcript: Persian Music

Video Time Cues

0:07 Self-introduction and learning to play

2:03 Improvisation on *dastgah Mahur* on *setar* (*daramad*)

3:36 Structures: *radif*, *dastgah*, *avaz*, *gushe*

8:45 Learning the instruments, *radif*, and Western music

11:11 Description and demo of the *setar*

14:16 Description of the *tar*

17:57 *Tar* demonstration: *dastgahs Mahur* and *Rast-Panjgah*

20:33 Tuning for performance on the *tar*

23:06 Names of *dastgahs*, *gushes*/comparing major & *Mahur*

26:00 *Gushe yesh*/*avaz*, *daramad* of *Mahur*

28:35 Composition and improvisation from the *radif*

38:26 Structure of a performance:

- 38:26 *Pishdaramad*
- 41:19 Instrumental *daramad* and improvisation

43:14 *Chahar Mezrab*

44:01 *Avaz* (vocal)

50:12 Transition to *Tasnif*

52:10 *Reng*

56:00 Changing modes during a performance

1:01:53 Microtones in Persian music

1:06:26 Rhythmic and metric playing

1:10:10 Rhythmic patterns, metre, and singing with *tombak*

1:22:27 Kurdish folk/Persian classical: percussion on *daf*

Suggested Activities and Assessments

Terms

Create a limited-access wiki of the terms and their definitions listed in the Terminology section above. Students can work individually to create their own "wiki" as text files, or in teams (e.g., through a course website). Students research the meanings, and if relevant, the history of these terms.

Participation

i. **Counting and clapping practice exercise**
Different metrical cycles are demonstrated, for example groupings of 6, 4, 2, and different additive patterns in 7 and 8 (see the **Video Time Cues** section for the *tombak*). Follow Reza's prompts for counting, and continue clapping and counting along to the beat cycles. It is more difficult than it seems.

ii. **Quiz: Game show**
What section is this?
The instructor plays various parts of a typical performance, such as *pishdaramad*, instrumental *daramad*, *chahar mezrab*, *Avaz* (vocal), *tasnif*, and *reng*. All have specific features related to tempo, rhythm and metre, instruments and voice, among other aspects of melodic treatment and improvisation. Students have to identify the section, and why they came to that decision.

iii. **Debate**

In separate groups, argue for or against: Persian music is a source for developing individuality among performers in the tradition. The debate aims at thinking of musical features that are the same among musicians, and ways in which performers may articulate their own interpretations of the material (or not).

Research

Compare and contrast traditions of the *maqam* and Persian *radif*. Answers will relate to sound, concept, and behaviour, including historical similarities and differences.

MUSIC OF NORTH INDIA: HINDUSTANI MUSIC

Overview

The classical music of India is divided into two traditions based on overlapping geographical areas: Hindustani music in North India, and Carnatic (Karnatak) music of South India. This video is based on Hindustani music.

The separate module on Carnatic music provides similarities between Indian and Western classical music, which both have a sophisticated theoretical system, a repertoire based on revered composers from the past, long periods of practical training for musicians, high value placed on technique and creativity, a history tied to elite classes, and are regarded as important cultural symbols.

Indian classical music is different from Western classical music in theory, concept, and most instruments, but has a common theory in Hindustani and Carnatic music; however, Hindustani music is generally more improvised, and does not share the same repertoire by Carnatic composers.

Hindustani music is based on the three layers of a drone, melody, and rhythm. The drone is a sustained pitch or interval throughout a performance, providing a basis for melody without harmonic movement. Melody is based on the complex modal system called *raga*, which includes a basic scale, its treatment, melodic patterns, aesthetics, and extra-musical considerations. The repeated metrical structure is based on cycles of beats called *tala*, each with a set of mnemonic syllables. The *raga* and *tala* have general similarities in Hindustani and

Carnatic music, but differences in specific concept according to their respective traditions and regional, familial, or educational learning systems therein. The general features of these melodic and metrical systems are covered in this video with a focus on *raga*.

Neeraj Prem provides an entry into Hindustani performance on the plucked-stringed chordophone, the *sitar*, with his son Sajan on the traditional set of two tuned drums, the *tabla*. The *sitar* developed as the central instrument of Hindustani music, typically accompanied by *tabla* and sometimes an upright chordophone called the *tambura* for supplying a drone. These ensembles perform chamber music and were historically tied to courts of the elite, which has more recently moved to the concert stage, and is largely responsible for popularizing Indian music and its instruments in the West during the 20th century.

Musician

Neeraj Prem

Guru Neeraj Prem is a *sitar* virtuoso, performer, and educator who is from Delhi, India and who moved to Canada in 2002. He belongs to the lineage of the famous Ustad Vilayat Khan and the "vocal style" of playing *sitar*, which is a modern movement in Hindustani music performance. He has recorded in India and Canada, and toured widely in India, North America, Africa and Europe. He has numerous appearances on television and radio, and was the recipient of the prestigious Pandit Nikhil Banerjee Music Award from India in 2005. Neeraj works as a professional performer, composer, and educator from Hamilton, Ontario.

Terminology

An understanding of the following terms would be helpful before proceeding with the Video Content.

- *Hindustani*
- *Sitar*
- *Tabla*
- *Raga* (*rag*)
- *Ragani*
- *Taan*
- *Alap*

- *Jor*
- *Jhala*
- *Tala*
- *Tintal*
- *Laya*
- *Mukhra*
- *Tihai*
- *Vilambit*
- *Drut*

Video Content

Neeraj introduces us to the *sitar* and *tabla*, and demonstrates and discusses the principle features of Hindustani music, its theory, and performance practice. The concept of a *rag(a)* is developed with comparisons between similar *ragas*, how musicians improvise, its vocalized syllables, phrases, ornamentation, and comparisons to *ragini* and related folk music. Formal concerns with designated sections of a piece, their expression of the *raga*, and relationship to tempo, rhythm and meter are included. The *tala* is explained using the *tabla* drum, and a demonstration of the *tala*'s structure related to composed and improvised phrases on the *sitar*. Concerts and performance lengths are discussed as well as Western influence on traditional practices.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=49#oembed-1

Transcript: Music of North India

Video Time Cues

0:06 Self-introduction

1:38 Description of the *sitar*

6:48 Demonstration of the playing & sympathetic strings

13:35 Demonstration of strings during performance

14:52 Demonstration of the *mezrab* (plectrum)

17:48 History of the *sitar*

23:05 Demonstration of the *tabla*/syllables of *tintal*

25:21 History, construction, and tuning of the *tabla*

30:03 Discussion of different rhythm cycles (*tala*)

30:57 *Rag(a)*, *ragini*, and semi-classical music

32:46 Discussion/demonstration of *alap*, *jor*, *jhala*

38:37 Full composition/*drut* with improvisation/*vilambit*

43:40 Notes and improvisation in two similar *rag(a)s*

48:53 Different phrases of similar *rag(a)s*

52:48 Ornamentation in two styles of Hindustani music

1:01:40 Syllables of the *rag(a)*

1:04:19 Typical concerts and the length of the pieces

1:12:11 Methods of aural learning

1:21:22 Classical vs. light (folk) music

1:27:57 Playing rhythmically on the *sitar*

1:31:56 Phrases (*mukhra/tihai*) based on the *tala*

1:39:50 Full demonstration of a *rag(a)*

Suggested Activities and Assessments

Terms

Create a limited-access wiki of the terms and their definitions listed in the Terminology section above. Students can work individually to create their own "wiki" as text files, or in teams (e.g., through a course website). Students research the meanings, and if relevant, the history of these terms.

Participation

i. ***Raga* practice exercise**

Provide an entry point to hearing notes of a *raga* through singing, and use the pitch collection from the *Raga Yaman* as an example. First, have students sing a major scale using syllables of Western solfège. Next, sing the same pitches but replace the syllables with syllables of the *raga*, demonstrated in the video (see the **Video Time Cues** section above). For the *Raga Yaman*, "Ma" (the 4th) is sharp (similar to a Lydian mode). Sing this scale with the raised 4th degree (Ma). Last, sing the scale ascending and descending starting on Ni, and emphasize the most important note Ga (the *Vadi*) and second-most important note Ni (the *Samvadi*) through accent, repetition, or ornamentation (e.g., bending), as shown in **bold** below. You may want to end by singing "Ga" as the final note.

Table: Raga Practice Exercise

Scale Degree:	**7**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
Solfège:		Do	Re	Mi	Fa	Sol	La	Ti	Do
Raga Syllable:		Sa	Re	Ga	Ma	Pa	Dha	Ni	Sa
Raga Yaman Syllable:		Sa	Re	Ga	Ma+	Pa	Dha	Ni	Sa
Closer to Raga Yaman:	**Ni**	Sa	Re	**Ga**	Ma+	Pa	Dha	Ni	Sa

ii. **Quiz: Game show**

What section is this?

The instructor plays various parts of a typical performance, such as an *alap*, *jor*, or *jhala*, which are all

related to tempo, rhythm and metre, among other aspects in melodic treatment and improvisation. Students have to identify the section, and why they came to that decision.

iii. **Debate**
Has Indian classical music been Westernized? Is that good, bad, or neither? This question may include further research as it points to a longer history of British colonialism, twentieth-century popular music, changing performance spaces, and recording technology.

Research

Compare and contrast *raga* and *tala* in Hindustani and Carnatic music traditions. Consulting the related module on **Music of South India: Carnatic Music** may be included as an example from the performer's perspective.

MUSIC OF SOUTH INDIA: CARNATIC MUSIC

Overview

Broadly speaking, the classical music of India can be divided into two overlapping areas: North India, referred to as Hindustani music and South India, referred to as Carnatic (Karnatak) music. The music demonstrated in this video is from the Carnatic tradition.

The term "classical music" is commonly associated with Western art music but is equally appropriate for Hindustani and Carnatic music. They have important similarities. Both Western and Indian classical music have substantive and explicit music theory and they both revere composers from the past whose compositions constitute much of the present-day repertoire. They both involve long periods of formal training, and place considerable value on technique as well as creativity. Both have a history of being performed in the context of ruling elites, although now public concerts are the typical venue. Finally, they are both valuable cultural symbols.

Of course, there are major differences between Western art music and Indian classical music in concept, instrumentation, pitch and rhythm resources, and creative processes as discussed below.

Carnatic performance contains three elements: melody, rhythm, and drone. Regardless of the number of performers, these three elements are almost always present. Melody, whether composed or improvised, is based on a *raga,* a modal system which includes patterns of pitch, usage and organization, and extra-musical references. Organization of rhythm is based on the *tala* (a system of pulses with cyclic patterns), reflected in

varied percussion sounds and verbal articulations. Although *raga* is included in this video, the focus is on *tala*. A drone is a continuously played set of two pitches made up most often of the primary note of the *raga,* known as *sa,* and the note a perfect 5th above, although there are other combinations. The drone anchors the *raga* performance.

This video features Professor Trichy Sankaran on the two-headed barrel-shaped drum, the *mrdangam*, and a tambourine-like instrument, the *kanjira*. The *mrdangam* is a highly developed classical drum of South India, employing precise tuning, a variety of timbres, and is played using subtle hand and finger techniques. It is the most important percussion instrument in the Carnatic music ensemble, performing both accompaniment and solo roles. Throughout its long history, the *mrdangam* has been used in a variety of ensembles, gradually evolving from the accompaniment of theatre music to more elaborate styles of temple, dance and concert music. At present it is used most notably in Carnatic concerts and percussion ensembles, in *bharata-nāṭyam* (South Indian classical dance), and *Bhajans* (congregational devotional songs).

Musicians

Trichy Sankaran

Professor Trichy Sankaran is a world-renowned percussion virtuoso, Indian music scholar and composer, and the founding director of Indian music studies at York University in Toronto, Canada. A highly influential musician, teacher, scholar, and composer, he has made valuable contributions to many scholarly conferences across North America and has published two major books: one on theory and techniques of South Indian classical drumming, and the other on the Art of *Konnakkol (Solkattu).*

Trichy Sankaran has performed at major festivals in India, South-East Asia, Europe, Australia, and North America. In his six decades of concert experience in Carnatic music, he has accompanied all the top-rank artists of India. In addition, he has played with contemporary music ensembles, jazz groups, African music ensembles as well as his own group, Trichy Trio.

As a composer, Trichy Sankaran has to his credit several pieces for gamelan, jazz ensembles, traditional Western classical orchestra, and world music ensembles. He has received numerous honours and awards for his contributions to university teaching and artistic excellence.

In January 2012, Professor Sankaran received the most coveted honour of *Sangita Kalanidhi* from the prestigious Music Academy of Madras. He was the pioneer in starting the Thyagaraja Festival in Toronto, Canada in 1972.

Suba Sankaran

Three-time JUNO-nominated world/fusion vocalist, pianist, percussionist, teacher, composer, arranger, and

choral director, Suba Sankaran has performed across North America, Europe, the UK, Asia, Australia and Africa with Autorickshaw, master drummer Trichy Sankaran (her father), FreePlay Duo and Retrocity (80s *a cappella* revue). Highlights include performing for Peter Gabriel, Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and performing with Jane Siberry, Lorraine Segato, Bobby McFerrin, and the Swingles. She has composed and produced music for theatre, film, radio, and dance, and collaborated with Deepa Mehta, the CBC, and the Stratford Festival.

Terminology

An understanding of the following terms would be helpful before proceeding with the Video Content.

- *Mrdangam*
- *Tala*
- *Raga*
- *Solkattu*
- *Konnakkol*
- *Mora*
- *Korvai*
- *Kanjira*
- *Carnatic*
- *Adi Tala*
- *Laya*
- *Avartam*

Video Content

Master *mrdangam* artist Trichy Sankaran and his daughter Suba demonstrate and discuss the properties of the *mrdangam* and the playing techniques used to create the diverse sounds that this instrument is capable of. Trichy Sankaran also demonstrates how these sounds can be articulated through vocables. They discuss

and demonstrate *tala,* its theory, how one "keeps" the *tala,* some of the different types of *talas*, and their relationship to performance practices on the *mrdangam.* They explain and provide examples of improvisational techniques as well as discuss various kinds of compositions. Trichy Sankaran also explores and demonstrates another Carnatic percussion instrument, the *kanjira*. Finally, they address the relation between the performance practices of *tala, mrdangam,* traditional dance styles, and singing.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=33#oembed-1

Transcript: Music of South India

Video Time Cues

0:08 Self-introductions

1:00 The *mrdangam*, its construction, tuning

6:30 Demonstration: different drum strokes/sounds

8:23 Spoken syllables for each drum stroke. *Solkattu*

10:46 Drum strokes and their sounds

12:40 The art of spoken syllables: *konnakkol*

13:25 S*olkattu* and corresponding drum strokes

15:21 Explanation and demonstration of keeping *tala*

17:25 Performance, *tala, raga,* improvisation & *solkattu*

19:12 Doubling rhythmic density in *solkattu*

20:47 Doubling rhythmic density on *mrdangam*

21:43 Rhythmic cadence. *Mora*

25:53 Drum strokes to *tala*

28:00 Lower sounding drumhead

29:45 Lower sounding drumhead and *tala*

30:20 *Talas* other than *Adi tala*

30:40 *Misra Chapu tala*

31:39 Different *talas*

34:32 Demonstration of longer, rarer *tala*

35:26 Premeditated rhythmic patterns. *Korvai*

37:55 The shape of rhythmic patterns

41:05 *Kanjira* description and demonstration

44:33 *Kanjira* and pitch

45:20 Hand strokes on *kanjira*

47:00 Rhythm instruments used in concert

47:54 *Korvai* on *kanjira*

49:09 Pre-meditated patterns vs. improvisation

51:50 Rhythm and dancers

52:00 Rhythm and singing

1:00:49 Performance of *bharata-nāṭyam* piece

1:06:00 Improvisation and composition. Singer and *mrdangam*

1:08:11 Musical form

1:12:17 Learning *tala*

Suggested Activities and Assessments

Terms

Create a limited-access wiki of the terms and their definitions listed in the Terminology section above. Students can work individually to create their own "wiki" as text files, or in teams (e.g., through a course website). Students research the meanings, and if relevant, the history of these terms.

Participation

i. **Keeping *tala***
Ask students to keep *tala* during any one of Trichy Sankaran's demonstrations. Some of these will be easier because Suba is also keeping *tala*; but for some, she isn't. This is harder than it looks. Do this for more than one *tala.*

ii. **Quiz: Game show**
Name the tala
Demonstrate various hand motions for the *talas* discussed in the video. Students identify what *tala* these belong to, or if, indeed, they represent any *tala* from the video.

iii. **Debate**
Are improvisation and composition all that different?
Improvisation has been called composition in the moment. How are improvisation and composition alike? How are they different? Depending on the size of the class, create two teams of 2 to 4 students. One team argues that improvisation and composition are different, the other, that they are basically the same with minor differences. Students can use the content of the video in their arguments as well as academic literature on the subject.

Research

Students are asked to research the differences between Hindustani and Carnatic *tala*. Part of this assignment is assessed on the kinds of sources used. Each student writes a short paper (say 400 words) on this topic which is posted online at the course website. Each student is then asked to review the research posting of a fellow student, pointing out its strengths and how it can be improved. Students are assessed on both their own posting and the peer review.

BALINESE MUSIC: GAMELAN

Overview

Gamelan means “musical ensemble” in Indonesia with major traditions in Java and Bali. Gamelan can be made up of a small group of musicians or can be a large ensemble. For example, the gamelan that accompanies the traditional theatre, *wayang kulit*, can be made up of four musicians while the royal court orchestras can have as many as 26 musicians as shown in this performance video. Some are even larger. Instruments include bronze gongs, gong-chimes, and metallophones. There can also be a smaller number of drums, flutes, stringed instruments, and singers. The music is used for a wide range of social functions including accompaniment of sacred and secular ceremonies, dance, drama, and shadow puppet theatre. The two heptatonic (7-note) and pentatonic (5-note) tuning systems are widespread with regional differences for tuning of individual pitches. A full set of instruments from one gamelan often has a unique tuning so that instruments of one gamelan cannot be interchanged with those from another. Gamelans from Bali include pairs of instruments with slight tuning differences to create a shimmering sonority through interference beating. Compositions consist of cyclic phrases marked by specific instruments creating what is called the colotomic structure (metrical cycles of 2 to 256 beats), a skeletal melody by one or more sets of smaller higher-pitched metallophones, and a layer of elaborating high-pitched instruments. Performances include an improvised synchronous increase and decrease in tempo guided by the drums and select instrumentalists responsible for the colotomic structure. The videos

in this module are of kind of modern gamelan from Bali called *Semara Dana*, with a traditional composer, instructors, and performers at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo.

Musicians

I Dewa Made Suparta

Dewa Suparta is a musician, composer, and teacher born to a family of artists in Pengosekan, Bali, Indonesia. Immersed in Balinese gamelan from early childhood, he began performing with the children's group of his village at age 10. He is a founding member of Çudamani, one of Bali's most innovative gamelan ensembles, which has engaged in international tours, including performances at sacred music festivals, the Lincoln Center, in Italy, Greece, and Japan. He has engaged in collaborations with international artists and performed and given workshops worldwide. He previously served as Visiting Professor at l'Université de Montréal and is currently at Conrad Grebel University College where he is artistic director of the University of Waterloo Balinese Gamelan and the Grebel Community Gamelan. He teaches courses in Balinese music, culture, and composition.

Maisie Sum, PhD

Maisie Sum is an ethnomusicologist, educator, performer, and faculty member for the Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo. Her research and teaching combine a variety of fields, including ethnomusicology, anthropology, music theory and analysis, performance, ritual studies, peace and conflict studies, music and health studies, and psychology. As a performer and general director of the College's two gamelan ensembles, she shares her passion for Balinese gamelan music with a wide audience through concerts, workshops, worship services, and open access recordings. Professor Sum has published her research widely and gained recognition through numerous awards and research grants.

Terminology

An understanding of the following terms would be helpful before proceeding with the Video Content.

- Gamelan
- Colotomic structure
- *Gilak*

- *Kempur*
- *Kempli*
- *Ugal*
- *Reyong*
- *Barong*
- Skelatal melody
- *Kajar*
- *Calung*
- *Sléndro*
- *Pélog*
- Interference beating/*Ombak*
- *Kendang*
- *Kotekan*
- *Kilitan*

Video Content

Demonstrations and a discussion of the Balinese gamelan are provided in three videos: 1) a full performance of a *Gilak* piece 2) a lecture and ensemble demonstration led by Dewa, and 3) an interview with Dewa and Maisie for an in-depth look at the instruments, concepts, and social context of the music. In the first two videos, Dewa directs the Balinese Gamelan at the University of Waterloo in a performance of a *Gilak* piece, then a lecture-demonstration to show the various parts of the composition: its eight-beat colotomic structure, skeletal melody, variations, ornamentation of the melody with interlocking parts, percussive accents, on-beat and off-beat patterns on the drums, and how these parts fit together. A performance at the end captures typical changes in tempo, and energy of the music in a shorter example of the *Gilak* piece.

In the third video, Dewa and Maisie provide a closer look at the instruments, their sound, tuning and interference beating, playing techniques, and function in the gamelan. A discussion and demonstrations cover topics of ornamentation of the melody, tempo changes, interdependent instrumental parts, body language for communication while performing, repertoire, and how compositions change depending on the gamelan being played. Dewa shares his experience of growing up with the music and draws links between technical aspects

of the music and social contexts such as learning the music, difference in tuning between Balinese villages, the relationship between music and dance, and the significance of the gamelan maker.

Video 1: *Gilak* Performance

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=65#oembed-1

Gilak- UWaterloo and Grebel Community Balinese Gamelan

Grebal Gamelan YouTube. (April 2019). " 'Gilak' – UWaterloo and Grebel Community Balinese Gamelan April 2019." [YouTube video]. Performed by the Conrad Grebel University College and University of Waterloo ensemble. Uploaded by University of Waterloo, Conrad Grebel University College, Grebel Gamelan YouTube channel. Retrieved February 2022 from, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6kdf-NXhmM. Reproduced with permission.

Note: no transcript is available for this video. It is entirely instrumental.

Video 2: Lecture-Demonstration: *Gilak*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=65#oembed-2

Transcript: Balinese Music Video 2: Lecture-Demonstration: Gilak

Video 3: Interview: Dewa Suparta and Maisie Sum

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/beyondtheclassroom/?p=65#oembed-3

Transcript: Balinese Music Video 3: Interview: Dewa Suparta and Maisie Sum

Video Time Cues

0:06 Self-introduction and purchase of the gamelan

2:29 Demonstration of gongs, *kempur*, and *kempli*

3:50 Starting a piece with the *ugal*

6:21 Learning instruments/ownership of gamelan

11:52 Example of learning a *Barong* dance piece

12:43 Learning from teachers/family

14:06 Ornamenting the skeletal melody on *ugal*

15:12 *Kajar* and changing tempo with the drum and *ugal*

18:11 Performance contexts for changing tempo

20:31 Improvisation in music with dance/tempo changes

22:46 Tempo changes and rehearsals

24:22 *Calung*: melody instrument/tuning for beating

25:50 Basic technique of playing gamelan

27:32 Beating/paired tuning/matching the gong to gamelan

32:17 Description of the *Samara Dana* gamelan

33:55 Modes of the *Samara Dana* gamelan

37:34 Cultural function of traditional modes

42:40 Impact of unique gamelan tuning on repertoire

46:18 Choosing the tuning of the gamelan/how it is tuned

55:14 Explanation: variance/identity of a composition

1:10:41 *Kendang* demonstration/leading changes in dynamics

1:15:26 Changing tempo on the *Kendang*

1:16:56 Demonstration of the *Kendang* role as leader

1:22:34 Significance of the gamelan maker

Suggested Activities and Assessments

Terms

Create a limited-access wiki of the terms and their definitions listed in the Terminology section above. Students can work individually to create their own "wiki" as text files, or in teams (e.g., through a course website). Students research the meanings, and if relevant, the history of these terms.

Participation

i. **Vocalizing the colotomic structure**
Divide the class into 4 groups. Each group will vocalize the instrumental parts of the colotomic structure (see Video 2 starting at time 0:36). Have students say the associated syllables for each of the instruments during the explanation (time 0:36) and with the performance starting at time 10:06. The syllables are as follows:

- *Kempli*: "plee"
- *Kempur*: "pull" or "pul-l-l"
- Gong (male): "gong" (high pitch)
- Gong (female): "gong" (low pitch)

The chart below may be used as an aid for the eight-beat cycle. Note: the beat numbers are according to the video in which the female gong (lower pitch) is on beat 1 as the beginning. For the remaining cycles,

it may be appropriate to think of this beat as a point of transition, or the last beat of the cycle as is typical for the colotomic structure.

Table: Colotomic Structure

Beat	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
Kempli	plee		plee		plee		plee	
Kempur						pull		pull
Gong (male)					gong (high)			
Gong (female)	gong (low)							

ii. **Quiz: Game show**

Which instrumental part is this?

The instructor plays audio excerpts of the parts explained in Video 1 (the *Gilak* demonstration): the eight-beat colotomic structure (*kajar*, gongs, *kempur*, and *kempli*), the skeletal melody (first melody provided), the varied melody, *kotekan*, and *kilitan*. All have specific roles: students identify the parts and explain why they came to that decision.

iii. **Debate**

Music of the Balinese gamelan is sometimes referred to as "virtuosic." Is virtuosity a universal value in music? Arguments of the debate will require comparison to other music, discussion of what constitutes virtuosity, and evidence to demonstrate the presence or absence of virtuosity.

Research

Compare and contrast gamelan music from Java and Bali. Answers will relate to sound, concept, and behaviour, including historical similarities and differences.

PART II

TRANSCRIPTS

TRANSCRIPT: POW WOW MUSIC IN CANADA

[Kevin Myran:] So I'd like to say thank you to your university for inviting us out to come speak about our drum. We brought Jayden here with us, Dakota, Kaelen. Anthony, Albert, Joey, Wynona, and Dani, and we'll get them to come up and introduce themselves a little bit later, right? But what was most important was that you guys gave a tobacco offering, right? And this tobacco offering, it's for us, to tell the drum what we're singing for, so the idea of today, right? — was us sharing our information about the big drum with the settlers and Canada, the United States, amongst all the universities, so we're actually really happy about that to be able to share that, because 50 years, or 70 years ago, we couldn't. We weren't allowed to share those things, so the proper thing to do is always give a tobacco offering and you gave me a really good tobacco offering. This is natural tobacco. It's very nice. What we do with this tobacco is we put it on the drum. Each and every one of us, right? And we offer that tobacco to the drum. We let it know what we're doing, so today we're practising and we're teaching, so that's what we're going to do now before we sing our first song. So we're going to make her offering and we'll get right into it. We're going to jam out a song right away. Okay?

[Drums, Singing]

Hey, Howard.

[Dr. Howard Spring:] Great.

[Kevin Myran:] That was a quick song, generally a grand entry song. If you want to talk a little bit about that drum in particular —

[Dr. Howard Spring:] Yes, please.

[Kevin Myran:] A drum has two sides. One side represents the female. The other side represent the male. The stitching in between, it represents those children that hold that together. Inside that drum is an eagle feather, and they say that the eagle carries our prayers to Great Spirit. So when we sing, it's kind of like prayers, ay? We ask that Eagle takes our songs to Great Spirit, let him know that we're celebrating in a good way. That drum itself, that style of drum, it's not very old at all. Right? It's actually only about four or five hundred years old. And it come about during the time of sadness. There was two great nations, the Ojibwe nation and the Dakota nation. They were fierce fighters, and they were at war with each other. Right? And during this

time, there was a young lady named Tail Feather Woman, and she grew up during that time, but she grew up respecting all life. Her grandmother told her all those creation stories, told her about — you ever — told us — told her to respect all life no matter what. So when she talked about war, she looked at war, she felt really sad, because she knew that wasn't respecting life. Right, you know? And she knew about wars, but she didn't particularly see a battle herself. Right? And like the grandparents, they always tell you, just in case, so they always give you a plan, just in case a war party attacks, right? So she had a just-in-case plan. Right? And her grandma told her, you know, if she ever got up in the morning, to go get water, and there was no dogs, that was the first sign that a war party has approached, right? — because they take out the dogs first. So they she asked her to go hide under the water. So one morning, she got up and that happened. There was no dogs, and she went right for that water, right? And she used a reed along the side of the water to breathe with, and she put herself under that water. So I don't know how many of you have stayed in the bathtub for longer than an hour, right? You get all wrinkly. Well, this girl was — they say four days she was under that water, and that's how long this battle took place was four days, right? And while she was under that water, right? — she would check every once in a while just to see if the battle stopped, but it didn't, and she could hear cries of war, and she didn't like what she was hearing in any way, so she prayed real hard, right? She asked for something to come along to help the people to get along, right? And she had a dream. In that dream, she dreamt of that drum there, that double-sided drum, eagle feather inside. She was given songs with her dream. Those were chant songs. There's no words in those songs. You know, the song that we sang were all chants, right? And she was told by the spirits to present that drum to the Ojibwe nation, and that there would be peace amongst our nations, so when she — after four days of being in that water, she crawled out. Right? She was really sick and the medicine man come by and they nursed her back to health and she had an opportunity to talk to the chiefs, talk to the medicine man about this style of drum in the dream that she had. Right? And together, they constructed that drum. They sent a runner to the Ojibwe nation to let them know that we're coming with the gift. Now the Ojibwe people were pretty wary about this gift because we were known to trick each other. Right? But once they heard that that gift come from a little girl, they were happy to accept it, right? And this girl was probably no older than 11, they say, 11, 12 years old. She wasn't quite womanhood yet. Right? And ever since then, we kind of sat down. We had our first celebration together. You know, we shared food. We — the men met wives. The girls met husbands, you now? We traded items and we sat down around this big drum and we sang, right? And we shared our songs together with those chant songs. No language between the two of them, so no one can sing Ojibwe, no one could sing in Dakota. They had to sing in the chants, so it was a universal language. Now if you look at today, right? — that drum didn't stop there. You can go all over Turtle Island or North America and see that big drum. So we're going to do another song and then I'll come up and talk about a different style of drum, okay? And maybe we'll call up some of the singers to talk about what they feel about drumming.

[Drums, Singing]

[Kevin Myran:] So right now, we're actually in a neighbourhood where there's one, two, three — there's

four buildings of native people in this neighbourhood, so when we were done, we heard "Woo hoo!" That was pretty cool. That's just one style of drum. Right? With First Nations people, there's many style of drums, so there's a little boy water drum, which is really, really old. No one knows how old that drum really is. There's a double-sided hand drum. Right? Can't really fit your hand. You have to use the handle. Right? That one goes in the ceremony, goes in the sweat lodge, ay? There's a hand drum that the Cree people use for round dance. Right? And that round dance is a time of mourning. Right? So instead of crying, we celebrate. Right? You now, we celebrate, and there's a whole story that goes to that. Maybe I'll tell you another time. And then there's the kettle drum. Well , it has to do with hiding our ceremonies. So the kettle is actually an all-cast iron kettle, and it's like a water drum. Put water in it, and you put a seal over the top. Right? It goes [sound]. It makes a sound like that, but what we used to do is we only did those songs at nighttime, because the Indian Agents in the Army were scared to come in at night. They don't know what to expect, so they would only come in in the morning, so here are all these songs going on, and all this celebrating. Then they'd come into our camps in the morning and tear apart our camps looking for everything, and they couldn't find nothing but a piece of wet hide, because we use that kettle. Sometimes you'll see a cast iron smudge bowl, cast iron frying pan for a smudge bowl that we use to smudge with, right? And that's because that. We had to hide our ceremonies, so speaking of we had to hide our ceremonies, we have women singers behind our drum. And as women singers, they didn't actually start there. They were the ones that gifted us the drum. Right? But because they like the way we sing so hard, right? They come in behind that drum and they help us out a little bit, so they give the boys a chance to come down, right? — in their voices, and the girls come up, and when the boys — and then girls come down in their voices, the boys come up in their voices. It gives us a little bit of a break that we need, ay? And then also, the girls have a job to do. Right? Because of the fact that when we're sitting around that drum, the drum's a sign of peace. Right? So it's a sign of unity, so if our drummers are at the drum and they're not getting along, right? — and they're arguing, they're bickering with each other, the girls will touch your shoulders and tell them, "Hey, you guys, you're at the drum. You have to be peaceful," right? And then, there was a time when we weren't allowed to powwow at all, right? So we weren't allowed to gather, and this is less than 100 years ago, just so you guys know, okay? — less than 100. Some of your grandparents, oh, can remember this, okay? Our girls, our grass dancers, had to come out and make the powwow grounds, and had to do it quietly, pack down all the grass for the celebration grounds. And our girls who come up behind that drum, we sit them in each direction, four directions, right? And that was to keep an eye out for the Indian Agent, right? They would sing, but we'd be drumming, so we'd be so concentrated in drumming, our dancers would be so concentrated in dancing, we needed eyes out there, so the girls would watch for the Indian Agent, and you could see the smoke come in, or the drums come in or the grass moving, you tell them — the girls would tell them, "Pack up your stuff, boys. Time to go." We got to pack up our stuff and go hide our stuff in the bush, because we weren't allowed to do this, right? So I look at the singers now, right? — and I look at these girls singers. I look at that drum. I'm amazed it survived, because the government in Canada, the United States, did everything in their power to crush our culture, take away our ceremonies, take away our language, take away our way of celebrating, right? And this is a way of celebrating. Now powwow wasn't always powwow.

You boys got another song ready? Yeah? Get one ready. Give me a couple minutes here, okay, guys? — two minutes, two minutes. Okay? So the powwow wasn't always powwow, right? Powwow was just the time when we all got together, right? Powwows come about was when we were allowed to travel. Right? The actual first powwow was with — you guys ever heard of Wild Bill, the Wild Bill west show, right? Well, Wild Bill, okay? — he liked to showcase our culture, so we had an opportunity to do war dances, and the actual first dances were only men's traditional dancers, just war dancers. Right? And then he wanted us to fancy it up a little bit and they want us to a do a war dance a little faster. The men's fast dance came about, right? And you'll notice the song's are a lot faster. That's where powwows started, bringing in the flags, and all that kind of stuff like that. It was during rodeos and things like that we'd come in and showcase or stuff into that rodeo circle, so that's when you go to a powwow, you'll see that great big circle. It's a representation of that rodeo circle. Right? That's how we used to celebrate, because we were allowed to celebrate at that moment, at that time, right? So when we're actually able to travel, that's when powwows come about, right — because we we're able to go to a different reservation and celebrate, so powwows became big, because before, we weren't allowed to leave the reservation without asking the Indian Agent, and it had to be for work, and then to top it off, we had to give up our status cards, so we weren't allowed to be native if we left the reservation. We had to give up a rights to be native, right?

[Dr. Ryan Bruce:] Is it a custom that there's always a full circle around the drum?

[Kevin Myran:] Yes, it is. There's always at least four singers. If you don't have four singers, you don't set up. Right? You got to have a singer for every direction. A lot of times young groups have 8 to 10 singers, right? — and then plus your backup singers, four girls behind you. Right? So a drum group usually consists about 10 to 15 people. Right? Yeah. That's not the only style of drum. If you go to a powwow, you might see those bass drums. You know those bass drums that you see? Right? From that drum set, you might see those, right? And that's us. We're kind of making fun of Custer, right? — because during that battle of Big Horn, we stole his bass drum. I mean, when we beat Custer, we took his bass drum, and then when the US Army came after us, they came after all the war chiefs, all the war chiefs and families and they were getting rid of all the war chiefs and families. They wanted to take out our bloodline, so Sitting Bull and a few other of the war chiefs brought us up to Canada, and we sang with the Crees. And we actually sang on that bass drum, right? And we told that story of that battle of Big Horn on their bass drum, right? So every once in a while, you'll see a powwow drum group, they'll pull out that bass drum, and that's just to tease, so they're teasing, saying we took out your best, the bestest that they could, that could be beat, we beat him, and this is his drum, right? So we celebrate and we tease just a little bit about that when you see that other style of drum that comes out, but today, powwows are everywhere. You know, you can go all the way to California. There's a powwow trail on California. Every province has a powwow trail. You'll see all kinds of drum groups just like us. Our drum groups pretty special. We show — I think I'm the oldest, right? And then Anthony's the second oldest. We got our original members and we started with was Jayden, Dakota and Albert, and then we have two other little guys that come on, and then we also have guys that we teach, right? — that come on, that are smaller, that are just learning. Right? So

we're trying to pass that knowledge on because it was lost, right? All right, guys. So the next song we're going to do is a song that you sing before grand entry. It's to open up the powwow, right? And during this time, we ask all the grass dancers to come out and bless the ground. So what their job is to do is to pat down the grass, right? — for the grass dancers and say a prayer that everybody gets there safely, that they get home safely. A lot of people don't know this about grass dancers, that they were the stoics. They were the finest of all warriors. They're the best of the best, and they would send the grass dancers out first just in case something happened, just in case we get seen, that they'd be able to get away or they'd be able to fight their way out of it, right? So the grass dancers are all of the ones that came in first. So this is a grass dance song.

[Drumming, Singing]

All right. Grass dance song. All right, my boys here. This isn't the only drum we got. We got three different drums. We had to retire one drum. It was our fourth drum. So we're at Kettle Point pow — no, no. Cape Croker powwow, and it was our first competition, you know? And we were all pretty nervous and, you know, I screwed up my lead. Anthony screwed up his lead, and we were supposed to be the old guys, right? But we were drumming so hard and so our drum split right in half, right? So we had to flip the drum over real quick, right? — and continue our song. And the other drum had — the other side had a little bit of a hole in it, and it was sewed up. And there was a drum group out there called Charging Horse, and one of their singers had a spare drum, right? So he asked us if you wanted to borrow his drum. We said, yeah, that'd be great. And we borrowed his drum. At the end of powwow, we got to walk our drums our, and that lead singer gave us that drum to use, so now that drum [inaudible], right? And the other drum, we took it back to the water, where that drum came from, right? — because it came like I told you the story about how that drum came from the water spirits, right? So we took it back to the water and sunk it in the water there at that powwow, right? And then after that drum came we built the family drum, a great big drum, bigger than this one. It's a Buffalo drum, right? And that one's used at [inaudible] fire, and it's for the dads and for the kids and for our singers to sit with the dads and the kids teach them singing, right? That's why we call it a family drum. And we have a lot more girls coming around because the moms come out and sing too, right? And then this drum here, we applied for a grant, me and Dakota, through Taking It Global, and they gave us $1,500 for us learn how to make a drum. So I asked Dave White. He's been a drum maker for probably about 40 years, right? And he helped me and Dakota put together the frame, barrel style. He helped us get our hide. [inaudible] some teachings on how to lace it right. And so me and Dakota and Joey and who else? — [inaudible], no? A couple other kids came in and helped us sand a little bit when we constructed this drum here. This is our newest drum. We put dye on it so it looks cool, right? And the original drums don't have no dye, but it's year 2020 and we want our kids to come into drums. We make our things look cool. Even the sticks have changed. Right? The sticks are a lot nicer, shinier, right? And therefore, there were more blingage, right? Before they were just sticks and had a little bend in them, like that, and it was used [inaudible], right? Now it's a softer pad. This one in particular, we got Council Fire put right on it. There's Council Fire put right on there.

[Dr. Howard Spring:] What is it made of?

[Kevin Myran:] This is this just hide. This one, hey, do you know those fence poles?

[Dr. Howard Spring:] Yeah.

[Kevin Myran:] Those orange marker poles?

[Dr. Howard Spring:] Yeah.

[Kevin Myran:] They — it's fiberglass. We use fiberglass so it doesn't break. Right? If you use wood, like the amount of singing we're doing, it would just bust the stick.

[Dr. Howard Spring:] Right.

[Kevin Myran:] It would be no good.

[Dr. Howard Spring:] Right.

[Kevin Myran:] Right?

[Dr. Howard Spring:] So Kevin, how do you learn the songs?

[Kevin Myran:] How do we learn the songs? This is how. Okay? So sometimes we have drum practice twice a week. Sometimes we have it once a week, right? But it's always important to practice, right? And when the singers come, and sometimes [inaudible] right away, so they sit and they listen. Right? Kaelen, it took him a year to develop his singing. Joey, took him a year to develop his singing. Jayden, he was already developed in singing. He went to powwows his whole life. Right? So when he came to the drum it was nice to have him, right? — because he already knew the songs. He developed the beat. Dakota asked myself, Dakota here, if he could learn how to sing, so I brought in some older singers to show us, because I never knew how to sing either. So when Dakota started learning how to sing, so did I, right? So he asked me and I had to find a way to learn how to sing. We had a drum at Council Fire, an old drum, that first one and that busted when we started [inaudible] that one, right? But I called in some singers that knew how to sing, right? And then taught us the songs, right? So every song — like there's a song for every style of dance. There's a song that pulls off the powwow. There's a song to pick up an eagle feather. Just about a song for almost anything, right? And besides the powwow drums, there's other drums. You have songs for ceremonies, the sun dance songs. Sun

dance singing is a lot different than powwow singing. As you can notice right here, like you can hear a lead. So one singer will do a lead, right? And everybody here will second, right? They'll come in and do the same lead, okay? And then there'll be a body of the song, right? And then they'll repeat that same body of the song again. That's one time through. Okay? We'll go over it four times through, right? — for a whole song, at least four, sometimes five, right? When you go to sun dance that might be 150 times through, right? — depending on what song it is. Huh? You mean the second? So Dakota told me to make sure to tell you guys the meaning of the lead, okay? So when we lead, our first lead is to Creator, right? So we start off as if we cry. You know when you're born, you put out that first cry, right? That's what it represents, that first cry, that high-pitched cry. And that second is all the singers calling on the ancestors, so they represent the ancestors and they sing. So they call upon the ancestors. They call upon the Creator to come celebrate with us. Okay, you know? That first lead, second lead. And these sticks, they say are a extension of your arm, right? So we're not — like we're drumming, right? But we're only giving that drum what it can handle. So we're not up here just slamming down as hard as we can on that drum, right? Because [inaudible]. It's just like beating that drum, so like, we want to give it respect. We all at the same time, drumming at the same time, and do honour beats. They're not that hard, but they're hard enough to make noise, right? So we just like — we want to drum on the drum. We don't want to beat up the drum, right? And that's the idea. So we have to remember that the sticks are extension of our arm, because we're hitting that drum really hard, it's just like us hitting that drum with our fist. Right? So we want to keep it soft. Well, not too soft, but do not want the drum to [inaudible]. This is — the next song's a crow hop, and it's one of the favourites for a lot of the dancers. They can really shake their stuff during this time? You have to ask an elder to come up and talk to you guys about that meaning of the crow and what the crow did for us, right? I'll give you a short version is that, Crow, they say got back our fire. Okay? When our fire was taken away, they say the crow went and got it for us, and that's why his feathers are black, okay? And so when those dancers dance, you kind of do that representation of that crow hop, of that crow when he hops.

[Drumming, Singing]

>> Thank you, so much.

[Kevin Myran:] So like I said, this is four times through, right? And there's different types of singing for different events, right? We would sing you guys a sun dance song but we can't, right? — because those songs were only song at sun dance, right? And sometimes well, we'll practice but not in front of the camera, in front of people, right? I'll offer that tobacco to the spirits, let them know that we're just practising, right? — and that we're not calling on the spirits for sun dance, you know? We're just practising. We'll offer up an offer, so we don't just respect that, the songs, right? — because those ones are really, really old, the sun dance songs, right? And you seen there's [inaudible] singers [inaudible] I brought them to sun dance this year and Jayden, Dakota, and Joey became the sun dance drum for the Thunderbirds sun dance lodge there asked them back and sing, right? And the elders want to pass that knowledge down to him, right? So they want him to come back every

year to sing, right? And it's not like a normal singing, right? They sing from five o'clock in the morning, right? — sunup to sundown, right? — all day long, straight, right? So it's really hard on the throat, and not every singer could do that. Not every singer can be a sun dance singer. I'm really proud of these boys that they're able to do that. Right? And they're able to complete that part of the ceremony, while two of us dance. And the sun dance is just about — it's the same as prayers for the world. Right? So we're not — like you're not there for you, but you're there for the whole world. You're there for the world problems. You're there to make offerings. You're there to make — to pray the tree about pollution, but world hunger, about clean drinking water, about COVID, about many different things. That's what we sun dance about. It's never about us. It's about the whole world, and that's what the Sundance is really about. You know, it's when all these natives, even though all these things have been done wrong to us, okay? — even though our land has been stolen, even though our culture has been stripped away piece by piece, right? — we still pray for the world. We still pray for all the good things to happen in every community, in every society, no matter what colour or race you are, even if you bleed green, you don't bleed red, you know? We hope the best for you, right? That was always our intentions. When you go into a grand entry, right? You're going to see these flags coming in, right? You're also going to see these eagle staffs. [inaudible]. It's the oldest one we got, man, your old school. The flags, they used to be war staffs, right? So they had a spike on the end, right? And you had all your feathers down here. A lot of those feathers were keeping feathers, which meant if you let your enemy live, it was worth more than honour to let him live than to kill him, because he could go home to his family, look after his kids, all that stuff, right? So you see give him that break. You got a feather for that, you know? In some cases, you know, in war, war happens, you have to kill, right? But a lot of cases, if you can let somebody go, you would, right? And they'd have to go home with a big lump on their head and say they could cope. It's kind of embarrassing, right, you know? But all those staffs, it'd be those war feathers. Right? So when we decided to do treaties, right? — we decided that you know what? Enough's enough. Too many people are being hurt. You know, we have to settle, right? We decided to do treaties. We took our war staff, and we bent them into a circle, so now you'll see those eagle staffs will be a circle, on those eagle staffs, and that's to show the government that we came in peace, that we're not coming in with our war staffs, that we come in with a bent staff. That means we're being peaceful. Right? And then we'd carry in their flags too, so we carry in a Canadian flag. We carry in the US flag, right? — just to show that, you know, that unity amongst us, right? You know, just because unity wasn't shared from the settlers to us, doesn't mean that we didn't have that unity in mind, right? And we did, because otherwise we would have kept those war staffs bent straight just like. We're going to sing a flag song for you guys. And it's usually sung after grand entry. We're going to do a flag song where they post the flags or the retire the flags, right? — which are meant represent — we're giving honour, right? — to those nations. Right? So Metis Nation, all of our nations, right? — including the U.S., and Canada.

[Drumming, Singing]

The boys don't want to sing the retreat song because they say we don't retreat.

[Dr. Ryan Bruce:] That was great, Kevin. I wonder could you talk about the drumming a little bit, because I've noticed that of the songs that you've sung so far, the drumming has different levels and especially in the last one there was different levels of drumming? And also and I forget his name, I'm sorry. The drummer to your right seems to be taking the lead at some times. He's drumming a different part than other people. Could you describe that for us?

Kevin Myran:] So in between the first and second body, on the second body, right at the beginning, there's an honour beat. As we're all going the same, he's going to do an honour beat. Right? That's the chance when those dancers raise their staffs, okay? Some of the girls when they're dancing, they'll pray. So they'll raise their fans. And that's like that's for their prayers. Right? There's many different things we use those honour beats for. At a giveaway, okay? — at the end of the powwow, we have a big giveaway. On those honour beats, those harder beats, bang, bang, they'll raise their gift up to say thank you to Creation for receiving a gift at this event, right? In the beginning of the song, our beat's kind of slow, right? Certain songs, we'll drum on the side, the last dance, right? Then we'll come back and we'll come in, right? That's just so we can hear our voice more, right? And so those grass dancers can focus on their prayer, instead of that great big beat. Once their prayer is focussed, we bring that beat in. That's what that side [inaudible]. In the song, we have a pickup, right? So dancers dancing, they usually start of flow, right? So we're going to pick our beat up so those dancers move a little faster.

[Dr. Ryan Bruce:] I'd like to know, you know, who gets designated as the person to —

[Kevin Myran:] To do the honour beats.

[Dr. Ryan Bruce:] To do those honour — yeah, honour beats. That's right. Thank you. To do the honour beats, and also who gets designated to be the leader of the singing? I didn't get to ask that last time.

[Kevin Myran:] Okay, so we have usually it's a guy that's been around the longest. Right? It'll — he'll be the one that's the lead singer, so we have in our group we have four lead singers. Okay? So we have the Dakota. Right? We have Jayden. We have Albert, and we have myself. Each of us have different roles, right? So, Dakota has a higher pitch, right? — in his voice, so if we want to start a song off at a high pitch, we'll call on Dakota. Jayden has a lower tone of voice, so if you want to call — if you want to start a song off with a lower tone, right? — and bring it up to a high tone, we'll start with Jayden. And Albert has like a medium high-pitched tone. Right? So if that's how we want to start the song, we'll start with him. We never start with me. I wreck the lead every time. Sometimes we'll start with me. Like on the older songs, generally, I'll start the older songs, right? I don't know why that works out but it just does. Like for the AIM song and a few of our older songs, I'll start them off, being the older guy, right, you know? — and I'll start the pitch off for that. The person in charge of

the honour beats, depending on what we're doing, so if it's for a gig in the show, right? — we want our guy that has the best honour beats to do the honour beats, so that's generally Albert. We get Albert to do our honour beats, and Jayden, between those two. Now, if we're just practising, and we're at a social event, we'll pass those on honour beats around, so we'll give everybody a chance to do honour beats. Not everybody is good at those honour beats as Albert or Jayden or Dakota, right, you know? And so it gives us the opportunity to learn a little bit better doing those honour beats. Like my honour beats are different. They're more straight. These guys have a more newer style honour beats and the drum developed. Like it changed. Like our style of drumming, changed according to our dances, right? So even the drumming used to be real straight, not too much of a pickup, but as the dances got fancier, as men's dancing come about and women's dancing come about and the different songs change, different dances come along, the beats changed. So they wanted to show off those fancy dancers a little bit more so the beat picked up. It got faster, right? And then partway through the song, it'll get really fast, and on that fourth time through, it would be so fast that dancers just be giving a — and we try to trick the dancer and stop at a certain time, so we have songs, some songs are like trick songs. It's a competition between the drum and the dancers, so they won't know our song. That's when we'll come up with a new song. Right? And we'll try to trick them. Hopefully we'll catch them during their competition, and either they'll lose points, right? Or we'll get the honour of being able to trick the dancers, some of the dancers, right? And they'll come up and offer us tobacco, say "That was a good song, man. You tricked me." They'll give us tobacco, right? Sometimes [inaudible] money. You know, here you go, man. That was a good song. You know? How do we pick those lead singers? Through practice, right? During our practices, those singers that know most of the songs, right? And have those leads, you know, they'll generally take charge, right? When Jayden's around, he really controls our beat. Right? So he makes sure our beat's right. That's one thing that he's really good at is that keeping that beat. We all have to stay in tune. We all have to drum the exact same time. It goes off, it goes sounds like a horse beat. Right? That's not a good style to dance to, right? We want our dancers to be able to all have the same beat to dance to so we all go in sync, right? We sing in sync. We do everything in sync and try to do in sync as best to our ability. I'll talk a little about the girls. Right? You know, we talked about how the girls don't sit at the drum and that come from a story from when — I think — did I tell you guys the story of the drum.

[Dr. Ryan Bruce:] You did. Yeah.

[Kevin Myran:] I did. Okay. In that story, right? — it talks about that young lady gifting that drum to her men, right? So if the women sit at the drum and sing, it's like that — them taking back the gift, because that gift was meant for us men to be able to get along. Right? For us to celebrate in a good way without us arguing or fighting or going to war. That's what that's about with the girls not sitting there. It wasn't a girls who were fighting. It was the boys. Girls got along just fine with each other, and the boys were the ones that never go along. Look at any war. It's mostly boys that fight. It's not the girls.

[Dr. Howard Spring:] You said there was a bunch of different kinds of songs.

[Kevin Myran:] Yeah, so there are. There are different melodies, different style of drumming. Right?

[Dr. Howard Spring:] So are they different because they're just played at different times, or they have different melodies or different tempos?

[Kevin Myran:] Yeah. Yeah, so there's like, there's a crow hop beat, right? — where it's a whole different beat that those styles dance to, right? There's a double beat crow hop. It's a whole different style of beat. And there's a sneak up song, right? — where it's a ruffle. And it talks about those dancers sneaking up on Custer, right? And it tells that story, that sneak up dance, right? In the old days, that sneak up dance, those dancers didn't wear bells, because if they wore bells, they wouldn't be sneaking up on anybody, would they? Right? You know? Then you'll hear, again, that ruffling during that sneak up song, you're going to loud on the beats, bang, bang, bang. That's representation of gunfire. Right? So those dancers, when they're dancing that song, they'll duck down, and they'll dodge that gunfire. You'll see them dodging it out, right? You know, when they talk about our old stories to some of our warriors could see those bullets coming, and just move right away from them. So that's what they talk about in the sneak up dance, right? — is that sneak up. That was one of our first dances, one of the first songs that we sang and told stories with was actually that sneak up dance. We shared that with a lot of our different communities, right? — different nations and Dakota people. That's where that dance come from was the plains natives that got that style, this style of drumming, this style of dancing, the style of celebrating. And it was just shared amongst the different communities, and now it's spread like wildfire. So if you were to go anywhere on Turtle Island, you're going to see, you know, powwow way out in New Mexico, powwow way up north, you know? You're going to see those powwows happening everywhere, and they spread. That big drum's everywhere you go. What other different styles of beat? You would do a round dance, where it's more of a heartbeat, ta-doong, ta-doong, ta-doong, ta-doong, and everybody holds hands and they dance in a big circle all the way around. It's kind — it's called — oh, in B.C., they call it a friendship dance because everybody takes the time to go around, shake everybody's hand during that dance, to say hi to each other. And there's not a style of dance. It's the same beat. It's called a two-step dance, and that's for couples, and the couples — the girls ask the boys. The boys are not allowed to ask the girls. The boys are not allowed to refuse, so if a girl asks you to dance, you can't refuse. If you want to refuse, you hope that you're rich, because she can ask for anything that she wants for that refusal. If she wants 10 horses, you got to give her 10 horses if you don't want to dance. If she wants a house, you best get her a house because if you don't want to dance with her, right? So you got to show her that respect if you don't want to — if she admires you and you don't admire her, you got to give her a gift, right? You know, in most cases, boys don't say no, but in my dad's time he seen a boy say no. Right? And the girl actually wanted two horses. And it took till the end of the powwow, but the boy had got two horses for her, and presented her with the two horses at the end of the powwow. And even a ride for the horses attached to the back of the truck. And my dad said that's how — because see, that boy was

in love with another girl and he was hoping that that other girl would ask him, right? But the other girl's friend jumped in there and asked first, and that was a story on how my dad seen horses, they'd give them away during that style of dance. These days, the girls don't ask for much. Most of time the boys don't say no. They're just excited that somebody asked them to dance, you know, and they go up and dance. That's a style of dance. And at the end, they have a giveaway song. These days they use a jingle dress beat, a sidestep. Right? And everybody dances to that one and during honour beats everybody holds up their gift and hold it up like that and then bring it back down, and that's just to tell Creation that they appreciate the gift that they received from this community, whatever community that you're at, and you're singing at. How you conduct yourself around the drum is really important too. Each one of our singers are kind. They're not mean people. Right? So you're not going to see Albert or Jayden or Dakota going out in the street picking fights, right? You know? They'll defend themselves if they have to defend themselves, you know, but they're not going to be that guy that goes out there and calls somebody name or they're not going to be that guy that hits his wife. They're not going to be the guy that that spanks his kids. He's not going to be the guy that, so when you become a singer, you have to follow those seven grandfather teachings, and there's — love is the first one. It's very important. Truth and honesty, wisdom, using your wisdom, bravery, humility, and respect, and when we use all those seven grandfathers, you're able to conduct yourself in a good way, no matter what situation arises. You know? In some cases in life, you might have to fight your way out, but in all those cases, you can guarantee that none of these guys started it, that they're on their best behaviour, and they're asked to go sing at — they're so honourable that they're asked to sing for the chiefs, and many times when they'd have the chief conferences. Whenever they come to Toronto, they ask for a drum group. They call on our drum group, and there's a few drum groups out here they could call on, but they call on ours because they know our boys are always on their best behaviour, and they do good things. They put their best foot forward. You know, when they see lady struggling on the streetcar with getting her stroller on the streetcar, they're the first ones, first ones to lend a hand. You know, they see somebody struggling with their groceries, you know, [inaudible] car, they're the first ones to lend them a hand, you know? If one of our buddies calls, "Hey, we need help moving," they're all there. They show up as a group and they make sure they help, you know? When there's a protest in the city, and we're called upon to help out, you know, they don't ask to get paid or get an honorarium. They show up, and they sing for that protest, for that event, whatever is going on. If they're lucky, they get an honorarium after it, you know? You know, some people do give good honorarium but those types of events, these guys go up — every Thursday, they go up the Native Canadian Centre and we sing for our residential school survivors, right? And we show them that the culture's still here. That we're still singing strong, that they survived for a reason. Right? And that all that hiding our culture and stuff that their parents did, we're picking it up, and we're singing it, and we're doing it, right? So we go up there and put a show on for them. We sing and we celebrate with the elders, and they really enjoy it. They don't ask for anything for that. We just do it every week, just for the sake of doing it, right? — just for going up there and bringing a good feeling. And that's the idea is to bring good feeling. Last week, when we sang out here, we had some kids come out. The kids were dancing. This week we have people waiting. They're waiting to hear us sing which is a good feeling, so it brings community together, no matter

what community you're in. When I was at home at my house, we had the big drum over there. I would bring out my big drum, and we'd sing on the porch, and you wouldn't believe all the community members come out, come say hi and introduce themselves and, you know, native people for years have had a bad look. We're looked at as drunks, you know, savages, violent people, you know? And it was — and to see just the opposite is good for the community. Right? You know, so there was lots of questions being asked, and the community got to know about us, so my neighbourhood, we can sing anytime we want, and the community knows exactly what the drum's about. They know what we're singing for. Right? And these are non-natives. These are all non-native people in my community, in my area, and they're [inaudible] and they come out and they bring food and gifts and things like that. It's really cool. Right? So that's what that drum's about is bringing people together and together as a community, and bringing that good feeling that happiness. Right? And that's why we sing, because it makes us feel good. It makes us feel proud to be first nations. You know? It gives us the opportunity to express who we are, where our grandparents never had that opportunity. Right, you know? And yeah, it's a little bit of both, about that big drum. So we're going to sing you a crow hop. That's going to be our — one of the songs to show you a different style of beat besides that straight beat that we do, right? And they say that that crow did something really special for us. He brought back or fire. Right? And there was a time when they say that Old Spirit come along, and he didn't like us so much as human beings, but he really liked our fire, and our boys were arguing about who was going to watch the fire, and there's always supposed to be a boy around that fire, and they walked away. So that spirit had his chance he snuck in there and he grabbed that fire, took away from us. And they say that all the animals had a council because we didn't know how to get our fire back. We didn't know where it went, and we out and searched for it, and when they found it, it was a crow who snuck into that spirit's camp, grabbed that fire, and come down the mountain, bring us our fire, and they say that when he grabbed the fire, he grabbed it so that that spirit wouldn't know that it was taken. Right? And he took a great big stick out of that fire like that, which is the end of it was red, and they say that he couldn't fly down the mountain because the stick was too heavy, right? So he hopped, and he hopped over down the mountain until he got to us, and they say by the time he got to us, that it there was just a piece of coal in his mouth. Now, not a lot of people know this, but crow used to have a really beautiful singing voice. He was a really good singer. He didn't have that cawing that he has now, right? And his feathers used to be all white, and they kind of shined like a rainbow when you held it up to the sun, and it still does that. If you were to hold a crow feather up to the sun, you can see that rainbow inside the feather, but they say crow's feathers went all black from the smoke and from the coal. From the coal in his mouth, he lost his voice, so we sing that crow hop song, and those dancers kind of tell that story and hop around like that crow and how crow hops, right? This is a crow hop.

[Drumming, Singing]

Is that one of our songs? Yeah? Did you make that one? Who made that one? That song was actually a song that one of our boys made. They don't remember which one made it, but they remember it was made by us, so

that's an original song. You won't hear that from any other group. You hear that from us, right? And sometimes those boys how they make the songs, is they'll be at home and a song will come in your head, as a verse, right? And they'll try to tap it out and they'll come up with the lead. Then they'll try to make a body fit to it that kind of matches the lead, right? You know, and then they'll do the second body, and if it sounds good, and they went through their drum list of all songs, and it doesn't sound like any other song, then we can use that as a new song. But if it sounds too close to some other song, then we can't use that. We have to make sure our songs are original, and they sound different from the other songs. So that was one that they made up. Boys, we're going to do a sidestep, okay? I know it's a hard beat but we're going to do a sidestep to show them the different beat. They're asking about different beats today, right? You know? So we're going to show them a different beat.

[Dr. Ryan Bruce:] Was it a chant or are there words?

[Kevin Myran:] That was chants? So most of our songs are chants? We barely use words, but when we do, you have to know what the meanings are, so you have to know what you're singing. Right? So if you're going to sing in the language, you have to know what it is you're singing because you're singing to Great Spirit. You can't just sing gibberish, right? And then not know what you're saying, so you won't know what you're saying, so if you hear do a word song, we'll tell you the meaning. Maybe we'll sing a word song a little bit later, for yous, okay? But this one's going to be a jingle dress style dance song. Right? And the song's pretty special. It's not an old style dance at all, you know? It's less than 100 years old. Right? And it come about during a time when a old man's granddaughter was really sick. And he couldn't figure out what was wrong with her, right? So he had a dream of these cones that he puts on the dress and that he was dancer around the circle that she would get better around that circle with these cones, and that's what he did. He constructed her dress, and they sang the first jingle dress dance style and the first time around they say that she had a hard time going around. They had to help her, pretty much carry her all the way around. The second time, you know, she only needed one person to help her around. Third time, she was moving on our own. And by the fourth time around, she was dancing. So at a powwow, when you hear that the jingle dress dancers are coming up, if you have somebody in your family that can use healing, that's the time that we ask, and you know how you guys gave us tobacco to sing. You would do the same thing. You'd walk up to a jingle dress dancer and offer tobacco to sing for your family member that's — or dance for your family member that's sick. And what she would do is she would say prayers that the right people come into her life, into that person's life. That's going to help them get better. This is a jingle dress style beat. It's a little different. It's going to be a sidestep beat. It's a little faster, and you'll see. You guys ready? You got one? All right.

[Drumming, Singing]

All right, so let's sneak up, okay? The thing about the sneak up dance — because that last song, on those honour beats, you'll see the girls at powwow, they'll raise their fans during those honour beats, and they say

that they're letting go of those prayers, so they're ask — they're sending off those prayers to Great Spirit and asking that eagle to take those prayers and with those cones and all that, so you'll see that at a powwow when you go there. So in this style here, this style of dance is sneak up. It's for a men's traditional dancers. Only men come up and dance in that song. Just like that jingle dress dance, only the girls will appear in dance. You won't see mixed dancers in there. That crow hop, most all dancers do the crow hop, okay? So most of them will do the crow hop. And this style of dance here is just men and they're sneaking up on their enemy. That's what the true meaning was was they're sneaking up on Custer and they tell that story, that war dance, that story to how they snuck up and how they couped and how they stole the drum and how they got away and how they won that battle. And that's what this this song was all about, and that honour beat you hear here, you're going to get a ruffle in the beginning. Everybody's going to be ruffling the song. You hear great big honour beats, bang, bang, bang, bang. So that's when the dancers will sneak up. Right? And then when those great big hits go bang-bang, they'll duck down because that's gunfire and you'll notice. Here we go. You ready?

[Drumming, Singing]

We'll do a grass dance song next, guys. Yeah? So there's only — so you hear about the drum, right? You hear about those war dances. Right? You hear about those kind of things, right? There's only two war dances left out of all the war dances that we ever did. That was one of them, so the sneak up is one of the war dances. Another war dance is the grass dancers. Okay? Those grass dancers were the elite. They were the best of the best of warriors. They were the fastest runners. They were the fastest on horses. They could camouflage themselves in the best way, and they were the best of fighters. Right? Them and the dog soldiers. Okay? We sent the grass dancers out first as scouts. Right? So that was their job is to go into enemy territory and to scout, and a lot of times they would put real grass onto their regalia, so when they moved, it would move like that grass blowing in the wind, and you couldn't even tell that they were there. Right? So during that grass dance, when you see their style of movement, some of them will be swinging and swaying and they'll be moving like that grass. And then other parts of it will be some deadly kip work with their feet. Right? And that's them in battle, right? That's them right in the middle of battle, and they're trying to get away and get back, so they have their own story to tell, those grass dancers. And a lot of people don't know that that was one of our original war dances. It was the grass dancers actually came out first, and then the men traditional dancers came out, because that's how our dancers were, right? The scouts went first. Right? And then our warriors came after, after we knew how many how many soldiers that were there or how many enemy was there. This is a another war style of dance.

[Drumming, Singing]

So I don't know if you guys can see the — we got a baby in the background here. We got a couple moms that come out to listen to the music, and like I said, it brings the community out, right? And just to see the baby listen in, and you see that it doesn't scare the baby. The baby doesn't cry. Right? And if you really look at

it, when the baby's inside a mother's belly, that's what she hears. Right? It's a heartbeat. So it's nice to hear it, when you come out of the womb and you hear the heartbeat again, you know, that big heartbeat that we do. Right? And that's what we call that. That's the heartbeat of our mother, or the heartbeat of the nation. Right? So we call that, that beat, that main beat, that's the heartbeat of mother. Right? And you hope that Creator hears that, that here we are, and we sing those cries out, that first lead to Creator, and the second lead coming into our ancestors, right? And sing nice and hard that way.

[Dr. Ryan Bruce:] Kevin, it seemed like that one was a little bit different, more different than a lot of the other ones that you played. It was really nice. There was parts when some singers were louder than others. How did — how do you make those decisions while you're performing?

[Kevin Myran:] Some singers are loud — oh, you mean the leads?

[Dr. Ryan Bruce:] Not just the leads. There was times, you know, at the end of the first or second time through, definitely when the women were louder,

[Kevin Myran:] Oh, we came in louder. Okay. So it always starts off smooth, starts off low, and it works gradually, it gradually works its way up. Right? So we try to pick up the momentum near the end of the song, so we try to get a little louder, a little stronger in our singing, and then you'll hear the girls come in. Right? And that's when we bring our voices down a little bit. Right? And some of the singers' voices are just — they really like that song, so just goes a little louder, you know, depending on how well you know that song, and sometimes the singers don't know the song that well. Right? So the voices go down a little bit because they're not too sure. They're just learning that song, right? You know? When we do presentations, like this is the first time we actually recorded during practice, right? We usually don't do that. Usually we'll do a presentation, and we'll have set songs that we're going to sing, right? — and ones that we're really good at and ones that we really practice lots, right? So having you record during drum practice is kind of funny for us because a lot these songs, we're just working on. We're still learning them right? And we're practising them. That's what we're doing. We're practising, right? So you caught us during a practice time and, you know, there was — we're just picking our songs as we go. Right? And hopefully it sounds good when we're singing.

[Dr. Ryan Bruce:] It does. It sounds great.

[Kevin Myran:] Yeah. This is going to be a song that was composed by Jayden. Right? [inaudible]. Ready?

[Drumming, Singing]

So that song did have words in it. Right? That was a word song. Jayden, want to get up and talk about that

song just a little bit? I got Jayden come up, one of our lead singers. This is Jayden Wemigwans. You can see the camera there, Jade. He's going to talk a little bit about that song.

[Indigenous Language]

>> [Jayden:] I learnt that introduction from my teacher here, Tasha. As we practice our language or we were practising our language, but that song I composed for the All Nations Juniors Drum Group, and in those words, it's saying that all the Anishinaabes, they're welcome to come dance. And Kakeo [phonetic] it's a mixture of Cree dialect and Ojibwe, so I mixed two of those dialects into one song and created that Anishinaabe Kakeo. It means come, and "hone maetuan" [phonetic] is like, "you're here", to be safe, so you're dancing area is safe. So I also compose a lot of other songs, like crow hops and other straight songs, different dance styles. So all of my teachings from other singers and other song composers helped me to create my own songs, and yeah, so what else?

[Kevin Myran:] Awesome. Thanks, Jade. That's good.

[Jayden:] All right. Thank you.

[Dr. Ryan Bruce:] Yeah, thank you. It's great to hear about the songs and the composers and what they're thinking and how they're learning. Very valuable. Thank you.

>> [Dr. Howard Spring:] Well, it's great to hear that young people are still creating.

Kevin Myran:] Yeah, they're creating. Yeah, that's the best part about it is that they're actually doing the creation of their own songs. Right? They're not scared. Right? And it's not illegal for us anymore which is even better. The last song we're going to sing, it's — for you guys — it's called the AIM song. Right? And we sing this in the end, and the AIM is called the American Indian Movement. Okay? And they came about during the '60s and '70s when native people needed to be picked up, and they needed to learn about the culture, so they came around and they actually got rid of whole liquor stores and took over towns and took the alcohol away and brought in culture. They brought in drumming. They brought in medicines. They brought in teachers. They brought in dancers, and they helped picked up the community in many different nations. Right? And there's a chapter in Ontario of AIM and run by two females. Right? And we were asked, as our drum group, to be the AIM drum group for Ontario, so these young guys not only have — not only are they All Nation Juniors Drum Group, right? They're also southern Ontario's AIM's drum group, and they're also Thunderbird Lodge drum group for sun dance, right? So they've earned those spots throughout the years that they've been dancing. So this last song is pretty important to us. It represents that pickup of our people. It represents that us taking back our culture. It represents the warriors that we still have. This is our last song and thank you, Howard and

thank you to the University of Guelph for inviting us out to talk about our drum and, you know, and to listen to our songs and take the time to get to know First Nations people and about some of our celebrations, so we just want to say thank you. Thank you for taking the time to do that. It's the last song, Howard! It's the last song.

[Drumming, Singing]

All right. That was the AIM song. That's usually what we end with. This time, I'll get all the singers to come up here and introduce themselves real quick, so you guys at least have that for your video, you know who sang for yous, right? I'm going to introduce Anthony Gladue. He was our [inaudible] worker. He couldn't make it out, due to vacation. He's out in ceremony, out in — out west, but he was here the first round. He been singing with us for about three years. He's our driver. He gets us at all the powwows with the van and he's also a sun dancer, and these boys sang for him last round, so I just want to say thank you to Anthony for coming out in the beginning, right? I'll bring up Joey Myran. Come on up, Joey. Introduce yourself.

[Joey:] My name is Joey Myran.

[Kevin Myran:] [inaudible] Dakota.

[Joey:] [inaudible] Manitoba.

[Kevin Myran:] How long you been singing, Joey?

[Joey:] Three years.

[Kevin Myran:] Three years? How do you like leading, when you do leads?

[Joey:] It's good.

[Kevin Myran:] What does the drum make you feel like? Proud?

[Joey:] Yeah.

[Kevin Myran:] Proud? Okay. Most natives are shy, so we're lucky to get him up here. Okay, thanks, Joey. Kaelen, come on up, man. Right? Kaolin here, he's been with us for — this is Kaelen Pelletier. He's been with us quite a long time. Also, about three or four years. He's also our eagle staff carrier, so at council fire, we have a youth eagle staff and he carries out through all the protests and everything that we do. He looks after it, feeds

it. Our first drum, the one that we were given from — I talked about it — from Charging Horse, Kaelen here looks after that drum at his house, right? So we have a drum on the other side of the city and we have a drum on this side of the city, so we can sing anytime we like [inaudible] part of the city you want to. And Kaelen, do you have anything to say? How's the drum make you feel, man?

[Kaelen:] Proud.

[Kevin Myran:] Proud? Awesome, man. Okay. Good one. Well get Dakota up here quick. This is Dakota Myran, one of our lead singers. He's been — how long have you been singing?

[Dakota:] Since I was six.

[Kevin Myran:] Since he was about six, and Dakota here is the reason why we started All Nation Juniors Drum Group. He wanted me to learn how to sing. I didn't know how to sing, so I called upon my co-workers and they helped me along and we started a drum group. Right? And here we are today. Dakota, how does drum make you feel?

Dakota:] Closer to my spirit.

[Kevin Myran:] Closer to his spirit, man. Awesome. Call up Albert. Albert Therrien. Albert Therrien is also another one of our original members. And thank you for coming out today, Albert. Okay? And how does the drum make you feel?

[Albert:] Makes me feel good.

[Kevin Myran:] Makes you feel good?

[Albert:] Yeah.

[Kevin Myran:] All right. Thanks, Albert. All right? Jay, Jay, you guys met Jay already, okay? Jay, how's the drum make you feel, Jay? Come on over.

[Jayden:] Well, drumming makes me feel happy. It's always a place I could rely on and express myself in the way I want to sing, and I also dance, so dancing helps me cope with any stress or any negative things are happening in my life. I always like to go back to my culture and sing my heart away. Yeah.

[Kevin Myran:] Awesome. Thanks, Jay.

[Jayden:] You're welcome.

[Kevin Myran:] Girls up, Dani, and Wynona. You're okay? Yeah, this is — go on, introduce yourself, Dani.

>> [Dani:] Where's the camera?

[Indigenous Language]

Hi everyone. My spirit name is Black Bear Woman. I live in Toronto. My family comes from Gwich'in First Nation as well as Wiikwemkoong on Manitoulin islands. I'm Thunderbird Clan, and I've only been singing with All Nation Juniors for about a year now but I've been singing since I was six years old, ceremony songs and I'm a powwow dancer. I'm a jingle dress dancer and I take our culture very seriously, and my goal in life is to share everything with the young ones to help that generational traumas. So yeah, chi-miigwech.

[Kevin Myran:] All right. Thanks, Dani. Come on up, Wynona.

[Wynona:] Oh, there's the camera. Hi.

[Indigenous Language]

I'm Ganeegahaga [phonetic], Anishinaabe, and Mi'kmaq as well. I've been singing like since I was 13, I think? — 14 with Council Fire. And yeah so far it's like been a fantastic experience. I love it. I love singing. For me, it's like my time to like heal. A lot of it's my self-healing, and yeah, I just get to share and create songs and with a great group of like guys and girl and yeah, so thank you.

[Kevin Myran:] Awesome. Thank you, Wynona. Well, that's the All Nation Juniors, and that's the gist of us.

TRANSCRIPT: CANADIAN FOLK FIDDLING

[Howard Spring:] April and Cody, thanks very much for doing this. We're very excited about this. Can we start by just you saying a few things about yourself and the music that you're going to play and talk about?

[April Verch:] Yeah.

[Cody Walters:] Sure.

[April Verch:] Of course. So my name is April Verch. And I grew up in Pembroke, Ontario in the Ottawa Valley. And this is my husband, Cody Walters.

[Cody Walters:] Hello, everybody.

[April Verch:] Also band mate. We've been playing music together in the April Verch Band since 2007. Yeah. And we're just going to give you an overview of some of the stuff that we like to play and some of the stuff that I grew up with, which is namely the Canadian fiddle tradition to start, that's my roots. And so maybe we'll warm up with a couple of tunes before we talk more about it. Just give you a sense of what it is we do [laughter].

[Cody Walters:] Yeah.

[April Verch:] So we're going to play a couple of traditional tunes. These tunes definitely came to us from Ireland and Scotland, as many of the traditional tunes have sort of crossed genres over the years. These are two good examples of that. Both in the key of D and we'll play a bit of St. Anne's Reel and Whiskey Before Breakfast, and we'll play them in kind of old-time Canadian style.

[Music]

[Howard Spring:] Great. You said that was a kind of an old Canadian style. What do you mean by that?

[April Verch:] Yeah. So, it's interesting. I guess what I meant was, you know, those are the types of fiddle tunes that there are certain tunes that no matter where you go in the world, if someone says they play the fiddle, you can probably safely pull them out and that other fiddle player will know them. So like if I was in Scotland

or Ireland or if I was in a Bluegrass Jam or even, you know, when we're touring like in Scandinavia, if there's a fiddler from the Scandinavian fiddle tradition and they love the fiddle and they know they're going to be jamming with people from all over, those are two of the tunes they might learn. So you can sort of expect to hear those tunes played in a lot of different ways. And what I was trying to do was play them the way I heard them growing up. And the Ottawa Valley style is what I would consider one of the old-time Canadian styles. So, what I mean by that, and, you know, I haven't done extensive research on this, but it's something that I've just sort of come to my own conclusion about. So we have these regional styles of fiddling across Canada. And there are some that are very specific. They sound like the people that settled there in particular. So for example, the Cape Breton style sounds very Scottish, the French Canadian style is very French and Irish from those settlers in Quebec, the Metis style sounds like our First Nations in French and Scottish. It's a little bit easier to pinpoint those styles. They have things about them that make them sound that way. And then we have all of these other styles in Canada that are kind of a melting pot. So, growing up in the Ottawa Valley, I learnt the Ottawa Valley style and was always taught about how our style developed in the lumber camps, which was the main industry. So, those people were French, Irish, Scottish, German and Polish. So now, you know, we've got a bunch of things going on there and it's a little harder to play a tune and say, and that comes from the Polish people. You know it's just [laughter] — And so, what I've sort of figured out is that in the late 1950s, I think it was around 1957, Google would tell us, the CBC started the Don Messer show. Don Messer's Jubilee, which was a weekly program. And it in some regards, it was the first time that the same Canadian fiddle sound was being heard across the country. And Don Messer was a great fiddler. He was from the Maritimes, but he had this style. He was classically trained for one thing. So, his playing was very clean unlike a rural fiddler that was maybe more raw sounding, he was a bit more refined. That was just part of how he played. And he played straight-ahead, driving dance beats, not a whole lot of ornamentation. And so if you lived in Cape Breton or you lived in on the West Coast or you lived in Quebec, I mean, it was a huge success. The show ran forever. And everybody was tuned into the Don Messer show. And people started to emulate his style, which was one of those styles that was kind of the melting pot. And so, when we say old-time Canadian, I feel like it's not the oldest fiddle style in Canada by any means. I feel it means you play one of the styles that is a melting pot, and sort of sounds like what Don Messer would have played.

[Howard Spring:] Great answer.

[April Verch:] Does that make sense [laughter]?

[Howard Spring:] That is a good answer.

[April Verch:] Yeah, it's, you know, because there's — like, there's so many little pockets, like so, I was always taught that about the Ottawa Valley, those sort of five groups of people. But I know fiddlers that live in the Ottawa Valley between Killaloe and Wilno where there's a strong Ukrainian settlement and tradition, and so

they play Ukrainian tunes, but they play Ottawa Valley tunes too, like, you can — it can just — you can just find these pockets everywhere. Saying I lived in Saskatchewan for a while, you know, where there was also more of a Ukrainian influence, but their fiddle music, because it was a melting pot still just sounded old-time. It was just — There's something about that. And I think a lot of it has to do with the dance tradition as well. But that's just something I've observed. Yeah. I mean, people started to play like Don Messer, and he wrote tunes and people — well, I mean, I think a lot of his contemporaries saw how successful he was. And so, they were going to play and write like that, too [laughter]. They caught on. Yeah.

[Howard Spring:] Sure. That makes a lot of sense. I want you play another tune, and we'll talk some more after.

[April Verch:] OK, cool. Maybe we'll play on waltz. Let's play the Thomas Fraser Memorial Waltz. That's in D.

[Cody Walters:] D.

[April Verch:] So this is one that I wrote, but I tried to write it in that tradition. I'll just say before we play it that part of my upbringing was my parents were huge fans of the Ottawa Valley music scene. And so, when they were dating when they were young, they went to the local dance hall every weekend for entertainment. That's just what they did. And so, when my sister and I came along, that's what we did, too. We went to dances and jamborees and jam sessions. And I was really lucky to get to grow up playing for dances and beside other fiddlers which isn't always the case anymore. And my dad taught me early on that you could have the best tone and you could play more in tune than the older fiddlers. But if you couldn't fill the dance floor, then what was the point [laughter]? And so whenever –

[Howard Spring:] Right. Right on.

[April Verch:] — whenever I play a waltz, I think of that still. And when I write a waltz, that's what's in my mind. What's going to get people on the dance floor? So I wrote this tune when we were at a festival in the Shetland Islands. It was called the Thomas Fraser Memorial Festival. He was a great artist from the Shetlands and I wrote it in his honour.

[Music]

[Howard Spring:] Great. When you write a tune or when you learn tune, I'm assuming it's all by ear. Is that right? Or is any of this notated? How do you learn and also play this?

[April Verch:] Yeah. I do read music now. But I think just the nature of the stuff that we like to play the most isn't always notated.

[Cody Walters:] No.

[April Verch:] And we really love listening to the oldest version of things that we can find. So like, even, you know, I have this great book of old-time tunes and I want to learn a new tune, I might go to it and sort of learn it but then end up wanting to know how the oldest source recording fiddler played it. And so, you know, so, usually we just start there if we can with the recording. That's something that I think has changed a lot even since I started playing. I started playing when I was six. And my first teacher was self-thought. And he was young. He was probably 16 when I started taking lessons from him. He was a great fiddler. He'd been shown by other fiddlers who were self-taught a little bit. And so, I learnt by ear. He would take the tune for me on a cassette back then, and I go home and learn it and come back the next week. And later, I learnt to read because I started classical lessons, which was, actually, because so many fiddlers back then had been shown the basics, but few of them had formal training. And so like, one time, I was at a fiddle contest and the judges came up to my parents later and said, you know, she's doing pretty good. But the thing is, the way she's holding her instrument, she's not really going to be able to get that much better. So, it might not be a bad idea, even though she doesn't want to play the violin for her to study some violin, because it'll make her a better fiddle player in the long run, you know, which I really fought against at first. And it was really hard, because I knew how to play and then I had this like, stare at the page and I couldn't do it. So it's frustrating. But that's really changed. I think that there are so many people now, like me, that know technically how to do things and pass that on, that young people learning to play the fiddle today are learning from people that, you know, have that technical ability. And so, that has also changed the music to some degree. Like, there's a lot of times that I will learn an old-time American tune and Cody and I will look at each other and hear the source recording and I know that with the training I have, I can never play it exactly like they did. Because there's like stuff that they did because they didn't have that knowledge and they found other ways of going about it and it's just the best [laughter]. Like, sometimes, I feel like it hinders us, even though it helps us in a lot of ways. But that's like change just in the last, you know, 30, 40 years.

[Cody Walters:] Yeah.

[April Verch:] The amount of fiddle players who are also classically trained. Yeah.

[Howard Spring:] Do you think something is lost with classical training? I know if something's gained, there is something lost.

[April Verch:] Yeah.

[Howard Spring:] OK.

[April Verch:] Maybe, I don't know. It's sort of hard because there's other things that have changed, too. It sort of hard to pinpoint like what causes that loss and or what the combination is. I think another big thing, you know, I talked a little bit about growing up playing for dances. That doesn't happen anymore, because dancing is not what we do for entertainment anymore on the weekend, like it was for my parents. And so, when I was little and we would go to a fiddle contest, which was really just an excuse to hang out with other people that like to fiddle, it wasn't about the contest, you know, but the contest would end with a dance and the competitors will get up and play for the dance. And, you know, it used to be that if you played the fiddle, dancing is what you did for entertainment way back when. So, every fiddler knew how to dance. So then by the time I was, you know, 13, contests were really popular and got really big and they went too long, so that there was no more dance. So now there's no — there's not as many social dances, generally speaking, as there were. And you have a generation of fiddlers that may not know how to dance or have never played for a dance. Like certainly now, during the pandemic, I'm teaching private lessons on Zoom, and so, I can't even, you know, I can sort of show them but I can't just be there to say now do this waltz step with me, because if you can do the waltz, you'll feel that through your bow arm and you'll feel that in your body and you'll play it differently. I think that's been a huge loss for the fiddle tradition in Canada is the loss of social dancing. Not that it's gone, you know, I'm not saying that there aren't a lot of people learning to step dance. Step dancing is doing great, but like –

[Cody Walters:] They're popular. Yeah.

[April Verch:] Yeah. But the square dancing and just like the couple dancing is –

[Howard Spring:] Socializing. Yeah.

[April Verch:] Yeah, like it was. So I think that's a contributor. Yeah, dancing, training. And yeah, especially lately, just the amount of, of distance rather than in person, there's something about playing knee to knee with somebody that I feel bad for the — for my younger students, you know, during the pandemic that have just gotten into it and haven't had that yet.

[Cody Walters:] Yeah.

[April Verch:] So, when that comes back, that'll help [laughter].

[Howard Spring:] Sure, sure. Do you want to play something else?

[April Verch:] Sure.

[Howard Spring:] And talk some more.

[April Verch:] Yeah. Maybe we'll play French Canadian tune just to play something and share something that's a little bit different than old-time Canadian. So this is a tune called William Gagnon. I'm not French Canadian so I will play this as close as I can to how a fiddler from Quebec might play it with that disclaimer [laughter], that it's not as good as they would. But a lot of the Quebecois tunes are crooked, which is not common in the old-time Canadian tradition. So, those –

[Howard Spring:] What do you mean crooked?

[April Verch:] Yeah. So those melting pot styles are going to be straight. What I mean by crooked is a couple of things. So you're going to have extra beats or missing beats. So it's going to change time signature. So, you know, instead of the real being just in two, four, you'll have a bar of three or a bar of one depending on how you want to look at it [laughter].

[Cody Walters:] Yeah [laughter].

[April Verch:] So it can — it's crooked in that sense. And then not all of the tunes are crooked and formed, but this one is a good example. The way I make sense of this tune in my head is, you know, usually a fiddle tune will be A part twice, AA, B part twice, BB. This one is ABC, ABC, DE. And all of the — all of those parts are different lengths. So it's Uber crooked [laughter].

[Music]

[Howard Spring:] Great. So, is the difference between what you just played and sort of battle time Canadian style, it's just a matter the crookedness or is there something else going on that's different?

[April Verch:] Yeah, there's something else going on because not all French Canadian tunes are crooked. I think part of it is that rather than all of these different influences you have mostly French and Irish, so you're going to have a little bit more, sometimes the Celtic influence, so whether it's Cape Breton with the Scottish or any style that has some of that Irish will have some of the bode triplet.

[Music]

Where you're just doing those separately quickly. You're not going to find that as much in old-time, usually. That's one of the things. The form of the tunes, also, the different styles have different types of tunes in the repertoire. So old-time Canadian, you know, you're going to have waltzes, jigs, reels, maybe a schottische two-step polka. In Cape Breton, you're going to have stress phase and marches and slow errors and laments that you don't have in other places. In Quebec, you'll have a quadrille, a cotillion, which you don't have in other, you know. So, sometimes it's the actual type of tune or the dance that it came from. What else? Some of it's in the technique. So, the French tunes have a lift and a bounce. It's almost a syncopation in the tune. And even if it's not exactly a syncopation, it's — there's a — it's very common to do this lift with your bow when you're teaching fiddle and you're trying to — people are like, how do I know whether I go up or down? You often say, go down on the downbeat, wherever you tap your foot, go down. And then when you teach somebody a French Canadian or a Metis tune you say, except. So it's very common for them to slur across the bar line, which we don't do in old-time and to go up on that downbeat, so.

[Music]

But not always, because it sounds like a hiccup if you do it too much. Sometimes I show people that trick to get the lift, and then they do it everywhere. And it's like, ah. But — So that's part of it. And they also cross tune their fiddles sometimes in the Quebecois tradition, also in Cape Breton, maybe a little bit in the Metis tradition, which you wouldn't have in old-time. Yeah. So if I were going to play — Oh, sorry, go ahead, Howard.

[Howard Spring:] I was just going to ask you, what do you mean by cross tune?

[April Verch:] So, that's where you take — So usually in standard tuning on the fiddle would be EA, DG. And so, if you take any one of those strings and make it something else, you've crossed tuned. So there's a variety of different cross tunings. And we can talk more about that. So I wanted to see if I could try to show you if I tried to play William Gagnon in an old-time Canadian style, which I've never tried to do, how the [inaudible].

[Howard Spring:] OK.

[Music]

[April Verch:] Like I'm almost not play the notes that way. And then, so contrasted with.

[Music]

So some of it is ornamentation.

[Howard Spring:] So it's almost like a question of rhythm and accent.

[April Verch:] Exactly. Yeah, that's a good summary of it. And also the ornamentation vary somewhat between styles, but not as much. I think mostly our Canadian fiddle traditions borrow from the Celtic ornamentation that you'd hear an Irish or Scottish player use. It might be neat to sort of contrast. So, obviously the Metis fiddle tradition, French, and Scottish and First Nations has a lot in common with the French Canadian tradition. And what's interesting is that French Canadian tunes are French Canadian tunes. They've been, you know, added to the repertoire by fiddlers from there. And so, it makes sense that they're crooked. Metis tunes are also crooked in similar ways. But a lot of Metis fiddlers play tunes that are common. You know how I said like St. Anne's Reel and Whiskey Before Breakfast, everybody plays them? Well, there are Metis versions of those tunes that are crooked. So they're not Metis tunes, but the versions of them are crooked and very cool. So I can give you an example of one of those. So I'll play a little bit of Arkansas Traveller, like, most people would play it [laughter].

[Music]

OK. And so, here's a version that John Arcand who is a master Metis fiddler from Saskatchewan. He remembers his ancestors playing Arkansas Traveller this way. And so a lot of people affectionately call this Arcand-Saw Traveller in John Arcand's honour [laughter].

[Music]

So I was trying not to tap my foot there, so it wouldn't be too loud on the mic. But that reminded me that in the Metis and the French Canadian tradition, they use their feet to accompany the fiddle. I'm not very good at it. But it's sort of a rhythm where your heel and your toe would do the one and the two. So it'd be like one, two, one, two. And your other foot would do the end of two, one, two, and one, two, and one, two [stomping]. So they're doing that while they're playing. And they have –

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[April Verch:] — swiftly strong thighs.

[Howard Spring:] Right. Does — So does that rhythm stay the same? Or do they use variations of it or?

[April Verch:] It pretty much stays the same while they're playing although some people have taken it and made it a little fancier, especially in the Acadian tradition. They almost — It's almost like chair step dancing,

you know. So it's no longer just what you do while you're playing, it's actually like a choreographed thing and they'll do it in sync, get up and walk around the chair and come back and everything. So a bit of both. In Cape Breton, they do the heel toe, so they just do the one, two rocking up their foot as they play. That's very common, traditional.

[Ryan Bruce:] With the toe tapping or the heel and the toe, does that change with the crooked tunes? And I guess my more general question is, how are the crooked tunes tied to dancing?

[April Verch:] Oh, yeah, great question. No, typically the rhythm of the feet doesn't change even if it's a crooked tune. It all just comes out in the wash [laughter]. I think, like I said, I don't do it very well and it's not part of my tradition. So, I hope I'm telling you correctly. But for my experience when I've tried it with a crooked tune, I didn't have to change anything and it was OK. And what was the second part of your question? Oh, yeah. How's it fit in with the dancing? So, yeah, there — I mean, there are some legends out there and I don't know how much truth is to them, like, I have heard people say that that French Canadian fiddlers — that the dances were made first and the dancers weren't keeping track and so the fiddlers changed their tune to fit the dance. I don't know. There is a tune, a Metis tune called the Red River Jig. So, we have a lot of, you know, all over Canada, you have square dancing and social dancing. And then you have some specific types of step dancing, like Cape Breton step dancing, or Arcadian step dancing or Ottawa Valley step dancing, French Canadian step dancing, all slightly different from each other. The Metis people have what they call the Red River Jig, which is a little bit related to step dancing, but it's kind of its own thing. And it's neat because you do — first of all, jig in the sense of dance, so it's not in six, eight. It's called the Red River Jig is the tune and that's the name of the dance. And you do the Red River Jig dance to the tune called the Red River Jig. So, one time I attended a competition for Red River Jigging and the poor fiddler had to play that same tune all day, whereas, at a step dancing competition, you can dance to any real. And it's sort of the A part, so it's a crooked tune, which is why your question made me think of this. So, it's a crooked tune but the dance is written in such a way that in the A part, they sort of do a circle step, which is always the same, the B part, you do the change, which is the fancy step and you show your stuff and then you go back to the circle step. And there are a lot of different versions of the Red River Jig, like every Metis, Fiddler plays it a bit differently. And even a bit differently, in the sense of, it's crooked in different places. So it's kind of amazing. So, I haven't played it in a long time. I'll try a little bit of it. My version, I think, would be close to John Arcand's just because he's the Metis fiddler that I know and have hung out with the most. Have been lucky to sort of grow up around him. And a lot of them would tune their fiddle to A for this, but I'm not going to do that.

[Music]

So the A part — A Metis fiddler told me one time, so, you know, because they have their own different crooked versions, he was explaining the dance to me, and the A part is up high on the A and the E string, and

the B part is down low on the D and the G. And he said, you just keep circling around and when the fiddler hits the big strings, then you go [laughter]. And I thought that made a lot of sense. It's like, you never know what crooked it's going to be. So, when they get down there to the G you better do your fancy stuff [laughter]. Yeah, you want to switch to banjo?

[Cody Walters:] Sure.

[April Verch:] Give me as well.

[Ryan Bruce:] Actually, yeah, maybe while you're switching, I have another question about ornamentation because people who might have been brought up with a music tradition and played maybe a different instrument, hear the word ornament, and they might think of a trill or turn or something like that. What kind of ornaments do you use in the fiddle tradition? What — And how would they maybe differ between one regional style and another?

[April Verch:] So, most of the ones that I use would be in any of those old-time Canadian styles just because that's what I grew up with. And it's exactly what you're talking about, a trill where it's not the repeated trill [music], it's just a single trill. So, going up a melody note and back. We don't do as many roles or turns. So like in Irish music you'll hear [music]. So if my note was an F, I might go F up a step back to the F, below the F and back. So you'd have five [music]. That doesn't fit into a lot of old-time Canadian tunes. Our Canadian tunes are nodi [phonetic] and don't leave room for that as much. But then again, you know, we have some of those Irish tunes that have made their way into the repertoire. So then you could fit one in. Hammer on where you anticipate the melody note. So if my note was the F sharp, then I might play a quick E before it. So instead of going [music], I would go [music]. Or, if I was coming down in the melody, I would do the same thing, but I call it a pull off. So instead of going [music], I might go [music] where I'm just pushing that one note out of the way. Lots of slides, and they can be kind of big [music] or really subtle, so that you hardly hear them. Runs, so anytime you're coming up to a third finger, you know, you might [music] just run up to it. Or if you're having open you [music] come down. That's the main stuff for left hand. As far as the right hand, we talked a bit about that bowed triplet that will make its way in. There's also something that I call a ghost note. And every one of these ornaments has 50 different names, and it just depends who you ask. So, this is just my version. But a ghost note to me, is almost more of a groove thing, but I still kind of considered an ornament. So like if I was playing [music] where I have those two up-bows, it sounds very straight to play it like that [music]. So if I do a quick, silent down-bow in between the two ups, so.

[Music]

And if — When I speed that up, if I just relax, sometimes it'll be silent, sometimes it'll make a squeak or a hit. But it gives that groove and that lift. So you get.

[Music]

So that's sort of an ornament, but it's also sort of a style thing. And then just the way you bow a passage is changing it and varying it. This is a good question because coming from the Canadian fiddle tradition we take a tune and we play the melody and then we vary it. But we don't improvise as a rule. It wasn't part of the tradition. Lots of Canadian fiddlers are great improvisers now. But like, originally, it was about the melody and just changing it to keep it interesting. And so sometimes that's just how you bow it. Sometimes it's taking a nodi section and holding a note out, or you have a place where there's a long note and so you double it or you triple it. It's very basic ways, but it's endless possibilities. Dynamics, where you play it in the bow, if you're playing here versus hear you have a different feel to it. So yeah, you know, I think Canadian fiddlers because they didn't improvise came up with these really cool ways of keeping a tune fresh, both for the player and the listener. And the other thing that came out of that melody based tradition and the dance tradition was stringing tunes together in a medley. So, you know, if you're playing for a square dance and you're going to play a jig rather than play that jig 20 times and play four jigs, five times each, you know. And so, that's a big part of the tradition as well.

[Ryan Bruce:] How much do you ornament, like how much of a piece is ornamented in a performance versus something that you said would be straight? And do you tend to play the same ornaments each time you play the same tune? Or does that change with every performance as well?

[April Verch:] Excellent questions. I'll start with the last one. No, like, I hardly ever play a tune the same way twice. So like, the ornaments aren't going to happen in the same places. That being said, it's kind of like, you know, how you have comfortable licks, so, there's certain stuff that you're good at, that you fall back on. And so even though I'm saying I don't play the same way twice, there's certain things that every time I play a certain tune that I like and sounds good and so it might not happen in the same place. And what precedes it and comes after, it's not the same, but there's just like there's — it's almost like there are ornaments that become licks [laughter] that I depend on. If — I hope that makes sense. And then, as far as the amount of ornamentation, it depends a lot on the tune, but I — and the style. But I would say that I really try to pay tribute to the tune, the melody and the tradition, the genre I'm pulling it from the first time through, because I want the listener to know what was intended. And that can be a fine balance because, you know, I grew up in the Ottawa Valley. Well, I just played a whole bunch of other Canadian styles for you, and I'm not a native of those styles. So I do my best to play them, you know, in a way that gives an idea of the best I can do from that style before I mess with them, you know, and put in ornaments that I might have pulled or a bowing for example. Now that I played and loved old-time American stuff as well, well, I'm not from there either, but then they have some

bowing stuff that's cool that we don't do in Canada and some of it sounds great and Canadian tunes, well, I'm not going to throw that in until the second or third or fourth time through, so that, you know, I'm hopefully walking that line. And that's something that I started decided early on. It's like, it's important to me to have my own sound, my own style because, you know, as a teenager going to fiddle camps I noticed that all of my friends picked a favourite fiddler and followed them around and learnt all of their tunes and they sounded like little clones. And I remember thinking, OK, we all say we want to make a living playing the fiddle, but how are you guys going to do that because you sound just like them? Don't you want to sound like yourself? And so I worked really hard to sound like myself. And then, at some point, I got older and thought, OK, but it's OK to sound like me, but I've got to get out of the way. I have to get out of the way of the music. It's not about me, it's about this tune, it's about this fiddler that I learnt it from, it's about the place that it came from, and that has to happen first. And so I guess that's why I say the first couple of times through, that's what I'm thinking. I'm not thinking, how does April bow this? How do I make it cool? I'm thinking, what is this about and to the best of my ability how do I get that across [laughter]?

[Ryan Bruce:] Great, thank you.

[April Verch:] Yeah. Awesome.

[Ryan Bruce:] You guys want to play some tunes with the banjo?

[April Verch:] Yeah. Let me go — Well, are you in D?

[Cody Walters:] I am in D [music].

[April Verch:] Maybe before we change the banjo key, we'll sing one. This is an original tune called Worth the Wait. And I guess this one sort of falls between styles. It's just kind of folk [laughter]. It's like [laughter] Canadian old-time meets American old-time or something. So this is a good transition maybe. And then we'll cross tune both instruments to A, and talk about that and play a couple of old-time American tunes.

[Cody Walters:] Ready?

[April Verch:] Yeah.

[Singing]

[Howard Spring:] That's a beautiful song, April.

[April Verch:] Thank you

[Howard Spring:] Cody, could I ask you something about the banjo there? Are you use — Is that a clawhammer technique or?

[Cody Walters:] Yeah, that's right. It's all done with the backs of my fingernails. I don't use picks or anything like that. And everything is a downward stroke. And the basic rhythm of it is, they call it the bum-ditty. Bum ditty [music]. So that's the basic right hand motion. So it's kind of — Your rhythm and melody are kind of both happening at the same time because you're — you have that rhythm always going underneath your melody notes.

[Howard Spring:] Is that a typical mode of accompaniment when you're playing with fiddle?

[Cody Walters:] It's more of an old-time American tradition, traditional accompaniment to fiddle. There's this style and there's also a two-finger plucking style which I don't do but it's it sounds much different from, say, like the Scruggs-style three finger, bluegrass banjo stuff.

[April Verch:] But I think that's one of the differences, too, is like in a lot of the Canadian traditions, the fiddle, when it's fiddle music is the star. So you're like, you have the fiddle and then guitar and piano or playing accompaniment.

[Cody Walters:] Right.

[April Verch:] And there's a couple of exceptions to that like the accordion plays the melody along in the Quebecois tradition, things like that. But in the old-time American style, the fiddle and the banjo –

[Cody Walters:] Share the melody.

[April Verch:] — share the melody.

[Cody Walters:] Often.

[April Verch:] Yeah.

[Cody Walters:] Oftentimes, the banjo can't play all the nice things that a fiddle can. So, you play the melody, but you don't play –

[April Verch:] It's not the exact same version.

[Cody Walters:] — all of the same melody. Yes.

[April Verch:] Which is part of the charm, because it's very complementary.

[Cody Walters:] Yeah. Yeah.

[April Verch:] So, we're going to A. So for me, that means my E and my A are staying the same, but my D is going up a step to an E and my G is going up a step. So I'll have AE, AE.

[Cody Walters:] Yeah.

[Music] And I — It'll be for me from the first string, E, C sharp, A, E again, and then the drone is also an A. So it's two steps up from what would be a standard tuning on the banjo.

[Ryan Bruce:] How often in performances or fiddling contests are you doing this cross tuning? Or if I was to attend an event or something like that, how often would I hear that?

[April Verch:] [Background Music] So, it's not really part of my tradition that I grew up with. So like, I only started doing it maybe 10 years ago. So you'd never hear it in a contest, because it just isn't part of the tradition there. In an old-time American contest, I don't know, I haven't been to any. But for us onstage now, you know, we love some of these tunes, and so we include them. But we try to not make it a part of the show. It's like — So our set list is all marked up with, OK, April needs to tune here, so Cody talks, and I walk to the back of the stage, and people hopefully aren't paying attention to the fact that I'm cross tuning, you know. Like I'll make mention, I'll say something like, hey, this is an old-time tune and they use alternate tunings, which means this and then I'll go do it, but he's filling time. And then when he has to tune, I'm filling time. So, it's happening, but it's hopefully not like annoying [laughter]. Although we do play instruments that –

[Cody Walters:] Required tuning.

[April Verch:] — that require a lot of tuning, so probably it's more — it's annoying to us [laughter]. OK, so.

[Music]

So what's cool about being in a tuning like this is oftentimes, you can play things in two octaves. So even

though the A part is written up here [music], it's the same fingering. And after you've played it a few times you dropped down and you play it down low, and it's all growling and driving.

[Cody Walters:] On the big strings.

[April Verch:] Yeah, on the big strings. And so, you know, there's different thoughts about the cross tunings and how they originated. Some people say that the old-timers didn't want to have to learn different finger patterns. So, rather than change what key you're playing in, you change the strings to be in a different key and you use the same finger pattern, could be. But also a lot of people talk about how one fiddler might often have to try and play loud enough and resonant enough for a whole roomful of dancers to hear them. And obviously, the fiddle rings in a different and bigger way in across tuning, I mean it just — because they're all ringing sympathetically because they're tuned similar, right? So, there is a different feel to the instrument and the resonance, so that it's also part of it, which is why it's so fun to — like, there's oftentimes I can play a tune in standard tuning that's meant to be cross tuned, but I'd just rather not play it. It's like, it's just such a part of how the tune has to sound [laughter].

[Music]

What do I play? You want to do Horse and Buggy and Jimmie Johnson?

[Cody Walters:] Yup.

[April Verch:] OK. So this is what happens when a Canadian girl tries to play old-time American tunes. We're going to play a medley, which they would never do [laughter]. They tend to just play one tune for a really long time and the tunes are hard to stop. Like a lot of old-time American tunes you get into that zone and you just can't quit them. But my Canadian nature has me stringing them together sometimes. So the first one here is called the Horse and Buggy Oh and the second is called Jimmie Johnson?

[Music]

Ready?

[Cody Walters:] Hmm-mm.

[April Verch:] One, two.

[Music]

[Howard Spring:] That was great.

[April Verch:] So one of the things that's different about the old-time American — thank you — the old-time American stuff, bowing wise, that's probably the biggest hardest thing for me not coming from the tradition. There's a lot of pulsing. So, a lot of like, even though you might just be playing [music] that, you're actually doing [music]. So [music], it becomes.

[Music]

So we have this sort of thing going on. Even when you can't hear it, if you're doing it, it comes out in the groove. And I'm still not that great at it. It's taken me a really long time to even feel like I can play these in public and pay respect to the tradition and I'm always checking in with, you know, my mentors [laughter] on that. But, you know, the cross tuning is a big difference because you automatically get that ring. And then I'd say the bowing is the other biggest difference.

[Howard Spring:] Did you want to play something else with a banjo?

[April Verch:] Yeah. And maybe we'll play something else in this tuning since we sort of have a rule that when we get the instruments in a tuning, we do more than one [laughter]. It takes [inaudible].

[Howard Spring:] I'm glad I ask.

[April Verch:] Maybe we'll play — So, when I write, I sometimes try to write in a style. And so I wrote a tune called Firewood last year. That's just kind of a long story. We had to cut our firewood a couple of times, because when we got it delivered, it was too long for our stove, wood stove. So we had to cut like three inches off of every piece before we split it and stacked it. So we were thinking about firewood a lot.

[Cody Walters:] Yup.

[April Verch:] And I tried to write this tune in the old-time American tradition. It's modal sounding. So it's still in A but it's a modal. It's crooked, which, you know, their tunes are as well often. Yeah, and it's kind of fun to try and write a tune in a tradition but also have it sound like maybe, like, my goal with this was when someone heard it that they would think it was public domain. So it's like not just an old-time tune but it actually sounds like it's been around for a hundred years, hopefully, like that was what I was going for. You can decide.

[Music]

[Howard Spring:] So when you say one year, you try to make it sound older, is that the modal part? I mean, in other words, because it's modal, does that make it sound older or what's wrong?

[April Verch:] No. I don't think so. I don't think that that makes it sound older. Hopefully it's just the tune itself, the melody. There are a lot of old-time tunes that are modal, but yeah, not necessarily that part of it. While we were playing that, I also wanted to say about the old-time American stuff that that's also an umbrella term. You know, there's Kentucky old-time is different than Virginia is different than North Carolina. I mean, every state, every region.

[Cody Walters:] Every valley.

[April Verch:] Every valley. Yeah, every holler. And I'm not as, you know, I can't speak to that as much. Usually, we know the tunes that we learnt from that tradition. We know where they're from. And we know the oldest person that played them, where they were from and who that was. And that's a big part of learning that style. When you're at an old-time jam, people don't just call it tune and play it. They'll often like, call the tune and then say, now are we playing so and so's version or so and so's version? And like, whoever knows the oldest one is obviously getting more points [laughter]. But they, you know, there's a — it's really a cool part of the tradition how much people pay attention to that.

[Cody Walters:] Yeah.

[April Verch:] I think that's not true in all fiddle traditions in my experience. When I met a Canadian jam, a lot of young people don't know who wrote Don Messer's Breakdown. It was Done Messer, by the way. But like, even like tunes that are standards in the repertoire, people don't know anymore who wrote them, but we don't talk about it enough, I think. So, yeah.

[Ryan Bruce:] I've been thinking about something you were saying at the beginning about Don Messer, and since you've mentioned him in passing again, you said that he had — he was classically trained and had a clean — kind of clean technique and had — there would be some of the older players that might have played more raw. And I'm wondering, what's the distinction? How's that made? I'm trying to get a sense of what it sounds like to be a clean fiddle player versus a raw player.

[April Verch:] Yeah. Like, I feel like that's part of what I was talking about. Like, I don't know if I can give an example of what it sounds like to be raw, because I was also taught to play, you know, clean, if you will. I think actually, like, a good example of that might be just contrasting. Even though there are two different styles, those tunes that we just played that were cross tuned in A, you were hearing a lot of other strings ringing. So,

we would call that a drone. So, a raw old-time Canadian fiddler who is not as trained is probably hitting other strings, even when they don't intend to. There's an emphasis in the old-time Canadian style of being clean of playing one note at a time and being very articulate. So even though that — articulate, not meaning all the notes have to be both separately, but if you're slurring it, it's clipped and it's clean and people know exactly what you intend to be doing. But if you're a raw player and you have less training, you probably don't actually know how to execute that. You can't articulate. So you might be using more slurs or slurring in a place you shouldn't be. You're hitting other strings. Your tone isn't as good. And like, I mean that in maybe a good way. Like, that's part of the thing, like, when we're talking about, oh, I wish I could play like that guy. Yeah, you don't — you just don't have the facility to accomplish things in a clean way. And so, things just happen that or just sound really authentic and raw. Yeah. That's the word I'm using to mean unrefined and yeah.

[Cody Walters:] I think it also, that lack of skill might inform their sense of style, so that they're playing it the best way they know how and that makes them sound a certain way.

[April Verch:] Yeah.

[Cody Walters:] Give them what they can do. And I enjoy that personally, but.

[April Verch:] Yeah. And then sometimes, like, with the really old field recordings that we hear, their instruments also, probably had an effect on that. Like, they didn't have a bridge with a good curve. It was really flat and that's what they had or it was a homemade instrument, right? So even that's affecting their sound and their style and what they can do and they can't do physically on an instrument like that. OK, I'm going to go back to standard tuning here, I think.

[Music]

So we've played a lot of the styles that we talked about or planned to play. Did you want to expand on anything there? Or should we — We can give a talk and give an example of the Ottawa Valley step dance style, too. Although I won't have as much breath left after we do that [laughter]. Fair warning.

[Howard Spring:] Sure. Let's do the step dance style, I think.

[April Verch:] Cool. So, yeah, this style, again, I was always taught that it started in the lumber camps. And if you can picture a bunch of lumber jacks with their big gum rubber boots on, you can — and then picture what I'm doing now, you know that it's kind of come a long way. But they did used to put nails or tacks in the bottom so that they could have a good sound on the hardwood floor. And they were sharing steps that they remembered from their homelands. So whether that was Irish or Scottish or French. And in the Ottawa

Valley tradition, Donnie Gilchrist, who was born in Quebec and then moved to Ontario, he used to watch the — when he was a little kid, he would go to the pub at night and watch the lumberjacks after they'd had some water and loosened up. And he would watch them dance and was influenced by them. He was then influenced by tap dancers. And Donnie was one of the first ones to pass the tradition along. And so he had a couple of prodigies. And then they continued teaching. And so, my dance teacher was Buster Brown. And Buster took from Donnie Gilchrist. He was one of his students. And I think one of the things that changed is that I think they used to just listen to the tune and dance the tune. They were moved by the music. And then when these people tried to pass it on, they had to figure out a way to teach it. So, you know, they would break it down into steps, and you do the steps in a certain order and then you have a routine. And groups of people can learn this style, but they're all dancing routines. And so, kind of a happy accident for me, I got sick when I was in my early teens and I couldn't dance for a couple years. I started dancing before I started fiddling. I started at three. And when I got better and could dance again, I still remembered like the moves, but I didn't remember any routines. And I don't know if I was lazy or [laughter] if it was just something that I realized, but I didn't really go back to ever forming those routines again. And so, I like to think that I'm carrying on the tradition of dancing the tune, [laughter] a little bit. And like, we were talking about earlier with the ornaments and the licks, certainly I have steps that are coming up again. I have moves that I'm relying on, but I can just like listen and do whatever I feel like in the moment.

[Howard Spring:] Do you think when you're dancing, is that a kind of improvised dancing, you think?

[April Verch:] Yes. Yup, it's improvised, unless, for some reason, I'm going to dance with someone else. Yeah. Yeah. When I — When we perform, and what I'll do now is just like, yeah, whatever [laughter]. Whatever comes for good or for bad. So it's — The Ottawa Valley style, there's no rules. What you have to do with your hands, you don't have to stay straight. You can flail. And the general rule is that you're on your tippy toes. So, unless you're stomping with your whole foot on purpose, if you're doing a step you're — so yeah, your heels don't touch unless you're doing a heel or a stomp. And so for that reason, it looks a little higher off the ground than some other styles where your flat foot. And so, you're maybe flat and scuffing. So that's one thing. It's, like, it's fairly high energy. And I think also that tap influence makes our steps a little bit more intricate than some other forms of step dancing. So that's kind of all I can think of on that at the moment. What are you going to play?

[Cody Walters:] I don't know.

[April Verch:] What key are you in?

[Cody Walters:] I'm in A, but I think [inaudible] –

[April Verch:] OK.

[Cody Walters:] — might be –

[April Verch:] Oh. What about Brickyard Joe?

[Music]

Yeah?

[Cody Walters:] Sure.

[April Verch:] That work. I like it.

[Cody Walters:] Yeah.

[April Verch:] OK. Hang on with [inaudible]. You can start.

[Music and Stomping]

Yeah. You just got a single tap on the bottom. So it doesn't –

[Howard Spring:] Is that typical?

[April Verch:] Yes and no. Buster always used what was called a staccato tap. So it was a tap with a smaller tap and a little rivet. So, it wasn't what they use in clogging is called a jingle tap where the whole thing jingles a lot, but it's like a mini jingle tap, if you will. Should we play another tune so I can get my breath back [laughter]?

[Howard Spring:] Yes. Not to sing now. Just play.

[April Verch:] Let's do Cauliflower.

[Cody Walters:] All right.

[April Verch:] This is a tune called Cauliflower, which I really liked to play. We learnt it recently. And I think it's a Kentucky tune. Kentucky or Ohio, but it sounds to me like, it could be a Canadian tune. It's nodi in the

same way. And I can bow it, like a Canadian or like, I think an old-time American player would and it sounds equally as good. So I find it a fascinating example of a tune.

[Music]

[Howard Spring:] That was great.

[Ryan Bruce:] How much are the tap dancers thinking about the rhythms that they're dancing? And does that change what the musicians are doing while they're playing?

[April Verch:] So, the — I think the answer is that, typically, people don't think about it enough [laughter] in our traditions. But I will say that when I'm playing for a dancer, a really good dancer, I know they're listening to me. So I'm trying to, you know, be steady. I'm trying to inspire them a little bit. You know, even if its dynamics, sort of kind of coming down and building it back up by watching them. But I feel like my job is more to be there to allow them to do what they want to do. So I make it interesting enough. But I think a really good dancer is listening more than the musician who's playing for them. Typically, that's the sense that I get. I mean, it doesn't happen enough, in my opinion. But when it happens, and you encounter other dancers and other musicians that are approaching it that way, it's next level stuff, you know. Really cool. So right now I'm working on a project with a dancer from England and he does Northumbrian clog dancing, which traditionally was done with a wooden clog. And he has a dance legend in his tradition that is from the same era as Donnie Gilchrist. And we're comparing their lives and careers and dance styles and choreographing a routine that is based on both of them together. And talking to him about this stuff is really fun, because he approaches it the exact same way. I mean, he's always listening to the tune. He's always trying to figure out how he can use his feet as an instrument to mimic the melody. And so I've been thinking about it extra this last little while as we're working on this project. And I'm hoping that, you know, our project and others like that will sort of revive that thought and that part of the tradition of how important the feet can be in being another instrument. Where the dancer is just not another showpiece where you bring out the token dancer for the entertainment, you know, it's part of the band.

[Ryan Bruce:] It definitely seemed that way when you were dancing.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

[Ryan Bruce:] I think more music would be great.

[Howard Spring:] Sure [inaudible].

[Cody Walters:] Yeah.

[April Verch:] Yeah, sure. So this is a tune that I wrote a long time ago. And I tried to write it in the old-time Canadian tradition or the Ottawa Valley tradition. We have a lot of two steps and polkas that would be played for social dancing at a dance in between waltzes and square dances. And so I wrote this for some neighbours it's called Eldon and Ethel. Just going to check my tuning lick. [Music] It's getting warm in here and the fiddle feels it.

[Music]

One, two, three.

[Music]

It's a pretty happy tune. And I think that's true, generally speaking of old-timey Canadian tunes, like, they're all very happy sounding, whereas some of the more, you know, the specific regional styles that, you know, have the Scottish lament or the slow air, you know, they might be sad, but yeah, the rest of the Canadian traditions are very uplifting and joyful [laughter].

[Ryan Bruce:] Do you have a lament that you guys can play? An error or lament, one of these other more contrasting tunes? Maybe that could be something to wrap it up.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah.

[April Verch:] Yeah, I can play in a slow air solo.

[Cody Walters:] Yeah.

[April Verch:] Yeah.

[Howard Spring:] Sure.

[April Verch:] Sure.

[Howard Spring:] That'd be great.

[Ryan Bruce:] That would be nice.

[Howard Spring:] That'd be great.

[April Verch:] Log Driver's Waltz, I don't know if that's one I can play because Cody loves that tune.

[Cody Walters:] I do love that tune.

[April Verch:] I don't know. Look it up. If we can play that, we'll play it [laughter]. [Music] So, this is called Miss Jamieson's Favourite. And it's a slow air from the Celtic tradition. I think I learnt it from a Cape Breton fiddler. But I don't know. It's not a traditional Cape Breton tune, it's older than that, so.

[Music]

[Howard Spring:] Gorgeous.

[Ryan Bruce:] Excellent choice

TRANSCRIPT: AFRO-CUBAN MUSIC

[Howard Spring:] Thanks for joining us Mags. Can you — Can we start off just by you telling us something about yourself. Where you're from? Anything you want to say about your background? How you learnt to play? Anything else, what you're up to now?

[Magdelys Savigne:] All right. How much time do we have? No, kidding, kidding.

[Howard Spring:] We got time. We got time.

[Magdelys Savigne:] So my name is Magdelys Savigne Careon. I am from Cuba, originally. Now I live in Canada. I've been here eight years now. I love it here. But well, I'm still Cuban, born and raised. And I'm a percussionist. I studied classical percussion. That was the main thing. And then I actually did the popular — this is called popular percussion or folkloric percussion from Cuba, like you don't study that. In school, it's only classical training. And then once you finish school, you can actually learn — if you're not learning since the beginning, right, how to play congas. I don't know if you've seen the congas. And this instrument that I have right here.

[Howard Spring:] And that's called what, the instrument that you have there.

[Magdelys Savigne:] Bata It's called bata, bata drums. It's a very religious instrument, mostly played by men. Mostly? Yes. Allowed to play by men. Women are not allowed to play them. But these ones are artistic. So I do play them.

[Howard Spring:] OK. So when you say they're religious. What do you mean? What religion and how do they fit into that?

[Magdelys Savigne:] So they are religious from the Santeria religion. It's — It comes from the Yoruba, Western Africa. That those are those slaves that went to Cuba. But the religion that they brought — of course, they weren't allowed to bring their own instruments or anything, or even allowed to practice their religion openly and their traditions. But they were allowed one day a year and the other day is, which is January six to do their own carnival. It was like a carnival. So they could — They have to create their instruments and a whole new set of traditions because that's what they could do in Cuba. And these are the instruments like they are

from Cuba even though in Africa, we see many cultures, Nigerian culture that they have, the bata. Very close to the bata, but the ones that the Santeria religion plays is from Cuba.

[Howard Spring:] OK. That's great. So when you finished your formal training and classical percussion, you learn the bata. Did you just — Did you have someone that you studied with? Or did you just pick it up by hanging around and trying it out?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Huh, tricky. Thanks for the question. Well, actually, I didn't finish the training because I finished when I was at the university when I was 21. I started playing the Bata when I was seven, eight-years-old. And it was very hard for me to find a teacher because no one would teach a girl to play these drums. So it was very, very secretive but only boys could be allowed to learn the drum, even for religious parties or not. Women are not encouraged to play this instrument. So unless you sing or dance, you're fine. But if you are a percussionist if you play this instrument, you're not allowed. So I found a teacher, a Maestro Ventura [assumed spelling], like he passed a few years ago. And he was the only one willing to teach me because I used to go to the rehearsals from the folkloric company that he used to belong. It wasn't an ensemble that used to play Afro-Cuban traditions, right? So I used to skip school. This is wrong. Well, I used to skip school just to go there and watch them rehearse. See the dancers, the singers and then this drum just got my eye. I used to be a pianist at school. I was studying piano back then not percussion. And then I just fell in love with the Bata and I wanted to learn. So I — Every day I was there seeing how they were playing it. Why they were doing? What they were singing. And one day this person just comes to me that Ventura. And he told me, what are you doing here? You know, the girls aren't supposed to be here, right? I'm like, yeah, I know. But I'm really like this instrument. And he's like, are you serious? And I'm like, yes. So he is like, let's see what you can do. So he called me inside. He gave me this little one called okonkolo. And he's like let's see what you can do, just like that. And I was there like every day for some reason I had something in my head. He was playing and I was playing with him. And then he's like, mm-hmm, all right. I'll see you tomorrow in my home at midday. So come see me and then we're going to start lessons. But just like that. Some stranger, that I had to talk to my mom and like convinced her at seven-years-old that that's what I wanted to do, which was hard. So it was a long process after that, but I just wanted to play them so badly that I did. And I continue piano because that's what my mom wanted. So I graduated from piano and then I started percussion because that's the main career that you have to do with the percussion. So I just started doing both until I just left alone with the percussion. That's it.

[Howard Spring:] Great. Is that — is it different now in Cuba do you think when it comes to women playing these or it's still the same women don't play those drums?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Well, it did better now for women to play percussion. So back in my day, I was one of the few women in Cuba playing percussion. Trust me. And I've known and I've heard many women like the lady of percussion [foreign language] like she used to play bata, Naile, Obini Bata. So those are bands that they

are pro-women playing this instrument, but still they are not allowed. They get a lot of criticism. But nowadays it's better for percussion. Congas, drums, now it's better but this remains a taboo for women especially in religious parties.

[Howard Spring:] Right. OK. Well, let's hear what they sound like. Do you want to just demonstrate them?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Sure. Well, I mean, yeah, sure. Why not, why not? So this huge guy over here it's called iya or mother. It sounds very deep. [Drumming]. Then you got this middle one called itotele. So it answers whatever called the mother's playing. So, [drumming], it sounds like a medium pitch one. And the little one is called okonkolo. It means little one. And it keeps the beat generally. OK? [Drumming]. So they each have their own technique to play them and yeah, they sound like this together. They're played by three people. But I have next time to play them by myself. So this is called ibalo — I mean, this is lalubanche and this token is a lalubanche from Elegua.

[Drumming]

[Chanting]

That's the lalubanche. That's a chant from Elegua. It is one of the deities from the Yoruba continent.

[Howard Spring:] Can you just maybe swivel those drums around and talk about the technique that you're using on each one?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Of course, I can.

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[Magdelys Savigne:] So here. It's like modelling. Its great [laughter]. So there are three of them. Like I said before they're played by three people, but I arranged them to be played by myself. So this huge one called iya needs to be play with a whole hand. So they each have their own technique to be played with. So we got this. [Drumming]. To get that booming sound, you need that. [Drumming]. And then you have the itotele, the middle one. And you use the same technique as if you were using a conga, the open sound. [Drumming] To bring that sound also so you got, iya, itotele. So, the little one okonkolo which mean little. You just play with the tip of your fingers. So, [drumming]. Just like that. So we got this, this and this. That's it.

[Drumming]

And the other side — oh, wait, before I go to the other side, let me show you this. These are different because they are called Bata Cajon. So they're slightly different. I'll show you the actual Bata how they look like. But this it's called Bata Cajon and they are new-ish, like a few years ago designed by Valter, a percussionist from Sweden. And they are great for tutoring and packing unpacking. Is very — it's only one case. You don't need to carry the three cases plus a stand, anything. So everything comes in one case, which is amazing. So, you use this magnet actually to tune them. So let me show you how it works. So you got this itotele [drumming]. And it sounds like that now were like it, right? But then you move the magnet and it changes the sound just like that. Or very high [drumming] if you want it really high. I like it, [Drumming]. Not too high. The same with your okonkolo. [Drumming]. This switches the sound, same thing. Same with iya. You just move that and it change the pitch so, that this side called mouth, the mouth and the one that talks. We got this side. That is called chacha. The chacha is chacha because of the sound it makes. Cha, cha, cha. So it's similar to the slob with the congas. [Drumming]. Also they have different pitch.

[Drumming]

And is used to feeling on the, whatever the mouth is saying. These are — I mean if these are — if you think about that. If these are the vowels, they will be the consonants. So those — They together create the words, right? So imagine that rhythm that I just play and I have to put it apart like now the arrangement that I just made. Let's see with the iya, you will do the calling first.

[Drumming]

You see? So there's a space there. What happened with the rhythm? We need a little bit more, right? So we got the itotele doing this.

[Drumming]

It's a little bit full. I'm still missing that booming sound from —

[Drumming]

That would be two of them. So we're still missing one more and — which is the okonkolo keeping the beat. So we need that. [Drumming]. So with the itotele. That's why I do this on the chacha to create that, yeah, from the okonkolo, right?

[Drumming]

And then the booming.

[Drumming]

So it feels like there's more people involved, right? It's only one person. And of course, nothing beats to have three people with, you know, six arms doing this. But well, you got to do what you got to do. And do the best you can. So, plus this thing in which is very hard with all that syncopation happening. So yeah. So that's this. Let me show you if I can, right? Howard, is that OK. I'll show you the real Bata how it look like. So these are the religious ones. Of course, they're not religious in case I get into trouble. OK. So this is the itotele. This is the middle one from the real deal Bata. So you see they have no metal. There's no metal involved. This just skin that you just pull when it gets kind of wet. So you wet this, and then you just pull, pull, pull, and you get that. You see the sticks, that's what you use as the keys in order to hold that and change the sound. Hear that? So look at this. So they look like this. Now they have designs that they do this and they put them into the ones with the keys that I'm going to show you next. Just to make them look very traditional. But these are the traditional ones. OK? The chacha. Well, this is very out of tune. But you see it's very — its handcraft, everything. These drums have to be handcraft. And they have a ceremony to give birth to the drums also. So the best players from the country are called into Matanzas, which is one city like two hours from Havana. And they are called there in order to give birth to the drum and it's a beautiful ceremony where they play the newly made Bata.

[Howard Spring:] Who makes them? Who makes them? Is this specialized, are there special drum makers? That's what they do?

[Magdelys Savigne:] [Inaudible] makers do them. I mean, people with the tradition of doing the drums, making the drums. So, people who know how to make those. The same people who used to make the Cuban congas. In Cuba there is no — they cannot be knowing the industrial thing involved, you see, its handcraft. The wood is specifically picked [foreign language]. I mean, it's a tree. I don't know how to say it in English. And the skin, it has to be animal skin because it's what brings life to the drum. And it needs a special ceremony because before you put the skin on to close it inside in it needs another saint that it's a one of — another deity that goes inside the drums that needs to give a soul to the drummer. I mean, that's what is believed on the religion. So it's not just the drum. That's why this one has nothing inside. But the real ones do have a saint inside or a stone or a special thing inside that makes them religious. And you want to be clean to play down. I mean, it's a whole process. Clean as in men clean. Women are dirty, I guess. These are the artistic Bata. The ones that I'm sure people have seen on TV, on YouTube and all that. So, also different. These ones have keys. I will show you. Chacha same. [Drumming]. They sound different, right? So this another itotele, but the artistic one, you see just the real thing. The same wood, nothing inside. You have these keys because they are not religious and the skin of course, it's very important in both sides. So you have that sand clock sort of shape. And you put them in your legs. And you play them. I mean, I played to this side because I played them left-handed. But people

actually do this to the right side, and they play on the right side. If you're left-handed you played on the left side. The big mouth.

[Howard Spring:] OK. So the difference between a religious one and non-religious ones is what's inside? Is that right?

[Magdelys Savigne:] What's inside and how do they look like, also. You won't find religious drums with keys to tune them or wrench.

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[Magdelys Savigne:] There's no industrial thing happening, just craft. It's got to be religious people making them with a long tradition of making the drums. And then the Babalawo or the high priests has to come and put the saints inside and sing the songs accordingly to that certain story to give birth to the drum.

[Howard Spring:] That's very interesting, actually. Can we go back just –

[Magdelys Savigne:] They don't broke.

[Howard Spring:] Can you go back to the piece that you were playing and singing. What kind of peace was that?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Well, it — this is one of the chants that for Elegua. Elegua is the first deity that we sing on the religion. It's the — I mean, its syncretized — I say syncretized because as I told you before, the slaves weren't allowed to sing their traditions or the songs or anything. Practice their religion. So what they did was behind the master's back, they were worshipping their white gods with black names. So they were taken to mass and everything. And they were saying oh yes, that's a — I don't know. It's a god, we called Orula. Yes, that's Saint Anthony that's Elegua. All right. That Saint Barbara yes, that's Shango in our head. So it became part of the tradition just to believe in both religions basically. But yes, they are the white gods but we believe in the black gods with the black names and different stories and Oshun, Yemoja which is the sea is Mercedes, like Mercedes St. and the Virgin Mary, which is Oshun, the one that gives birth. And yeah, every single one have their own story. Oya, the warrior. Shango is the another warrior guy, god of thunders. So we do have a god of thunder also for, Thor. So it's called Shango, one of Cuban religion, and they dress in their own patterns. Shango in this case, dresses in white and red. Oshun as yellow. Yemoja is blue. Las Mercedes or Obatala. It could be male or female. And they — he dresses or she dresses in white.

[Howard Spring:] Do the deities have their own rhythms?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yes, they all have their own paths. Sometimes they interlock. And that's why sometimes on the singing and the rhythm, so you can hear very similar rhythm pattern, or a word, or something, named across to the other deity because they actually interlocked. They met each other at some point in history. So they used to be human like the Nordic gods, same thing.

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[Magdelys Savigne:] Like all the antique gods. And so, they all have their own paths, their own singing, their own chants, their own dances, and their own playing, their own rhythm.

[Howard Spring:] Can you play an example of the different rhythms that would go along with certain deities –

[Magdelys Savigne:] Sure.

[Howard Spring:] — or certain chants and rhythms, whatever?

[Magdelys Savigne:] OK. Yeah. Sure. For instance, that one that I played, it was an Elegua. Elegua is red and black. It's like a kid. Like a very naughty kid. And is the first and last that you play for the party otherwise, its chaos in the party. That's a lalubanche. It's one of the stories. You got Yemoja, for instance. [Drumming]. The Yakota.

[Drumming]

[Chanting]

That's Yemoja. That's the one for the ocean. And she dances to this. This story is very fun. This story is very nice because she was taking care of a town and she was giving water to the town and somebody stole it. So that's what he's talking about in this story. Of course, we don't know the right translation like, word for word of what we're saying. But we know the stories behind it. This ancient, nobody speaks like that anymore.

[Howard Spring:] What language is it in?

[Magdelys Savigne:] It's Yoruba.

[Howard Spring:] Yoruba. OK.

[Magdelys Savigne:] That's right. But many things got mixed. That's why it's called Santeria religion because many things — it was, you know — back in the colony time, colonial times. All black were the same. So when they were brought to the New World, they were put all together the same ships. So there was no like, OK, people from the Yoruba tribe, you go there. People from the Bantu go there. Like people Arawak go here, like no. So it was like, oh, there — black people are the same. They just put them together and then let's sell them and everything. So many religions, many tribes got mixed, and that's what gave colour now. I mean, we've got to get a positive thing out of that of course. It gave colour to the religion and that's why it's called Santeria because it has many words from Congo. It had — it has many words from Benin It has many words from the Yoruba tribe. So some Nigerians might understand what we're saying, but it's like a very ancient Nigeria language of prayer. So –

[Howard Spring:] That's interesting.

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yeah, yeah.

[Howard Spring:] Can you play another example?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Sure. So that was a Yemoja. We got Oya for instance.

[Drumming]

This is the war calling.

[Drumming]

[Chanting]

May dances go with that. That's a calling for war to Oya, just St. Teresa, I think it's called. But Oya, this is the warrior lady. She goes to war. That's her chant for war. So not a very sad war. What I mean it depends how you look at it. But that was a [inaudible]. We got what else? Oh, do Orula. So the chant to the main god began.

[Drumming]

[Chant]

So that's for Orula, the deity, the main deity. So we have Orula, Oricha, Olodumare, the sky, the sun, and the Holy Spirit. Same thing about Orula. That's different from [inaudible]. Who else? Oh, Oshun. Why not?

[Drumming]

This is Orisha.

[Drumming]

[Chanting]

So we got to stop for Oshun. Like it's very rhythmic already. This is like a party sort of toke. We call it toke or just rhythm. And not only Oshun uses it. Like many, many deities dance to this sound. They all gathered together with this sort of rhythm.

[Howard Spring:] Mags, when you learn a piece or when you learn what you were playing. What do you actually learning? Do you learn each drum separately and then put the beats together? How do you do that?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yes, that's mandatory. You have to know what each of them play. So you start with a little one, with the okonkolo. And you have to do the whole auto cycle which is the auto cycle is like the whole ceremonial path from all the auditions. You have to know every single Orisha, Orisha path. Orisha is the deity from the Afro-Cuban religion. So you have to learn one by one starting with Elegua ending with Oduduwa. So all 21 saints, you have to learn one by one, one by one drum as well. So, everything on the okonkolo. Everything on itotele. Everything on the iya, at the end. It's a lot.

[Howard Spring:] Sure. It sounds like a lot. So, is that — so let's say you're starting with the first one and you're doing it on the smallest drum? Are there a series of different rhythms or there's one rhythm that goes with that drum with that deity?

[Magdelys Savigne:] So, it depends. This particular drum has different beatings for each song — in each one of the paths of each one of the Orishas. So it's a lot.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah.

[Magdelys Savigne:] It's not like you can play just this for everybody all the time. No, it's like — it's different for Elegua. And then you can divide the — that chant — the oto, for instance. Let's take Elegua which is the first one that you play for. You do the latopa. It's called Latopa, the main prayer for Elegua. And then you have

to — it has like six calls and you have to answer the six calls. So five, six call and you have to answer them. You have to know each called. What does it do in the — in that particular one? The call number one is similar to call number two because if we say only the okonkolo you can do one, two, three, four, one.

[Drumming]

That's one. When the next call comes if you're learning like that it's the same thing but in another beating because the iya change and switch key — not key, time signature. So you have to — you keep doing this but the feeling is different. And so basically the same thing for calling number one and calling number two, but is not. Then you got calling number three and is different. So is not bepa, bepa, bepa [drumming]. So it will be [drumming]. So it's there like eight note now. It's not deda, deda. Like there is no three, no more. It's more of a two, fourish sound like it's accommodated. And then the last one is very fast, then you got another one that is.

[Drumming]

But you know — you have to know what each drum is doing in order to enter at the right time, the right spot.

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[Magdelys Savigne:] So why don't we knowing what to play and when to play it.

[Howard Spring:] Because all of these rhythms interlock, right? Like you say they have two optimal ways when to come in.

[Magdelys Savigne:] A [inaudible] on you come in. Because they all telling a different story. They're all telling something different. That I mean, in the drumming, sort of talking. They talk to each other. For instance, in that one Elegua starts with a calling from the mother.

[Drumming]

This one response.

[Drumming]

Then — [drumming]. That's when you come in. So they together —

[Drumming]

So it's like very — they all talk to each other is very — it's different. It's different when you play with three people. It's different when I have to, like read out the whole rhythm in order to make –

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[Magdelys Savigne:] — it sounds similar to that. Yeah, because then otherwise, there will be spaces. If I don't fill in with a chacha, there'll be spaces and it will sound like someone is trying to play that rhythm and it's not doing it properly.

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[Magdelys Savigne:] It's more like there's three people.

[Howard Spring:] Right. Is any of this improvised?

[Magdelys Savigne:] No.

[Howard Spring:] No. OK. So, when — [inaudible].

[Magdelys Savigne:] I mean you can improvise — you have to know it. You have to know the rhythm.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah.

[Magdelys Savigne:] People improvise on the big one. But you have to know the traditional part. And then you can just pull one hand here and there to switch the rhythm slightly. But at the religious ceremony, you have to do what you have to do.

[Howard Spring] Right. OK. That makes sense. And you have to — nothing is written down, right? You have to remember all this whole oral tradition, right?

[Magdelys Savigne:] I mean, I just didn't write it because school gave me the tools but you got to understand this guy's didn't go to school. Like back in the day –

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[Magdelys Savigne:] — there was no school for them. It was all oral tradition. And I mean, it was then supposed to be oral. And that's it. My eyes, provided –

[Howard Spring;] Yeah.

[Magdelys Savigne:] — so I don't forget this because this is a lot of rhythm. So I have to remember a lot of pieces from the classical world. And then apart from that write all this rhythm. So I write some of them that I don't remember. Others, you just play them so much that it just comes to you when you play them.

[Howard Spring] What's the relationship between what you're playing on the drums and the language that you're singing in?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yeah. There has to be a relationship. So as I told you, the drums communicate to each other, right. Like call and response, the same. The chants also go on call and response. The singer sings one piece of the song and then the choir repeats after that, right? So you — Some chants, you can hear them through the drumming. For instance, Oshun has the Cheke Cheke which is another dance that it — goes with the dance through Cheke Cheke. So, with the steps and all that. The drums do.

[Drumming]

So that's the drumming. The chant goes.

[Drumming and Chant]

So in that particular one, everything goes with the drummer. It's very hard to do with the three of them. So.

[Drumming and Singing]

So, [chanting] that rhythm in that particular rhythm goes with the chant. Others is just you know what chant to sing once you hear that — the rhythm you know what chant –

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[Magdelys Savigne:] — comes with it. That also, traditionally. Well, there are many, many chants. It's not like one chant for rhythm. There are so many chants and they all have to do — have to come with a different rhythm. So, you never stop learning.

[Howard Spring] Do you have to know the dances too? Do you have to know how to dance them?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Well, I dance pretty badly, trust me [laughter].

[Howard Spring:] OK. So.

[Magdelys Savigne:] That particular thing like no, Cuban's getting that folklore dance. I mean, some people specialize in that. And they dance properly to the Orishas, but I wouldn't dare to do it. I have tried. For me the drumming, yes. I can take it anytime even the singing. But the dancing is another matter. It's very hard because actually, you have to know the singing and the drumming. But the singer tells you what to dance. So you have to be aware of what they're singing. And then you're like, oh, so is this path from the Orisha and then you have to do it. What steps should I do? Ba-ba and then it goes with the drumming. And the drummer is going to be, OK. The singer just did this. Oh, the dancer just did that. So I have to basically do it. But physically do it no, I know what chant goes with what dance but visually. [Laughter]. I wouldn't dare to go in person.

[Howard Spring:] When we, you know, when we learn about this music, African music and Afro-Cuban music I — there's two things. One is this idea of polyrhythm. So is that what's going on here as well?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yes. Many.

[Howard Spring:] OK.

[Magdelys Savigne:] That's all a polyrhythm in these chants. I mean, that's why the Bata so complete. It's very complete instrument because it's a lot happening. It's not only rhythm. Its polyrhythm, plus the tuning that goes with it plus, the singing and everything else. So that's a lot of polyrhythm.

[Howard Spring:] Can you demonstrate?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Sure. What I just did now. It's very hard not having somebody else to play.

[Howard Spring:] Sure.

[Magdelys Savigne:] What we — if we do this in person one day, I can have the students with one drum each, and I can teach them how to play something from the rhythm. And then I grab this. I teach another one to do that. And that creates a polyrhythm. That's what a polyrhythm is. So the amount of different rhythms on top

of each other that match and they create something new. So let's say for instance, let's do this chacha locafun which is a very famous rhythm.

[Drumming]

So that's a polyrhythm. So how would it sound separated? The one — the iya calls [drumming]. The okonkolo response papa, papa papa, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. That will be this one. That's one of the easiest one. That's what I teach my students there to start with. They just do that. [Chanting and Drumming] One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. So it's easier to count on four then all threes. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three, four. So it's the rule of three on top of four. So reanalyze it like that. One, two, three four. One, two, three, four. Then with that same counting, I'll do the itotele. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. Pak, pak, pak, pak. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. Usually, the itotele, the middle one is the one that creates the most polyrhythms, right, because it's in the middle. And the chacha is usually mostly never on time. It's a beat usually, right? But — So, this is what — imagine if I play just this dry, no counting. [Drumming]. It could been in anywhere, right, if you don't know where it is. [Drumming] One, one, one. Like who would say that the one is in the air? Like the one is not played by anybody. The one is played by iya. So only here you know where the one is. [Drumming] That's it because the big drumming goes on the downbeat. [Drumming] One, one. That's it. And the itotele is different. It's one, one, two, three, four. One, one. It's like no one is playing it. But actually, someone is playing it, the okonkolo is the one that keeps the beat and is the one that is counting also. So everybody pays attention to the okonkolo here because it does one, two, three, four. [Drumming and Chanting]. Yeah. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. You see that? So it's not triplets. Were you doing? One, two, three. Pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa. It's like twosies. [Laughter]. [Inaudible].

[Howard Spring:] Like quarter-note triplets or something.

[Drumming]

[Magdelys Savigne:] One, two, three, four. One, one, one, two, three, four. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. If you want a take it like that. One, two, three, four. One, one, one. That's a way of seeing syncopation there like with the counting of one, two, three, four. So sometimes people need that downbeat they need it. But not every single rhythm or toke has the downbeat. So there is when it gets complicated. And yeah, it is very complicated.

[Howard Spring:] So one of the things that we're told sort of holds all this together is the clave.

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yes.

[Howard Spring:] Can you talk about that a little bit?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Sure. And I'm going to use the same rhythm to do the clave. I'll grab the clave.

[Howard Spring:] OK. Go ahead. Right.

[Magdelys Savigne:] So this was over here are the African claves. We call them African claves, couple of sticks [laughter]. And they are African claves. They're Cuban. But we call it African cloves because they have this hole behind. I don't know if you can see it properly. Yeah, this — it has like two holes in here, and then you put your hand in here. It has this shape. And you put your hand in the back of it. And it makes it sound deep. Otherwise, it will sound like this. [Claves sound] Very high, right. So you need this.

[Clave Sound]

You see. Any street tree. It sounds like this and the sticks will sound like this. But the clave have their particular sound just that. So in this particular rhythm, we will have many claves, of course. But in this particular rhythm we use the 6/8 clave. Or the guaguanco clave, 6/8 is this clave.

[Clave Sound]

I'm sure you've heard it. It sounds a syncopation happening there, right? So you — their ways of thinking of this clave. Let's say you're thinking of it in 6/8 way or 12/8. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three.

[Clave Sound]

One, two, three. One, two. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two. That's it. Four, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. Same thing. You could think it like round it to 4/4 or do 12/8 or 6/8. That's the thing. So that's — from that one comes the guaguanco clave. The clave that every Cuban plays, in Cuban music which is —

[Clave Sound]

Not confused with a Cuban clave which is the 3/2.

[Clave Sound]

You've heard it on the New Orleans theme. So that happens in New Orleans with a Cuban invasion, to New Orleans [inaudible]. That's all about tradition there like they take from Cubans too.

[Clave Sound and Chanting]

That's the Cuban clave is called the Cuban clave, 3/2. But the 2/3 is one, two. One. Two, three. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. That counts from the 6/8 one. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three. Guaguanco. Two, three, four. One, two, three, four. We just take it, f new few beats of this one.

[Clave Sound]

Basically, the same clave, but just taking a few beats from that one, from that rhythm and it creates a whole new clave. Oh, we also have the other one. [Clave Sound]. Just play that guys. Like three beats. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. Well, where do I play that? [Clave Sound]. With the count four, one, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four.

[Clave Sound]

So there's a lot of other rhythm that you can create there. So if we see each other one day, we could also do that. I play games with the clave. You're going to play the one, two, three, one, two. Let somebody else can play one, two, one, two, three. Somebody else can play pa pa, pa, pa, pa, pa. The 6/8. And somebody else could do [inaudible].

[Clave Sound]

So you can create many, many polyrhythms with that. Or what we used to do at school, which is go nuts and switch the downbeat to the two, three or four, whatever you want to do. For instance, if you're doing one, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three. You can switch to your downbeat to 2.

[Clave Sound]

So you start on the second beat or somebody else's start on third. And you can also create a whole new song. Even with [inaudible] let's go with that. So there are things you can do with the clave.

[Howard Spring:] I'll try and get you up to our class. You can do that in our class. That'd be great.

[Magdelys Savigne:] That would be so much fun. The kids love that [laughter].

[Howard Spring:] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, for sure. Let me ask you another question about that. You know, when we were giving — when you were demonstrating some of those chants and pieces and drumming. I didn't hear the clave in that. Was it operational or what's going on there?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yeah, there's no physical clave with the Yoruba with the Santeria. It's physical. You could do the clave with people in the parties, in the ceremonies. They do clap the clave because it's actually makes it fun, right? It gives you energy to play the drums. But the clave is internal. So let's say you — we know already this clave. [Clave sound] One, two, three, four. We know that, right? So keep that in mind. And we're going to do that same chacha [inaudible] from the way were doing. Let's say we want to put that clave to learn the okonkolo. OK? We're going to do pa, pa, pa, pa, pa. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. [Drumming] [inaudible] pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa. One, two, three, clave. Pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa, pa. That's your okonkolo, right? So you got the itotele. Remember that the itotele, the one was somewhere in the air, right? You were doing, one, one. Remember that? So, we got to do the same with the clave.

[Drumming]

You see that? And then the iya.

[Chanting]

You may say that when it's easier. Well, that one has to do a lot of improvisation. That one is the one that solos in the middle of — in this particular rhythm. So.

[Drumming and Chanting]

But that was art [inaudible] [laughter]. I want to do it all. I mean, you should practice that? We got one show person [laughter]. So, yeah.

[Howard Spring:] That was great. That was fantastic really. So there's so many ways –

[Magdelys Savigne:] Imagine to bring the polyrhythm on top of that? The polyrhythm of singing to bring it on top of this polyrhythm. That's crazy.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah. It is. But it sounds great, sounds great.

[Magdelys Savigne:] Well, thank you.

[Howard Spring:] That's fantastic. Ryan, did you want to ask something more about this?

[Ryan Bruce:] I'd like to see it on the side. I'd like to see you actually play it on the side.

[Howard Spring:] Right. Right. OK.

[Ryan Bruce:] Because I think that there's — I think there's something I'm maybe I'm kind of missing. And maybe that same beat that you were — that same polyrhythm that you were putting together.

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yeah. So for instance, this is the side of the drum. We're going to do that same thing clave.

[Chanting and Drumming]

That's iya. Itotele. [Drumming], remember? One, one. That's the one. So.

[Chanting and Drumming]

So, this one is different from the iya, because this one has a short sound because its short sound. You got open sound [drumming] and you got to short sound. So, there — there's a switch — like a slightly change of pitch and music with that combined with the chacha, so. I mean, if you hear the pitch of course. [Drumming]. If you do two open. So it sound like this [drumming]. It's like another different rhythm. But if you do this.

[Drumming]

Let's say — I mean, that one I think was responding to a call that the mother might have done. And the same with your okonkolo.

[Chanting and Drumming]

Or you could do. [Drumming]. Like add that feeling of an eight note on top of that too.

[Drumming and Chanting]

You could do that.

[Drumming and Singing]

You could do. [Drumming] or [drumming]. And, you know, it's like, you could combine the both of them and together when everybody plays that makes a difference. So you see different techniques for the drum. Again, on the mouth side [drumming]. The mother, the whole hand and you bring that boomy sound out. You got itotele with the fingers. And you have this short sound also. You don't do this for the itotele. There's no sound there. But you do this [drumming]. And you have the okonkolo with the tip of your fingers [drumming]. That one has no bass sound either. And so that, bringing that little like a bell-ish sound.

[Drumming]

Very, very bell-ish sound. So you got that —

[Drumming]

Different and the other side you got the chacha same. You don't need to bring your own hand to tap on that. Like that's a mistake. Like a rookie mistake when you start doing these drums. You try on hit as much as you can like a slap on the congas. But then they'll actually break your hand if you do that. So it's mostly fingers, and it has to be itchy, and it hurts. But then you get used to it and you don't feel thing after that. So you can be no hand model after that. So forget about that career. But I mean, if you put some cream on it your hand might get soft again, but don't care about that when you're playing. So you use your fingers and play that same movement of a slap of a conga like that. [Drumming]. It got to sound very dry, like bop, bop.

[Drumming]

That and [drumming]. So in this case, they both have pitches to.

[Drumming]

I'll play it from this side now. So you see enough what's happening.

[Drumming]

So you see, you can create whatever you want. But that's basically it, you know, with the technique, twice.

[Ryan Bruce:] It seems like the — almost the sound or the rhythm of that one is like a duple rhythm although you were counting in three. But does it have almost like a one, two, three, four, one, two, three, four?

[Magdelys Savigne:] That's why I give you the freedom of thinking on three or four, it's up to you. It has the feeling on its own of four or two-ee rhythm. But once you combine it with the rest, it changes. So its better if you learn it both ways because then when you put the iya on the Itotele so the other bigger drums playing it's all triplets. If you're going to write that down, it'll be all triplets. And you want them to be on the right comfortable time signature, right? But this one if you — let's say you want to just write whether your okonkolo dos you can just do 2/4, 4/4 whatever we want and just do just eight notes. [Chanting] Just it crushes there if you want. [Drumming] you could do that. But in the back of your head, you must be thinking —

[Chanting and Clapping]

You need that duality. So I mean, if you want to go deep –

[Ryan Bruce:] That's right.

[Magdelys Savigne:] — with it, they'll be a good idea.

[Ryan Bruce:] Yeah. So, it's — But it's really that drum that creates the cross rhythm.

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yeah, this one.

[Ryan Bruce:] Is that right? Yeah.

[Magdelys Savigne:] And that this one. Yeah. Sometimes the itotele does to with the upbeat sort of thing. Let's say, what other rhythm could have that?

[Drumming and Counting]

You see, it's all eighth notes. [Drumming] and the rest of course.

[Drumming and Counting]

So this one, you have to do then died on a crotchet and then semiquaver. You got an a quaver or semiquaver. You could do that.

[Drumming]

For this one. Unless you do, in triplets all. One, two, three, one two three

[Drumming and Chanting]

This one you could write it in.

[Drumming and Counting]

I mean, it depends on how you're feeling of what are you — where you want to put it. So you cannot be square to oh, I just want to do this 4/4. No, you got to know what's behind it with the 6/8. You got to count to like this — like the double time counting can help you a lot. That's what we used to do. Because then you could put it into perspective. And then when you're comfortable, then you go to the 4/4. But that's a beautiful thing about this because you could put it in both and people still going to feel a difference. So is one thing while you are feeling as a percussionist, playing it. And it's one another, like one or the thing, what the audience is going to receive, right? Because you are — let's say you're playing with two more guys or girls, that's it. Let's put it all together, two more people and you're doing your rhythm while you're focussed on the random because you have to be listening to them while you're focussed on doing your rhythm. So you're feeling mostly what this drum is giving you. The middle one is focussed mostly on that rhythm and the big one the same. But then when they play together, you hear one thing because you know where the one is. You're supposed to know where the one is and where the rhythm sounds really like, right? But the people don't know that. Their one will be different. Their feeling will be different and that creates a whole new experience for everybody. And rhythm wise. You get — I can play this for you and then you can tell me where the one is. Let's say let's make — let's try that. Let's try them. Now that you were at this for a while now and you have an odd feeling with a one. Yes. Let's try that. Let's try that. Oh, it make any sense, let's do that [laughter].

[Drumming]

What do you think of the 1 is?

[Ryan Bruce:] I heard on the last hit that you got.

[Magdelys Savigne:] So.

[Howard Spring:] Right. Lower drum I think, no?

[Ryan Bruce:] There's on the lower drum. Yeah. The last one.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah.

[Magdelys Savigne:] The lower drum has far the ones. So I won't separate it because it is very complicated to hear with so many things happening at the same time. So I'm going to do

[Drumming]

So, [laughter]. So you can do –

[Ryan Bruce:] So, that one was after. It seemed like the one was going to come right after the [inaudible].

[Magdelys Savigne:] Right after, right. So I finished on one, so with that one. So you say one, two, three, four.

[Drumming and Counting]

It's — because it has like a different step. It has like an upbeat, sort of one of syncopation there. It's what it throws us out, right?

[Drumming]

That's what the middle one does. And you could tell where the downbeat is because of the chacha is very steady.

[Drumming]

But then can you tell — you know where the downbeat is? Now that one is a problem.

[Drumming]

You might think it is, one, two, three, four, one, two [Laughter]. It is not.

[Drumming and Counting]

So it's like a different spot. But I mean, it takes you somewhere else. And you go with it. And that's the beauty of it, you know. You create your own world with this drums. That's what I liked them so much. You can create so much with them.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah. Clearly that was really well click. Anything else?

[Ryan Bruce:] If you're three people that were playing, because you were talking about how you're thinking in these quick triplets or –

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yeah.

[Ryan Bruce:] One, two, three. One, two, three, or like a 6/8 time. Would it be typical that everybody — that all three musicians are on the same or feeling that same pulse, or would it be typical that people are feeling and thinking of something different, to create that sense of polyrhythm?

[Magdelys Savigne:] No. It's up to you. We all have hearts. We all have different pulses and we still beat the same, you know? It doesn't matter — it means to an end. It doesn't matter how you beat like. You beat the way you beat. But it has to go with me. We don't actually talk to each other say, OK, you know what, let's think of this, like 6/8 instead of 4/4. Nobody says that to you. You just feel the calling. You play along with it. And it doesn't matter where you are. We get connected because you feel the rhythm. And you have to do that polyrhythm right away, right? You know where to come in. If you know the drum, you know where to sing. You know where to step in if you're a dancer. I don't know, it's not a matter of saying it in a chord or anything. It's just the — a matter of feeling. It's a feeling. It's a connection that you have with the other musicians, the same with a band.

[Howard Spring:] What's that instrument that you're playing now? What's the name of it and where is it used, that kind of thing?

[Magdelys Savigne:] So this is my second favourite instrument that I play. And it's called a cajon, C-A-J-O-N, cajon. There's a variant of where they come from. We call it cajon flamenco because we actually got to Cuba with the Spaniards when they conquered us and is played with a flamenco dancing and singing. So that's it, flamenco cajon or you can say that it comes from Peru, which is the original, the indigenous people used to play it with this. Very similar to this one. That's why this one particularly like, because they has like a hybrid of that flamenco feeling with the Peruvian deep sound of the cajon. So it's a box. It's a box that has strings inside. And it has actually, let me show you has a hole in the back where the sound comes from. So this is very

cool. People might get their inside. And it's a lot of things to discover. But they actually have strings inside in different positions. So you have strings like this, steel strings. Like guitar strings. You have them in this position or depends on the sound that you want in the particular cajon or they manufacturer that they want to put in like this, like that and give that kind of snare drumming. So that's why sometimes we use it as a portable drum kit because we have the bass sound like this, and we have this sort of snare-ish sound.

[Drumming]

I mean, like what's not to like. It's a portable drum. You can just carry everywhere. You can sit on it. I mean, it's great. But different techniques depends on the rhythm and the — whatever rhythm genre that you're doing. It changes the rhythm. So it's not just one part- it doesn't belong to any religion. It's just the flow is very cool, very cool. That's why I love it. [Howard Spring:] So when would you play it? You play at social events, for entertainment, for performance or all of those?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Entertainment, performance, social events, all. All — so this is so such a great instrument that I — when I first got to Canada, I was hired for so many weddings. One of this was like an example. So many Jewish weddings and celebrations. [Foreign language] I used to do a lot of those and Turkish parties. And I used to play those genres with the cajon. So imagine — you could actually insert this into anybody. Anybody, any culture, and it will work. It's just great but I mean mainly, it's used for the Spanish flamenco dances and the Peruvian as well. It has different rhythm and metric but basically that's it. Flamenco has more of a 6/8 feeling. The Barlow's, the Buleria. It has many — it depends Buleria is like —

[Drumming]

So you hear that or 6/8 normal in marcha and rumba.

[Drumming and Counting]

You see. If you like 4/4 but is actually 6/8 as well. And the bularia, they count as different. You still [claps] like that, but they don't do — it's like similar to Turkey. Just 9/8 in Turkey will be — not in Turkey. The whole world, 9/8 is one, two, three, one, two, three, one, two, three. Right? But for Turkish guys differently, they do one, two, one, two, one, two, three, one, two, one, two, one, two. And is actually — they emphasize one certain spot and that changes the 9/8 but still my 9/8. But you do one, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three.

[Beatbox]

So it's there. But they just put an accent in a different spot and then it's the changes of feeling. So that's the

Turkish. The Spaniards also switch the counting and they have their own counting. They do one, two. One, two, three. So I mean, I have to do in Spanish because it's hard to do it in Spanish — in English.

[Foreign Language]

It's part of the rhythm.

[Drumming and Counting]

I mean, it's hard. It's hard to think in English. So I tried to do that rhythm. You learn it in Spanish and — but I'll try. I'll try it and then the next time we see each other I might be able to do it in English.

[Howard Spring:] Sure. So when you're playing Cuban music, are there specific rhythms like there were for the Bata?

[Magdelys Savigne:] So, in rhythm — in Cuban rhythm, in Cuban music, you don't use the cajon. So the cajon is not part of our African upbringing. You do congas, you do bongos, you do Bata. The cajon, you do the Spanish side because Cubans also defend like tigers, their Spanish side and European side. So basically, what you use is you just play the power of the rhythms. You use buleria. You play rumba flamenco. You — That's what you do with the actual cajon you keep your music. But nowadays, like everywhere else you just put in part of the timba, of salsa. You can play also cajon on it and you create different polyrhythms to that. We've created things like —

[Drumming and Counting]

So you know have to take your drum kit. Now basically will be the drum kit pattern. This will be the base drum.

[Drumming and Counting]

The snare drum.

[Drumming and Counting]

The — When you put all that together and then you actually feeling quite a few things

[Drumming and Counting]

So you do — you put a cowbell to that and it creates a whole new experience. OK. That will be in Cuba music. But in Cuba we basically do it for the Spanish side, for the flamencos.

[Ryan Bruce:] Is there a clave that's guiding your — this music then if it's on the Spanish side?

[Magdelys Savigne:] So there's no clave for the Spain. No, clave. The clave is an African thing, but what the rhythm. I was just playing which is a new creation on top of Cuban Conga pattern and bongos, whatever, what the drum key would do. What we do is we could do the clave, the same.

[Clapping and Counting]

That same one that we did before with the Bata. But the particular thing about this one is that the one we saw somewhere else. So remember that we were doing.

[Clapping and Counting]

So, the one will switch to the next side of the clave.

[Clapping and Counting]

[Drumming and Counting]

It depends on the clave. So there I did a clave Cubana, which is the Cuban clave. The 3/2. And I also did the 2/3. So, you see, it's a flavour. It's up to you on what you want to do. The difference would be Bata drums is that anybody can play them.

[Howard Spring:] Right. That's an important [inaudible].

[Magdelys Savigne:] There's no religious ceremony with it. You just play them anywhere despite –

[Howard Spring:] Any gender? You can be man or woman or any gender to play them?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Any gender plays them but –

[Howard Spring:] OK.

[Magdelys Savigne:] I mean, in Cuba is tricky. The situation with women and percussion. But I mean, nowadays is better, right, as a told you is way better. And many girls are now taking out the percussion which is amazing. There's no boys club anymore, still, you find people are given here and find people here that they're still — because they grew up with that kind of mentality. And they still have it. They don't call you to perform with their bands or anything because you're a woman, not because you are not good at what you do. It's just that it's a boy's thing. And you're not included. So in this particular instrument is the same thing. You just play. If you like it, you play and if you want to go deep into the flamenco, there are different techniques for it as well. You play with a tocon. So, with the heel. You play it here. You play it here, you switch pitch. Here, it won't sound because this is a hybrid for proven. But if it would be the real cajon flamenco then you will hear that [drumming] up. So, that you can hear it. So you press this as if you weren't pressing — while you press it with your feet or foot. But as if you were pressing the congas skin, and it kind of switches pitch there. And mostly fingers and bass but it's a flavour thing. It's a soul thing. You bring your own flavour. You — There's nothing standard, like you have to do this or that. No. It's like you bring your own sort of natural instinct, instinct to the instrument. Nobody talks about that. Oh, so that's the thing that we were talking about, especially on the Bata drums. It's not something that you study at school. And it's something that you pick up on the street because it's very — it's part of the religion. And in Cuba, there was no such thing as an open thing to this religious side unless this Catholic. There was a time in Cuba where everybody religious was persecuted. So this religion in particular was persecuted. Now it's better but still consider like an underground religious like black magic and voodoo stuff like that. Craziness. So those are now considered part of — I mean, they are part of the history. And on the history books in Cuba, you — they talk about them because it's undeniable that they exist and the richness that they bring to our music. But there is no like a deep, deep to go deep on the religion unless you belong to a religion. And, you know, you pick up a one thing or two when you play them and you enter that world. But at school, you won't see or hear or play them. So that makes a difference.

[Howard Spring:] So it's kind of like a lower status then?

[Magdelys Savigne:] Yeah, it is.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah, yeah. OK. That's interesting.

[Magdelys Savigne:] Unfortunately.

[Howard Spring:] Well, yeah. No, I agree.

TRANSCRIPT: CUBAN URBAN MUSIC

>> Howard Spring: Hilario, thanks so much for doing this. Can we start off a little bit by you talking about yourself? You know where you're from? What you – what kind of music you learnt? Like anything you think is.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Important.

>> Hilario Duran: Yes. I was born in Havana, Cuba in 1953. I don't have to say my age you know that it's, it's funny because I – one day they ask, they ask [foreign language] they're saying how old you? I have to say I'm born in 19 – 1940 dot com. [inaudible] that's what a joke at that. So yes, I am from Havana Cuba. I started – what I can is I started the music in my life came like naturally since I was a little kid. In my, in my home back in Cuba my – they were, they were playing music all the time. My, my grandfather Armando Montes he has a huge collection of music on disc. And vinyl – he has a big collection of vinyl records with all kind of music. With classical music, from jazz to Cuban music and I start – I started listening all kind of music since I, since I was a kid. And I start playing piano by ear. They, they bought a piano for my sister because at that time there was – it was a fashion that only girls should learn piano and stuff. So they bought, they bought a piano. And I remember when they brought the piano in my home. There was — I remember it was upright white piano. I just fall in love with that thing with the instrument. And so as soon they bought it they put in the living room. I went up to start getting sound out of this instrument. With one finger like that. And start, I start playing by ear. I start playing . Tried to reproduce everything I hear on the radio and the TV. And well but before, before that – a little bit before that I remember was my mother, she, she told me a story that I – because I was in a Catholic school. A Catholic school there. On the Catholic school the [inaudible] they have in Havana all over of the cities Saint John Bosco the Catholic school. I don't know if you hear about this. And they, they used to have the choir singing really just music every day in the church of the school. So I remember my mom she bought the little piano with I don't know eight keys, seven, but a little, little piano toy and I – my mother she told me that I was inside this room and she started listening all the music. I was playing all the music with one, one finger. The music that they used to sing in the church. And she was [inaudible]. She said oh my God this is – what's this doing this little kid? So I was playing all this chant, the religious chant with, with, with the toy. So after when they brought finally the real piano to my home, I just wanted to play piano all day. I don't want to play ball, baseball or be in the street playing with other kids. I just want, I just want to play piano all day. And so my mom she has to, she [inaudible] I love the piano for me. So because I don't

want to, I don't want to do anything else just play piano. So, so later on they my parent they, they start a few teachers, the piano teacher music teachers in town. And so I remember, I remember that I put – one teacher was the one in my neighbourhood. Was called [foreign language] that was the aunt of a – she was a local piano teacher in, in the neighbour, the neighbourhood. And she was the – she was the aunt, the aunt of the, the great [inaudible] player director [foreign language], [inaudible] so she has the – she has in her house a few kids from the neighbourhood teaching piano. So I started with her when I was – for me was great because she started teaching me classical music from the beginning until I think I was with her about maybe two years or a little more until she, she called my mom and say I was – she was at a point that I, I – she couldn't teach me anymore because I needed to go the national conservatory of music school to properly learn how to play piano with the [inaudible] you know staff. And that's, that's why she brought me to the national conservatory to get into the, to get into the conservatory Amadeo Roldan the national, the national conservatory of music in Havana. And, and so I went there. My mom brought me there. I made the test and I got in. And it was great for me because I have really great teachers. That she – they, they taught me to play, to play classical music. In Cuba the Cuban conservatory at that time they used to teach just classical music. Classical European music. They, they didn't teach anything else like even, even they didn't teach – at this time they didn't teach Cuban music. All they – they also teach how to play classical Cuban music from the two centuries ago. [foreign language] this stuff. But the classical music was a priority. They, they weren't , they were not jazz schools in Cuba. So they, they just – we taught our self — to the other musicians of my generation they, they learn how to, how to play just listening record, borrow record [inaudible] and stuff. And that was it. I was at the conservatory around three years until 19 – from 1968 until 1970. In 1970 they call me to, to join the, the army, the military. And – but they didn't, they brought me to the, the regular military unit. They, they brought me to the, to the military band in Havana. The band – so I was there in the military band. The military band is the one that used to do the, the military service. A lot of funerals and every time someone very important the president or someone come, comes to the, to the airport in Havana they have to go there and play – to play for them you know. At the airport. So all this military services. And I, I learnt how to play clarinet in the band. And also eventually I play — I also play piano with the, with the bank because they used to, they used to make festivals between the cities, and they make competitions. All the bands in from Havana from Orienta, from Camaguey they have all the city they have a military band and they make festivals and they, they make festival every year and they, they compete between them. So I – they put me to play piano and song – and songs, the songs of festivals.

>> Howard Spring: What kind of music did these bands play?

>> Hilario Duran: They play all the, all the – basically all the national I think of different countries. When they – when they receive the presidents in the airport in Havana and also in the – they, they used to play in funeral services. But all – when the time comes this, this festival they – the main repertoire they played was like Cuban music and some sort of classical music and original compositions and stuff like that. That was – for me that was a great experience being the – being in the band. Because I learnt to play clarinet enough that

quit the instrument but mostly because it was a great experience for me to be in the band interacting with all the musicians. And playing – because also they used, they used to [inaudible] on different groups and play and they you know this kind of stuff. When we was very, very good to be interacting with all the musician in the band. [inaudible] release the, I release the band in 1973. And I – after release from band I have – I want to be a professional, professional musician. Like play – make, make a living as a musician. That what I want, wanted to do. And so I, I started playing as a professional musician in the, in the band called [foreign language]. It was a kind of band that played like a very sort of traditional music. The [foreign language] was called [foreign language]. That was – that come from the rumba tradition the – this person. [foreign language] was again composer of this kind of music and the guy didn't know notation music. He used to take all his ideas to the musicians so he, he, he used to tell with the mouth how to play this thing. I sing the melodies. He sing the melody to the piano to the bass and he taught the musician how to play different combinations of, of [inaudible]. To play that. For me this band was great experience. That was the band where I learn really very much how to play all kind of Cuban music.

>> Howard Spring: So this was popular music?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, those Cuban popular music, yes.

>> Howard Spring: Okay.

>> Hilario Duran: And the – yeah in that band I learn, I learn how to play all different – the main genres of, of Cuban music like the son montuno, the rumba, guaracha, that kind of thing.

>> Howard Spring: Can you play some examples now just to give us an idea of what they might have sounded like?

>> Hilario Duran: All the time, yes, I, I quite don't remember very much the, the music that I used to – they used to play because that was a long time ago.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah, that's okay.

>> Hilario Duran: What I can do, what I can do is what I can do is I could play some sort of this style.

>> Howard Spring: Sure.

>> Hilario Duran: Of what they used to play. I will, I will play a song called El Manisero. I don't know you

have all this song is. I was a very, very popular at the beginning of the 20th Century in Cuba. [foreign language] the peanut bandit.

>> Howard Spring: Oh, yeah, sure. Sure.

>> Hilario Duran: And it was very popular. It's a, it's in the style of song [foreign language].

>> Howard Spring: Okay.

>> Hilario Duran: And the melody of El Manisero you know the son Oregon is a style of music that belonged to the song and it was – [inaudible] but they – what the state vendors in Havana. They used to make little melodies to promote their products in the street. And this song – sort of like flutes, [inaudible], flowers and roses kind of thing and they used to sing their, their products. And that's same – that this song play all this time became like a really like a tradition. Like a, like a really strong tradition into the Cuban method the son pregon and son montuno. So I will, I will play the El Manisero but I have to – I will put a stool to play a little better. Hold a second.

[Music]

>> Howard Spring: Very nice. Fantastic. That was great. So with people – when you played that in the band, would people dance to it?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, they used to dance, of course. We – the – there were – we used to, we used to play in places when the people used to dance. Places for dance for example it's a place called [foreign language] Tropicana. It's a – was like a big square and they have a stage with the band and the people danced down on the floor. And also, we used, we used to play in shows and radio and television, shows and theatres and all, of all kind, all kind of things you know. For me it was, it was a great experience to play with them because that's where I learnt to how to, how to play, how to play montuno's I had to play the main styles of, of Cuban music.

>> Howard Spring: So when you say montuno, what do you mean?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah montuno is a, a – the montuno is a melody. It's a little phrase like a kind of pattern two bars. The, the, the melody's would rhythmically– the – of the melodies that are made to combine all of different styles of the main style for Cuban music. You know.

>> Howard Spring: Can you, can you play an example?

>> Hilario Duran: Yes. Since I was doing and this song, this one montuno in four chord.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You know like that. [inaudible] this is the montuno's are like a -this is so different of western play montuno different from combination. This is really a different way to do it. Like more simple like we can do it with one hand like.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: And the montuno's are connected with the Cuban clave. You have the Cuban clave and so they – so we call them montuno because count the montuno's come from – they come – the music from the [inaudible]. From the [inaudible] son – so the son, the son [foreign language] it was original from, from, from the east of Cuba from Oriente. From Oriente and, and the – those – this, this melody, this pattern that this melody that make up the pattern has to Cuban music [inaudible]– they used to play on the tres, on the acoustic guitars. The tres, I don't know that you know that the tres is a, is a Cuban instrument that comes – that have different – three, three double strings. Two and different [inaudible] I think it was in three, four [inaudible]. I don't know – something where – what the, the tuning of the, of this, this instrument. They have three different strings. And when they, when they play these sonnes, they, they make those melodies.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: So the first son montuno that they made the – it was – it, it, it, it was something like that. That's it. in one cord for the [inaudible]. One, two, one, two, three, four.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You add the bass. It's going to be like that.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: So you want the clave, you want the clave to the montuno's it's gong to be like that.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You know like that. I don't mention the clave. You know the clave? You probably have hear about the clave. Clave.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah, yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Also the pattern [inaudible] of, of two bars that comes – it's added to all this – most of the styles of, of Cuban music. It's a pattern of two, of two bars that comes — that have to start with two [inaudible] that something with three, three beats and two in the second bar. It's a something like a two [inaudible] two dotted quarter note – two – see – yes. Two dotted quarter note and one quarter note at the end and two quarter note in the second bar. With the, with the quarter note rest on the first beat and two quarter note and another rest of quarter note at the end. That son that one, two, three, four.

[Banging]

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: Something like that.

>> Ryan Bruce: How does that figure that you're playing now become the montuno that you played before?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, because develop, it develop in that way you know the, the first montuno that I played like this.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: That was, that was the, the really – the very old style when they [inaudible] this song in the beginning of the 20th Century. The, the main composer of that era was Miguel Matamoros. He created a big collection of, of songs with the, this style of music. And he was, he was the one that created the all the structure of the, of the music with the melody beautiful melodies and they use of the clave. The clave were – you know the clave was, was made with, with wood. Start with two count, two count percussion instrument is to play like that you know. And this, this groups of Miguel Matamoros they used to play as a trio. As a trio at the beginning they have – they were made for by three singers. Three singers, for one singer to play the tres, the other play the acoustic guitar, the Spanish guitar and the other one the other guy play the clave. And some sort of instrument like a — could be like a bongo. The bongos are [inaudible]. There, there, there was a format of that those, those group at the, at the beginning of the 20th Century. And after, after a while they start adding, they start adding more instrument like the, the – they add acoustic bass, normal bass [inaudible] they added a trumpet and that and also, also they added another percussion and they were – the music was a little bit more complex than that but it was – the main structure was like that. You know.

>> Ryan Bruce: What are some things of the montuno's that you play now of, of a repertoire, something the montuno's all have in common? Or a defining feature. What is it that holds it and makes it a montuno rather than something else?

>> Hilario Duran: Yes, a montuno – the montuno what I said before is the, the figure the melody that they, they used to, they used to – they use to, to [inaudible] all sort different styles of Cuban music. And it – also the montuno is – it was part of [inaudible] the montuno was part of the, style called danzon that – the danzon was born also at the, at the beginning of the 20th Century around the 1930s. And the danzon comes from the contradanza. That it is even older, the contradanza is a kind of music that is the fusion of European classical music with — together with the Hispanic traditional Hispanic music and also the percussion from Africa.

>> Howard Spring: Can you play an example of a danzon?

>> Hilario Duran: Of a danzon? Yes, I can play [foreign language]. So this is, this is a danzon that was very popular in the – around 1930s or the end of the '30s, '40s called l'emindra. L'emeindra means alamo. So these are – but, but before, before I play the danzon I will first play will be the structure. The structure of danzon is ,it's a very similar to the, to the classical sonata. This a A, A B, A, A, B, A. was the main theme [inaudible] and after the main theme and then after that comes what we call the son or the montuno at the end and where – that's where the musician used to improvise over one sided harmony.

>> Howard Spring: So the first part is composed and then the montuno section happens, and people improvise over that, is that the way it works?

>> Hilario Duran: People improvise, people improvise [inaudible] and even they use the, the singers they use improvise but also the song instrument like the – mostly the flute. And so, some [inaudible] so the piano. So this is a danzon called l'emeindra. And before I, before I start, I want to say about the danzon the rhythmic, the rhythmic part of the danzon is what we call the [foreign language]. The [foreign language]. It's a figure of five, of five beats, of five note on the first beat and, and two, two hits on the second, on the second bar. Five, five note on the second bar and two notes. So it's a [foreign language] connected with the clave becomes like that.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: One, two, three, four.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: Sorry. I say five note and four, four note on the, on the second bar. And the [foreign language] connected with clave.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: It is different.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: So we play now the, the danzon. So you will see that, you will see here that the danzon emphasize it come from the [inaudible] of A, A, A, B, A. No. And after, and after the main theme repeats at the end is [inaudible] montuno where they improvisation. And after the montuno that comes the what we call the reprise. The reprise is – that they, they do like some sort of repeat the, the main theme at the end, the first theme are they, they do at the conclusion at, at the very end. So this is danzon.

>> Howard Spring: So Hilario when you do this, can you just – when you go to the montuno section can you say, here's the montuno section? Just so we can.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Hear it and then when you go back to the reprise, maybe just say that's.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: What's going on. So we can follow along.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Thank you.

>> Hilario Duran: So here, here we go this [foreign language], the composer of this danzon is Orlando [phonetic] Maldez [phonetic].

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: Here's the montuno now.

[Music]

>> Howard Spring: That's great, Hilario. All right. So that was danzon. What about a contradanza?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, the contradanza is a while we're doing, I will play the, the like a sort of medley of [foreign language] main but different composer. So the, the first, the first contradanza is called [foreign language]. And it was, it was dedicated to a great soprano singer at the time, the 18th Century for Tonada Tedesco. And this – the second one's called [foreign language]. In English it means the peppers eyes. And the third one is the [foreign language]. The three kids and this composition they were written by [inaudible] and Manuel Saumell that they were the main composer of the [inaudible] the major composer of the 18th Century in Cuba. Tunada Tedesco.

>> Ryan Bruce: Hilario.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Before you start, does each one of these have the same form of A, A, B, A,A, B, A?

>> Hilario Duran: No this — no. No. It's different. It's a – this is kind of more simple form. It is, it – yeah, yeah. It's a, it's a – it have a similar, a similar form. And you, you will, you will see and will realize [inaudible] the same more or less the same form. But what is different in danzon is that the danzon have the – it's a little bit more complex because it has the montuno at the end.

>> Ryan Bruce: And the contradanza that you're playing doesn't have.

>> Hilario Duran: And the contradanza it doesn't have you know it doesn't have the montuno. But it, it – it's basically the same form.

>> Ryan Bruce: Okay. Could you let us know when you change from one tune to the next?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Great. Thank you.

[Foreign Language]

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: And now the [foreign language].

[Music]

>> Howard Spring: Great.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: So when you were playing in the band that you were talking about before, you'd play son, son montuno,

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: You played a son. Would you play contradanza's as well?

>> Hilario Duran: No, no.

>> Howard Spring: No, okay.

>> Hilario Duran: That's different. That's different. Although when we, when we played those kind of sones that you say, that son that's a little bit of danzon elements. In the son – in the modern son there are some element of, of danzon sometimes that comes – come include, included in the son, the son montuno.

>> Howard Spring: Right, okay.

>> Hilario Duran: Because it isn't all connected.

>> Howard Spring: Right. Sure. So, the – so in the band you'd play son montuno you'd play danzon. What other kinds of music would you play in that band?

>> Hilario Duran: We play, we used play rumba. We used to play I don't know, cha-cha-cha. All sorts, all sort — most of the music, the music was [inaudible] mostly. There were, there were, there were – I can remember there were no slow songs on this in this, in this band. And just that was, that was, that was it.

>> Howard Spring: What – so can you play an example of a rumba?

>> Hilario Duran: [inaudible] you I did – I don't think I prepare. What I can do is the pattern. I used to play a rumba before but not – I haven't prepared for that today. The – what I can, what can – what I can say is the – I can play the pattern.

>> Howard Spring: Okay.

>> Hilario Duran: Of the rumba.

>> Howard Spring: Sure.

>> Hilario Duran: I can – it – how, how it was done because you know what is a rumba? Is, it kind of difficult to play just with the piano, because it – the rumba – to play the rumba you will need, you will need a set of percussionists to play, to play a rumba to play — with, with conga's and some other instruments like chime bells and, and claves and, and stuff like that. And also you will need a choir of voices doing, doing the, doing the chants how, how, how the rumba. But, but I will do hear it as the pattern. The pattern of the rumba it, it's really just simple. And, and you will see that when you play the rumba have some element of the montuno, but this is kind of fast montuno. You know it's – the rumba we slow that down. Sort of – let me see if I can.

[Music]

>> Howard Spring: Okay.

>> Hilario Duran: As slow as that you know it's like a kind of difficult to play the rumba with just one instrument like the piano you know. It's a little bit more complex.

>> Howard Spring: When you were playing in this band, when was that?

>> Hilario Duran: When?

>> Howard Spring: Yeah.

>> Hilario Duran: That was in the – I enlist the army, I enlist the army in 1973.

>> Howard Spring: Okay.

>> Hilario Duran: And I start playing with this band in 1974.

>> Howard Spring: And how long were you with this band?

>> Hilario Duran: Around, around two years. Around two years or a little more. And after – and that was when, when I got a call, I got a call, I got a call from the pianist Chucho Valdes, the great Cuban piano Grammy winner to – he call, he called, he called me to [inaudible] in a great big band that he used to play. Because he, he was tried to make his, his band [foreign language]. So he did – it, it would – so to leave, to leave the circuit that he needed a substitute and he called me. He called me to sub [inaudible] and I was, and I wasn't really hard to share when I got there because it was you know I used to play you know as – all this kind of music but I did not this time I didn't have the experience to get into this, into this big band. I was the, the great, the greatest big band that they make in Cuba after the revolution with all masters.

>> Howard Spring: This was Irakere you're talking about or?

>> Hilario Duran: No, yeah there was a band that Chucho made.

>> Howard Spring: I see.

>> Hilario Duran: To leave, to leave this band. This band was called Orquestra Cubana de Musica Moderna. Cuban twist on modern music and all the musicians there was – they were they were like [inaudible] great and it was, it was kind own experience this time. And – but I got in there and I, I got in the band with a little help I, I stay in the band. It was, it was another great experience for me to play in the band.

>> Howard Spring: What kind of music did they play in that band?

>> Hilario Duran: They played, they play all kinds music Cuban music, jazz and all sort of music and mostly what, what they used to do is play in variety shows in a, in a – in the local theatre [foreign language]. In the neighbourhood of Fidel. And they used to do every, every week they used to do a show there with, with the singers and play some all sort of Cuban music, like international popular music and sometime classical, sometime jazz and like that. I got the great, really great experience playing, playing on the [inaudible].

>> Howard Spring: Were you studying with anybody at that time or were you learning everything by ear or?

>> Hilario Duran: All [inaudible] learn was by you know taught myself. You know even – because when I got in this band that's where I started learn, I learn how to write arrangements, how to write musical arrangement and there was a kind of school, a really good school for me because I start writing music for the band. And for the – so some of the [inaudible] weren't, they weren't, they weren't good at the beginning but

after I got, I got better writing for this kind of – form of – for the big band you know. And I, I learn. I learn by myself actually to – because I also have the opportunity in this band, the Orquestra Cubana de Musica I had opportunity to check scores and learn how to, how to voice instrument and how to – the structure was different format of music and stuff. And it was, it was great for me.

>> Ryan Bruce: Hilario, studying classical music first and then being brought into the Cuban music with Valdes, what are some of the major features of the Cuban music that for you made it Cuban rather than another style?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, let me, let me explain, let me explain to you what, what this happen yeah. The, the Cuban music I learn how to play Cuban music because I was listening. I was listening Cuban music since I was a little kid. Since, since I was a little kid I used to [inaudible] sort of Cuban music on the radio, and the TV. In the [inaudible] in Havana they have what we call a [foreign language], a huge box when they, they have all this vinyl records and they put a coin in the, they put a coin in the – they play whatever you want. And so I was listening all the, all this style of music and all the Cuban music scenes since I was a kid after we got – I go over listening this even without paying attention I was listening. So that comes into – [inaudible] into your blood you know. What happen in Cuba was – let me explain to you. After the, after the revolution in 1959 when Fidel Castro took the power they were – it was something that – they – the, the American music and the music in English the jazz and the pop music all this sort of, all the sort of style of music they were banned from this. From the radio, from the TV, they were – it wasn't allowed to, to play American music at that time. And so the musician of my generation they learn I myself we learn to, to play jazz borrowing recordings [inaudible] vinyl records and, and also listening the short wave radio. And we used to be – jazz and this kind of thing. And at that time that was a time when I started write – staring classical music in the conservatory Amadeo Roldan in Havana. But and at that time I was obsessed with jazz. I really wanted to, I really want to play jazz all day. And I want – I don't want to play Cuban music and all the sort of I just wanted to play jazz because it was – the music that was banned and prohibited by the government. So all the, all the young people I meet in my generation that we, we used to borrow records and learn. And that's, that's, that was the way that I learn to play jazz. I know there is all sort of jazz schools in North America in college and stuff but the way I learn to play jazz was the best way. Because I, I learnt – I copy all the improvisations and after that proper music by myself and practising in different piece and apply to some songs that I used to play I used to learn all this time that I learn and that's the way that I learn how to improvise jazz. And so at that time in that was at the beginning of the, the year 1970s that I – and the end of the 1960s when I was in the [foreign language] when I want to hear jazz all day. I improvise and copying and I'm writing phrases and making – I have a book of phrases that I write myself and practice after. But the Cuban music was already into my DNA you know and so I went back to the Cuban music late, years later. Years later when I can say when, when, right before I came here – I get to Canada I start, I start getting interested again with, with Cuban music and, and, and that where I start investigating

the end of this really deeply how to play different styles of and how to learn the foundation of, of the Cuban music.

>> Howard Spring: So after the revolution, you – the radio stations couldn't play American music and I guess you couldn't get the records but was it illegal to play? I mean if you playing jazz was that illegal?

>> Hilario Duran: Sort – it was sort of illegal. So some of the – even, even when I was in the – I told you I was in the military band. I was in the military band and we all wanted to play jazz. We were young, we're adventurous and we really want to play jazz and they, they couldn't hear you to play jazz because if you – if they, they got you playing a standard of sort of the kind of music that put you in the solitary. You know. And it was, it was crazy, but it was like that. It was just like that. And it wasn't until when I – it was until later that they government changed a little bit the way, the way of that and they start playing music in the radio again. There only was jazz it was like a pop, a pop music. And all those, all those, all those group that [inaudible] really like the Beatles or The Rolling Stones, Marvin Gaye even so – most of the, most of the music of the pop music on the – the American music that I learn, there was – I discovered later when I make it to Canada here in the 1990s. [inaudible] Marvin Gaye, and all this other bands. I couldn't hear in Cuba. I used, I used even, even – I got some of the music on short wave radio, but it wasn't – just a little proportion of what I want to hear I got Blood, Sweat and Tears all those, all those, all those great band you know. I listen later. And also, I got – because after, after a while they – in the '80s that the government start opening, start opening [inaudible] and stop playing the music again.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah, I, I – I'm you know – I went to the Havana Jazz Festival many, many years ago. So – and there were a lot of great players there, so I was under the impression that there was some support for jazz.

>> Hilario Duran: That was later.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah.

>> Hilario Duran: That was later that they start, they start supporting jazz because it changed, they change the rules you know. But also because they you know what I can say is that we have all these they have all these conservatories of this school that they, they teach, they teach music for free. And, and the thing is that because of that they were a lot of great players but they, they didn't, they didn't teach – they weren't jazz schools in Cuba. They never were. They were – but the musicians they learn how to play jazz because it came from foundation of classical music and they weren't [inaudible] to play those – this older sort of style of music like the funk and the [foreign language] and all those thing and the – and they were, they were – there always were great players in Cuba. Even, even now you know. And so they start making, they start making the jazz festivals

in Havana. So by the time that you might be were the late '70s and stuff, but the government, the government, the government used to, used to get, used to make all these festival to promote the revolution.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah. Sure.

>> Hilario Duran: You know. That was the real truth of [inaudible] you know and the, and they're doing it you know.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah, no. I know. I know. Hilario you were saying that you know you were playing jazz but then you got back to Cuban music later.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: How did that play a role in your, your writing and your playing when you got back to that?

>> Hilario Duran: Yes it got, it got – it was something that was, or it came naturally you know. Like what I don't know that at first got kind of fusion of, the Cuban style of [inaudible] you know. I — the style that I, that, the style I tried to, to make when I play piano is the fusion of the – of this two style [inaudible] music just ceremony with the clave and with different sort of Cuban music. That's that what I was doing.

>> Howard Spring: Do you think that was in, in general that people got interested in Cuban music again even, even, even as the government opened up to more different kinds of music? I guess what I'm asking are people in general interested in traditional Cuban music or are they just interested in kind of modern pop music?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, but that was, that was – let me tell you. That was, that was back in the late '60s. Now, now it's different. And after they – now they, they – now it's different. They play all sort. There is there is a great development in Cuba of all sort of music in the radio you know. You know it's – it just like that. You know that all develop — and the, and the music – and this is something good with there. You know that the music help develop on the all the music schools and they got wait every year young musician with high level, really high level of interpretation and it's really, it's really great. That's why, that's why even since I, I came here to Canada, I came here to Canada in 1998. But I never, I never got disconnected with the Cuban, the music scene in Havana. I always tried to, to find out what's going on there you know because it's always – there's always a great scene going on in Cuba of the music you know. And I always – I connected with all the musicians there you know. We haven't been disconnected.

>> Ryan Bruce: I'm interested in the montuno because you were talking about it being a melody and rhythmic and then.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, well I – I [inaudible] for mention about this while were talking.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah.

>> Hilario Duran: The – so remember that I, remember when I talk to you about the, the montuno's that were connected with the clave.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah.

>> Hilario Duran: The clave is a pattern, it's a pattern of two bars. So I [inaudible] and the clave is more specific you know. Here, for here say that the clave is one of the earliest known percussion instruments that serve to the universal role of beating out the really accent of the music we – within [foreign language]. The term clave commonly associated with Cuban music. You know [inaudible] percussions instruments such as the banging of sticks or [inaudible] banging [inaudible] but for a purpose. Similar purpose of a modern use of calve to define the pulse and accent of the music. The percussion instrument were often made of wood. The most [inaudible] natural element between the environment you know. That's why the, the clave is, is two, two pieces of wood you know. So the role clave in many African [inaudible] has taken [inaudible]. Clave is both an instrument and a concept you know. The traditional wooden clave as such does not [inaudible] and on African instrument not in the same manner of the – for Cuban music. The Cuban clave is a parting of two bars. One of them is strong and the other weak. The pattern has to be complete relation with the melody and the rhythm. When this pattern is not connected or there is no [inaudible] between that is called calve [foreign language] you know. That's what, that's what I was doing for example. I would put an example of how, how this means. You know the clave – when the son montuno started, they used to – they used to have the three two clave is the what they call traditional Cuban clave with three beats first and two beats you know. Like I represent before.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: Three beats. Two beats. One, two, three, four.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: But when, when the music – when the Cuban music develop into the montuno have

start the clave change. And start — and so most of the Cuban music that they play now, nowadays, the modern Cuban music they, the Cuban clave it start with two beats instead of, of three. I try and demonstrate here before [inaudible]. I would play a montuno and different harmonies. It's a little bit more complex because that like more — starting with one, four, five, four.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: One, two, three, four.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: Okay plus the bass.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: And we want the clave it's going to be four three instead of three two.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: See. I start with two beats. So if you want to start the clave with three beats you have to change the montuno and start the montuno on the second bars.

>> Howard Spring: I see.

>> Hilario Duran: You know.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah.

>> Hilario Duran: So for example as you do – as you – if you play this in montuno you play the three two clave is what is wrong. It's called [foreign language] is the – for example if I want to play this.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: I start [inaudible] even I can't do it myself you know. So if you – even – so you want to play the three two clave you have to start the montuno on the second bar with the figure of all syncopated notes of this all off-beat notes. One, two, three, four.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: And now we, we start with three beats.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You know and that.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: Two beats.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: And three beats.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: All of the bass it's always – it doesn't, it doesn't change.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: The other thing about the clave, about this style of music is also what I, what I want apply five because this if we were – yeah, because we, we spoke about this son montuno first. We didn't speak about the African music that is connected to the Cuban music. I will, will talk about, about the bembe and how it's connected the African music with, with the clave one of this, this sort of thing you know. The bembe [inaudible] the, the bata drums and stuff. So the, the bembe what we bembe is, is the type of music that comes from Africa and the, the main, the bar, the main bar, the main verses that they use in this, in this music is the six, eight and three, four instead of two, four, four, four in the son montuno. And the, the bembe have the, the clave too. I will read about a bembe that is so you will understand. So the bembe African, Cuban music have been around for many years. It can provide many styles that all mould together to create one form of music. One proper form of this is a six eight for Cuban bembe. Any style of music played in six eight time [inaudible] takes on the [inaudible] or the bembe. This style originates from the word – for the word bembe. Religious – the bembe is nothing of that religious gatherings that involve singing, drumming, and dancing. In fact, this is more of an African beat than anything else. Bembe is a pattern where all songs create a movement come together at the same time to call the [foreign language]. To call the same you know. It is a party for the fun of religious or [foreign language]. What I want, what I really want to say is that bembe and also one,

one important thing about this the – with the clave, the son montuno, the bembe is this two — there's two divisions. So divisions in music. The bembe music is based on six eight three four. So all, all the music is, is based on triplets and group of three you know. So if you hear the, the, – if you, you hear the African or the African bembe clave is there's two kind. It's two different. This is a sample of bembe clave in six eight or three four. It can be – three eight – three – three four or six eight. One, two, three, two, two, three.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: So when you see that this with division are triplets.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: That is another African bembe clave. This is a little more simple. It's like.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: So the other one I was playing was.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: And when you play the most simple clave that is.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: And you take out the two division how it sounds. So.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: See.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: It's very similar to.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: See. It's almost the same. The only, the only thing that is the division are different. And you – you might have saw division of son montuno clave it's going to be.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: You might have saw the original six eight for Cuban bembe.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: What that means, that's why, that's why when you play Cuban music or African jazz, or all this kind of music you have to be very comfortable with this sort of division because there are lot of phases that you – when you play there is a lot of displacements on the melodies and the figures that comes from this division of triplets and A notes. That's why there are so many melody that use – for example, if you play the montuno.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: And you start making the displacements of the same montuno comes into the territory of six eight three four.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You know – I don't think you noticed that. Like if the – it's not [inaudible] counted this made – the displacement of the melodies. For example.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: That's all bass on A, displayed A notes. But if you do.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: One, two, three, four.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: It sounds like the montuno is slowing down in tempo.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Uh-huh. So you – in that example you were keeping the same bass line in the [inaudible].

>> Hilario Duran: The bass line doesn't change.

>> Ryan Bruce: In fours and then you're borrowing this – these ideas from the six eight clave in your.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Your right hand?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah. Yeah. Interesting.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, this is, this is, this is done where the, where the beauty of, of this style is you know that is – this really – all those phrases they come, come first an A note that suddenly, suddenly change to the territory of six eight three four and triple but syncopated and in some – there is a lot of the sample like that you know. But one of them montuno's the, the amount of montuno's you hear actually they are very complex because that comes into that, into that scene the – it change constantly between six eight – six eight three four or two four, four, four.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah. Your bass line is also syncopated and what you were playing there sounded typical. What are some of the characteristics of a common bass line?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, yeah also the bass line also change a bit. We change the, the – as I say at the beginning of the, of the, of the 20th Century when was the traditional son montuno, the montuno that I played.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: The bass was very simple.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You know like that. It's very difficult for me to play the bass the montuno and the clave with the foot you know.

>> Howard Spring: It's good. It's [inaudible]

>> Hilario Duran: I, I try my best. You know so the various change. With the other – when the montuno develop a little bit more – with more cords like.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: So the bass line started with two quarter notes and two other quarter notes at the end a quarter note tied with another quarter note that and [inaudible] all like that you know. When I started the, the music started on beat with one note of the, of the down beat.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: But when it comes to this bar the, the last quarter note is tied with the – of the next bar, of the quarter – another quarter note.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: Did the basic bass line of that. But You can have a little bit – you can add notes here and there. Like sounds like.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You can do it like that. One, two, three, four.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: There is another bass line that is very common in the modern Cuban music that we call timba. And it's very close at – very close to some of the Brazilian styles. It is – it start, it start with a quarter

note, a rest and two quarter note at the end. Bump, bump, bump bing. Ta, ta bump. And after it change — it, it comes in different with two rests a quarter note and two quarter note at the end. Like.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: One, two. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two. One, two, three, four. One, two, three.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You can, you can use – you can change back and forth of this [inaudible].

>> Ryan Bruce: It seems like in both of those you – the syncopation is anticipating the.

>> Hilario Duran: Every bar. Anticipated in every bar.

>> Ryan Bruce: On every bar, yeah.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, it comes – you can – it's like – it doesn't have to be [inaudible] a streak you know we don't want – you're playing music is like – it's almost all, all the bars are anticipated. But you anticipate every four bars, every eight bars. Nowadays it's sort of very, very – it's changed a lot. And it's a lot of.

>> Ryan Bruce: Is that – is there best practices or are people just improvising their choice on, on those notes?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, they're – also – but because also the, the thing is that I use, when, when they're [inaudible] the music is – it have – they play. Mostly bass player they play the depend on the intensity of, of the music you know. The intensity of how the drums comes with a beat or the thrill of [inaudible] on the piano that makes [inaudible] he also responding someone – some way you know. That, that's all – that's – this is all connected you know like that. Like. We can start doing. One, two, thee, four. One, two, three, four. One, two. One, two, three, four. And notice the change?

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You know like that.

>> Ryan Bruce: Now as much as you're describing it in four, four, it seems like a lot of those notes are, are

lining up with the clave. And a bass player would they being thinking more in terms of, of counting and bars or, or is all of this resting on more of a timeline to the clave?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, it's connected, it's connected with the clave and it's connected also with the part of the conga. With the tumbadora, the conga. It's connected most, most of the beats that he play are connected with the conga.

>> Ryan Bruce: And those will be the same or do they interlock?

>> Hilario Duran: They interlock. They interlock. Let me see if the – I don't – I have, I have a key.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: One, two, three, four. One, two.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: This part is for only one.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: One, two, three, four. One, two.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: One, two, three, four. One, two.

[Music]

[Singing]

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You know that – there – it, it's connected with the conga's. Connected with clave. [inaudible] it's like, it's like they rhythm machine you know.

>> Ryan Bruce: It's a good, good description. I have a question about montuno because but used in two

different context and recently we've been looking at the rhythm and the melody of a montuno pattern. But we also said that the montuno was a section when you played the contradanza.

>> Hilario Duran: The contradanza?

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah, the contradanza.

>> Howard Spring: You mean the danzon, mean the danzon?

>> Hilario Duran: No, the danzon – there is no montuno's in the contradanza.

>> Ryan Bruce: That's right.

>> Howard Spring: The danzon.

>> Ryan Bruce: So, when you played the danzon we got to a section called the montuno.

>> Hilario Duran: No. Danzon, yeah, yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah, and so assuming that you play a montuno pattern in the montuno section.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Right?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: How long does, does a montuno section last? Is it prescribed length when you're playing a piece or is that improvised as well?

>> Hilario Duran: Improvised. Improvised [inaudible] it, it keeps as long the energy of the musician you know. It can, it can, it can definitely [inaudible] like you know depends, depend on how, how long the, the musician is improving lasts if we run out of ideas you know. Like that.

>> Ryan Bruce: And how long is a typical section?

>> Hilario Duran: How long is typical section? It takes like a you know it's, it's – of the, of the – you have

to count, you [inaudible] even bars. You can probably to, to make a good, a good session for improvising can be maybe eight times or sixteen times. It always even. You know 32 times and done.

>> Ryan Bruce: So, in a live performance though would it – would you expect to be playing a montuno for a minute or eight minutes? How long?

>> Hilario Duran: Probably, probably a minute. Probably, probably two – probably two minutes.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah. Okay.

>> Hilario Duran: It takes, takes a lot you know as you count is two minutes of music is – it [inaudible] but when you, when you play two minutes it's you know. A song, that – a song that use you use two minutes of, of music playing montuno it's long. You know.

>> Ryan Bruce: And that, that would be the same for montuno sections in a, in a, a, a, son or a, or a rumba? Is that the same?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah. Yeah. Again like that. Again like that. On the rumba it's different because a rumba is, is more, is more active. And the sections are shorter. In the rumba because all based on percussion and voices. The, the voices they make a choir and they respond. Choir responds. Choir responds. And there is a guy improvising and there is a choir that is singing the, singing the section that is, it's a little phrase that responds to the person that's, is improvising. And it's just like that. Because they don't have instrument like when, when you play that rumba with voices and percussion. And percussion instrument is just like that. It's all based on melodies and, and, and choir – and choruses you know. But when you, when you play rumba with bass and piano it's different. It, it takes longer because they have the structure. It gets the structure. I, I would rather that you to maybe check it out one of my albums. There is a, there is an album that I made in 2006 with a big band. With the son – I made an arrangement of the, the song of the percussion [foreign language] Blem, Blem, Blem. It's a rumba. And you will hear that in this, in this song of the, all the structure of the, the rumba how it goes, you know. I, I don't know if here is anywhere that I can, I can play some beat for you to – let's not. No way no.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah, that's okay. How much is the montuno section tied to dancing?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah. It gets a – yeah. Well the montuno, the montuno is connected also with the dancer or with the dancers. I – it's a chord that if you, if you play the montuno that is wrong, the dancers stop dancing. You know. If something, if something wrong with [inaudible] instrument the dancer doesn't feel comfortable dancing anymore. They have, they have to be all connected you know. That, that way well that's why we call these [foreign language] or montado . Montado [phonetic] means that it's mounted, it's ruined you know.

>> Howard Spring: So wrong means instead of playing let's say for example a three two, you're playing a two three when you should.

>> Hilario Duran: Two three.

>> Howard Spring: Be playing a three two, something like that?

>> Hilario Duran: Yes.

>> Howard Spring: Nice.

>> Hilario Duran: Also, it can, it can occur with the montuno if you play that wrong montuno, if you play the wrong clave also. It bad. You know.

>> Howard Spring: So do you learn how – which – I mean I guess after a while you just get a feel for what's the right one.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah. Yeah, but it is – but you – let me tell you is that, it's a big controversy on, it's a big controversy on how it's, it's done. There was a time, there was a time in Cuba that there was a big controversy about the clave. And it get very intense. Also there is a thing, because I just want to tell you, the Cuban music after the revolution they – the Cuban music develop different inside Cuba than outside of Cuba like places like Venezuela or New York or Puerto Rico or Columbia in Canada plays the salsa you know. In Puerto Rico they play the Cuban music, they play this what we call salsa. And they – all the – most of their music that they play is in three two clave instead of two, three that the Cubans do. And it's a big fight you know. Puerto Ricans say that we're wrong and Cuban say that they are wrong.

>> Howard Spring: The best controversy.

>> Hilario Duran: Best – yeah. It's, it's like a – but, but it's, it's the people dance anyway with, with both clave's you know. Because as you, as you go to party in Puerto Rico with the salsa band, people are dancing. They're enjoying that's the thing you know. The same, the same with the Cuban music. But because the, the Cuban music develop with more elements. They have a lot of funk music a lot of Brazilian music and some other style like the bomba from Puerto Rico that have the same bass line that I told you.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: That, that's the bomba bass line from Puerto Rico. And they -this is a big – there is a big scene of Cuban music, the Cuban music that we call timba.

>> Howard Spring: So timba is what they're playing now?

>> Hilario Duran: Timba is what they're playing now. But, but, but the – but, but the timba was big in the – at the end of '80s. In the '80s they start, start develop the timba start developing because there was a – the Cuban musicians start adding a lot of rhythmic element from other styles of music like Brazilian music [foreign language] bomba from Puerto Rico and also element of funk. And they start adding phrases brass section like Earth, Wind and Fire sort of thing you know. And it's – this is – even became very aggressive, very aggressive. The music became very aggressive and this is why montuno with all this display of triplet and stuff is all get lost. The timba was getting really, really wild at that time you know. Now, it's – now the, the timba music and all the Cuban music in general got a little bit less aggressive, less intense but even more sophisticated.

>> Howard Spring: Sophisticated meaning harmonically or?

>> Hilario Duran: Harmonically, harmonic and rhythmically.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah.

>> Hilario Duran: You know.

>> Howard Spring: Do you think that's the influence of jazz?

>> Hilario Duran: Also has a little bit of influence on jazz too you know. Like it's all – start developing because what happened with Cuban music was that it continue, it continue to develop, develop. It never stop. Like it didn't happen like for example the, the salsa from Puerto Rico or Columbia this start sound – they keep sound in the same like in 1950s. It didn't develop that way, it didn't develop that. And it was just like that you know Cuban bands they always develop but now it's – this – all this is really fantastic when you, when you [inaudible] have all the [inaudible] or have the, the – it develop itself in music.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah. Do you still go down to Cuba?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah. I, I never stop going down there. I even – I – the other recording I made was, was I recorded in Havana. What it is – in the 2017 my last album it's called Contumbao they have the luxury and the privilege to, to use a really great musicians, big stars. They're, they're great players like tresaro Pancho Amat is the – ones the greatest in the world. And the percussionist Jose Luis Quintana "Changuito" down in Cuba.

Huracio "El Negro" Hernandez the drummer and even I have the, the great privilege to make a duet with Chucho Valdes.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah.

>> Hilario Duran: Which is [inaudible].

>> Howard Spring: Right.

>> Hilario Duran: And that you to check it out when you have a chance you know. it's called Contumbao.

>> Howard Spring: All right. I'll check it out. For sure.

>> Ryan Bruce: I've noticed, I've noticed that a lot of the music introduces a lot of chromaticism. I'm wondering what is the role of chromaticism in Cuban music? Where does that come from?

>> Hilario Duran: You know I, I, I don't understand very well the, the word. [inaudible] chromatic scales? No.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah. As opposed to diatonic harmony.

>> Hilario Duran: Diatonic harmony, oh.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah, so you have that.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Because a lot of the music sounds like there's very clear – a very clear sense of diatonic harmony.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: And then a lot of notes that are used outside of that harmony which we would call chromatic [inaudible]

>> Hilario Duran: Yes,

>> Ryan Bruce: Chromatic scale. So where does that come from?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, yeah. It come from you know the, the traditional Cuban music in general. The traditional. It's very diatonic. Very simple. Very simple. It's different than just lines and the chromaticism of just lines you know. But when the music – the music develop, when the music develop more even the Cuban music the salsa they start, they starting more modern harmonies and [inaudible] in the, in the music in general.

>> Ryan Bruce: So that's more of a characteristic of salsa then the earlier styles of son [inaudible].

>> Hilario Duran: Yes. For example, for example the – for example minor, the minor modes from the early Cuban music, in general in Cuban music it's based on the minor harmonic scale.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: That comes also because the influence that Hispanic influence in Cuban music with the scales of this.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: And if you – and, and in major one. To play them this music in major it's a really diatonic [inaudible] using most of the ionic major scale.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: And also make a emphasis, make – they use a lot of sixths.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: On that you know. There is a influence of the 1950s and the 1940 for the, the of the big band era of this big band Count Basie and Duck Ellington they use a lot of the sixths. They also applied this to the, to the big bands in Cuban music.

>> Howard Spring: Hmm, interesting. So where does the chromaticism come from bebop or?

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah, they come this – because as I say before the, the – most of the Cuban music is mostly diatonic. But when, when the, the Cuban music developed to the timba it did – it develop rhythmically

big time. But also harmonically. It's changed big time and this time you'll see modern harmonies in, in Cuban music in general.

>> Ryan Bruce: I'm also interested in this idea you did refer to the – coming from Spanish music and some – you played some scales that weren't of an Ionian or – they weren't of the minor scale or they weren't in the major scale. So is there an element of Spanish music that comes in melodically or harmonically?

>> Hilario Duran: Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: And where?

>> Hilario Duran: Come the flamenco. It come from the flamenco and it come from the – you know it's just a – it's a fusion of, of [inaudible] you know. The you know when the Spanish – for the Spanish Conquers went down to Cuba to exploit, exploit the island you know they brought African slaves. So the African slave they, they put African slaves on the – African slave they, they brought that with themselves with all this culture tradition of African, African chants. They're beautiful chants and melodies but really, really great. And also the, the fusion of that with the, with the Hispanic flamenco music and also because there is another element, the classical music the European classical music from mostly from France because there, there were, there were the [inaudible] in the island of Haiti and it was colonized by the French people. [inaudible] they were, they were they're located during – in the island of Haiti and they have also the, the slaves at the time and the slave they, they make revolution there. And there was a lot of killing and killing people and there was a lot of immigration escaping from the, from the revolution of Haiti. There was a lot of – a big population that went at the east of Cuba with, with all this music from – the, the classical music from France. And, and also all this music make a mix fusion. There were the [inaudible] also the contradanza they came from – it come from, from Europe to Cuba. So the island of Haiti you know. So the contradanza went – arrive in Cuba and fusion it. And blend the – with Hispanic flamenco.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: And together with the flamenco scales and Hispanic, Hispanic scales and stuff. And [inaudible] to the African percussion and claves, even the clave. The clave influence from six eight to four, four at the beginning of the 20th Century and end of the 19th Century. And that's all the – where it come from. So with the contradanza life to Cuba. So the island Haiti it and fusion with Hispanic and the African it became contra-what we call contradanza [foreign language] with all these element. That's what I was playing. And you could, you could hear that, that's sophisticated harmonies you know on that. It's really beauty. It's – and also because you know only that there was – there weren't a lot of at that time in the 1800s or the end of the 1700, 1800, there was a lot of interchange between Cuba, Mexico, [inaudible] and New Orleans. In New

Orleans they were, they were playing some sort of music similar to the contradanza in Cuba. They are – they were – there are a lot of element that interchange and make you know. The early, the early style of Dixieland that the music of Jelly Roll Morton and this traditional American music before the jazz came in have a lot of connection with the Cuban contradanzas. And this all fascinating you know. It's really.

>> Howard Spring: Right.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: It is.

>> Ryan Bruce: Is there any demonstrations of these kinds of things that we should have in sound? And what I'm wondering about is either some of the interesting things that you talked about if you're able to demonstrate either flamenco, something that's more strictly flamenco? You mentioned about some beautiful African songs, African chants. I'm not sure if you know anything that would represent that. Or just having something that is like a more modern sound compared to the.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Other traditional music. Is there – do you have preference? What would be most valuable I think at this, at this time? Maybe that one last demonstration before we finish.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah. I would, I wouldn't [inaudible] instead of – you know I'm going, I'm going to play some like I said before, the – there is a big influence of Hispanic music in the Cuban music. Even, even myself I was since I was a kid the same, the same [inaudible] listening to all sort of music, I was listening a lot Hispanic music from Spain on the radio and the TV. A lot of – I saw a lot of movie – it was very popular – we, we call in Cuba the Spain the modern art. We were colonies — colonized by them you know. So, there — for years I compose I was commissioned to compose a song with Hispanic influence. So I, I, I want to demonstrate for you that before I finish. This is, this is a song called Spain On My Mind. And it has the first part, the first part of the, of the piece is based on the old beat, old beat Cuba flamenco that have the twelve beat. And it's very fast. And the second part is the rumba, the slow rumba flamenco. And you will see the different you know. The rumba [inaudible] sound like.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: And the part comes with the old beat Hispanic music like. Very similar to the fast bembe, the African bembe.

[Banging]

>> Hilario Duran: Like that. So I will, I will, I will play that. You will see.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: Something like that.

[Music]

>> Hilario Duran: You know [inaudible] with the chair because it's.

[Background Noise]

[Music]

>> Howard Spring: That was great. That was great, Hilario.

>> Ryan Bruce: Great.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah, thanks for doing this. We really appreciate it. This is really.

>> Hilario Duran: Thank you so much.

>> Howard Spring: A great session. I think we're all going to learn a lot of from it and the students are going to learn a lot from it. It's exactly what we're going for here. So I want to thank you for doing this. It was really great.

>> Hilario Duran: Yeah. Same to you man. Same to you. I'm, I'm glad.

TRANSCRIPT: MUSIC OF ZIMBABWE

>> Howard Spring: Hi, Moyo, thanks for doing this. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself before we get going?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Hi, Ryan. Hi, Howard. My name is Moyo. I am from Zimbabwe. And I'm currently reside in Toronto. And I am a gwenya mbira. What that means is master mbira player. I play this music that is inspired by this instrument. And I also teach mbira here in Canada, but also in the US. I have mbira centre in Zimbabwe, so where people can actually go and learn mbira locally. So people — it's a global centre. So people from around the world come there to learn mbira and mbira culture.

>> Howard Spring: OK. Can you show us what your hands are doing when you're playing?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: All right. I'm just going to angle myself a little bit. OK. So basically, the mbira has three voices, right? And the right-hand side of the mbira is the high voice. And I play that side using my index finger and my thumb. And then the left-hand side, I only play with my thumb. Both thumbs play down, the keys down like this. Whereas the index finger play from the bottom. So the Moya Moya song that I was playing would go like this.

[Music]

Sometimes on the right-hand side, I play chords. I play two keys together. But on the left side, because I'm using one thumb, I only play one key. Sometimes, I play the three together.

[Music]

And that thickens the sound.

>> Howard Spring: So what — how did the — how does the melody actually get played?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: How does the melody get played?

>> Howard Spring: An odd question, I know. It's seems like your fingers are — they're sort of putting

the melody together between them, if you know what I mean. Or is it you play the melody and there's an accompaniment? Is that the way it works?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Right. You can almost think of it this way, that there are two parts, right? There are two parts, two main parts to the mbira. Even though there are three voices, there are two main parts. So the left-hand side kind of plays the melody. That's what grounds the song. And then, the right-hand side harmonizes it, right? So most sometimes, like a lot of times, when people are learning, you'd learn the left-hand side first so that you have a sense of like, you know, how the melody works. And then, you add the right-hand side. A lot of the improvisation that happens tend to happen on the right-hand side, in the harmony piece, but also in the melody piece too. Like if you're advanced, then you can also improvise on the melody side.

>> Ryan Bruce: Could you show us those two different parts in isolation?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: OK.

>> Ryan Bruce: So could you play as the melody on the left side, and then add in the harmony on the right?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: I will OK. So this is a song called Nhemamusasa, which means to make temporary — to build temporary shelters. And this is the left-hand side, which is the melody side. So this is the simplest melody of this song. There's more to it. It gets complicated. Maybe I can add a little bit later. So when anyone hears this part, they know that you're playing Nhemamusasa, right, anywhere in the world.

[Music]

Now, what's happening here is that I'm playing the melody on the left-hand side, and I'm alternating. But I'm beginning with the harmony side. So I'm going left. So right left, right left, right left.

[Music]

I'm going to harmonize on the right-hand side.

[Music]

But I can harmonize — I can also play with the melody on the left-hand side and shift it a little bit.

[Music]

You notice that I've added a few notes right.

[Music]

So in the first version, I was literally playing six keys per part on the left hand side. Now, I'm playing nine keys, right.

[Music]

But it can get even more intense. I can play 12 keys in the same sort of space on the melody side. And so, if I were to move from the simpler vision, if I'm going —

[Music]

And then —

[Music]

Same song, but this time around, I'm playing around with the melody on the left-hand side. And I can even make it even more intense.

[Music]

So it can get thicker, and thicker, and thicker. But usually, when you're playing this, you're not playing alone. This is a relational instrument. What that means is you always play with at least one more person, because each song has a call and a response. So I was playing mostly the calls when I was demonstrating the Nhemamusasa. But if my older son was here, who plays very well, I think Howard would play with him, he would usually play the calls and I play the responses.

>> Howard Spring: So the response has a different melody than what you're showing us here?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah. So if I were to play a response for the Nhemamusasa, that would be —

[Music]

What you'll notice with the response is that it doesn't start at the same point that the call starts. It sort of starts a little bit behind so that it — the two interlock. And you get this effect of kaka, taka, taka, kaka, taka,

kata, kaka, taka, kata. So one of the things with mbira is that it's preserved — Honestly, I want to demonstrate something with him playing.

[Music]

>> Howard Spring: Very nice, very nice. Thank you —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: — for doing that.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah, thank you.

>> Howard Spring: So, Moyo, when you learn a piece, you have to learn both parts, is that right?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Right, right, right. So usually, for you to be able to actually play mbira well, you need to learn both parts, so that you have an essence of, you know, how they work together, right? So if you notice there, he was leading, so he was a little bit ahead of me. And then, when I came in, I came almost one bit behind him.

>> Howard Spring: And that's how you get that interlock?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: That's how we get the interlock.

>> Howard Spring: Right. So, how do you learn that? I mean, does somebody just play it for you and then you try it until you get it?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah. I mean, because — Well, imagine a context in which you are immersed in the music, right? It's — You grew up people playing. So you actually — it's more like the way you hear it, as opposed to the way you learn it. So when you hear it played, and with the pieces working together perfectly, then when you play with other people, if it does not sound like how you are used to hearing it, you kind of have to learn to adjust, right? So, yeah, it's really how you hear it. And this is what makes mbira a little bit complex for people in the West learning it, because if you just learn it without really listening to it first, it doesn't work well.

>> Howard Spring: OK. So, you learn it — I think you're saying you learnt it originally in Zimbabwe.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: And then you came here, and you — and that's how you learnt it by listening.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: I see, OK.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Now, are all the mbiras tuned the same way?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: No. So, I said — I don't know if I said this before, but — So mbira is basically a family instrument, meaning that each family has its own tuning, its own style of playing. So you'll find that if you go to Zimbabwe and visit different families that play mbira, you will have — they'll have different — like sometimes different tunings, sometimes different songs, even, right. Now, people tend to share those songs and tunings to the extent that, right now, the tunings are coming together, right? For example, what we're doing with my son is that we're both playing on a what we call a Nhemamusasa tuning, which is like a B flat, E flat tuning. And we're both playing on the same key. We're using the same tuning. And that's like the traditional way, like simple B flat, B flat, someone plays higher, someone plays low, right? But then these days, you have what people call cross-tuning or orchestra tuning. And this was invented by a fellow called Garikayi Tirikoti. He came up with the seven different tunings that all play together. And he's one of my teachers. So sometimes, with my son, we switch. We say, he can take a Nhemamusasa tuning and mbira tuning. So this is a Mixolydian, this is Phrygian. And we can play both together. So for the same song that we're playing, if I call him, he actually knows how to play on both tunings. I can play on this tuning, he plays on his — this tuning, and they all — they go together really perfectly. And then suppose I have people who are experienced, they can pick up other tunings that I have. So this is a Bangidza tuning. I also have a Mahororo tuning, which is in here. Mahororo tuning is the best one. And we can combine all of them.

>> Howard Spring: Now, do they — the different tunings, they all have the same number of keys?

>> Yeah. Typically, yeah. Typical. But the number of keys doesn't — that don't really matter. Like the most important keys on the — So on the left-hand side — on the right-hand — on the left-hand side, typically we have about seven keys, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. And this one has an extra eighth one, eighth key. And here as well, seven. Here, you only pretty much need nine, nine keys. So as long as like you have a minimum of seven keys on the top keys, nine keys on the right-hand side and seven keys on the best side, you are good, right? If you

have more, you know, you can play more sounds. But the basis is that you have all those number of keys, you can play any song.

>> Howard Spring: So when the two, let's say two mbiras are playing together with different tunings, does it change the nature of the piece?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Pretty much.

>> Howard Spring: All right.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Pretty much. It makes it — In fact, it actually makes it more complex because —

>> Howard Spring: Sure.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: — these are different modes interacting, right? Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: OK. So earlier I saw you were playing with a gourd around —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Right.

>> Howard Spring: — the mbira. Can we talk about that for a while, take a look at those —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yes.

>> Howard Spring: — and hear what it sounds with the gourd?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yes. So the gourd, this one, this is a natural gourd. We call this deze. And it's the amplifier. So imagine a ceremony, when you're playing mbira in a ceremonial context, or even like when you're hanging out, you have pretty much a few elements interacting with each other. So you have the mbira instrument itself, you have ngoma, which is the drum. You have the drum. You have a hosho, the shaker. And then, you have people singing and dancing, right. Some people will dance with magavhu on, these leg shakers. So, with all these elements going on, right, there is a lot of noise. And so to, you know, create space for mbira to be heard, you have to put it in an amplifier.

>> Howard Spring: So I noticed on the bigger gourd, the natural gourd that you showed us before, there were bottle caps.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yes.

>> Howard Spring: How come there's bottle caps on the instrument?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Because you want the sh, sh, shaka sound. You want the percussive sound to be heard as you're playing. The spiritual explanation for that is that just like the hosho, the percussive sound on the gourd sort of clears the path for the spirits to come through. Traditionally, people won't use bottle caps, because bottle caps, of course, came with Coca Cola colonization, right? But they would use cowrie shells. Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: So can we hear maybe see you play with a gourd? The one you've got I think you said that we're seeing now is fiberglass that you said.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: So this is fiberglass, so that this is not natural. This is fiberglass but produced in Zimbabwe as well. And I can play a song in the gourd.

>> Ryan Bruce: Is that for durability, or is it actually louder?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: The natural gourd is louder, tend to be loud. Actually, it depends on how it is made. It really depends. But this is mostly for durability. And when you're moving around, you want something that doesn't break, right? Imagine you get invited to a ceremony, and on the way, it shatters and you can't really do anything without the gourd, right? So this guarantees. But some people in Zimbabwe would say, "We don't want this plastic stuff in ceremony," right? They only want the natural ones. So at my centre, we're actually growing the gourd so that people can use the natural gourd instead of using the fiberglass ones. So what I'm going to do is to play the same song that my son and I played, right, in the gourd, but on a different tuning now. So we played it on a Mahororo — Nhemamusasa tuning. I'm going to play it on a Mahororo tuning, which is a little bit deeper.

[Music]

>> Howard Spring: OK, great. So when you're singing, are you singing one of the melodies that are being played, or is it a separate thing altogether?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: It's separate thing. It's a separate thing. But you will find that sometimes people are singing following the melody. Sometimes, would people just like come in different parts. So — But this specific song, I was pretty much singing separate from the melody. Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: You mentioned improvisation before. Is that — You know, when you're playing a piece and you want to improvise, is that just up to you, or is there any rules about improvisation, or?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Theoretically, I think there are rules. I don't know if I can explain them well. But I think there are some rules that like — Imagine that you're playing with someone else, right? Imagine you're having a conversation with somebody else, and, you know, you're talking about dinner, right? You know, I really enjoy eating vegetarian food, for example. And then, the person starts talking about, you know, how they went and slept under a bridge in New York, right? So you kind of like have to stay within sort of like the boundaries of the melodies and harmonies that makes sense for that particular dual dynamic, right? So there are rules. I don't know if I can explain them properly, but like for a song to be called a song, to have a name, it has particular integrity. It has a sound integrity to it. It has a melodic integrity to it. And so, you will definitely improvise but within the confines of that melodic integrity.

>> Howard Spring: Right. And is there any limit to how much you can improvise? Like in a performance, for example, is it — or does it vary? Is it mostly the composition with some improvisation, or is there — you play the piece and then you can just improvise?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: It depends on your expertise, right? It depends on your expertise. The recommendation is if you are new to the instrument, please avoid improvising it all. If you're very experienced, you do it in a way that does not sort of — it's not like you showing off, right? If you're playing with others, you don't want to show-off, because usually, the improvisation in the mbira style is like really gets juicy and gets really super interesting. But when you're playing with other people, you kind of want to like stay humble and play the simple stuff, because usually, the simple stuff is when you're playing together with others is what really produces that beautiful community sound. Right. Improvisations tend to happen when you're playing solo, right? And we call that a [inaudible], like where you're showing off your prowess so to speak.

>> Howard Spring: So, Moyo, you were saying that the more skilled you are as a musician, the more improvisation is allowed, called for, whatever. But during an actual performance of a skilled player, how much of it is improvised and how much of is composed? And maybe we can hear you play something and then tell us, "This is the composed part and I'm going to the improvised part," so we can hear the difference.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: So what's interesting about this composing and improvisation issue in mbira music is you can almost think of mbira as always — Actually, maybe I won't say always improvise, but like there is the basic structure, and you will hear it. So Nhemamusasa, for example, you will hear many people playing it differently but within that same structure, right? What is most common is this sound here.

[Music]

So you can think of that is like the model for Nhemamusasa. But then, people play it very differently. And I think that because of the improvisation that is always ongoing, there are like different variations of Nhemamusasa in like across the whole world, right? So let me just like begin with that part, and then I will switch it and play with it. So the basic pattern.

[Music]

Most recordings of Nhemamusasa, you'll hear this sound.

[Music]

So you might want to treat this as like the composition.

[Music]

I am improvising.

[Music]

And then I go, and I go, and I go, right? It's unavoidable. You cannot not improvise if you are inexperienced mbira player, because in some ways, the mbira itself asks you to do that.

>> Howard Spring: What do you mean?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: What do I mean? I mean that like you hear sounds. You hear sounds. You hear sounds as you're playing. And you're like, ah, yeah, I hear that. Let me bring it in. I hear that. Let me bring it in, right? Almost like the ancestors are saying, "Do this now, and do this now, and do this now." Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: That's interesting. Yeah. You use the interesting word before, intensity, you increase the intensity. How does that work really?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Well, I — for me, it's the depth of feeling that I have. So if I'm playing, it's like it's a very mellow, like almost like I feel like grounded, I feel like I'm relaxed. And then when I start shifting, you can even notice that my body is that like moving in a different way, right? So let me play Nhemamusasa again.

[Music]

Like what I'm feeling right now when I shift, it's like this like intense, more emotion. It's like I am in — How do I explain it? It's like if I'm running, right, and I'm starting at a slow pace, and then I'm like, when I run faster, my heart beats faster. I start sweating. There's a lot more going on in my emotional landscape than the beginning. So I think that's what the intensity is. And there's, of course, also the intensity of like sound itself, right? It becomes more complex.

>> Howard Spring: Because you're adding notes?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Because I'm adding notes. I might like change where the beat is. I might like to even shift the beat, you know, depending on how I'm improvising.

>> Howard Spring: So let's say a melody is 24 — you're using 24 keys for a melody.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: So how would you add more notes?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: More notes, OK. So I have —

>> Howard Spring: To proceed.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: So I have Nhemamusasa. So that is six notes right there. And each mbira song can be broken down into four equal parts. So if I'm playing six notes right there, it means all the keys that I'm going to — the notes that I'm going to play in a full cycle, because it's a cycle, is 24. When I'm like feeling like shifting, I can go to.

[Music]

Now, I'm playing nine notes per part. So I will have 36 notes on the left-hand side. So let me just like play the full song, starting with the 24 moving to 36, and then moving to 48.

[Music]

This is, by the way, one of my favourite variations of Nhemamusasa. I'm going to shift to 48.

[Music]

Here we go.

>> Howard Spring: Right. So when you have this 24 beat, I guess cycle, and you went to 36 and to 48, when you move to 36 and 48, they're all — that occurs in the same overall length of time?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah. Yeah. So imagine —

>> Howard Spring: OK.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Again imagine I'm playing with someone else, right? This is not solo. I'm playing with somebody else, and they are playing like the basic parts, I have to improvise in this way to fit, you know, the boundaries that they have set. Yeah. So if my thing has to like run faster, that's what I need to do to make the time.

>> Ryan Bruce: How much of a balance between — when I'm listening, I can hear parts that are sounding like they're in twos, in groups of twos. And then at the same time, I can switch my attention and then hear what you're doing in groups of threes. How much of a balance is there between those two, and does that change over the course of a piece?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah. Yeah, it does. I think — I don't know if you can help me here. So when I was playing the basic, the 24 key, what were you hearing?

>> Ryan Bruce: Well why don't you play it again and we'll do it right now?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: All right.

[Music]

What are you hearing?

>> Ryan Bruce: I was hearing in twos.

>> Howard Spring: So was I. There's a melody —

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: — that's playing we da, da, da.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Something like that.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Which dividing — Each note was divided into two. So I was hearing it in twos.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Excellent. OK. Now I'm going to go to the 36 one.

[Music]

What did you hear?

>> Ryan Bruce: I heard it in twos again.

>> Howard Spring: I'm still hearing in twos, maybe fours —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: OK.

>> Howard Spring: — you know, because it's divided.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah, yeah.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: All right. So I am going to switch. Now, instead of playing the call, I'm going to play the response. I'm curious to hear what you hear.

[Music]

What do you hear now?

>> Ryan Bruce: Well, for me, it actually changed. I immediately heard in threes.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Exactly.

>> Ryan Bruce: And then you started doing some things. I don't know if you're adding more accompaniment, but then there was something that drew my attention into twos again.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: OK.

>> Ryan Bruce: It's hard to say. I mean, I'm aware that I'm — this is the exercise, right? So there's a —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: I'm being —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: So what —

>> Ryan Bruce: There's a [inaudible] —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah. What you'll notice, though, is that like I think in the simpler version, you definitely hear the twos and twos and twos, right? But if you — Like I'm going to do this again. So let me begin from a different — a whole different Nhemamusasa, OK? I'll start here.

[Music]

I think this one is more increased, right?

>> Howard Spring: Yeah, absolutely. That's why I was hearing in three for sure.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah, there's a fast three that's happening there. Yeah, yeah.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Exactly. So what Jacob [assumed spelling] is saying, the call and response have a different rhythm and structure, right? That is — And that then allows for the interlocking sound that you are going for with mbira. But you can also kind of do that as a solo player, right? You can do that as a sort of in the way that you sort of you bring together the harmony and the melody. Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: When you're playing solo, is the — so you're going to have some things that are happening

in two, and some things that are happening in three. Do you divide that by your hands? So, for example, do you have one hand that's playing two and one hand that's playing three? Or do those rhythms actually cross between the two hands, so like a one, two?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: They tend to cross between the two hands.

>> Ryan Bruce: Interesting.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah, they tend to cross between the two hands. But you'll notice that like the harmony side almost stays in the two. But it also shifts depending on how you're playing it. But definitely the melody side, when you're playing solo tends to be in the — in three. I can just say that, so the call and response do have a different rhythmic structure. And this is — this makes sense, because what you're going for is producing an interlocking sound. And then that interlocking sound can only happen when the call and responds have different rhythmic structures. Like if they are the — if they are clearly — if they are, the same, then you kind of like — like you're kind of like almost playing parallel, like the similar way — You're playing them in parallel with each other in a similar way. And it doesn't work. Like you're looking for this interlocking, not this. Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: How much do you think that the interlocking parts are result of — because you've described the offset of one player versus another? Is there something else that's happening rhythmically with the twos and the threes that is important for that kind of interlock, or?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: What's your perspective on how that works?

>> ML Yeah. One thing that you'll notice is that, usually, the calls go — the response comes one beat behind, right? You never start in the same place. Like the emphasis of the beat in the response and the call are also very different.

>> Ryan Bruce: Is that a beat in two or a beat in three?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: I would say with the call, it will be a beat in two. With the response, it would be a beat in three. But this is me who doesn't really know Western music theory.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah, that's — Well, I don't think that that's necessary. I think that there's a part there —

>> Howard Spring: No, that's pretty clear.

>> Ryan Bruce: — that's — Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: That's pretty clear.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah, it seems clear to me.

>> Howard Spring: When do you play this music? Are there other special ceremonies where it's played, or can you play it at any time, or can you do both?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: So I started by saying that the mbira is a spiritual instrument, right? And in Zimbabwe, it's played everywhere. However, for a lot of ceremonies, spiritual ceremonies, spiritual gatherings, this plays a critical role, right. These together with drumming, with singing and dance, allows for the spirits to visit, right. But what I would actually say is that this instrument is inherently spiritual wherever you play it, right? Like what is spiritual is actually the sound, not the context that you're playing it in. So I might play it in a bar, but for me, that is a spiritual experience, right? I might play it in the park. That is a spiritual experience. It does not have to be necessarily in the context of a ritual or of a ceremony.

>> Howard Spring: What kind of ceremonies — That's very interesting. But what kind of ceremonies do you hear mbira, or what kind of ceremonies are they played in?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: We — There are many ceremonies that take place like, you know, ceremonies when someone dies, ceremonies when someone is born, ceremonies where people are — when people are married, ceremonies when people break up, ceremonies at the beginning of the farming season, ceremony at the beginning of before harvest. You have a ceremony before people start eating from the fields. You have a ceremony, you know, ceremony to kind of cleanse the home, a ceremony to when there's trouble in the family or trouble in the — on the land, and you want to get wisdom from, you know, from the ancestors. So, there are many — Like, if you think about the breadth of life experiences, there's a ceremony for almost everything that happens in regular life.

>> Howard Spring: And mbira is always played at these ceremonies?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: And — Now, not always, because not every region of Zimbabwe has mbira, right? So sometimes, we'll play drums, or sometimes people just sing, sometimes people dance. But in areas where there is mbira, definitely mbira is always present. It's almost like synonymous with ceremony in certain areas. And that's why it's called mbira dzavadzimu, the mbira of the ancestors.

>> Howard Spring: Right. And how long would a ceremony last? In other words, if you're an mbira player at this ceremony, how long are you playing for?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: It can be two hours to three, four days. Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: And are mbira players, are they — is it specialized? Is it — Like is an mbira player also do something else, they have a day gig or something like that?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Or is this all they do?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Imagine rural life, right. In rural life, you are a jack of all trades. So you grow your own food, you build your own house. You might be a midwife. Sometimes, you're a cook. You are a carver. So it's just like that. It's like the mbira player is also — You know, I'm an mbira player, but I'm a lecturer at the same time, right? I do commit organizing. I — You know. You know what I'm saying? So it's kind of like a similar thing. But mbira players hold a special place in the ceremonial context, because it's not everybody that can play mbira, right? And you can't replace, like if you are in an area where this — the rituals are done with mbira, you can't replace it with anybody else. You can't just get somebody come and play a drum. It won't really work.

>> Ryan Bruce: About the accompaniment that you're doing, I was wondering if we could return to something there. That right hand that you're playing, it seemed like a lot of the notes were always descending, like you'd start at a higher note and then come down. Yeah. I heard that in some of your singing. So is that typical of most of the repertoire, or does it change a lot?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: It's a stylistic thing. It's a stylistic thing. Many people who play mbira tend to do that. I tend to be like there's a lot of like these descending sounds. But you can also have like ascending sounds too, depending on the song. But you'll hear a lot of like the descending sounds. It's just like, what I grew up hearing. Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: I wondered if that was maybe what Howard was hearing earlier when he was wondering if the accompaniment part could be possibly linked or tied to the to the singing part. Do you —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: I see what you're saying.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah. And I think so —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: I see what you're saying. Well —

>> Ryan Bruce: It's stylistic. What you're saying is something that's stylistic makes a lot of sense. So is there other — Or do you have an example of something that might be in a different style, or it could be a different piece, but something that might sound different, or? I guess I can ask a specific question. If you have something that's descending in the accompaniment, is your singing always going to be descending as well? Are those two things —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: No.

>> Ryan Bruce: — actually linked? No. OK.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: No.

>> Ryan Bruce: So —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: No, they're not. No. No, because what happens is that like there's a way of playing and singing where you're pretty much following what the keys are saying, right. So for example, I'll play you this song. This is called Gwenyambira.

[Music Singing]

You notice that like I am — I'm descending there, right? And because the song, the mbira song was composed from a vocal song, right, it actually follows the sound of the way people sing the song, right? So there are like things like that. But then, I will play Nhemamusasa and I'll play the response.

[Music]

[Music and Singing]

There's no sort of like clear connection between the notes and what I'm singing, right? So it really depends on the song. It also depends on the nature of, you know, people who like — Sometimes there's a song like Nhemamusasa and I come up with my own lyrics based on my own experience, right? And there's that freedom in composition. The singer has, or the lead singer has the license to do whatever they want with the sound,

right? But then there are some songs that kind of come from people singing first, and then put on mbira. And those songs tend to kind of like match. What you're singing is what the mbira is playing.

>> Ryan Bruce: That's great. I might have actually missed something because there was something that might have cut out. But I'll ask this question. Is there a repertoire of songs that are composed for the instrument only and based on the instrument without vocals, or are there pieces that are definitely written for the mbira instrument first and vocals added later?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: It's the latter. Right. So my assumption is that a lot of this stuff that we play at this moment in time, and we — It's interesting because we have the benefit of having this whole tradition, right, you know, having had its own life for a very long period of time. So we're kind of like adding to whatever exists. And the way we enter into that tradition, at least in my own way, my own entering into that tradition, is that the songs are there. The classical repertoire is there. And there are some people who've already sung those — over those classical repertoires, right? So I don't — like I'm not — one side of it is that I don't know, you know, whether when they were originally composed, like there was any singing. Now, one thing that people will tell you is that the way people sing now to mbira music might actually be different than the way people sing to it in the past, because people, apparently they didn't used to just — to sing words. It was mostly vocables.

[Singing]

Right. So there's a whole, like a whole style of singing we call Huro, throat, right? Now, because of — I think because of the influence of Western music, there's a lot more sort of, what do you call it, seduction with words, right, and with composing poetry. We'd sing something, right, like there's this like compulsion to say something in words that people can interpret easily. And I think that has to do with the influence of recording — of Western recording of the music.

>> Ryan Bruce: Do you think that the vocables that that style came, does it have some sort of spiritual significance?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Or isn't it — Yeah?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah, definitely. Definitely. It is — Because you're not saying words. You are giving sound to feeling, right? And our understanding, at least, is that like language might not be very, very old as well, right? And we're also connected to multiple ancestors that spoke many different languages, right? So to have access to that, you might want to not use a specific language.

>> Ryan Bruce: Right.

>> Howard Spring: That's very interesting.

>> Ryan Bruce: I'm interested in the tuning systems that are used and wondering how do the musicians decide on tuning or come about the different tunings of the keys?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Most tunings are people's inventions, right, like individuals that invent them. And then, they get played in the family, right? So, for example, if I'm mbira player, and I have my — this tuning which is a B flat, and I visit Mhondoro, and they have — let's say they're using an A tuning, I will have to play with them. I will have to change my instrument and play with them, right? But because of the interaction between different families over time, you'll notice that there are many tunings that are being played together. And more tunings are being developed because of that interaction. So, for example, when you are playing, for example, with two modes, there's a lot more interlocking, right, that happens. And someone listen to that and went, "Oh, how can I produce that in one mbira?" And they came up with a mbira tuning in called Dongonda, where the keys on this — the upper register here, these keys here match exactly the keys on the left-hand side, sorry, on the right-hand side, right. So, because traditionally, this would be different than this, right? If you go, right, they're different. But if you — I just learnt my Dongonda to a friend. They're exactly the same. And when you play them, like the interlocking sound, it's so loud — it's so clear with just one player, right? And then I — the introductory song that I played you, I played on this mbira, which in the Western music theory is called Phrygian, right? We call it Mavembe or Gandanga. Gandanga is like it's a rebel sound. Mavembe is like, it's almost like moments. It's very melancholic. And the way it came about was that one mbira maker and mbira player went to a funeral, right? And then, you know, people were crying. And then he was like, "What would — What tuning of mbira would work with this crying?" And then he came up with this tuning.

>> Ryan Bruce: Thank you. It sounds like you're talking about some notes that are matched and different scales that are used. If you have two mbira players that are playing in the same tuning, or with the same scales, if you had the same note, I don't know, you know, like the highest note on both of them, is it important that the actual frequency, like the actual sound is exact between the two mbiras? Or is it common that they would actually be, you know, slightly out of tune, that the tuning would be slightly different?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: I see what you're saying. The recommendation always is that they have to be exactly the same. They have to be exactly the same. Now, sometimes, you'll notice, sometimes people play them slightly, because, you know, in the context of mbira, for example, you're playing all night, and you never have the time to stop to say, "Oh, let me tune my mbira, or let me make sure that it's in the, you know, it's in the same

tuning as I started," because you know, they move, right? The keys move a little bit. So, there is that happening too. But if there is time, they always have to be the same frequency.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah. So — And then how much does that vary, you know, in terms of when you have one set of, or one family of have instruments that are tuned to a certain frequency, is there a common or are there guidelines for tuning that are similar between different families? Or how varied is that?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: They vary. They vary in terms of mode. They vary in terms of like the scales, right.

>> Ryan Bruce: Like the exact notes?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah, yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Yeah.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Like a completely different mbira. Like this is very different from this, right? These two are quite different. This would be a Phrygian, this would be Mixolydian, if we talk about them in terms of mode. And this is a different family of like a family that begin with Mavembe, the [inaudible] family, right? And this is a tuning that comes out of Mhondoro, mostly with [inaudible] family. They're very different. Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: So there's two different tunings that are happening. One is that they're tuned to a different mode.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Different scale altogether.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: And then there's another one that is they're tuned in terms of different notes that they —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: — they don't match up.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: Could we hear them? Like just play the note — the keys on one and then the keys on the other just so we can hear the difference?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: OK. So should I play the left-hand side? Let's see.

[Music]

And then this one.

[Music]

And this is a different one. This is this is the Mujuru family. They call it Dambatsoko.

[Music]

Three different families.

>> Ryan Bruce: Right.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Ryan Bruce: And different —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Now, they did —

>> Ryan Bruce: — few notes and different experience.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah, but —

>> Ryan Bruce: Is what it resonates.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: But what is happening now is that people, because of interaction, right, people are combining them together. So those three that I just played you, we can play all those together. One song, we can play all those together, but of course, starting in different places, right? But you can play them in such a way that they work together. And if you go to Zimbabwe, people will start talking about what they call cross-

tuning, right, because it's a — there are different modes or different keys. And that's what like if you — if we think of mbira music, right, so not adaptations of mbira music onto Western instruments, but a mbira music itself is actually quite different from what is get — what gets played in ceremonies. And mbira music, if you look at bands like Mbira DzeNharira, [inaudible], et cetera, they use the cross-tuning. So that's like real innovation that is dominant in urban spaces, and in mbira, that gets used for popular entertainment. Whereas when you go to ceremonies, it's mostly the same key, but with people playing, you know, different octaves. So like high — there's a high mbira, there's a low mbira. I thought I had them here, but, yeah, there's like high, medium size, best one. But they're all in the same key.

>> Howard Spring: So you — There's different names for these modes, right?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Where do these names come from? Do they refer to anything specifically outside of the name of the mode?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Some of the song — Some of the names refer to the songs, to the key songs in that family. So for example, this is a Nhemamusasa tuning, right? And there are songs that are derived from the root Nhemamusasa song. And if you're playing in a cross-tuning, the person that is, for example, let's say I'm playing a song called Shigwaya, right, the person that is playing this mbira will automatically know they have to play it from a Nhemamusasa position, right, because Shigwaya can be Nhemamusasa, can be a Nhemamusasa Shigwaya. It can be Mahororo Shigwaya. So I have to play for the cross. One person plays on a — from a Nhemamusasa position, another person plays from a Mahororo position, right? Nhemamusasa is the name of a song. Mahororo is the name of a song. Bangidza is the name of a song. But they all have different — they are all structured differently. That's what gives them the name, Bangidza. That's what gives them the name Nhemamusasa, or Mahororo.

>> Howard Spring: So the names most always come from songs, or are the names — can they refer to something else?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah. So, this one is called Mavembe which means murmuring, right? This is not named after a song. Some people call it a Mavembe. Some people call it Gandanga, right? And then, I also — I told you about Dongonda, which is like on the left-hand side, it matches the right-hand side of the keys. It is not named after a song — after a particular song. Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: So the mbira is very important in culture. What's that relationship between the mbira and culture?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: So, the word mbira itself can refer to the instrument, right? It can refer to a few things, a few practices that people engage in, right? So if we say, oh, [foreign language] mbira, it can mean — it means that we are going to a ceremony, right, in which the mbira instrument is being played. Mbira is also a dance style, right? So there's a specific way of dancing that comes out of the music, right? So — And there's a way of being that is expected of people who play mbira. So I know if — I don't know if you know of Ubuntu, right? I am, because you are, Ubuntu philosophy, I am because of you are. So mbira is an instrument sort of mimics that philosophy, right? One, as I said earlier on, that is a relational instrument, which means two people or more play it. And they have to be in conversation with each other, right? There's a call. There's a response. There is dialogue. But that is also expected in human relationships, if we are dependant on each other. So in itself, it actually, mbira, the instrument, becomes a text for a philosophy of life, right, that is centred on connection, dependence, being with each other in a good way. You'll notice that like the people that tend to play mbira tend to be very respectful, very spiritual, very grounded. And that translates to, you know, how they are in the world as well, you'd hope, right? But that is sort of like the way that the mbira instrument itself guides people on how to be in the world.

>> Howard Spring: And is that philosophy and the relationship of mbira to those ideas, is that generally accepted in the culture?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So like it actually — when someone sees you hold mbira, they go, oh, [foreign language] mbira, like, oh, you are of the mbira culture, right? And there's already an expectation that like, you know, you're a spiritual person, you're respectful, you're very connected to your traditions. You are always — Like you are participating in ceremony. You eat healthy food. There're all these like expectation, right, based on the fact that I'll just hold mbira.

>> Howard Spring: You already touched on kind of the urban scene a little bit. Is there anything else you wanted to say about it? Because I know, you know, I've heard recordings of Thomas Mapfumo where he's using Western instruments and electric guitars, but also an mbira. But even the style of electric guitar playing kind of mimics what's going on —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: — on the mbira. Do you want to say anything about that?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah. So Mapfumo, I mean people who know his history, he didn't begin with playing Chimurenga music, right, the mbira west music. But he began with, you know, copying Elton John and all the other Western musicians. But there's a guy whose name is Jonah Sithole who is the one who kind

of, they say some — There are two guys. I forget that the other name. Jonah Sithole is the most popular one who kind of took the sound of mbira and put it on guitar and played for Thomas Mapfumo. And that's — like that's what got — I mean Thomas Mapfumo does not even play guitar. He doesn't really play instruments other than like he used to be a drummer. But Jonah Sithole is the — and someone else are the ones that kind of like took the mbira and put it on guitar, right. And that really created this whole genre. They — People don't call it necessarily mbira but — mbira, they call it Chimurenga because it emerged in the context of the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe, right? But that guitar, people call it mbira guitar. People call it mbira guitar precisely because it is — it — the sounds and the songs, right, and the style is from mbira culture. Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: Is that still a popular sound in Zimbabwe?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah. Yeah. Like a lot of the bands that are popular derived from that. Like I can tell you like, you know, if you play, like, you know, this might — people might not be familiar with Zimbabwean musicians, right? But if you play like Alick Macheso, I will tell you, "Oh, this is a mbira song called Sungura, right? So it's not just like necessarily mimicking the exact sound, but also structures of songs. Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: So I guess that would be broadly recognized that —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah.

>> Howard Spring: — an audience would see. Everybody would understand that's what's going on.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But Jonah Sithole was very particular — was very like particular because he literally like Nhemamusasa, you'll hear him playing exactly what I'm playing, what I was playing. Yeah.

[Music]

It takes that [inaudible] in a guitar, like it's exactly photocopy, right? But, of course, you like you improvise, you play, like you mimic the high lines of the mbira by — Like if you listen to Thomas Mapfumo, like you really — you hear. And then what Mapfumo do then is then come up with different lyrics, or sometimes take lyrics from mbira families. So there's a lot of like Thomas Mapfumo songs that are all from like [inaudible] different families, especially like his earlier albums were literally like copies from these families.

>> Ryan Bruce: That kind of leads into what I'm — another thing I'm interested in, which is about the repertoire, because you've mentioned that there's — even this first piece that you played for us today would be

recognized by people all over the world. And you've said that there's these pieces that people know that are very, you know, standardized in certain ways, people recognize. How would you describe the repertoire? Is it fixed? Does it change? How big is it? How many pieces do people usually learn? Any insight into the, you know, the body of works or the body of the music that were — what is that basis?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: Yeah. I would say there's like a classical repertoire. So like songs like Nhemamusasa, Bangidza, they're all like really, really old. And then, there are songs that are emerging from people translating like vocal songs onto the mbira.

>> Ryan Bruce: How big is the classical repertoire? Like is it — To be a professional mbira player or to be an experienced mbira player, how many pieces do you learn of that repertoire?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: You know, I don't know if I can quantify it. But someone said like there's like 700 and something. Someone said there's like 700 something mbira songs. I don't know how true that is. I don't know. Yeah, I can't — I really cannot quantify.

>> Ryan Bruce: Well, you know, I'm not looking for an exact number, but having a kind of generalization, I mean.

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: In general. More like, if you're playing about 25 songs, like classical songs, you'll be able to play in many contexts. Yeah. You'll be able to play in many contexts.

>> Ryan Bruce: And how hard is it or how easy is it if you have that kind of — You know, if you have 25 pieces under your belt, how easy is it to join into a new context where you might not know that the piece that they're playing?

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: It's difficult. You have to be really, really good, right? You also have to have the right tuning, you know. Yeah, because people — Like it gets complicated because mbira, you can't just like tune it on the spot, right? It's pretty much fixed. To tune it, it takes about an hour or so.

>> Ryan Bruce: And when people get together, do they discuss maybe the repertoire that they know so that they can find the same pieces, or how does —

>> Moyo Rainos Mutamba: They mostly discuss like, OK, [foreign language], which hands do you have, right? They're like, oh, I have the Magaya [inaudible] hand, or I have the Nemakonde hand, or I have a Dongonda hand, whatever. And then if they — like they match, then people just playing. And if you can play, you play. If you can play the song, you play. If you can't, you do something else. But the thing is, is that, like as

I said earlier on, there's a wide range of things that you can do to participate in an mbira music context, right? So you can drum, you can dance, you can sing, you can all ululate, you can clap, you can play a whole show. So you — here's always something for you to do if you can play mbira.

TRANSCRIPT: MUSIC OF WEST ASIA

[Howard Spring:] Thanks, Rob, for doing this, and welcome. Why don't we start by you just introducing yourself a little bit.

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. Well, thanks for asking me to do this, Howard. It's my pleasure. I'm Rob Simms, and I'm a music professor at York University. I've been playing music from West Asia and North Africa for many years, I guess since the 1980s when I first heard it, coming over as — I began as a guitarist and got interested in flamenco guitar as happens to exploring — people who are guitarists and exploring the guitar world. And I spent a lot of time playing flamenco. I worked with a dancer and got deeper and deeper into that. And then I started listening to related cultures and slipped into the oud, which I'll be playing later. And yeah, opened up a whole universe of music and culture and ideas and wonderful experiences. So I'm a instrumentalist. This music is vocally based, but I'm not a great singer. So I kept myself behind the oud and the ney, which is a reed flute that I'll also be playing today. And, yeah, it's been a very enriching thing.

[Howard Spring:] Great, thanks. So you mentioned the oud. Can we take a look at that instrument?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. So the oud looks like a lute. Now, it's got a bit of a cutaway, so it's not a standard thing. Usually this is symmetrical and looks like a European lute, right, except the neck is narrower and there's no frets on it. And, indeed, the lute comes from the word a-oud. And the — that was a prestigious instrument before the keyboard took over for music theory and just, you know, training your aristocracy, training your daughter to be refined, you make sure she played the lute, right? And that prestige came along with the instrument over from the southern Mediterranean and eastern Mediterranean area into Europe. So there's a direct cultural link. And one interesting thing when you start looking at these cultures is we're supposed to be — you know, we live in a world where everyone's different and everyone's digging into their borders, their political and cultural borders, but there's a huge heritage between West Asia and Europe. And this is a perfect example, the oud. So we — you know, you play single lines. We're not playing chords with it. But it's a shared heritage, the instrument.

[Howard Spring:] Can we hear what it sounds like?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. So you play with a plectrum. It's kind of long, and you hold it like this like a knife that you're cutting.

[Music]

[Howard Spring:] So how many strings has it got, and how are they organized?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. It's six double courses. So it's like a 12-string guitar. They're tuned not in octaves but in unisons, and it's in fourths. So, normally, this is going to be a C, but this an Iraqi oud and it's pitched up. So it's like a transposing instrument. So it's pitched up a fourth to F with the outside strings. But I'm a little bit flat of that, so I'm sitting around an E. But when I talk about the technical things, I'm going to just talk about what the untransposed pitch is, like what the theoretical pitch is. Okay. So we've got fourths going down just like a guitar. I'm going from top down. Then you've got the second, which is kind of strange for guitars and then the fifth. And this can be — we'll see later, this can be tuned up to a fourth as well. And, in fact, with — this string here can be lowered by a — so you've got a second, and this can be lowered by a second. So you can actually get a major third here, in which case it's like the guitar just in reverse. We've got fourths and a major third And then another fourth, which is kind of interesting. But the second seems pretty awkward at first when you're learning it, but then it comes in really handy as a drone string. And that's an important thing in music is getting the resonance of the instrument and playing the notes off of some reference pitch.

[Howard Spring:] And what are you using in your right hand there?

[Rob Simms:] It's called a risha and plectrum. And it's — they used to use eagle feathers. And some people do just to be traditional. But now it's a soft kind of plastic. Some people like a hard plastic. You know, different players have different tastes with pick flexibility. But you can — with this technique, you can move your thumb around to vary how much pick you're using. And you can use quite a bit or a little bit. And it's a very subtle thing that you start doing without even thinking about it. But there's lots of –

[Howard Spring:] So that changes — that changes the sound, and you do that on the go?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah, yeah. Depending on the context of what you're doing. And, again, at first, this feels really strange having a big long pick like this, but it starts feel really good after a while and works quite well with the technique.

[Howard Spring:] Okay. So as your left hand is concerned, there's no frets, right, on this instrument.

[Rob Simms:] Correct.

[Howard Spring:] So how do you know what notes you're playing or –

[Rob Simms:] Well, it's like any stringed instrument, usually your ears. And this is microtonal music, so that becomes challenging because we spend a good deal of our time learning how to play in tune. And now you've got to play in between the cracks. So — and that's where open strings help as well, to keep you in tune. You've got a reference pitch to play off of and help you tune. And, of course, nice generous vibrato always helps with that to zero in on that pitch, you know?

[Howard Spring:] So when you say this music is microtonal, what do you mean? And could you demonstrate that?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. Well, I was playing here in maqam rast. Maqam, we can talk about that in more detail. It's like raga. It means the melodic mode. It has all kinds of other associations. Right there. So this is like a major scale with a

[Music]

not

[Music]

how you want to hear that note [inaudible]. there's another one. It's a quarter tone flat, approximately quarter tone flat third, short major third.

[Music]

And, you know, the first one, you know, you're not used to. Whoa, it's out of tune. But it has a very nice resonance and a very nice tension in it. And you — after you play it for a while, you start to tune into that. And you actually get better gradations of pitch because, you know, we're programmed to 12 pitches. Well, here, there's just way more space in between those. And you — your ears improve after a while. But at first you do little tricks to get that — to get that note. It's — on this string, it's like here's a minor third, fairly decent minor third. And you go halfway GMF. So you're using — visually, when I started playing, I would look halfway down, you know

[Music]

but it's music, so it's ears, right? But to get going, you do whatever you can. And those visual things help.

[Music]

so that's the atmosphere of Rast.

[Howard Spring:] So when you learnt to play this, you mentioned the word maqam. And I guess those microtones are part of the maqam.

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. Not all of them. Well, many of them are — have microtonal pitches in them. Not all of them. Some of them don't. But this music modulates a lot too. So if you start in one that doesn't have microtones, chances are as things unfold you're going to move to one that does. So it's pretty inevitable you'll come across them.

[Howard Spring:] So what is the maqam?

[Rob Simms:] Maqam is a musical mode, if we want to talk music theory. But it has other meanings to it. And this is really important because we can get technical with it, but it's really about a feeling and this creating an atmosphere like raga. Raga means that which colours the mind, right? Maqam means station or position so something to do with it with a position. And in Sufi practice, Sufism being the inner teachings of Islam — so you've got the outer teachings, following the word, the letter. But this is following the spirit of the teachings. And so it's more interpreting and gets into esoteric kinds of ideas. Maqam means your station of your level of consciousness as you're ascending up the Sufi path to higher levels of consciousness. So maqam means your sort of station of wisdom, how realized you are on the spiritual path. And so that's a nice kind of — and we'll see the connection between conscience and music, which is in every culture, but it's very explicit here. And we can go into that now. Or we can leave that for later in the conversation as you like.

[Ryan Bruce:] Now, it's good.

[Howard Spring:] Now is good. Sure.

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. Okay. So we're going to be talking a lot about scales and notes and technical things. But the main thing — and when I finished playing, I said, you know, that was the atmosphere of Rast. You have to create the atmosphere. And so that goes beyond — and to do that, you need the rest to be right. So you need to be in tune. You need to know your pitches. You need to know a lot of the nuts and bolts. But that's secondary. If you use all that but you don't create the spirit of it, you failed in — really, as a musician. And the primary thing in this culture is — and when I say this culture, I mean, many cultures, you know. This — we're going from — we're going from North Africa, even around the corner to Mauritania I think you could include as a maqam culture clear across to Central Asia. And so there's a lot of differences in there. And I think

you had a unit in your series on Persian classical music, and that's in there. And that's going to be different from what I'm talking about here but not so different. The sounds are going to be similar. And a lot of the ideas are going to be the same. And these cultures have been sharing stuff, bouncing back and forth right from the beginning. But the idea is to create what they call tarab, which means rapture or enchantment. You want to create magic. And we all know about that as musicians. That's our job, right? We want to create a magical musical moment. It's very explicit in this culture. And the tarab, t-a-r-a-b, which means this rapture, is related to trance states and states of consciousness. So we know — we know vibrations. You know, we have different brain wavelengths, patterns. And when we're sleeping and when we're awake, it's different vibrational patterns. Well, the same of this, and it creates different emotional and emotional states. And you've got to entrance your audience. There's one guy, Central Asian master Turbin Elimuta [phonetic] who said first you — first you tune yourself, then you tune your instrument, then you tune the audience. And so you need that resonance, that focus; and you want to communicate that. And then the audience will communicate back to you through various ways, depending on the culture. Some of that can be very ecstatic where it's, you know, flamenco, we get ole and assa, these people are verbally encouraging, just like after, you know, rock and roll or a good jazz solo, you know. And that is a feedback thing between the performer through the maqam that creates the atmosphere, that stimulates the people in the audience. Then the audience, that will flip back to the performer and you create this feedback of energy, musical energy that is supposed to create this rapture. So I think, again, all music is about that. But this is very explicit in this culture. And that's the main — that's your main job. So you've got to do your homework and learn all this technical stuff. But you also have to be aware of what the goal is, and that is tarab. And the — in the Persian world they use of word hala, which is an Arabic word that means state or condition. So we're talking about states of consciousness being altered through the music.

[Howard Spring:] Now, are specific maqams associated with certain states of consciousness?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah, particularly in the Turkish tradition. So — and I'll play through some of these things. I need to retune a little bit. But there's some general consensus. Like I was playing Rast there.

[Music]

And Rast, the word means rectitude, correctness, righteousness. And so it's really upright and on the straight path. Others are — and, again, the Turkish tradition, they — they're very — they're much more explicit, the Turkish Sufi tradition. I keep bringing up Sufi because it was the Sufis who really transmitted this music. You know, we got the Taliban swinging back into Afghanistan and abandoned music. This is an old thing. They didn't make this up. This goes back to the Middle Ages. And it was because authorities realized that music was powerful, that you can manipulate people with music. There's all kinds of stories back in Middle Ages. The musician would come in, and the saints would be called mutrid [phonetic]. That means one who does tara. And these guys were like shamans, you know. Their stories, they came in, and they played in this

maqam and everyone laughed. You played in this one, everyone cried. You played this one, everyone fell asleep. You played in this one, everyone woke up. And so that's, you know, that's dangerous because people are losing control. And then the musicians are too influential. So that's one reason why, depending on who was running the show, who was in power, it could be banned. But, yeah. Different traditions will have different associations. Some of them are fairly universal, like Rast is pretty universal. Another one, this is Saba. I should really bring this up to a D on the base.

[Music]

That's a universally considered deep and sad.

[Ryan Bruce:] I noticed that you were bending or — sorry, like you had some bent notes. You were sliding on the neck of the lute? And is that something particular to Saba, or is that something you do in all the maqam?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. Well, it works really well in Saba, but it's just part of the technique. And so, you know, like Indian music, it's about going between the notes. And so it's one problem when people start talking about maqam. They're just worried about notes, like these dots on the page. And those are dead things, but and that's why I like to play the ney because one note is so powerful, right, what you bring into it. Then the relationship between those notes, I think we lose a lot of that when we get obsessed with the technical aspects of it. You know, I have musicians when I first went to Egypt back in 1989, I was looking for traditional musicians. I went to the conservatory, and there's all these young music students in with violin cases, and they're playing Vivaldi and stuff. And I said, Oh, I'm interested in the traditional Arab music. And, ah, it's just a feeling. And I thought, you know, they were brushing me off. But you know what? They were telling me that, as it turned out later on, I realized, well, yeah. It is all about feeling. And as an outsider, how do you get that feeling? And we will feel things in different ways, and there'll be a lot of misunderstandings. But because it's music and it's not language, there's that room for communication, right, where if someone's speaking to you in Arabic and you don't speak Arabic, you're going to zone out in like five seconds. But if they're playing Saba, you can sit and listen for 10 minutes. And you can, you know, there's communication going on there. And you might not feel it sad or whatever they feel it is. But on the other hand, you might. And I did. I felt — you know, I felt that pretty powerfully, particularly the Saba. But in the Turkish Sufi tradition — and, again, it was the Sufis that kept this music going when it was repressed. They would go underground, and the Sufis were using music as a spiritual tool because, again, maqam means state of consciousness. It's the state of realization. That's what — that's a philosophical meaning. And they have some very precise meanings for the maqam. So when I'm on the ney, I'll show you that. But Hijaz is for separation. So these are not just emotional states, but it's also like a kind of — it's not just emotion, but it's a dynamic. It's a dynamic. So one is separation. Another one is Ushaq for love or, union, Sega. And you keep those things in mind when you're playing, and you're trying to evoke that.

So, first, it's just abstract sounds and everything. But then you realize, no, they're steering somewhere with this. And that's — you know, that's what a good player can do is steer you to these places.

[Howard Spring:] You've used a few different words to pointing to different modes. How many of them are there?

[Rob Simms:] You know, theoretic — there's theory and practice, right? So an index for this is how many compositions exist in different modes. So there's some esoteric modes. And some people are like, that's their specialty. They want to be, you know, it's like stamp collectors or whatever. They want to — they want to collect all these esoteric modes. But I think the main modes, you can boil it down to in the Arab and the Turkish world, probably more in Turkey, you know, if you get eight or nine under your belt, you're doing pretty good. And then they fan out into families. So there's variations on each one. So if you get that down, you can relate to the other ones because they're refinements of those basic ones. In Turkey, there's probably more differentiation. And then, you know, you go to Iran, it's a completely different system. Although a lot of the sounds the same, they call them — it's organized differently. And they have different names for things, and it can get very confusing as you start going between them. But, historically, there's a heritage. And I think you can hear it. If you play to people who've never heard this music, Turkish, Persian, and Arab music, they're going to say it all sounds the same. And they're right. Then you study it for a while, you go, no. You can hear the differences. And then if you study even more, you go back to going, yeah, it's all the same. And, you know, that gets very political. And people get very nationalistic with that. And that's one good thing about being a cultural outsider is I'm not — I don't have any nationalist program with it. But if you look through the history, it's really hard to tell who got what from whom. And if you talk to different musicians from different traditions, they'll say, oh, yeah. They got it from us. And some of the more, you know, open ones will recognize where there are — where there is evidence that there was connections. But it's impossible to separate where Persian music ends and Turkish and Arab music begins. It's just too complicated. The evidence that we have — and at certain periods, like in the 13th century, it was the same art music that was practised in courts from Spain all the way clear through to Central Asia. And I think what we have — this is an oversimplification, but we have, you know, depending on how things change politically, we've got now dialects of that language, of that shared language. And that's a long time ago. It's almost 1000 years ago.

[Howard Spring:] How did you learn to play all this?

[Rob Simms:] Well, you know, I came by pretty honestly, as I mentioned, I came into — through guitar so typical Canadian guy playing guitar. Go into flamenco, and all these signals are in flamenco with the singing in particular and in the modality. What's interesting in flamenco is that it's got that harmonic, underpinning, too, so it's right in the middle of everything. And then I started listening to this stuff, and I just fell in love with it. I mean, music's a love affair, right? We do it in spite of ourselves. Everyone says, no, no, don't do it. Don't go

there. And we spend our lives doing it. And through recordings and then meeting people and then travelling to places, working at it, just like you work at anything else.

[Howard Spring:] So you said you went to Egypt. Did you study with musicians there?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. Yeah. And those trips really — you know, I had kids and I had to — you know, there were real expeditions of going and getting resources and learning as much as I could in a short period of time and coming back and working with the resources, books, recordings, and whatever lessons I took at the time. And, you know, travelled to — then you start seeing, okay. This is how they play the oud in Egypt. Then you go to Morocco, and they play it a different way. Then you go to Syria, and they've got something else going on. You see the common denominators, and you see what's different. It's all very rich. It's extremely rich. Then you see individuals within the same tradition. You've got different master oud players. It's like jazz, you know, they got their own style. They got their own language. They've got their own way. Maqam is a relationship. So we can put dots on the page, and I can talk about all this technical stuff, but it's really my understanding of it, and it's my relationship to the maqam. Same with these masters. It's their relationship to the music. And some of them are noted for certain modes because they evoke them better because that resonates with them. So, you know, Munir Bashir was great at Nahawand. And, you know, it's a different — he was an oud player from Iraq. Or so and so was a master at Saba. And why? Because the guy spent a lot of time playing Saba. So another way to look at these modes is they're like personalities. And the more time you spend with them, you spend time with the personalities you like, right? You hang around with people who you enjoy. And so this mode, you're really, you know, it's really giving, you know? You're having great conversations playing this mode. And it's the same with Indian music. You know, guys, there's a really accomplished musician. You may know, 20, 25 ragas, but the ones that he's really good at, he or she, might be five or six, that that's their specialty because that resonates with their inner, you know, with their personality.

[Howard Spring:] So when you went to the Middle East, did you study with any particular players, or you were just there to listen or –

[Rob Simms:] No. I was seeking. It's always about learning to play, you know. And I didn't have context. This is pre-internet. You know, you just jump off the plane and check around and look for it. In a way, you know, I kind of miss the old days. I get nostalgic and romantic about that. The internet's great. And you can do a lot of virtual travels. You can learn a lot. You can learn to play — you know, people learn to play tunes now on — play Stairway to Heaven. You don't have to go to the music store anymore. You can, you know, where everyone's checking out the guitars and you learn a new chord. No. It's right on YouTube. Someone will show you know, step by step what has to happen. So that's great. But there's a social element here that is important. And being in the context and hanging out with musicians, going to their gigs, listening to them play, listening them playing a wedding, listening to them hang out, drink, tea, and play, all of that's really important. Some

of the heaviest, definitely the heaviest experience — musical experiences I've had are in people's living rooms, and that's where this music belongs. It was music from courts. And it's become commodified and turned into music business and big huge concerts and recording contracts and all the rest of it, but it's very intimate music. And even the pros who do that will acknowledge — and they sing and they play differently when they're in these social contexts. And people talk and drink and eat a bit. Then they'll play a bit. Then they'll stop and then they'll eat and drink and talk and do a little bit more. It's — the music is along with all these other things. And so that's — you can't pick that up on the internet, you know?

[Ryan Bruce:] Do you get the sense that others in — so where you've travelled, but there's also a kind of a wide range of learning, or was your way of learning kind of outside the traditional norm?

[Rob Simms:] No. I mean, I wanted to get — you know, I wanted to get as correct as I could. And so I was looking for people who knew. And I must say I did have a few leads. George Sawa put me onto some very good people in Syria before it was ruined. I was lucky I went there in the late '90s. Aleppo is — was the main centre for classical Arab music. And it's — there's great musicians there. But more than that, there was great listeners. So that's another thing we don't really talk about too much anymore is that any golden era of music is not just about good musicians. It's about good listeners. And so you have to be on top of your game to perform in there. There's a high bar, a discerning bar where — I think that you could say the same about the jazz form, too, right? There's different kinds of listeners. And with a discerning audience, you're going to play differently, right? Yeah. But, no, I was looking for, you know, people who were knowledgeable. And then, you know, one guy — my oud playing's really affected by some guy from Marrakesh, some young guy who had a crappy oud, old beat-up oud. And I can't remember how I got to meet him, but I'd just say, who plays oud? Oh, this guy, he'll play. Go to this place. And he was playing on the on the – crouched on the floor with, instead of a risha, he had — he had like a match booklet, you know, the card of match. And he was playing. I recorded this guy's playing. I loved his playing. He wasn't a virtuoso by any means, but he had a lot of soul. This music's like blues in that sense. You've got to — as I was saying, you've got to evoke the atmosphere. You need the tarab, the rapture, all that stuff, the enchantment. It's about what you're putting into it. And this guy had a lot of heart in his playing. And so I listened to it. I met him two afternoons, and that was it. He was off. Never saw him again. And I got these recordings, and I just loved his playing. And so I stole a lot from that guy. I learnt a lot from him. He stole it from someone else. There's no copyright here. There's no stealing, right? It's just tradition. It's oral, oral tradition, oral composition. And you pick up stuff, and you pick up stuff that you like. When you like it, then you do it. And then, after you play it for while, you turn something else. Even if you try to do exactly what that guy did, you can't. It's always going to be a bit different. Thank goodness.

[Ryan Bruce:] You were talking about a few different things with the maqam. And one was about how it's spread quite on a wide range across geography. And I'm wondering if historically maqams are associated with

particular places or emerged from certain places? Or is there kind of a parent maqam that things are derived from? How is it that this tradition emerged and represents such a large area?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. It's — everything in this part of the world is complicated. And that's a complicated question because, the same with ragas, you have the [inaudible] or whatever, that thing has a history. And so it was a certain way, you know. It first appeared at such and such a time. And then through this stretch of 100 years it looked like this. Then it looked like that, you know. Music's changing all the time. The music that we play today, the contemporary maqam music, was really consolidated in the late 19th, early 20th century. And, gee, whiz. That's just corresponding to the high colonial period. So these countries, these cultures were hunkering down and repackaging their music to fit into their new, you know, identities as in the colonial and post-colonial context. That being said, in the Arab and Turkish tradition, which is very closely related because the Arab world was part of the Ottoman Empire in — up until World War I, right. And so those traditions are very close, and it's really hard to see who got what from whom. And there's all kinds of nationalistic politics come in when people talk about it. But a key, a source of that system, of that maqam system, is the maqam Rast, which is why I played that when I began. And you can actually understand a lot of the other — the diversity of the system through that maqam. And if you get that scale down, that's a good reference point for understanding other modes and other maqams. And because this music modulates so, like, yeah. I keep coming up to Indian music because it's a good foil character because there's a lot that it has in common, but there's a lot of differences. You stay in one raga for an hour and a half, you know. It's raga immersion. You don't modulate. They do have some forms that modulate, but those are really secondary use. You stay in that raga. This music is more like Western music where you're travelling. You're going from — you're going on a journey. You're changing keys, and then you're coming back home. And so that returning, that whole process is more of a Western sensibility than what you have in the South Asian modal world. So to learn one maqam, you've got to start somewhere. So you've got to jump in and learn. And usually Rast is where people jump in. But to learn one, you've really got to learn them all because they're all interrelated in very interesting ways. And part of the skill of quality of a performer is how they navigate that. So you've got to be like, in the old days before GPS is like what kind of a taxi driver are you? How well do you know the city? Do you know where all the back alleys are to take a shortcut to get over here and to get over there, and you can zip around, really navigate the system really well, whereas, like, knowing the TTC, you know, you know your bus routes. You know your hubs and all this stuff. So it's a little bit like that. And you — so you've got to start somewhere, but you soon realize that you need to know a little bit about everything. To even play one properly, you need to understand others. So, again, it's more relationships, right? It's relationships on multiple levels. So, yeah. You know, you look at the history, you look at the music theory, you look at just about anything; and it's complicated. There's always Yeah, buts all over the place. So sorry I can't make it much simpler than that without, you know, simplifying the truth out of it. [Ryan Bruce:] Yeah. When you were saying that Rast is kind of a starting place, is that also — is that just a theoretical starting place? Or is that also a starting place for other ideas like the spiritual, spirituality or other [inaudible] things?

[Rob Simms:] Well, another thing I'd like to mention that's really important here is, well, Rast, maqam Rast is generally the maqam used — the one that's used internationally for a call to prayer. So this is the public, you know, broadcast. And in the old days, you know, people would go out, and there'd be no microphones. And now you go to large cities, and there's mosques close by. And it's on loudspeakers, and so you can hear them overlapping. But — and there's local maqams used. In Turkey, they have different maqams for different times of day. It's really amazing. These guys are amazing vocalists. But the standard one that you'll be likely to hear pretty much through the Muslim world is in maqam Rast. So that's an interesting unifying factor. And then the other ones you can hear a lot is Bayati, and that — that's one that's used a lot in Quran recitation. And I already mentioned the Sufi connection with this Quran recitation and the call of prayer are not regarded as music. It's Quran recitation. They don't call it music. But, structurally, the maqams that are used and the techniques and the melodic progression and all that is from the art music. And there's a lot of traffic between Quran — people began their careers Quran reciters and then went into classical singing. Umm Kulthum, primary example. She began reciting Quran, got into art music. And Kristina Nelson wrote a great book back in the '70s called The Art of Reciting Quran. And she documented this in Egypt where there's two-way traffic. They're going back and forth all the time. They do a Quran recitation; then they're doing art music, sometimes even simultaneously. Or they'll start out as art music singers and they go into Quran recitation. It's kind of like the blues guys going into, you know, preaching. Happened to a lot of guys, you know. They give up the blues later get into preaching because it was coming from the same spot, just different sides of the tracks, you know. And so you've got all this really sensitive stuff going on with music and spiritual qualities. And it's [inaudible] it's really important. But there's all kinds of danger zones there, and you don't want to associate it directly. So you don't want to call Quraan recitation music. But the best advice I got when I was learning, I got that when I was here in Winnipeg just starting out in the late '80s was a guy, he said — Egyptian guy. He says, Well, if you want to study, you want to understand Arab music, you better listen to Quran recitation. And that was really good advice. And, you know, I'll play maqam Bayati in a bit. And maqam Bayati is basically the second octave species of Rast. So you take the scale of Rast, notch it up. Like, on the piano, you go from C to C, D to D. That's how you get your modes, right? Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, etc. , C to C, G to G, you do the same thing. You cycle. You cycle them out. And that's the first — that's going from D to D in maqam Rast. And that's used a lot in sacred recitation.

[Ryan Bruce:] Why don't we hear that now?

[Rob Simms:] Yes. Let's introduce ourselves to Bayati. So I notched up this bass string to a — it used to be C. so it's got a nice octave here. So I'll go back to Rast first without the bass.

[Music]

Then I'm going on the second degree starting on the D and coming down in Rast, you can do a B flat. It's normally a seventh quarter tone, but you can — coming down. So it's the B flat that's getting used in Bayati.

[Music]

So it's like minor with a quarter tone second degree.

[Music]

Completely different atmosphere from Rast, right? And in a way it's kind of like the major minor thing that we have in Western music. These are really important modalities, really important atmospheres. They behave quite differently. But if you know those two maqams, you — there's lots of compositions, those. Are home to the most number of compositions, those two maqams, both in Turkish and in Arab traditions.

[Howard Spring:] So what kind of compositions are there? And when you play them, is there any improvisation?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. Okay. So I've been playing in an improvisatory style called taqsim. And taqsim, as you can tell, the rhythm, there's no — there's no consistent beat. Now, sometimes you can go into a beat and into a pulse, but it's not four beats or six beats or anything like that. And then you can drop it and slow down and stop it. And that is mimicking reciting poetry. And in a way, although, again, you have to be very careful to be separating this from Quran recitation. But that's — Quran recitation, the delivery of the text is — the rhythm of it is very controlled. The pronunciation, how long you stay on syllables, the phrasing, all that's very controlled. But, melodically, it's completely open. And it's following, you know, maqam grammar. And it's, you know, tapping your toe to it, you know. So this taqsim style is, like, alap in Indian music where you're trying to bring out the essence of the mode of the maqam. And you're improvising, and you're trying to create — then then there's an element with the instrumentalists using idiomatic devices, and it can get virtuosic and everything. And that's where you get a lot of individual expression coming out with that. And, for me, that was the interesting thing. I liked listening to taqsims. I wanted to learn how to do this. And as a — as someone interested in jazz and other improvisational forms, this is the one that attracted me the most. But in order to do that, you have to learn a bunch of compositions. And the compositions are varied. There's classical compositions. That's for chamber, small chamber ensemble. So it'd be for oud, ney. And then, in the modern, violin was appropriated. That's a really interesting — you know, violinists have it really good because that instrument just went all over the world, and people made it their own in India and in West Asia. And one or two percussion instruments, a goblet drum called darbuka, or tambourine called riq and the singer. And there's — there's strophic, songs. So some poetry is really big. You can do some poetry in this freestyle, free rhythmic style where they just improvise, and that's really beautiful stuff. And it's very — structurally

very close to Quran recitation. And then there's instrumental compositions. I'm sorry. Let me go back to the vocal repertoire. There's vocal repertoire. There's metrical and strophic. And there's all kinds of great rhythmic modes, additive modes, very interesting. We have 8 beats, 12 beats all of the things we expect. But you also have 7, 9, lots of great interesting rhythms that they're playing with. Seventeen beats in the Arab stuff can get really intricate in that level. And so you memorize these pieces. And the vocal ones tend to be more rhythmically varied, because it's related to the poetry, the prosody of the poetry. Then there's a whole genre of classical instrumental music. And then there's light classical and popular genres that are — Egypt was a big centre of the recording industry. And so people were writing new music in Bayati and in Rast and selling records, keeping the traditional feel but also updating it. So there's a lot of fresh compositions there. And that's a whole realm of sort of connoisseur expertise of knowing all these. It's a huge amount of repertoire between the classical stuff and the — and then the golden age of that period was 1940s to the 1970s, about there, '30s to '70s. And that — those were also film tunes, big hit film tunes so starting to sound like Tin Pan Alley a bit. And that's actually not a bad example. There's a whole genre of new music that came out for cabarets, for people writing songs for famous singers that would be recorded, selling records, on the radio, in the cinemas, mediating music. So it's kind of like knowing your American Songbook, you know, in — and your fake book so all of those things. And then, same way. How do you become a good improviser in jazz? Well, you learn a bunch of standards, right? And you learn structures through memorizing those standards, and then you listen to solos. And so you'll copy also improvisers who you like. Like, you'll take some phrases here and there like this guy in Marrakesh I was talking about who I really leaned on for my early vocabulary. Yeah. So here's — here's a classical composition in Bayati. It's in ten beats. It's called the — ten-beat cycle called Samai Thaqil. And there's a drum — the frame drum, and it's called a tar or in Morocco they call it a bendir. But the way the rhythmic modes are structured and how it's taught is through using two — it's not just a number of beats, but they're organized in certain groupings. And then there's a qualitative aspect of strong beats that are Dum, which is the resonant sound of the drum and Tek, that is on the rim. This is Dum, ten beats, Dum, Tek, Dum, Dum, Tek, Tek, Dum, Dum. there's lots of compositions written in — classical compositions written in this — it's a very popular modal.

[Music]

So that was the first — the first strain and the refrain, so that this part going

[Music]

that's the refrain that keeps coming back between different episodes. And it has a lot of information about Bayati there. First of all, even though Bayati I said the scale goes from D, that's a very Western way, sort of useful. But this music moves in tetrachords. It moves in smaller sections. And this actually starts halfway up. Bayati's character, you know that's the whole note. It starts in the middle. Can do a little improvising too.

[Music]

Starts in the middle, goes up a bit and comes down. And then this B flat that's implying sort of the B flat majors which is called Ajam maqam. So if you're accustomed to this music and you listen to it a lot, Bayati is kind of a good friend. A good friend of Bayati is B flat tetrachord. And your ear so it's a temporary tonicization of that. Your ears temporarily shifts over to that. And that's the pleasure of listening to the music is hearing these subtle little excursions. You know, you're walking down Bayati Street. No, hey, there's Ajam. How are you doing? Just tip your hat and move over. You might stop in and have a little chat, you know, depending what you want to do. As an improviser, you can hang out in there a bit longer, or you can — composer, too. You could write a longer kind of — spend more time in that door that was opened leading to that. So it goes back to what I was saying. To know one you have to kind of know — you can't just no one maqam. You have to know — because they're pregnant. There's different implications and different options, different networks that are conventional. So if you're performing an improvisation the taqsim, which is like a prelude in the function of — in Western music, you know, preludes came out of guys tuning their lutes, right? You're in front of the king, and you come in with your lute. And so, you know, you've got to tune up. And it was in a free rhythm, right, where you started arpeggios or something. And it's also tuning up the key. So you're getting the people accustomed to the key, and you're tuning up slowly the instrument.

[Ryan Bruce:] Taqsim is like a — taqsim is like a prelude?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah, right. Thank you. So before composition in Bayati, say that piece that I playing, Samai — in Samai Thaqil, that's a very famous composition, it would often start off with a taqsim by the oud player or the kanun player, which is a zither and plucked zither or the ney player. So it's like, okay. Let's start this piece. But, first, we're going to hear some taqsim, just to get us in the mode for Bayati. And then we're going to hit this composition that everyone knows. And so you get this shift between improvised material and composed material. And, meanwhile, that piece that you play, everyone knows it. But when it's played in an ensemble, its heterophony. So it's not a nice, clean unison line. Everyone who's playing in the ensemble is doing their own version of the line. And so it's — you have lots of — everyone's ornamenting it differently. And maybe they're rhythmic hesitations; or they're adding a few notes, a little flourish here and there. And when you first hear this music, it sounds disorganized for our ears. But if you listen to New Orleans jazz, it makes perfect sense, you know. You get that a lot, you know, playing the head at the end. It's nice to have a nice tight head when you're in jazz, but it's also nice to let it — you know, let people sort of stretch out a bit and ornament it the way they want. So we do have that heterophic — heterophonic kind of approach in our music too. But — so those are all kinds of different improvisations you can have or some of them anyways. When you're playing the line, you can decorate it any way you want. But when you're in rhythm, you've got — you know, you've got to keep it moving, and you can't go too far out and too far behind or ahead of it.

[Howard Spring:] So, Rob, after the taqsim happens and the composition, is there any improvisation going on, after the head, if you like, or after the composition is played?

[Rob Simms:] You know, there's all kinds of different forms and options, performance practice options. So sometimes it can go into a vamp. And singers — again, this goes back to the tarab thing, and Umm Kulthum was really famous for this. If they catch a line that seems to be hitting the audience, she'll go back and do it again. And she's famous for taking the same line of poetry and delivering it with different decoration and emphasis, sometimes, you know, five, six, seven times. And the ensemble has to sort of be behind her, you know, with that. So they're not just ploughing ahead, here's the composition start to finish. It's based on what's happening in the room. And, you know, that's a big thing with qawwali music, too, when they're vamping and they just stay in one thing. If someone goes into a trance, it's the job of the guy to — the lead singer to keep that person going. And that can be dangerous if you break that too quickly. So that's why you get this repetition a lot of time. In the Arab classical scene, it's not so driving. Those lines are going to be longer, and there's going to be more space. It's going to be a bit more refined than that, I mean. But, basically, the process is the same. And people, particularly some real war horse compositions, people are going to try to — I mean, people, they need to do something different with it. So there's — you'll hear someone who will really stretch out their ornamentation or their rendition, or sometimes a little fragments will come in. Again, we're talking about many different — if I — if I look at the Iraqi maqam tradition, sometimes you'll just take one section of the famous composition, and that's how you'll start it off. So you want to play the whole piece. So it's a lot of sort of cut and paste grabbing things, too. And that's what you're doing when you're improvising. I think that's the way it is with all traditions is you're recombining stuff. Yeah. You're programmed with a big vocabulary, and there's a grammar for putting it together. But, again, the motivation here is to be responding to the audience and what they're needing. So my conversations, particularly singers, it's really important. And a lot of these singers, Umm Kulthum and I know Mohammad-Reza Shajarian, a great Persian singer I did a lot of work on, he wanted the house lights on. He wanted to see faces so that he could interact. He didn't want it all dark. It was all about — and there, in that tradition, it's not about getting people to go, Yeah! You know, Rock on! It's about, he says silence, when people were dead silent, he knew he was getting at them. And he would target people and, you know, work his magic that way. And he would elaborate. And sometimes he'd throw an extra melismata. So he's got his poem. That's set. He knows what he's going to sing in terms of the text. But how he's going to deliver that depends on what's going on and how he's feeling and where he is. Is he in Toronto? Is he in Tehran? Where is he? And Shajarian also started out as a Quran recitation prodigy. And that's the job, by the way, of a Quran reciter is to bring out the spirit of the scripture with a proper, beautiful rendition. The Prophet Muhammad said, when you cite the Quran, make it beautiful. And in Egypt, there is this response that's very much like the art music that, if the guy makes a poignant point and then there's a certain line in the scripture that comes out and he nails it with a high note or he goes into Saba at a certain point, they go nuts. It sounds like a football game, you know, that really overt ecstatic reaction would not work in Saudi Arabia and a lot of places. So it's a local Egyptian thing. So, you know, we're talking in general terms here, but we also have

to be very careful about looking at specifics. It's the same thing when you're talking about Indigenous people in Canada. You just can't talk about Indigenous people. What people are we talking about? What exactly — you know, what community? And even within one ethnic group, there's different communities with different things going on. So it's tricky, you know? You need to get a handle on things and get some basic concepts down, but you also have to be tweaked to local practices. And so what do you come up with? At the end, like, how do I play? It's completely unique, you know. And same with the any individual is going to be a unique combination of their listening pool, what they've been listening to, how they grew up, what their — what their musical career has been, all that stuff. So it's, yeah. It's infinite. Infinite. Yeah.

[Howard Spring:] So you also play the ney. Can we see that and hear it?

[Rob Simms:] Yeah, yeah. So this is the ney. It's — the word ney is a Persian word that means reed. And this reed is literally the same reed, exact thing that you have with a saxophone or clarinet. You just slice off. It's grass, you know. It's like bamboo, big grass. And you go into warm countries, and some — I've seen some in Canada and in Ontario. It's just a wild thing that grows, and they call that the ney asen [phonetic], the place of the ney. And it's by the — it's by the — it's usually by river beds. And these things can grow huge just like bamboo, you know. This can be like three stories high. And get same thing with the shakuhachi, right, in Japan. And, of course, flutes are the oldest instruments that we've — that found flutes that are 40,000 years old, so there's a real ancient heritage. And getting back to the plant itself, it's very symbolic of a lot of Sufi philosophy. And there's a very famous poem by Jalal ad-Din Rumi. Now, Rumi was a medieval Persian cleric who escaped Genghis Khan and moved into what is now Turkey. And these are the famous Whirling Dervishes, you know, that spin around to the ney, the flute music. And Rumi wrote a huge his masterpiece poem called The Masnavi. And it can — it's usually spelled m-a-t-h-m-a-w-i or sometimes Masnavi, m-a-s-n-a-v-i. And apparently the story goes, because he was a spiritual master and had all community behind him and he would improvise poetry. And one of his followers said, like, why don't you put together like a comprehensive collection of your poetry? And he pulled out of his hat this poem that is — was the seed for the Masnavi. And the Masnavi is like 40,000 couplets. It's like twice as long as the Iliad or Odyssey. And it's about the reed. And this is a literal translation. There's millions of translations out there, but you need to — you need to know this poem before we get into the ney because it's bringing so much stuff together here. So it's about the reed being torn away, being separated from its reed bed, and it's longing to get back to the source. And that's the wailing of the ney. It's wailing to get back to its source. So you can see the spiritual kind of project going on here. And the first line of this poem is, Listen to the ney, how it makes complaint, telling its tale of separation. Ever since I was cut from the reed bed, men and women have all lamented my bewailing. I'm going to skip some lines and just go to some key points. Everyone who — in every company, I've poured my lament. I've consorted alike with the miserable and the happy. Each became my friend out of his own surmise, but none sought to discover the secrets in my heart. My secret indeed is not remote from my lament, but eye and ear lack the light to perceive it. This cry of the reed of the ney is fire. It's not wind. Whoever doesn't possess this fire, let him be naught. Whoever saw poison

and antidote in one like the reed? Whoever saw sympathizer and yearner in one like the reed? So this goes on, it was about 17 couplets, and he pulls it out of his hat. This is the legend, right? And then this huge didactic poem follows. And it's all a variation on that original, those original 17 lines that is to do with the ney. So the ney is about separation and the yearning to get back towards union. It's about a fire, a passion. And people read into it what they want. People thought, you know, that people were happy or sad, that no one sought the secrets. Everyone thought they heard. They heard what they wanted to. It's a very deep poem. So I suggest anyone, you know, to check out that poem before they — to understand the whole connection here. And the Sufis, particularly Rumi's order, were very important for music. The classical music and the Ottomans, all of those musicians were playing in the court. They — there — it's synonymous with the Ottoman tradition. And there's a separate repertoire for the ritual music where because Rumi would — sometimes he'd go into, like, his own trance, and he would like to spin around a pole and recite poetry. And they'd say, Oh, he's doing it again. And they'd have to go — and he'd be writing, he'd be improvising this poetry, and they wrote it out, then they'd read it back to him, and they edited it. And that's how he — that was his creative process. And then they turned into this ritual of listening that they called sama, s a m a. And that was reading poetry, dancing in some cases, and for sure with his order, and listening to music. So, you know, and in terms of the legality of music, here's music used as a spiritual tool. And, apparently, Rumi was talking to some cleric who was against music. And he says, Look. We both agree that music is very important and that, you know, takes you onto — it takes you to some important position, say, the Gates of heaven. He says, The difference between you is me is that you hear the Gates close; I hear them open. And so it was never about the music itself. I mean, the music — so you have this debate. We see it right now in Afghanistan. It's not about music. It's about the person. And the Sufis felt that way. It's like fanning a fire. Whatever you are, that's what it'll be. And, you know, one famous poet said before we talk about the legality of music, show me the man because it's right — it's about how you take it and what you do with it. If you want, you know, sex and drugs and rock and roll and decadence, then that's what it'll be. Sorry, but that was a worthwhile — you know, I could go on and on about that. And I know we want to — we only have so much time here, and I should get to the ney. But this is what the ney is. This is no ordinary instrument.

[Music]

That was a bit of Rast. Didn't even go up the — I actually did go up the full octave. But you can just sit on three or four notes, you know, and evoke Rast. I was trying to do that at the beginning. And what's great about the ney versus the oud as horn players and singers is you can see it's — again, there's not just some dots on the page or geometrical patterns. It's a living, breathing thing, each note. And Turkish ney playing the taqsim style of playing is really slow and stately and non-virtuosic. It's sliding around a lot, kind of like Indian music, you know, a lot of articulation, sliding between notes. And it's used as a model to study maqam. If you're studying any instrument, they say listen, to the ney players because they come to the essence of the maqam without all the, you know, virtuosity and fast playing and things like that. So — and there's a lot of symbolism, too,

in the ney. There's nine notes to the day. So one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. So notches like pieces of — you can see notches. There's nine of them. There's also nine holes. Nine is three times three. I mean, there's numerological numbers, three is the number of perfection. Nine is the number of openings in the human body if we can include our eyeballs. And so the ney also, because it's straight and Rast, remember, Rast, rectitude, this is what they — what's called in Islam the straight path, walking the straight path. So this is like the first letter in the alphabet, aleph. It's just the straight line down. And it's loaded with — everywhere you look, there's some symbolism. This is no ordinary instrument. Well, that's an interesting thing about the ney, too, you know. And I had my own little initiation with this instrument when I was in when I was in Cairo. I'm a string player. And, yeah, I heard the ney and I loved the ney. So I bought a ney, went to take some lessons with a guy. Well, I couldn't get a sound out of it. And most people can't. It's an oblique embouchure, and it's kind of tricky. And this guy, he had a student there, and he's putting it in this — he's saying, do this, do that. And the student there, I felt like I was at the dentist, you know, because these guys are hovering around and trying to get me to get a pitch. I couldn't get a sound out of it. And I said, Okay, guys. Thanks a lot. I guess I need to just, you know, work on it. I took it home, nothing was happening, brought it back to Canada. And every once in a while, I would pick up the ney, blow it, and still nothing, you know, maybe two or three times a year. But one time I did it went. I got a toot. Oh, my God. I did nothing different. I believe the ney was testing me. This is my initiation. What am I going to do? And I had to — there's all these stories of where you have to, you know, work for the guru and cut his grass and go do his groceries and everything for five years before he teaches you anything. It was kind of like that. And then I started playing, and I got a foothold on it. And it was amazing. But the thing is, when you're watching the oud, you can say, okay. My hands working. There's nothing to watch with the ney. So I'm backing up here so you can see but it's all inside. There's nothing to see. You can see me using, and it is interesting watching how the fingers work. And I can show a few little things, but it's all in your mouth. It's all inside. It's all in your breath. So that's an interesting — again, built right into the instrument, all this — all of this philosophy. And to get a good tone on the ney, you have to push hard. But you can push too hard. So it's balance. And when I go into the lower register, if I get entry permission from the instrument, which is tough to do, I'm actually in — why need to take my — hear what's going on with the overtone series. I'm actually playing the multiphonic when I go down there. I'm playing — because the fundamental is very quiet, and to get some punch on it, you need to bring the octave up and balance that. So here's the fundamental, you know, just in terms of physics. This is what the toot sounds like in the lower register. Oh, I need to go down. Sorry.

[Music]

It's very quiet. But if I get a bit of the octave in there

[Music]

When I am getting the octave, when I'm getting that lower octave and it's sounding big and fat, that's because I'm playing a multiphonic down there. And that also goes back to this whole Central Asian thing of overtone singing. So the Turks, the people in the — the present people who live in Turkey are central Asians, right. Turks originally came from Central Asia. And some people believe that this Turkish specialty of playing in this low register is — Walter Feldman talks about that there is maybe some heritage with the overtone tradition.

[Music]

In terms of what you can see, the orientation is like, again, transposing, this is — this is pitch towards A is all notes closed. But I'm thinking — here's another nationalistic thing. The orientation of the system in I said with the oud is C to C, in Turkish tradition, it's G to G. So in the early 20th century, everyone was trying to be different and show that they're different. Oh, we're not like the Arabs. We're Turks, you know. So we base our us on G. And you can have different sizes of ney starting at different pitches. But you're thinking it's just like a recorder, you know. It's like C, D, E, F, G, right. And at the back, there's a hole. And this hole is actually a — depending on how you blow it, has — is really wide. It's like a — almost a major third. And that's the quality you get, a lot of sliding around when you're playing with that, and it's all on your thumb, sort of quarter holding it or half holding it and how much pressure you're using. And you hear this unstable note that is really idiomatic. And it's that break between you get — between that lower octave and getting to that next octave. I'll try to demonstrate that.

[Music]

I don't know if you can see it.

[Music]

So in terms of looking, that's about all you can see. You know, everything else is kind of inside with this instrument, which is really appropriate.

[Howard Spring:] You know, when I think — hear that sound and compare it to a Western flute sound, for example, this is a lot more breathy.

[Rob Simms:] Yep.

[Howard Spring:] A lot more air. So is that just the way the instrument is constructed, or is that a technique or –

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. It's breathy. It's supposed to be breathy. I think it's part of the physics. Just the acoustics of the instrument, it's a breathy — just the embouchure. And this is not a Coke bottle embouchure, right. This is a — this is a very strange embouchure. It's coming off the side, hitting off your teeth and into the tube. And you're getting the — you know, the air's going this way. So it is breathy. But also breath, I mean, that's — you're dealing with breath. I mean, breath is your vital force, right? And there's — in Sufi doctrine, there's this whole thing called the breath of the compassionate, which is what animates the whole universe. And so, when you think of it, you know, Sufism isn't to — is really not — it's more — it's a deeper version of Islam, but a lot of Muslims don't agree with Sufism, because it's about trying to connect with God instead of obedience to God because, in Islam — and I don't want to get into a big, you know, religious discussion here. But God has completely transcendent. You're just a little human. You cannot — sorry, you can't reach God. That's the exoteric view. But the esoteric view is you can and they're trying to. And you can see the heresy of, if — the ney was also a symbol of the perfect — the perfect human, you know, with all its anthropomorphic. The ney is the human soul, right, the poem. It's separated from their reed bed and longing to get back. And then every ney, when you're making a ney, you know, many are called but few are chosen. To make a good one, you might have to throw out three or four, you know. So — and if you're really playing this thing properly and this thing is breathing and it's this breath of the compassionate, well, I mean, the symbolism is pretty heretical, right, like you are blowing life because — in and of itself, it's nothing. This can't make a sound without a human being blowing into it. So I think that breathy sound is something to do with that. And musicians are very practical, and they talk about the technical, scales and the rhythms and all these things. But particularly with the Turkish ney, it's very tied into all of this stuff. And so it may seem that I'm going over the top here, but I'm just trying to open up a whole different way of looking at this music. And they say the way someone plays, that's who they are, you know. That's not just revealing them as a musician. That's their — that's their maqam, their spiritual station. I want to play a couple other maqams, though, just to get these different — so Rast is rectitude, Hijaz is separation. So this is the beginning of — the beginning of Rumi's poem, you know. Listen to the ney as it wails in separation from the reed bed.

[Music]

You know, when you play this — when you play this thing, you have to really get into it. So I'm talking, I'm playing. It's different, completely different modalities. And you have to slow, slow, slow down, you know, big time. So I just kind of rush into it in the beginning and, you know, I'm playing the ney here. Got to slow down. Separation. What I like doing is going from separation with Hijaz to union which is Sega. Sega, and you were asking earlier about places, Ryan, like where does this music come from? Is there certain places. Well, Hijaz means the — the word Hijaz, there's a lot of place names with maqam names. And Hijaz is the Western side of Saudi — the Saudi Peninsula, Arabian Peninsula. Sega means third place, and it's the third octave species of

Rast. But you'll see I'm going to really go to town if I can get access permission into the lower register. I will really exploit this thumb region. There's a whole universe in the thumb. All you need is your thumb.

[Music]

It's very chromatic in there, too, which is quite interesting. And those are very deep maqams, so see Rast, Hijaz, and Sega, tons of compositions in there. And so you listen to these compositions. You learn them. Then you listen to taqsims and put it all together, and you're conversing with the maqam and you're playing. You're having a conversation with it as a player, you know, trying to, trying to evoke that feeling of union there or separation in the case of Hijaz.

[Ryan Bruce:] So in these last two pieces that you just played, how much of those were composed; and how much was improvised?

[Rob Simms:] That was improvised. So that was improvised based on my reassembling of all kinds of phrases. Some of them are cliche. You know you're in Sega as soon as you hear

[Music]

And the ending.

[Music]

[Inaudible] little gesture coming up. A lot of them are sort of giveaways with just a few motifs, you know, because they've given their character away. They're like personalities, right? And you can — sometimes you can just see a little profile and suddenly go, Oh, I know who that is because it's just so strong that character, that feature. And that personification is, I think, really correct. And, you know, I got that actually from Jim Kippen who was talking about Raga and that Raga is like complex personalities. And some of them can be very similar, but they have their own idiosyncratic behaviour, you know, or characters. They can be very closely related, but they're different because this one behaves this way and, you know. You can predict behaviours in people, right, if you know them well enough. And so the more you hang out with them, the more you can predict what's the next note supposed to be. So when I'm listening to a taqsim in Sega because I spent a lot of time in that, sort of took a hint on the union thing. I thought, gee. I'd better pay attention to this one. You can predict what they're going to do next. You can hear what notes should come next. And that's from just what's out there in the repertoire. That's from the personality, understanding the personality of Sega. And someone who's really good can throw in surprises, like any other kind of improvisation. There's expectations and then surprises. And then — but the main thing is bringing out that spirit, that quality, that magic of it. And in the Turkish tradition,

again, it's a very precise — the head space that you get in. Ushaq is love. And this is like Bayati. So I played Bayati earlier on the oud. But this has a different — it's called sayir, a different path, a different progression, path or progression. So Bayati is the same scale. Bayati starts up on the fourth degree and then goes up a bit and then comes down. This one stays low and goes up and comes down. And if you start up really high and come down, that's Muhayyer. And then there's another one that's in the middle. So they're all pretty much the same scale, but they behave differently. They've got different personalities. When you think about it, you're excluding certain motions and you're including others. So anything that's written in that mode is going to have certain feel to it because — because the behaviour, its path. Ushaq.

[Music]

So that note I'm playing there is the tonic.

[Music]

Easy to slip into Rast there. And that's where we're talking about drones and how drones can sort of help. On the oud, you're hitting those notes to help keep you, you know, clearly bringing out the maqam that you're trying to evoke. So here's some maqam Husayni. And this is in the same scale as Ushaq and Bayati. There's six — the sixth degree you'll hear is variable on it. And — but it has a different feel to it and a different progression, different sayir. So I'll just run up and down the scale and then I'll quit.

[Music]

So that evokes nostalgia and is related to separation, all this — all the Rumi stuff that we were talking about. But you'll hear there's some pentatonic kind of connotations to that and a little bit more leaping going on there than what we have in these other maqams that are — it's because of the vocal nature of it. And, again, this goes back to the vocal models that goes into a lot of sacred recitation where it was reserved and, again, especially with the ney, you don't — you can have a nice dramatic leap, and they'll shift octaves for that kind of effect. But it's true. The music's very compacted. And that's where I was saying earlier, you follow the tetrachords. You can — you've got to be good at making music when you're improvising with a taqsim with three or four notes. So how do you do that? You — rhythm. You have to — you have to get a good sense of rhythm and not tapping your toe rhythm but when to hold it, when to when to go, when to play with a few figures and pace it, how to make — how to make a sentence like an utterance that makes some kind of sense based on the grammar of that music. And, again, that comes from just a lot of listening and absorbing compositions. But some maqams, particularly the ones that leap up high often start with one lone note, low note and then jump up really high. So this one will start on the tonic and then jump up to the fifth right away or to the seventh and then down to the fifth.

[Music]

Or:

[Music]

It's very Husayni. As soon as you hear that, you know it's Husayni. You don't have to do anything else. And we get nostalgic, or at least we learn to get nostalgic.

[Ryan Bruce:] So that's different than the other maqams you were playing that have much more stepwise motion or

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. I was trying –

[Ryan Bruce:] Why is that we hear the other maqams much more stepwise?

[Rob Simms:] As I was saying, these are quirky personalities. That's Husayni. So you have to know the personality and that Husayni has the same — wears the same clothes as Bayati a lot of time and Ushaq, you know. A lot of — there's certain things that — there's a lot of overlap. If you have a Venn diagram, you know, they overlap in certain ways, but they also have their own identities. And that's why it's a family. And those ones share a very similar scale. That's a very interesting group of maqams there. And, again, that's the Turkish side. An Arab musician would say it's all Bayati. They wouldn't — a lot of them would say that. A lot of them wouldn't differentiate. That's one difference between the Turkish Ottoman maqam tradition and the Arab tradition as it emerged in the late 19th, early 20th century. They tend to think more — the Arab musicians tend to think more in terms of a scale and then with starting high and going lower, whatever they're thinking more in terms of, well, that's a Bayati scale whereas the Turkish thing is more differentiation based on the progression of it.

[Ryan Bruce:] You've mentioned that the drone is important, and you have something for us here to do a demonstration of how we can hear the drone with the maqam.

[Rob Simms:] Yeah. It works really well with Sega because, again, Sega is this very chromatic — Sega is the third species of Rast so — right. Rast is the major scale. It's the third and the seventh slightly flattened. And this is beginning on the — that third degree, third place, Sega, se is three and Persian ga is place. And what I got here is a little green box that allows me to do drones. I think this one is probably still on here. We were doing them in our soundcheck, so I might be able to just turn it on. And I'll play around a little bit in Sega. And you

can hear when the drone's there, you can hear the tension between the notes and the energy between them, the dynamics between it. And you play differently when you have a drone. You enjoy those notes more. And this is a thing that's used a lot in Turkish, particularly Sufi circles, whether it be a bunch of ney players. And a few of them will just hold the drone, and someone will go off and solo. I've heard it with Arab music, too, although a lot less. They'll have the unison, you know, doing a tremolo on the oud or something while the ney player takes a solo. Let's see if it's still on here. Prefab.

[Music]

[Howard Spring:] I just want to get at that thing about a Canadian doing all this music and tie that in with, you know, in the world today, as you pointed out before Rob, you know, talking about music in terms of strict geographical area makes less and less sense or at least corresponds less and less to the reality given mass communication and transportation. And I just wanted to know what — if you had any thoughts on that or, in your particular role, playing this very deep music but being Canadian and that kind of thing.

[Rob Simms:] I always make sure when I play, first of all, that I tell people about the really great players, you know, because a lot of times I'm playing — sometimes I'm playing in communities who they know — I don't have to say that. They know that, you know. And — but if I'm playing for people who've never heard the music before, so there's some — Kutzier Bruner [phonetic] and his father — the Heir Bruner family are amazing. [Inaudible], people like that. So they can go out and listen to, you know, the source of it. And, on the other hand, what fascinates me about music is that how we can be — we can have huge cultural — be separated culturally hugely, and yet music, there's a hook there. We can relate to each other through the music. We can appreciate music. People all over the world love, you know, Beyonce, and they don't speak English. I dug — got first into Indian music and into flamenco, you know, which is kind of like sideways. Grew up with North American music, went into flamenco, opened up a whole new palette of sounds. I think if someone loves music, any kind of music, that means there's probably music out there they don't know about that they love too. They just — they're just — there's some latent interests in other musics that — that will also attract them. And I find it sort of transcends all the culture, politics and all that other stuff that is — you know, the gears are grinding in our world right now, that humans can just resonate to each other's music or food, you know. You go somewhere and you go, Wow. What is this dish? I never had it before. Boy, I'd like some of that. Give me some more of that. You don't have a clue what it is, but it's just — it's — you've never thought of doing it that way, you know. And you hear sounds, and you fall in love, as I mentioned. So it's — you know, it's a language of the heart in a way, and it shows our common humanity. That's very cliche. Music is not a universal language in the sense that it's usually regarded as, but it is in that sense where we can — again, we can — we can be more receptive to music than we can to language and other ideas in a culture that we don't understand. And we'll have — we'll project all kinds of misunderstandings on it. But it communicates in a very deep human way. And I think that's really significant and profound. And I've always — I just was following

my musical ear. But then later, when I thought about it in a more intellectual way, I thought, No, I like this. This is — this is the way it should be. You know, we're — humans have more in common than differences, although we live in a time now where the differences are really being emphasized. And there's a lot of injustices happening between those differences. But when you look at it, right from the beginning of time, we've always needed — you know, we have the same number of bones, the same number of organs. Our DNA is the same. Physiologically, we're very similar. And we've always needed, you know, a roof over our heads. We need food. We need shelter. We need to feel part of a community. We need to have loved ones. These are all basic human needs. We're more similar than we are different. And meeting people through music is so amazing because if you go over and you've don't a little bit of homework and say, yeah, I love ney playing. And they go, Oh, really, it's a great way to open up relationship with people. You talk about music; it's totally positive. It's — to me, I think there's like — it's almost like some kind of a passport where if you show interest in another music, other musicians will say, Yeah, yeah. We can show you that. Oh, you're a musician. Oh. You play guitar? Okay. And they might know a little bit about guitar or whatever or jazz or whatever and you start talking about that. Musicians tend to — you know, I brought this up, and other people say, well, there's also barriers where musicians are very, you know, protecting their turf and everything. And that's true. Professionally, they don't want you to know because you might — you might steal some gigs from them or hurt something. But I'm not a threat. I'm not going to steal any gigs from anybody. So — and as long as you're honest about it and — you know, I'm lucky to have a job in academia. I don't have to make my living playing this music and representing another way. And I played mainly for myself and I always have. It's for my own edification.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah. I think — I think you're absolutely right. That's — I mean, that's been my experience, too, in terms of research. As soon as you say you're a musician, that just opens up the gates. The other stuff about protection, I think, is about more about money and the economy rather than about music, per se. When it comes just to music, that connection is always — I mean, I've always found that.

[Rob Simms:] I've just had so many amazing experiences with completely random people who immediately as soon as they know you and especially if you show a little bit of competence and interest in their music, they're more than happy to open that up to you. And, travelling, it's just been an amazing, as I say, passport to meeting other people. Then you started with the music, and then you start to learn other things. So another thing is when you really get turned on to another music, then immediately you respect those people. If you love their music, sometimes I hear something. What is that? It's from Turkmenistan. Never heard it before. Turk — well, I immediately like these people because they make music like that. So it starts things off on the right foot, you know. And then you go, I've got to do some homework. I need to learn a little bit about the geography and the cultures and history and everything. And you educate yourself about other people. And — but, you know, it's always coming back to me for the music as the — as the connection and the hook for getting into it. And, you know, music's an irrational thing. It's been rationalized through music theory and the music business and everything, but at the base of it it's a very primal, irrational, spontaneous thing. And it presses buttons in a

way that nothing else can. So as long as you show that respect — and, look. The classical music world, look at all the great Asian artists like top notch. There's opera singers. There's pianists. There's violinists, conductors and everything. This is proof that anyone who spends enough time, any human being, you put a kid in a home speaking — kid's born in Argentina. Put him in a home in China, the kid will speak Chinese, you know. It's just the way it works. And if you put enough time in, there's musicians in Africa and all over the place who want to learn to play Bach. And if they put enough time in, they can play Bach really well. We can do that. It's just how much time you're putting in. By the same token, just because you meet someone from Turkey, they may not know a thing about the ney or care about it at all. So it's really about where are we putting our focus. And the identity politics, you know, I'm all for, you know, making more social justice and everything. But we need to — we need to keep the whole, our humanity up front, the whole of humanity and our — and what unites us. And I think music's a fantastic way to do that.

[Howard Spring:] Agree.

[Ryan Bruce:] Yeah.

[Rob Simms:] Here, here.

[Ryan Bruce:] Thank you.

TRANSCRIPT: PERSIAN MUSIC

[Howard Spring:] Hi, Reza. Thank you for doing this. Could you introduce yourself a little bit?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Sure. My name is Reza Yazdanpaneh. I'm from Iran. My background is Persian music. And yeah, I'm 52 years old. And what else do you want to know?

[Howard Spring:] How did you learn to play?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah, that was — yeah, I was — that was a good experience, I was as a guest in a house in the second floor. So I heard a sound and I was attracted. That was fascinating. And in my whole family, nobody knew anything about music. In all my generation before me, nobody did music. So that was the first time and I didn't know even the name of the instrument. Afterward, I realized that the instrument is setar. So I got started doing music with setar. I can show you the instrument that's here. This is the instrument that I got and started and so — and mostly I have learnt this music by listening and listening to the recording that I had access from previous musicians. And yeah, that was the player of cassette, there was no CD in that period, you know that. Yeah, that was this instrument is called setar. Yeah.

[Howard Spring:] Can you play a little bit on it so we can hear what it sounds like?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah, of course sure.

[Strumming]

[Howard Spring:] And what were you playing there?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] So, I was improvising based on mahur, dastgah-e mahur, mahur is one of the seven dastgahs in Persian music.

[Howard Spring:] What is a dastgah?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah, you know, Persian classical music is established based on the repertoire, which is called radif. And radif contains lots of modes and melodies. If we want to categorize radif, we should say we have dastgah, avaz, and gusheh. Both dastgah and avaz include gushehs. But the difference between dastgah

and avaz is the number of gusheh. Mostly, avaz has less number of gusheh than dastgah. And we have seven dastgah, shur, mahur, segah, chahargah, rastpanjgah, nava, and homayun. And somehow, avaz is subcategory of dastgah. You know, we have the name of avaz, if you want to know, are bayat-e tork, dashti, abu-ata, afshari, and bayate esfahan. And yeah, we have another avaz, it's called kord-e bayat or bayate kord. And most of avazes are subcategory of shur, dastgah-e shur is the most important dastgah in Persian classical music. And dastgah-e shur is famous, is known as the mother of other dastgahs, which is interesting.

[Howard Spring:] So when you learn how to play, do you learn the radif or do your learn a dastgah? Or do you learn a gusheh? What are you actually learning when you learn?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah, that's a good question. You know, I've been listening to different recordings based on the musicians, based on the — I think that depends on the approach of musicians. Some musicians' approach are more traditionally, you know, if they — their approach is more traditional, they follow the repertoire of the radif and use the gushehs and the sentences and the ingredients from radif much more. But some of musicians just were improvising based on the radif. So, I would say I was listening to different approaches. For example, we had a Master Muhammad Reza Lotfi, he was using lots of patterns from the radif. But we have another master, for example, Hossein Alizadeh, who is — who see the repertoire more flexible. He uses the repertoire more flexible and mostly tries to improvise based on the repertoire. Yeah. So — And for example, Ahhmad Ebadi, who was a sitar player, and was the son of the one of the toppest master in Persian classical music. That's interesting. Although his father was the main — somehow the main presenter of the radif, Ahmad Ebadi was more improviser than follower of the radif. Of course, he was following the taste and atmosphere and modes from the radif, but not specifically following the repertoire. So — And he was a fantastic improviser. Yeah.

[Howard Spring:] Right. Now, so did you study with a master or did you do it all from listening to recordings or?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah, so I played setar for seven years. I learnt the elementary technique, I mean, the posture, how to take the instrument, how to pluck, let's say, for a month or so. But yeah, I would say 19% — 90% of what I learnt, I learnt from listening until seven years. After seven years, I — after my military service, I went to the university, you know, and to study music. At the university, you know, you learn solfege, we call it solfege, which is yeah, ear-turning and other stuff, harmony, [inaudible] and, radif as well. You know, we had to do memorize and present the repertoire at the end of the each semester So, at the university, I learnt different things. And yeah, and I play, I learnt, I wouldn't say I learnt the radif at the university because during that seven years, I already was enough — familiar enough to the repertoire, right? So yeah, at the university, yeah, I learnt different — other stuff.

[Howard Spring:] So you learnt both Western music and Persian classical music at university?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] That's right, yeah. You know, there was two direction at the university. Some students were focussing on Western music, Western music, specifically. But the students who were doing Persian music had to have some courses from Western music. And I'm happy that I've learnt them as well. Yeah.

[Howard Spring:] Sure. Sure, of course. Now, the instrument that you're playing, what is that called?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] That's called setar. And se- means three. This instrument –

[Howard Spring:] So it has three strings?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] No, currently, this instrument has four strings, but one of them are doubled. Somehow, you know, we use this string independently. And this is used individually. But on the top, we have two strings, we play and fingering at the same time, you know, and the interval is octave, you see, while we play like it this. Sometimes that's not the tradition, but we use this. I'm using the first and the third single string, right, which are the same. But mostly, yeah, when we use the third one, the toppest one, we use both strings simultaneously like this.

[Howard Spring:] Does that instrument have frets?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yes. That's — It has movable portable frets. You can you can change the spot. Sometimes we change the — based on the mode or we have to change the interval, sometimes, not all the time. But yeah, that's — you know, frets are movable, portable.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah, and they need to be movable because the different modes have different notes that you will use, is that right?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yes, sometimes. But I would say mostly we have to change them because of the — and that is more happens when we use tar, another instrument that I will show you, I will demonstrate that to you. So, I would say because of the humidity and you will — you know, because yeah, the instrument is built from wood. Sometimes because the surface, this part of the resonator changes and that changes the interval. Yeah, a little bit. But yeah, this problem we have, when we use this instrument, and that's because of the membrane. I can show you if you want.

[Howard Spring:] Well, let's — Yeah, let's take a look at the tar.

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah, sure.

[Howard Spring:] So, Reza, the instrument you have now in your — that you're holding is called a tar. Is that right? Can you say something about it? [Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Sure. It's called tar. You are right. I would say, this instrument is the most common instrument in Persian classical music. Yeah, this instrument has membrane, skin as the — this part of — I mean, compared to setar, this part of the setar was built from wood, as you know. But this is membrane and because — this membrane is natural, so it's very sensitive to humidity and temperature, you know. And yeah, this part of the instrument is built from berry, the berry, this berry is a tree, that's not the plant, right? And I haven't seen that in Canada at all. But the fingerboard is built from walnut tree. Here we have bones as you see. And the bridge and this part are built from horn. So — And in terms of strings, we have three double strings on top, right? On setar, just one string was double. But here, we have six strings as three. We could say three double strings. And we pluck them and do the fingering on both like this. You know, if I pluck them separately, that sounds like this. But — And the frets are the same as setar. They are movable and portable. And yeah, and so we play setar with our nail. But for tar, we use pick. And the pick is built from two materials. Actually, it depends, we have different material in different picks. What I've got here is built from horn of sort of goat. And this part, the part that I hold in between my fingers is honey wax, right? Because that's flexible, you can shape it as you wish, right? But mostly, the part that hit the strings is from metal, different metal, steel and other metals, right? Yeah.

[Howard Spring:] So can you demonstrate a mode or go up and down the neck so we get a chance to hear what the different notes sound like?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Sure, yeah. You know, we have different scales. We have similar scales like Western music, you know?

[Strumming]

Right? This is like major, major scale exists in Western music. We use this scale when we play –

[Howard Spring:] And what do you call it in Persian music?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah. So either we want to be and play in mahur.

[Strumming]

This is daramad-e mahur, the first gusheh in mahur. Or if you — if we want to play rastpanjgah, somehow the escape for rastpanjgah and mahur is the same.

[Strumming]

But one interesting thing is when we play rastpanjgah, mostly we use F as tonic, something similar to F major scale, right? Because of the atmosphere, articulation, and expression of the rastpanjgah. But for mahur, either we play on C, on F, or G. I think I need to explain something. Most of the time, specifically, we want to do the solo. We say C, F, but we don't mean it. Mostly we tune our instrument a semitone, or a major tone lower. For example, on tar, mostly people tune their tar on B, a semitone lower than C, right? But on setar — Why? Because really, these instruments are not designed to hold a huge pressure. And another thing is, when you played lower, an instrument is more feasible, soft. And when you want to do the technique and ornamentation, that's more simple and accessible. For example, you see?

[Music]

Because ornamentation is very, very important in Persian music. So on setar, probably, because we play it with our nail and our finger, we want to have the strings looser, somehow. So sitar is tuned at least a major tone lower.

[Ryan Bruce:] Yeah, I have a question about the, the modes or the dastgah that you played because you played mahur. And from what I understand, the term mahur is actually — it's just a coincidence that it sounds like major. It's — Yeah, those two actual words aren't related, right? So where did the words come from? The names of the dastgah?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] That's interesting. You know, we are not sure about the terminology of the name of dastgahs, avaz, and gushehs. Some gushehs are called based on the place, I mean the name of the gusheh is the name of a location. Some names are the name of the people. Some name are the name of expression or emotion. So those are different, but that's interesting. I was thinking the same about the term of mahur and major. But just so you know, mahur is called hill, right? Let's say, yeah, smaller than mountain. Yeah. Am I pronouncing it correctly? Yeah, hill, mahur yeah, but major as far as I know means huge, it means big, right? Major compared to minor, yeah. The interval are the same, but the difference here is, you know, in tonal music in Western Classical music or generally, if I call it tonal music, you need to see the octave and consider and determine the function of the degrees, right? For example, the first degree is tonic. And its importance is the same as somehow the octave and then the fifth and then the third, the order that Western music considers for melody, harmony, and all those stuff. But in mahur, we don't follow the octave. You could present a mode just by using five or six notes and that's it. I can show you, right? And, yeah, for example, when I played the daramad-e mahur I didn't go through the whole octave. Let me play this gusheh for you from mahur. This gusheh is called gusheh-ye or avaz and yeah, we could talk about it more. The gusheh is like this.

[Strumming]

You see? The tonic — I mean, I wouldn't call it tonic, we say shahed. Shahed is a term that we use at the most repetitive and use the notes, right? And you heard that — the important note here is this degree is D. Although we are in the atmosphere of mahur and basically the main mode of mahur is based on C. Let's say — We don't call it tonic. Let's say, let's call it shahed. That's something similar to tonic, but not exactly. We are in the atmosphere of mahur. And shahed is C here. But when you play avaz or gusheh-ye, shahed changes to D. And as I said, I didn't — when I was playing this gusheh, I didn't cover an octave, right? That was less than that. Yeah.

>>[Howard Spring:] So the last thing that you played, Reza, was that a gusheh? And was it composed or was it improvised? What was it exactly?

>> [Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah, that was a gusheh and the gusheh was called avaz and this gusheh has another name in different version of radif, which is gusheh-ye. And you know, gusheh, we have different sort of gusheh in radif, but gusheh and in general, radif basically is not improvised. It is something that we have something like inherited from the previous periods. So, somehow those are fixed. Of course, different — we have, as I said, we have different version of radif. In different version, you could see differences. But when you approach to a specific version and you want to learn it, everything is somehow precomposed. That's not improvised. But when you learn it, you can go from there and improvise, compose, write a song, whatever. Yeah. And –

[Howard Spring:] I see, OK.

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah.

[Ryan Bruce:] So what is a gusheh exactly?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] You know, we could gusheh — we could define gusheh as the smallest part of the radif. Or let me rephrase it. Radif in general, includes lots of melodies and modes, and each melody and mode is called gusheh. Gusheh is a general name for lots of small melody and mode that exists in radif. But we have different gusheh, as I said. Sometimes a gusheh is a modal and when I say modal, I mean that gusheh changes the mode and changes the interval. Some gushehs are mostly a rhythmical pattern. I can introduce them. So, we could categorize gusheh in at least three branches, right? Some gusheh are — So, you know, most importantly, daramad is the most important gusheh in each avaz or dastgah. And daramad somehow means conversational opening. Dar means door. Dar is the same as door in English, and amad means coming. So when you want to come to a place, you come from a door, so daramad means coming from a door, right? So, when you get started,

either in dastgah or avaz, you get started from a gusheh, it's called daramad. And I'm talking in traditional way, because, yes, some — you can get started from a gusheh, which is in the climax. You can do that based on your emotion and your situation. But traditionally and classically, and when you want to learn it, you will learn it from the beginning. So the first gusheh in each dastgah or avaz is daramad. And then you go through — And you will be encountering with different sort of gusheh. Some gushehs are composed based on the modal gushehs. Some gushes are mostly a rhythmic pattern, they present rhythmic melodic pattern. For example — I can give you example. You know, the most common rhythmic pattern in radif is called kereshmeh. You can see kereshmeh everywhere, you know? So I — And I can play the kereshmeh without using the interval and notes. Kereshmeh is like this. You see? And I can apply this pattern in different scales, different mode dastgahs or avaz. For example, in mahur, in chahargah, bayat-e tork.

[Strumming]

You see? You can apply this pattern everywhere, in every mode dastgah or avaz, right? And we have some sort of gusheh that's combination of rhythmic and melodic pattern like bastenegar.

[Strumming]

You know, you can do this sequence and we do this in different intervals and scales, but you need to follow this pattern, right? Like here.

[Strumming]

And so on, right? This is bastenegar. And we — So, if we — if I want to categorize it and make it simple, I say, we see three different branches or three different kinds of gusheh. Why — The first category is modal gusheh, and daramad — actually, some of our musician categorize daramad in different branch. They say — Let's say we have a category of basic mode, right, because daramad is the beginning and the most important gusheh, let's categorize the — all daramads in basic modes. And we have another modal category, which is the gushehs that change modes and bring new modes. I can demonstrate that. And the third one is non-modal gushehs. They are either rhythmic pattern or melodic rhythmic pattern, or just beautiful melodies that are built based on other modes. And I can give you example of each of that.

[Ryan Bruce:] How many are there in the radif? How many gushehs are there in the radif?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] So, different version of radif has different number of gushehs. So, I think at least, I would say, something around 150 or so. But we have different — Let's say, newer version of radif, they have more gushehs. And some musician believe they are somehow another interpretation of those gushehs. But, you

know, since this tradition has been mostly verbal, right, so that's not like all musicians believe in a same thing — in the same thing, right? Yeah, there are different approaches — opinions, I would say.

[Ryan Bruce:] It seems like a manageable repertoire of things that a musician can start to learn, like a repertoire.

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] That's correct. That's what we call it, radif. Radif is repertoire that's determined, you know where you're at, where you could get started. And you know when you finish the whole — and you did, and you learnt the whole repertoire, that's correct.

[Ryan Bruce:] If you were to play a full piece, would you play one gusheh, would you play many gushehs? It sounds like you would play more than one.

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah. You — Again, it depends. Whether you want to improvise, whether — or you want to structure a traditional performance. But in a traditional way, we have pishdaramad. Pishdaramad means before daramad, something like prelude, right? In a very old time, I would say, the form of pishdaramad was invented sometimes around 100 years ago, almost. OK? Before that, musician would get started from daramad. But we believe 100 years ago, our musician were influenced by Western music. So they realized in Western music, the Western musicians just don't jump in the main idea, right? They provide a prelude, something like introduction at the beginning, and little by little, gradually they go toward the subject, the main subject. So, this form was invented by a great musician, his name was Darvish Khan. And Darvish Khan is a very respectful musician in our history and, you know, everybody does respect Darvish Khan. So, Darvish Khan invented the form pishdaramad, something like this.

[Strumming]

You see, pishdaramad is a slow song, something like want to get you prepared for listening to vocalizing and the main idea and main subject. So, yeah. After that — So, if we want to design a performance and consider, let's imagine we are after the time of — invention of pishdaramad. OK? So we have pishdaramad, when we finish pishdaramad, of course, now we play daramad. Let's say, now we finished pishdaramad.

[Strumming]

Now I finished the pishdaramad, I started daramad and depend. If I'm — That's up to me, if I want to do the — play the radif like this.

[Strumming]

I played this before in our previous videos, recordings. Now, let's say I want to improvise. Again, I'm in the place and atmosphere of daramad, I'm following the daramad of mahur, but I want to improvise, right?

[Strumming]

And after daramad, mostly another form, another song is played and that's called chahar mezrab. In contrast with pishdaramad, which was very slow, chahar mezrab is supposed to be fast, right? And again, this chahar mezrab is from Darvish Khan.

[Strumming]

Right? This is chahar mezrab. And then, when chahar mezrab is finished, the atmosphere is provided for the singer to little by little get started. Let's say chahar mezrab is finished, again, a little bit instrumental layer, give a little bit taste of the daramad, or they could play kereshmeh as a variety, right?

[Strumming]

So they provide atmosphere for singer. And the singer gets started like this.

[Singing]

And again, based on the interest and opinion of the singer, singer could follow the radif as much as they want, or sing improvisational, right? So, the singer presents the — no, this technique is very important in Persian classical music, and that's called tahrir. [Singing]. And we believe that this technique is inspired based on nightingale singing.

[Singing]

You know? And we — The singer presents ornamentation, tahrir, different thing, a little bit, and then the singer goes to the poem and presents the poem based on the mode — whatever mode is. At this moment, the mode and the atmosphere is daramad, right? So the singer sings like this.

[Singing]

Right? And when the singer sings the poem again, the vocalizing of the poem includes tahrir and ornamentation as well, right? So, they don't sing just a poem, not just the — not just like you put the melody

on a board, that's not like that. Again, you see the ornamentation and, yeah, sometimes melismatic decoration, something like that. And so, let's say, the singer is singing, very, very important thing in this tradition and in this performance is called javab-e avaz. Now, what is it? Javab-e avaz is like the singer sings, the instrument player should be answering, something like we said call and response, right? Now, I'm going to sing and a response to myself, because I don't have an independent singer beside me, right?

[Strumming and Singing]

You know, something like — You know, the instrument player imitates and tries to imitate and follow what exactly the singer sings. And that's interesting. Sometimes, based on the delay and the distance in terms of time between the singer and the instrument player, you could hear heterophonic texture, which is interesting. Because the melody and the ornamentation mostly are the same, right? If they are too close, sometimes you can hear that texture. OK. And then when the singer in the climax, so something like here, we have a gusheh, it's called Iraq, and that's Iraq, the name of the country of Iraq, our neighbour, right? And you, you can hear the expression of the Iraq, which is — which demonstrates the climax.

[Strumming]

>> OK. Singer — The singer here is saying something at the climax. So, sometimes the instrument player, because they want to give a rest to the singer, because they sang something, let's say, difficult, so they answer like this.

[Strumming]

So, somehow this is a javab-e avaz that is, again, that's call and response, but with playing something metric, rhythmic, right? Yeah. And again, depend on the length of the performance, amount of avaz and singing could be determined. And they somehow end up with tasnif. Tasnif is a piece — a rhythmic piece that include word, poem, something like this.

[Strumming and Singing]

You see, that's rhythmic, metric, it has words, it has word — I mean, a poem. And at the end of the end, we play sort of song that's called reng-e. Reng these days, you know, dancing is not allowed as a performance, but the reng — this form, reng, more specifically had been for dancing. And people know the reng as a happy song, like this.

[Strumming]

You see? So if you know the way that Persian people dance, then you could realize this pattern, this rhythmic and this sort of melody are suitable for Persian dancing. And that's a happy song for them. And consider, so, we get — we got started from the pishdaramad to the reng. If I want to summarize that, I say, pishdaramad, daramad, solo, not singing, chahr mezrab, avaz and javab-e avaz, either free metric or metric, and then tasnif, which was a song with the poem, with word, and then reng at the end as a finale or final, right? So — And this is traditional. This is totally traditional. You know, nowadays, I would say playing reng is very rare. That's not played very often. And, yeah.

[Ryan Bruce:] Why is that?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Because generation by generation, you know, they don't follow the tradition. Do they in Western countries? I think that's the same in the whole world. You know, things changed and new generation mostly don't appreciate the tradition, not all of them, but most of them, I think. And, you know, because of the media and, you know, social media, different things, people are influenced by taste. And I'm not saying that that is a bad thing. You know, I'm influenced by lots of culture that I've heard, I've been facing with, right? Specifically, here in Canada, when we talk about improvisation, you know, yeah, sometimes a piano player improvises without using the keyboard. I've seen that many times, they use the back of the piano, right?

[Ryan Bruce:] Question. You've been playing in this mode, or the dastgah of mahur, do you change modes during a performance?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Of course. You know, although we say mahur and we present a scale for daramad, even through the playing the radif, per se, you can see lots of modes, scales, and intervals changing. And I can explain those to you. You know, when we play daramad, the scale was something similar to major scale, Western major scale. But, for example, we go, we have a specific gusheh called delkash. Interval for delkash is the interval of shur somehow, like this. And I'm going to play the — exactly the radif, you know. I'm going to — I don't want to improvise. I'm going to just play the patterns from radif.

[Strumming]

You see? We are in the mahur, we are playing delkash. And delkash, these intervals are interval of a shur.

[Strumming]

Right? And we — When we play in another area in mahur, that's a group of gushehs, they are called rak.

And raq is not related to rock music. Actually, that's — that is a raag, right? And that came from raga, Indian raga, yeah. And you know, the interval changes like this.

[Strumming]

You see? Interval is like — something like minor scale, right, somehow. So we have three-quarter tone here. So if you use this interval, that's the interval of the shur, you have got two three-quarter tone right after each other. But instead of this, which is B flat, and that's not actually B flat. I need to talk about all of those things, I don't know how much time you guys have. But I will explain. Let me explain about B flat later, but for now, OK. Let's say this is B flat. So we have two three-quarter tones right after each other, somehow — not somehow, exactly, that's the scale of the shur. But if you, instead of B flat, use B natural, then you have the interval of raag or rak. We don't say raag. I'm saying raag because I want to clarify this subject for you.

[Strumming]

You see? And so these things exist in radif, so of course, when we perform, we change modes. And using these different modes, you could do modulation. You could change the mode, you can go from this dastgah to another dastgah, right? And there are lots of possibilities in different dastgahs and avazs, you can switch from here to there. So, you know, actually, that's a huge difference between Western classical music and Persian classical music. So, when you are in a scale, you go on the dominant, you go to the minor scale, which is related to the major scale or another major scale or whatever. But we are in the atmosphere of, let's say, mahur, but we have different scales, you know? And those scales, when we presenting them — when we are presenting them in the context of shur, of course, there are similar similarities, but we do another thing. So yeah, I don't know how to explain, you know, because they are all different angles about this subject. But anyway, let's make it simple, of course, to answer your question, Ryan. Even in radif, when we are going through the whole dastgah, many times, scales and modes are changing.

[Ryan Bruce:] Good. You are mentioning — You were mentioning a three-quarter tone. Could you explain what you mean? I think you're pointing to something that's microtonal.

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah. You know, even us, when we teach our elementary students, we say, you see, this is semitone, this is three-quarter tone. And some people say, in Persian music, we have quarter tone, and we don't. We do just in one folklore music in a specific area in south of Iran, and I'm not going to talk about it, but in general, when we talk about Persian classical music, there is no microtone. Because when you say semitone, and you talk about chromatic scale in Western music, you really use it, yeah, you do like this. But when — if we say quarter tone, then we are supposed to do this. But we don't have this in Persian music. So, just to be clear, we don't have quarter tone, we have three-quarter tone, that's not three-quarter tone. That's

not like you divide or split a major tone to four pieces and then grab the third. No, the three of them, no, that's not like that. The interval is mostly less than a three-quarter tone. But we call it, because we don't want to make it complicated for our students or our people, but, when we — when I'm facing with a professional musician or ethnomusicologist like you and Howard, so I need to mention those specific things because those are important, right? So, yeah.

[Ryan Bruce:] Could you give us a demonstration of the difference between maybe a semitone and a three-quarter tone and a full tone?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Of course. First of all, we have different measure tone. For example [strumming] and [strumming], you can hear the second one is smaller, is lower.

[Strumming]

And why is that? You know, so you — in Western music, you have equal interval. In this music, you can see that on piano — on the piano. But sometimes we have a degree note in our music less. In my opinion, the reason is we increase the pitch with ornamentation. I was mentioning, I say this is B flat, but that's not exactly B flat, that's less, that's — I mean, lower, right?

[Strumming]

You see? [Strumming] For example, when I play shur, [strumming] the third note in the scale of shur is like —

[Strumming]

You know, with — vibrating with bending or other technique like three.

[Strumming]

The interval is lower and we somehow establish and shape the mode with ornamentation. That's why I did insist on ornamentation and decoration in Persian music. Ornamentation is a very determinative and important part in Persian music.

[Ryan Bruce:] Great, thank you. That note seems very clear. I'm wondering if we could maybe talk about the rhythmic aspects of the music as well, because you've mentioned before some things that are rhythmic pieces,

and also, you talked about metric pieces. Could you talk something about the timing or the idea of playing rhythmically when there's not a metre?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] That's a great question. You know, first of all, when you — our radif, our repertoire is written now by some people. When you go and look at the notation, you don't see time signature at all, even though if — when you play you can hear something rhythmic happening. In terms of using the term of rhythmic and metric, in my opinion, all pattern, all melodies have rhythm. There is a rhythm in every melody. But when we say metric, it has to be a time signature, a specific exact spot in our notation. So, we need to be clarified, if we are talking about radif or a performance. And of course, our performance is influenced by radif, right? In radif, for example, we have this.

[Strumming]

Something like this.

[Strumming]

You know, you see, I changed the pattern, I modified the — something that is, in my opinion, that's metric, to a free metric pattern. But when you look at the notation, as I said, in radif, you cannot see, you don't see a time signature for this part. But let's say, we are at our performance, that's different. Yeah, people write songs, compose, you see the time signature, and you see different rhythm — I mean, sorry, metric. You can see time signature, two, four, six, and we have five and seven in our music. But again, when we talk about metric or rhythmic pattern, depends on how you interpreted that, we see lots of pattern like bastenegar. I demonstrated kereshmeh. We have zanguleh, we have zang-e shotor, we have [inaudible]. You know, those patterns have a specific name, OK? But if we want to talk about metric pattern, that's the time that we bring our percussion instruments up, like what I've got here, right? You want me to demonstrate one?

[Ryan Bruce:] That's great, yeah. That would be a great thing to — yeah, thank you.

[Howard Spring:] Yes, for sure.

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] I will talk about the daf later, because that's the instrument that came from folklore music, somehow spiritual music to classical music. But tombak is a more common instrument in Persian classical music, right? And the name of instrument is tombak because of the sound of the technique. This is tom [percussion] and bak [percussion], tom-bak. And of course we have different — other techniques like pelang or eshareh, and combination of those. So —

[Percussion]

I should say, the most common time signature somehow, I should call it, in Persian classical music, is six. And we have this from the very slow tempo to a very fast one. Like this.

[Percussion]

We call this six-four, and the sixth pulse or beat is silent, right? See, one, two, three, four, five, six, one — [percussion]. In recent decades, musicians don't use this pattern more often. But I love it. As I said, we have lots of tasnif, tasnif the piece with poem, as I introduced before. And those are beautiful. Like this.

[Percussion and Singing]

And so on, right? But if you want to make it faster, that goes like this.

[Percussion and Singing]

Like this. So, six-four was.

[Percussion]

You can make it faster. [Percussion] Or go like this. [Percussion] Like this. Sorry. [Percussion] Faster. [Percussion] And when we play chahar mezrab, like this.

[Percussion]

Something like this. So, six is the most common time signature in Persian classical music. We have got two, four — and that's interesting. I would say, 90% of pishdaramads, the piece that was invented by Darvish Khan, are based on four. Like this.

[Percussion and Singing]

I have to use my voice as instrument, all right? Yeah. And we have seven. We have seven very often in radif and in our compositions. And by the way, I need to explain. I'm singing on these time signatures. But this doesn't have to be just for tasnif. You know, that could be different songs in different form with or without poem. I thought I needed to explain this. OK. But yeah, we have two, time signature of two, like —

[Percussion and Singing]

Or if I want to sing a tasnif.

[Percussion and Singing]

Something like this. Oh, I wanted to mention seven, right? We could have different time signature for seven. What we use and we have got it from radif, and of course we have it in our folklore music around the country in many places, but the seven is like two plus two plus three. Like this. One, two, one, two, one, two, three, right?

[Percussion]

Something like this. And in terms of tasnif.

[Percussion and Singing]

This is the atmosphere of chahargah, which is epic. Chahargah is epic.

[Percussion and Singing]

Something like this. And we have different seven, which is, let's say, four plus three, or — no, no, no, sorry, three plus four, or three plus two plus two. Like —

[Percussion]

I'm trying to remember a tasnif for this.

[Percussion and Singing]

Something like this. Yeah. And recently, the — I would say, the new generation are more interested in — I'm trying to remember the word in English. What is the word when your pattern is not even?

[Howard Spring:] Asymmetrical?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Asymmetrical, exactly yeah. That's not even, that's not — yeah, asymmetrical. So, the new generation are more interested in this, like eight. Eight like —

[Percussion]

You know, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. Two plus three plus three, or —

[Percussion]

Three, three, two.

[Percussion]

Something like this. Or other things, yeah. Yeah.

[Ryan Bruce:] Are there some patterns that are more common than others?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] In terms of time signature, if you mean that, I said that's six. But what do you mean?

[Ryan Bruce:] I was actually wondering about the actual patterns of the [inaudible].

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah, yeah. Now, I got you. You know, in performance, we don't have a specific name for pattern like Arabic music. I know what you mean. In Arabic music, they have, for some specific pattern, for example like this —

[Percussion]

I don't remember the name of this pattern right now. But I'm sure it has a name, it has a specific name. No, Persian music is not like that. In radif, yes. If we talk about the radif, yeah, we have kereshmeh, [inaudible] and those are specific patterns. For example, in radif, if we want to play [inaudible], that's like this.

[Percussion]

[Percussion and Singing]

You see? This is [inaudible] in mahur again. Today, we are doing everything in mahur, right?

[Howard Spring:] So, Reza, what's that instrument that you've got now?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] So, this is called daf. And basically, this instrument is a Kurdish instrument. And this

instrument used to be used in a spiritual occasion, you know, specific group of people in Kurdish area. They were using this and they mostly play in a group, you know, lots of daf players get together and play. And — But a family, a Kurdish family brought this instrument to Persian classical instrument. So — And if you want to learn — see the body of the instrument, the instrument has lots of rings, you know, around. Yeah. And the instrument sounds like this.

[Percussion]

Actually, this pattern that I'm playing is a Kurdish one, right?

[Percussion]

And what — So, in Persian classical music, musicians use this instrument and they play all patterns that they want. Like —

[Percussion]

Whatever you want to play, seven.

[Percussion]

Or six.

[Percussion]

Something like this.

[Howard Spring:] I was going to ask. So those are the same rhythms — those are the same rhythms that were on the tombak?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah, sure. Yeah, yeah. You know — And these days, people use patterns from the folk music in their performance and they combine it with the classical music, right? And they write tasnif based on this rhythm and put poems, for example, from rumi and this pattern, and play it. Yeah.

[Ryan Bruce:] I wonder if you could talk about the technique of how you play it.

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] So, daf, I suppose, has less techniques compared to tombak, right? [Percussion] This technique —

[Percussion]

Right? Techniques on daf are more like a slash, right? Is that a slash? Smash, right? [Howard Spring:] Smack. [Ryan Bruce:] Or slap. [Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah, a slap, slap. You know —

[Percussion]

But on tombak, tom, you know, the posture of hand is like —

[Percussion]

And that's more bass, boom, boom. It's like — It sounds like this. [Percussion] And the sound of rings are as part of the sound of the instrument, like —

[Percussion]

Yeah. But this technique that we use on the tombak [percussion] is called riz, yeah. Daf players use riz on daf as well. Yeah.

[Ryan Bruce:] So when you're lifting the instrument up, it's almost like you're throwing it a little bit above. Is that to get the sound from the bells inside? Or is that to free a hand for playing it?

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] I think I do it — I did it — Or I do it subconsciously. [Percussion] If you mean this motion, yeah, I use it because I want to have the sound of rings. I suppose. But I haven't paid attention to this. That's interesting.

[Ryan Bruce:] It's a unique technique to have the drum, you know, up by your face and to be lifting it.

[Reza Yazdanpaneh:] Yeah. And, you know, again, I'm not — I see myself as a beginner on daf. You know, I'm not a daf player. If you see a professional daf player, sometimes they just — you get worried, oh, this instrument is going to fell down — fall down, right? Yeah, and some of them, younger, but mostly younger daf players do a couple things. They, you know, they throw out — up the instrument and grab it. I mean, you are [inaudible]. You know. Yeah.

TRANSCRIPT: MUSIC OF NORTH INDIA

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: So my name is Neeraj Prem and I'm a sitar player, Indian classical musician from New Delhi, India. Now, I live in Canada. Sitar or music has been in my family for last four generations. My father, grandfather, great grandfather, all musicians. Now, my son is learning little by little. So, I started learning I don't even know when. But I gave my first public performance along with my brother when I was about seven or eight years old. And since then, I've been learning, playing, practising and performing, and also teaching. So I have taught in India, in high schools for about almost 20 years, and then I moved to Canada. And then I had my own school here in Kensington Market called Raga Middle School, which I ran for a few years. And now because I perform more than I teach, so I teach privately mostly. And my son has been learning tabla for a few years, but he is not a dedicated student, which I want him to be but he is not because he doesn't practice as much. So — But I hope he will pick it up and he will grow with it as time goes by and we will all have great fun with music and next generation as well. So this is about me, Neeraj Prem and Sajan Prem.

>> Ryan Bruce: OK. Thanks, Neeraj. Can you say something about the instrument that you're playing?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Well, this is called sitar. And this comes into different shapes and sizes. So this is [inaudible]. This is the sound box or we call it tabli. And then on top of it, here, I'll come closer to the camera. And on top of it is a bridge on which all the strings sit. So that is the bridge. That is a bridge. And there's — Another bridge under it, if you'll see, is a black one. And that is for the sympathetic strings. So as you see, the pegs here, so these small pegs and then the big pegs. So big pegs, the strings are sitting on the wide bridge and the smaller pegs, which are these ones, is the sympathetic strings at the bottom here. Now, this sound box is attached to a gourd. It is a function. It's called gourd. So if you — it's all hollow, if we hit it, it's all hollow. And then at the back, it is all red cedar that is being used in the front is red cedar and there's some decoration and stuff like that, and there's another bridge up here where the strings are sitting right on top here. So, now sitar — Now there's another kind of sitar, here's another one. This doesn't have a gourd, this is flat like a guitar. Now, this we call a studio sitar or a travelling sitar, see it has a guitar pegs for tuning instead of the big pegs. But this sympathetic strings, the pegs are still the same. And exactly the same, everything is good, it's just that it doesn't have a gourd but has a flat back. See how flat it is. And it has a pickup. So if I need to —

>> Ryan Bruce: And when do you use that one [inaudible]?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Usually when I'm travelling, then I just — this is easier to carry. It has the same sound, same —

[Music]

Exactly same sound, same everything. The frets are exactly the same. Fret from sitar are little curved as you can see, and that is because we pull the strings. So when we pull it, the curve helps us so we can pull few notes.

[Music]

So we can pull up to five notes.

>> Ryan Bruce: I wanted to ask, as we were on this, about the frets. Are those fixed on the instrument or can they move?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: They are movable frets. But there are three kinds of families or schools which play different — three kind of sitars. One is movable frets, which is the one I played. So, for instance, I want — if I did major scale right now [music]. If I want to make it minor, I'll have to move the fret. So I'll just move it and hold the sitar and move the fret. And I move this and I move this. And now, I've made my sitar a minor scale now.

[Music]

So these are movable. Then there's another style, which is not movable there. Yeah. So these are 19 frets, the non-movable, it has 21 frets. And then there's another school which uses only 17 frets. So they don't have this fret here and this fret here. So the three different kinds of sitars or schools of sitars that we can.

>> Ryan Bruce: I wanted to say that we — I think we'll revisit this idea of scales because the raga is much as a degree of difference and not just major minor. But the frets that are there, what's the range of — from the bottom to the top, is it about an octave for one string?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Yes, it's three octaves or so.

[Music]

So these are the main octaves. And then we can go higher octave from it. And then another octave. So three octave, but for the third, the lower octave, we have to go on to the second string. And for higher octave, we have to pull.

>> Ryan Bruce: You also mentioned that there's different kinds of strings and what — there's sympathetic strings. And then you said that there's these other strings. Could you tell us the difference between them?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Yeah. So in sitar, unlike guitar, in guitar, we use all four fingers, right? We make a chord with four fingers, three fingers. In sitar, we mostly use the two fingers only, the — these two fingers. First and the middle finger, index and the middle finger. So our index finger is the main worker here. And we work only on the very first string that is called barge. So this is our first string like they're from here, the main string. All these strings are steel from Germany, but the only second string is a copper, this one. And this is our main mother tuning string, the copper string. Rest of all the strings are steel strings. Now the strings, how we play it is we play only mostly on the very first string, so.

[Music]

Only when I have to really go into a lower octave that I want my second string. And then back on to the first string. So, basically, we play like 99% of our performance on the very first string. Now then there is — Now there are two kinds of sitar again, one that uses six strings. This is a six-string sitar. So, one, two, three, four, five and six. So six string. This string — This peg here doesn't have a string, it's empty in my style. And this style called — is called Ustad Vilayat Khan style because he is the person who created this style. This also called Etawah gharana or Imdadkhani Baaj. So that few different names of this school. So Etawah gharana is — meaning gharana means school. So gharana or Imdadkhani Baaj because Imdad Khan was a great grandfather of Ustad Vilayat Khan or grandfather of Ustad Vilayat Khan. And Ustad Vilayat Khan is one of the or was one of the leading or the pioneer of this style. He created this style. So he removed one string, usually sitars — normal sitars have seven strings on top. So, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. So seven pegs here, but Vilayat Khan took off this string, which was a brass string. And I'll tell you why later on. So this is — this sitar is 16 sitar, the other normal sitars like Ravi Shankar Ji sitar is seven-string sitar, which all these specs have this. Apart from that, then we have sympathetic strings right here. Now, sympathetic strings can also vary from 11 strings to 13 strings, depending on what school and what style you're playing. My sitar has 12 sympathetic strings but will Vilayat Khan style can have 12 or 11 sympathetic strings. Ravi Shankar Ji's family or Maihar gharana, a major school of sitar. They can have — They usually have 13 strings for sympathetic strings. So playing — Again, we are playing mainly on the very first string and then rest of the strings are the supportive strings. So we keep strumming them to fill up the sound. So, for instances.

[Music]

So I'm just strumming this thing, that's not the string, just to get that support.

[Music]

But all the work that I'm doing is on the very first string only.

[Music]

So I'm just strumming them every now and then just to keep that whole cycle [inaudible]. Sympathetic strings are used only based on the raag that we're playing so that they can resonate from behind. For instance.

[Music]

This note that went so long is because of sympathetic string.

[Music]

And we only use a seldom once in a while.

[Music]

Using the very beginning of the performance or at the end. In between, we only very rarely.

[Music]

Or maybe we use this from here.

[Music]

For instance, there's a composition here. I'll just play the first line of it, OK. This composition can be played like.

[Music]

Now, this I can also play like this soft.

[Music]

So instead of using the note right here, I'm using this here. So that's the very rarely use of sympathetic strings

in a performance. Usually, it is used in the very beginning when we start the raag, so we'd just go and then we start off.

>> Ryan Bruce: Great. So there — So a lot of times, they're — I think you were pointing to the resonate behind or they resonate with this — the notes that you play, right? So when you play a note on the playing string, the sympathetic strings that are in tune with that string or its overtones are starting to resonate with it, right?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: That is right.

>> Howard Spring: What about your right hand? Are you using a plectrum or just your nail or how's that?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Yeah, very good question. Thank you you asked me. So this is — I don't know how far can I go. Yeah. So Sajan will show you. [Inaudible] Yeah, you move it, move it. And then there's another one I have. So I have different — They're the same thing. So this is called mizrab. You will call it pick, just like guitars have pick. We have — But what we do is we don't hold it, we wear it. So it goes on top of my finger, so I just put it on my finger and now it becomes part of my finger. Can you see it? So I'm not holding it with two fingers, I'm wearing it and some sitars just with two of these in the middle finger and the index finger. But usually, 99% of sitars wear only one pick. And that is on the index finger. And that is how we strum it. See the difference in tone, I'm playing with the pick. Now, I play without the pick. I mean, I can play with my bare finger also but it'll be very hard and I'll get blisters and my nail will get ruined, and the tone will not be as good. And this is made, again, on steel or a metal. But steel mostly. Some people use copper also and brass strings as well. But steel is the most common.

>> Howard Spring: So when you perform, you always have that pick?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Always, we have to wear it. Otherwise, we can't play for an hour long, maybe five, 10 minutes, we can play without a pick. But anything longer than that have to have pick. But everyone wears a pick, not just because they get hurt but because of the tonal quality that you get.

[Music]

That robust sound is coming from the pick. If I play the same thing without the pick.

[Music]

And now, with the pick.

[Music]

So that's the difference. And for our left hand, we use only these two fingers.

>> Ryan Bruce: Thanks for answering our questions. Really does demonstrate the instrument well. You were talking about the history of the sitar. I was wondering if you could return to that and tell us more about it.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: OK. So, there are two thoughts or two ideas about the history of sitar, basically. And then I will include a little bit of North Indian classical and Carnatic classical as well but — and very brief. But, majorly for sitar. So, one group thinks or have this idea and it all recorded that sitar evolved over a period of time. It came from an instrument called veena. And from veena, it came to setar and from sitar, it became sitar. So, veena is a very old and ancient Indian instrument that is also, yeah, we get to see it in the Indian mythology or Indian religion where Goddess Saraswati is holding a veena and playing. So that is — Goddess Saraswati is God of knowledge. Like Goddess Lakshmi is God of wealth for Hindus, Saraswati is for knowledge, of education, of art and culture. Now, that is one thought that it came — evolved from veena to sitar and then sitar. So it took many centuries before it became sitar. The other school thinks that with the arrival of Moguls, there was a Sufi musician, his name was Amir Khusro, that he created this instrument and it is not that old. So these are two different angles that we can look at. What I have learnt is that sitar evolved over a period of time from veena and then other instruments and, of course, the influence of Moguls or the Islamic influence that we had on — and that country including the music that has a big role to play in the formation of the sitar. Because veena is totally different, the fret patterns are different, it's flat, and you have to fold it like this straight and then bring the whole hand forward and then you play it with not only one finger or two fingers but you use all of your fingers. And over here also, you wear the same pick in veena, you wear in all four fingers and then — or three fingers and then you play with all three fingers for different strings. So from that, veena came sitar. Now, sitar is an instrument which came from Iran or Persia, and that was — that could be three-string instrument or 100-string instrument, because there was another instrument called Shatha tantri veena. Shatha tantri veena is like 100-string veena. Now, from all those — when people, you know, they kept experimenting, just Vilayat Khan have experimented in recent in our times, for that he made sitar from seven string to six string. So that is the innovation during our times that happened to sitar. Before that, what has happened, we don't know in details, but the idea that we get from different books and, like, Visi Viwa [assumed spelling] is one of the authors of — one of the most renowned books, vision on Indian instruments, and he talks about the evolution which came into the instruments, including the tabla. The tabla has the same theory. Tabla, some people say that it evolved from a period of time and other people say Amir Khusro, again, the Sufi saint, he brought the Pakala into two and made tabla. So, it has also two different ideas of how tabla came into being and also sitar. So, sitar has an old ancient history, but when we — we say OK, we know when sitar was,

I think it would be in the 18th century that we know that sitar was there. Before that, it would be called other — like because the ancestor of sitar, immediate ancestral of sitar is surbahar, which is a bass sitar, which has all the seven strings. And it is mostly — what is done on surbahar is the alap on the slower, which we'll come to later on, as Ryan will ask me those questions later, I know. So, surbahar is a recent, very recent ancestor of sitar, which is still being played. But very, very rarely, we get to see concerts of surbahar. So this is a brief history of sitar. So what we'll do here is we will do a little interactive session and I'm going to put Sajan on the spot here, because he accompanies, the tabla companies today. So Sajan, I'm going to ask you the very first thing is how many schools of tabla are there?

>> Sajan: There's six.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: OK. Can you name me six?

>> Sajan: There's the Delhi.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: OK.

>> Sajan: Punjab.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: OK.

>> Sajan: Hapnao.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: OK. Hazara.

>> Sajan: Banadis and —

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Hazara.

>> Sajan: Yeah.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Hazara and [inaudible].

>> Sajan: That's — OK.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: OK. So there's six schools of tabla. And although the rhythm, cycles, patterns, everything is same, but still they all have their own peculiar and different style. So, for instance, I'll give you one

— 16 beats rhythm cycle, [inaudible] commonly know it. Now, 16 beats rhythm cycle goes like da, din, din, da, da, din, din, da, da, tin, tin, ta, ta, din, din, da, da. So now the words here are with ta, din, din, da, da, din, din, da, da, tin, tin, ta, ta, din, din, da. Sixteen. But some school will recite it like da, din, din, da, da, din, din, da, na, tin, tin, na, na, tin, tin, na, da. So there's just little bit — little differences here and they're of the notes. For instance, plate. So first, we'll play the basic style, the [inaudible], and then na, tin, tin, da, na. OK. OK, so very slow. So, now I'll count it here and Sajan will pay the tabla here. Da, din, din, da, da, din, din, da, da, tin, tin, ta, ta, din, din, da, da. Now the same tile will — I'll recite differently and he'll also play the wells now, OK. Go. Da, din, din, da, da, din, din, da, na, tin, tin, na, ta, din, din, da, da. So this is a very minute difference, but these are the minute differences that distinguish each gharana from each other. And as I said, we just said that the six different styles of tabla. Six different gharanas or tabla, and they all play differently, but they all play the same music. Rhythm cycles are the same, but their own improvisations will be different. Now, the history of tabla is also same as we were discussing. This one school things, Amir Khusro, the Sufi saint, he created tabla by breaking pakali into two and other things that evolved just like other instruments evolved. Now, I'll just show you what tabla is. I'll just come closer. So, this is called CI and this is altogether called puri, the whole head is called puri. Now, this puri has four different parts to it, this the outer part here. Here, this outer part here is called gajra. Then this is called chati. And then this part is the main playing part and this is called CI. It is tied up with these strings, which we call badhti, and do the tuning pegs. And at the bottom of the tabla, again, here, here, this is another gajra. The badhti or the strings are tied to this badhti here or this one has a steel one. Sajan, show me the other one, that one. So, this is the latest thing that people are doing, makers are doing, they're putting up steel rims here. Otherwise, traditionally, it used to be also of leather straps. So, [inaudible] part away. So now, for tuning, we can tune from the gajra from here by hitting a hammer, show me the hammer. So this is the hammer and we tune it by hitting it here or the specs down or up depending on what key we are tuning it to. Now, similarly, for baya, exactly the same thing, the head is the same. It's just bigger, it's a bass drum. So gajra, chati, main playing area, and then the syahi. Same thing here, same badhti, the strings and another gajra here, which is holding the strings together. And by pulling these pegs down or up, this pegs down or up, we create the sound how we want it. But this is baya, the bass drum. And this is called daya or chekto. Just like this is also called dugi, daga, dugi, baya, these are all different names for this bass drum. For this one, it is also called chekto, it is also called tabla by itself and it is also called dai. And together, they make tabla. So, now, that is one rhythm cycle, 16 beats we just did.

>> Ryan Bruce: How do you decide which pitches to tune the drums to?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: OK, good question. Whichever key I'm tuned to, tabla has to tune to that key. That is why there are different tabla or different scale, different keys. So this is a D tabla, I'm tuned to D. So, OK. Again. So these two have to match, they have to be together. If I'm playing an E sitar, then the tabla has to be E. Now, baya is just going to be the lower octave of this tabla or my key. Or it has to be somewhere around, maybe the third note or the fifth note depending on what kind of baya it is. But this tabla has to be same tuning as the

main instrument or the vocalist or whatever the other instrument is. So — And as I said, tuning is all from the gajra or the pegs. And for us, tuning is from here and we all have to be on the same page. That's why we have to — And hammer is a tool to tune it with. We can't tune it with hands because it is very hard. This is very hard leather. It's all good skin. These are all good skin. These are all good skin. And it's very hard leather. So, now, we did one rhythm cycle. I just do another one and that is six beats rhythm cycle. And that is — Like in Indian or North Indian classical music, South Indian is very strong with rhythm. They're rhythm-based music form of India. And in North India, we have many rhythm cycles, but the most prominent ones are tintal, which is 16 beats rhythm cycle, jhaptal which is 10 beats rhythm cycle, rupatal that is seven beats rhythm cycle, edtal which is 12 beats rhythm cycle, dada of just six beats rhythm cycle. So these are the basic rhythm cycles that we work with. And today, when we will go forward with raga and stuff, we will — I will give you an example of all these different ones. Now, raga or raag, we call it raag but raga is just an English way of saying it. In English language, this is something very funny that English language has done to Hindi or Indian language is that they have added a to every word at the end, like it is ram, but they call it rama. It's Krishn, they call it Krishna. Similarly with esraag, but everyone calls it raga. But there are two forms of raags. One is raag and one is ragini. Now raag is a major big thing, which unfolds in a — takes a long time to unfold. Ragini is a smaller piece or a shorter piece or much more sweeter piece. So ragini is basically the feminine version of raags. So if raag is male, ragini is female. So that is how we will distinguish the two. And then there's — So in — not in the classical music, there is raag and then there's tumili. There's dadra, this top bar, this Kajri. Now, raag is the main meal in a course of food. And then there are few little things as snacks is tombri, which is a lighter part of the same music. Kajri, it's lighter part, chati, lighter part, tappa, dadra, all these are lighter. So these are called semi classical, semi North Indian classical music, but raag is the main course and raag is main course because it has three different parts to it. The first — very first part is called alap jor jhala or alap. Now, alap is the free flow. There's no rhythm, it is not rhythm guided. But we still have to keep a rhythm behind and — in our head. So rhythm is there, but it's hidden, it's invisible rhythm, but it is still called rhythm free because we are not — restricted ourselves to any time cycle. But we are still restricting ourselves or following a beat. So we're still going on a beat, but we're not following any rhythm, pattern, rhythm cycle as such. Now, jor, so this is alap. Jor is when — We are still playing alap but now we have introduced rhythm to it. Now, there is a physical rhythm which is you can see that, OK, there's a rhythm added to it. And jhala is a last part that concludes the whole alap jor jhala or the alap section of instrumental music of North India. So I'll give you a very brief example of what alap, is then what jor is, and then jhala and how it is all connected. So I'll start with alap.

[Music]

Now, this is alap, which is free flow. And how am I controlling it? How am I making free flow is with the support of strings, when I strum those strings and when I play an actual note. So what's the gap here?

[Music]

Now, after alap is jor. As I said, the whole thing is alap jor jhala, the second part is jor. Now in jor is where we — we are still playing alap but we now introduce a proper rhythm, meaning the beat. Watch.

[Music]

So how is this different because I'm giving an actual rhythm with my support string? So I'm keeping my little [inaudible] here.

[Music]

And then the jor here is becoming faster and faster so that I can get onto jhala, which is the last part.

[Music]

And then I'm just cutting it short but then we get to the jhala part.

[Music]

So this is the very first part of raag. For instrumental music, we will play the full alap jor jhala. This can — Alap jor jhala itself can be 30-minute long. And then comes the slow composition or the medium tempo, and then comes the drut or the faster composition. So slow is called vilambit. Slow tempo is called vilambit. Fast tempo is called drut and the medium tempo is called madti. So vilambitle, meaning the rhythm. And the madtile, medium rhythm and drutle, faster. So, these — So alap jor jhala, which starts very slow and it builds up and builds up and builds up, and then it comes to a jor and then jhala, and then it ends with a crescendo. And then we start with vilambit or madtile. And that is — These compositions all preset. The composition itself will be preset in any round. All we do, the new things is improvisation when we have already established a composition. For example, I'll play a composition. Let's play [inaudible]. Let's play. I'll play a drut, fast composition for you.

[Music]

So now this is a fixed part. This is a composition, which has been composed by Ustad and Datkasa [assumed spelling], Ustad and Datkasa. Very famous composition in our style of music. Now in this composition, when I established it, then I will start doing all kind of improvisations. Whatever mindset I'm in right now, whatever mood I'm in right now, all those thoughts will keep coming to me and I will keep portraying it through my instrument, through my music right now. Again.

[Music]

All [inaudible] that I'm doing, it is not fixed. I'm just coming it up right now. It's all coming to me and I'm just saying my mind is guiding my hands to do this and this and then they'll come. So — And I'll come on [inaudible].

[Music]
And then so it was — progresses. So — And [inaudible] vilambit.

[Music]

So now, this is also a phrases composition, it's a composition. And then when I start — when I establish this composition, then I get into the improvising. Now, how do we improvise? These are structure for improvisation, we start with short alaps. We short — We start with few — the most powerful notes of that raag. And then we elaborate on those — only those notes and then we start involving the other notes, which are in the raag. Now, what is raag? OK. Raag is a scale, but it is scale which is a pattern, which has a set. It has a — Hard to explain it. It has a set movement and that movement creates that raag. For instance, a raag can have — two raag can have the same notes. [Inaudible] this.

[Music]

Now, this is a Lydian scale. And this scale, if I include both the G's in it, so.

[Music]

So this becomes raag yaman kalyan, so.

[Music]

So this, I'm using [inaudible]. It's a Lydian scale but I'm using [inaudible]. Now, same scale will have totally different raag.

[Music]

So that was yaman kalyan, this is bihag. The only difference is how we are treating these notes. Which note am I playing more in one raag and which note I'm playing more in the other raag? How I'm — How am I

treating both the G's in one raag and how am I treating the — both the G's and on the raag? So, for instance, in raag yaman kalyan, I'm using the G note very less minimum but G sharp, the maximum. So here's the example.

[Music]

So I just — That's G. OK.

[Music]

But I'm using G sharp with prominently.

[Music]

So this is same notes, same everything but I'm using G very slightly, just a touch of it and using G sharp very majorly. In the other raag bihag, here's the example. I'm actually just hitting on G here.

[Music]

Now I introduced my G sharp but very quickly. I get away from G sharp [music]. Although I can use G sharp and G equally, but to create the right effect of raag bihag, I have to be very careful how I use G sharp in this one.

[Music]

Here's the composition in raag yaman kalyan and then I'll play a composition in raag bihag, so you'll see the difference what we've done.

[Music]

This is raag yaman. Now, bihag.

[Music]

So, this is just a basic difference between this case and how a raag is played and how raag is treated.

>> Howard Spring: Are there any other ways that you can tell the difference between two different raags? Is it just a matter of what notes are — get emphasis? Are there other things that define a raag?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Yeah, basically, if there are — there are a few raags which have same notes, like — but the only way to distinguish them is how we treat those notes, that is the only way. So there's no other way to find out. So suppose, for instance, I'm playing — someone who's playing this raag, right? Another raag, which has both the G's in it and the same scale, major scale and so that is [inaudible], so.

[Music]

So now — And this one again. So — And sending, I'm skipping away the second note.

[Music]

So this is the main phrase. Every raag has their main phrase, a catchphrase. So this raag has [music]. The — For this raag nand. This is called raag nand. As soon as someone who's performing does this much, I will know this is raag nand. All of the notes are same. As soon as someone will do this, I will know this is raag bihag. As soon as someone will do this, I will know this is raag yaman. Same notes. It's all major scale. And they're using G in different forms, different way. But they're using it differently and that — those catchphrases is telling me what raag is this [music]. So there's one catchphrase for raag nand, and then.

[Music]

So two catchphrases here. One, and then.

[Music]

So this is raag nand. Bihag, just as much. Anyone done and I know it's raag bihag.

[Music]

And established even more, that is raag bihag now. Because I'm skipping re again here. And I'm skipping the ha, this second note, and the fifth note, I'm skipping it. Not that I need to delete it from my performance. No, the notes are there, but you have to use a minimum, so.

[Music]

So just a patch.

[Music]

And then I jumped this note [music]. And that came back with a pattern.

[Music]

So it's all about the catchphrases and how we treat the notes that will establish what raag it is.

>> Howard Spring: I see. OK. That's great. What about ornaments? I mean, I think it's in Carnatic music, they're called gamaka, not sure what they call it in [inaudible]. But are there specific kinds of ornaments that you use?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Yes, now ornaments and gamaks are two different things. Gamak is a prominent part of North Indian classical music and they're used in alap jor jhala and also in the gadkari or the compositions. [Inaudible] when I'm doing alap jor jhala. So I'm at the jor now, right? We just discussed alap jor jhala, so I'm at jor, the second, where the alap is with the rhythm, so.

[Music]

So this is gamak, which I can include in my alap jor jhala or in the composition, for instance.

[Music]

Then composition, now I'll play some gamak in it.

[Music]

So, this is the role of gamak. Now, ornamentation is khan morke kadka. These are the words for it. And these are the things that we include in our recital to ornament the whole recital. For instance, in alap, for example. Simple alap is just.

[Music]

So this is simple alap, I'm pulling notes and I'm just creating the raag. I'm just following the raag in the way it is supposed to.

[Music]

Now, again, over here, I like to tell you something. There are two different styles of music in North India itself. One is Khayal laiki, which is playing — which I'm doing right now. And there's another one which is called Dhrupad. Now Dhrupad is the older form of India — North Indian classical music. And Khayal laiki came with the portions and they brought it in. Now, Khayal Laiki has most of the ornamentation done. Dhrupad has very minimum. Dhrupad's goal is very simple, straightforward like this.

[Music]

And it — The pulls will be very slow and long.

[Music]

Now, let's get to the ornamentation of this. Now, same thing, when you put ornamentation on Dhrupad, it becomes Khayal basically. And, for instance, in Khayal itself, when we put these things, then it becomes ornamentation. See this one I just did.

[Music]

So that [inaudible]. That is ornamentation. I can do it simple. There's a simple way of doing it. Now, if I want to ornament it.

[Music]

So this is ornamentation. And this is [inaudible].

[Music]

I can do it simple. Or I can put some ornaments on it, decorate it.

[Music]

Simple.

[Music]

So khan morke kadka, the three elements, the main elements, then also jamjama and gamak as we mentioned. Gamak is but — Gamak is more prominent. Gamak [inaudible].

[Music]

This is gamak [inaudible]. And we can create phrases and some sentences out of gamak. But gamak is used as a permanent part of the recital. When we play tans, this is tan [music]. So there are four different kinds of main tans. One is sapart, one is chut kitan. One is jamjama kitan. And then there's one, gamak kitan, gamak. So, gamak is a very prominent part of vocal and instrumental, both resettles. But ornamentation is kind of morke kadka jamjama. These are few things which majorly on the — we use these elements, these tunes to ornament any piece or any phrase that we want to.

[Music]

>> Ryan Bruce: I'm finding that a lot of the ornaments that you're playing involve pulling the strings. I'm wondering, are all of the ornaments based on pulling the strings? Or are there any ornaments that you play that don't involve pulling the strings?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Excellent. Actually, I was missing something and your question brought me to that. Thank you for that. So now, there's — another one which is called klinton. Now klinton, you can do on the frets. It is mostly done only on the frets. So for instance, we're doing this [music]. When I cut the note like this, that is klinton.

[Music]

So this is what revisions that you use to use mostly in the cycle of klinton.

[Music]

>> Ryan Bruce: Thank you. I have another follow-up question. There was something that you mentioned before, you use the word re and you were pointing to the scale degrees. I wonder if you could tell us about the words or the syllables that you use for defining the notes of the raga or the raag.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Right. Right. So re is like investing, we have do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do, right? In Indian, we have, sa, re, ga, ma, pa, da, ni, sa, sa, ni, ma, ga, ma, ga, re, sa. Or, sa, re, ga, ma, pa, ra, mi, sa, fa, mi, na, [inaudible] sa. Same thing, So ray was just another note. So, do, re, again, sa, re. So re is the same, I think. So, do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do. So the same thing. So it's just name of every note. So, first note is sa, second is re,

third, ga, fourth, ma, fifth, pa, sixth, da, and then seventh is ni. So, sa, re, ga, ma, pa, da, ni. And then, sa, sa, sa, same. So you start [inaudible].

>> Ryan Bruce: I think that you're — before you mentioned that you're in the key of D. And so sa would be the note D. So if you were going to play something similar to a major scale, but start on the note E, or if your sitar was an E sitar, you would use the same syllables, correct? Just starting on a different note. Yeah.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Yeah, it's sort of the same.

>> Ryan Bruce: And the other thing I wanted to ask, because you were — at one point, you're talking about using the note G sharp and you're emphasizing G sharp a lot. That G sharp is related to the key of D, is that correct?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Right. So my key is D and in relation to D are all my other notes. So D is like my mother note.

>> Ryan Bruce: Right. And that emphasis that you were putting on that G sharp [inaudible]. Yeah. Your drone note.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Yes, my drone note is D.

>> Howard Spring: I just wanted — Neeraj, I just want to talk a little bit about, what happens when you do a concert? What kind of pieces do you do? What order do you do them in?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: OK. So — And you know what, we were talking about how musical instruments evolved over a period of time, so did the music. In the ancient days in India, they used to be, obviously, no sound system, no equipment. And music concerts were — used to have to take place in a very small intimate setting. That's why it is also called chamber music. Because the audience is all sitting together with the musician very close, just like me and him sitting very close, this close, so that they can hear the musicians, and there was no amplification. So at that time, the music was performed in smaller pieces, like 20, 30 minutes long each piece. And then the concert would go on for about three to four hours. And, over the period of time, the music has changed a lot because now people don't have that long attention span. And also, people don't have that much time. And also, people don't need to, in many cases, listen to long pieces. So, musicians like Ravi Shankar Ji, Anoushka Shankar, who have lived in West for too long, they have created or altered Indian classical music in a very western fashion, where you can play 10-minute piece or 20-minute piece max or five-minute piece in most cases. But originally, Indian classical music was played. Each raag has — supposedly played for — at least for an hour. So when I go perform for a classical concert, for instance, in Toronto, we have the biggest Indian

classical music group, it's called Raag-Mala Music Society of Toronto. When I play for Raag-Mala, they expect me to play a full rock for one hour. So then I go with my mindset that, OK, I have to play one raag and I have to play it at full length, at least for an hour. So that is one way of preparing myself, OK, I have to play for an hour, one concert for one hour that is one raag, not 10 different pieces in there. And then there are other concerts where they wanted to play smaller pieces, five-minute,10-minute pieces. Recently, we recorded for — Who did we record? Oh, yeah, for Hamilton City, for Hamilton Arts Council. Now, they wanted me to play no longer than 10 minutes each piece. And it was just released recently. I think I sent you a link to that, too, raag. So in that, I had to go with the mindset that, OK, I cannot go over the 10-minute thing. So I have to keep my — I tell myself always, OK, if it is 10-minute limit, then I'll play only for eight minutes. Because if I am in a different mood and I'm in a zone, then it's only two minutes and then still I'll be within the timeframe. Same thing with one raag, one-hour long concerts, I tell myself I'm going to play only for 15 minutes. And then if I'm in a mood to play longer, then I have 10 more minutes to play around with. And that is one full raag. So one full raag as a tool, we were talking about it and it is alap jor jhala. That's the first, so that is almost 25, 20 minutes, 30 minutes depending on how I feel that day. And then we — I get into my slow composition or medium tempo composition. There'll be another 15 minutes and then 15 minutes for my drut or fast composition that ends with jhala. So that — the breakup is alap jor jhala, medium tempo composition, fast tempo composition and with jhala, and then it's done. Now this, I can fabricate this for one hour, for 45 minutes, for half hour, 20 minutes, 15 minutes, minimum, 15 minutes for a raag to be completed. In — You know, a proper picture of the raag, if I want to paint, it has to be at least 15 minutes. But then the compositions that I can play for invest when they ask me like for arts council now or these other organizations when they wanted to play 10 minutes or less, then I alter my — and I choose my composition very wisely then, that I should not choose anything very intricate or very complicated. You should be very simple straightforward to the point so that, you know, a common listener can relate to it and enjoy it. Because all the intricacies and the delicate moods, like you were talking about ornamentation, all that stuff, Howard, that comes in a longer rendition of raag or performance. Shorter ones, I keep it way to the point, just make it as soon as possible and then, you know, move on to the next one. So that is the mindset I go with, that whatever time duration I've been given, I have prepared according to it. Listen that a little bit, so that if I'm — if I get carried away, I still have that two-minute grace that I have saved for myself. But full raag will be at least 45 minutes to an hour. And smaller compositions can be as small as five minutes.

>> Howard Spring: Now, when you do a concert, do you choose — and you're going to do more than one piece, do you do — do you start off with a short piece and then eventually go to longer pieces or — and then do maybe some shorter at the end or is that the way you think about it?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Traditionally, longer piece first and then shortly. So, for instance, I play one for raag bihag yaman or this or whatever, right? I played that one full raag for 45 minutes or 30 minutes or whatever. And then I get into a shorter piece, which could be a don, meaning a tune or a folk tune, or tumili or, you know,

something like that, or another piece. So that will be the last piece, a shorter piece traditionally. But in today's day and age, we are also mixed up and messed up in so many different ways that some people want or just, you know, play some fast stuff for us. And, you know, make it short and also [inaudible]. So, it all depends who I'm playing for, where I'm playing. So, like universities, where I did a lot of shows for Vancouver universities, and they wanted a full raag. And at the end, they would want a lighter piece for 15, 20 minutes. And that is a right way of doing it. I mean, right way in the sense because it — traditionally, we have been doing it so I find it right way. But, I don't think there's any right or wrong, where some people just enjoy short pieces first and then, OK, now we'll sit and listen to a raag. That's totally fine, too. But it's all — it all depends on who is my audience. It all depends on the audience.

>> Howard Spring: The other thing I wanted to ask you about is how you learn all of this.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: How I learnt all this? OK. This is — Well, my first teacher — I'll just take a few minutes here to explain this. My first teacher was my father, whom I learnt from. And then I went — My father passed away very young. So I — there was a big gap in my musical education. Because during the school days, I was in grade four when my father passed away, or five, something like that. And then by grade 11, I had no particular or a specific teacher. I was just playing, because whatever I had learnt from my father previously, I was just repeating that and playing that. So by the time I was in grade 11, I had made up my mind to be a musician. So at that time, I joined a university which is called Gandama New Delhi in New Delhi. And I started learning there. At this time, I was already teaching in other high schools, music. Because of my standard, which was already there, because of what I learnt from my father and how I've been performing, how I was performing all those years. And then my teacher at Gandama New Delhi, he taught me all the delicate and intricate things on — in Indian classical music. And after that, I went to Delhi University for a bit, and then I became a student or disciple of Husar Shujaat Khan, who is one of the prominent musicians of this day and age. So, in the whole process, the whole — What is it? The whole — This process of learning and teaching was all oral. I hardly wrote down any notations ever. Very seldom did I wrote down any notations. I would listen to my teacher, he would tell me and I will sit in front of him with my instrument. And I will just repeat it and repeat it until I get it. He will keep correcting me until I get it. He'll keep correcting me. And once I get it, then he'll make me sit in one corner. OK, go and I'll just keep repeating it and practice it before you go home. This has to be in your mind and in — on — in your hands so that when you go home, you don't make a mistake. So then I would go home and I would practice hours and hours of those things. So that gets drilled in my mind and my hands are used to it now. Doesn't matter. So for instance, I'll give you one example. Just a very simple stroke pattern, here. So this right hand, very simple properties one, two, three, one, two, three, one, two. Now that is eight beats, one, two, three, one, two, three, one, two, eight beats. So, it is divided into three, three, and then two. Now, this pattern, my teacher will teach me. OK. One, two, three, one, two, three, one, two. And now you just keep repeating it from every [inaudible].

[Music]

Now, when I practice it enough, I can create phrases just by just one stroke of all kinds of phrases. And I can play for 10 minutes just using this phrase — this stroke pattern, creating all kinds of different things. So, for instance.

[Music]

As he was saying, talking about gamak, so I can use the same pattern and create another gamak with this pattern. So my teacher will make me practice this so much in front of him. And then he will let me go. And same thing with my present teacher or Ustash Jatt Kasab [assumed spelling], he will teach me something. See, I went — I — whatever, technically, I perfected it. It was from my father and from my teacher, Jagdeep Singh Beti [assumed spelling] at Gandama New Delhi. And I was already at a good standard so that I can go to a renowned musician, like Ustash Jatt Kasab, where I can go and learn from him. Now, there's a very interesting thing here. Learning from renowned musicians, or a performer, or a great performer who's always busy, always on the road and touring, it is very difficult for them to sit and teach you for hours, they will never do that. So as a student, it is your responsibility that you should have all the chops in your hands. And all the idea is already here that you can copy and follow that teacher so that you don't waste his time and you don't waste your own time. So I was already at a good standard when I went to my teacher, Ustash Jatt Kasab. So he would just play one fret for me, for instance.

[Music]

And I just have to follow it, and then remember it, and when I go home and I have to practice it, and make my own phrases out of it, because my teacher says, OK, you can copy me, but then copy me only to practice and learn. And then you create your own phrases, you create your own music based on what you've learnt from me. So there's different angles here now. My father taught me simple compositions that, just don't think about it. Don't do anything else. Just repeat this, practice it just the way it is. And then at Gandama New Delhi, my other teacher, Jagdeep Singh Beti, he also taught me, OK, these are the phases I'm teaching you, these are the things and this is the technique, just follow the technique, and don't do anything else. Don't think too much. This [inaudible] for the basic and the initial stage. My teachers always told me, don't think too much. Don't think for yourself. We are thinking for you, you just follow what we're telling you and just keep doing what we're telling. And when you get to a stage where you are good enough to do things on your instrument or musically, then you get to a teacher who is a performer, who's a great musician. And then he doesn't have that long — that much of a time for you that he will sit for four hours with you. I mean, they do but they expect you to be off a standard where they teach you something in five minutes, and then you get it in five minutes, and then you're out of there. And then you just practice that and then you make your own phrases, your own

music out of it. Right now, my teacher is in India. So if I have any confusions or any doubts, if I want to learn something new, I just call him. So we don't even sit with the instruments. I just call him and ask him, OK, how can I do this? How am I supposed to do this? And he just teaches me on the phone like he'll just tell me, we just talk about music, we don't do music. And in that talking of music, I understand and learn what I need to from him now. So these are different stages of learning music and how we grow as musicians from student at different levels and different stages in our life. Hope that answers your question.

>> Howard Spring: Yes, very, very interesting. But in all through this is always one to one, right?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Always one to one, always one to one. In some cases, like when I went to the university, it was group over there. There are other 10, 15 students with me, just like in any university, right? So it's all group. And so you have to stay with the group. But these are two different things, I always tell my students also, that it is always better to practice in groups because then you're competing with each other. And that is a very important thing as a student, then you compete with each other so that you try to be better than the other and then the others too and tries to better than you. And that is both your standards. So, in university, it was a group setting. But with my father, it was just my brother and me learning, and then with my present teacher, Ustash Jatt Kasab, it's just me and him. It's always very personal. It's very one to one. We call it sina ba sina, meaning chest to chest, we are sitting right in front of each other and, you know, learning.

>> Howard Spring: Yeah. Yeah. Sure. That's very interesting.

>> Ryan Bruce: At one point, you talked about some lighter classical music or some folk music. So what's the difference in the lighter music from the classical music you've been showing us so far?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Yes, there is other kind of lighter music. So lighter music is — Now for lighter music, there's also lighter tals on tabla, on rhythm. So for classical, it'll be tals like thin tal, ektal, rupak, jhaptal, these are classical taals. Now for lighter music, they will be like dadra, keherwa, adta. This kind of taal, pajini, these are the taals which are used for lighter music.

>> Ryan Bruce: What characterizes those taals as something different? How are they different from the other ones, from the classical tals?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Those taals are peppy tals. Very peppy. Those are very peppy tals. For instance, [inaudible].

[Music]

So this is keherwa. So the tal itself is so peppy that whatever I play on it will become very lighter and very mischievous kind of. Another one, dadra.

[Music]

So, now, lighter music, basically music, even classical music, it all originated from our folk music, then the folk music came into the temples and from temples, it came to the courts and from courts, it came into public. Before classical music was not in India, at least, was not meant for common people. Common people didn't have that privilege or pleasure of listening to or being involved with classical music. It was only for very top-notch royal people that could afford royal musicians and music. And then it — when it came to the temples, and from temples, it came to the people, but it all originated from the folk, for all our raags are based on some or the folk tunes or folk scales. And from that, some became very prominent, and those became raags or aginis, and then rest which are still very popular in nature and very shortly in nature became the semi classical music or the lighter music or the folk music. That's just like these two pieces that I just played. One is a Sufi, the first one was a Sufi folk tune, very old Sufi folk tune, the mana masculine. And then the other one I played is from Bengal, West Bengal, it's called patiali, it's a boatman Song. So — And these people, even common people, know these tunes, they can hum, they can, you know, sing along these tunes. Classical music, you have to sit and listen, and — especially if you know what classical music, then you can enjoy it or enjoy it more. But for folk tunes, [inaudible] or semi-classical music, you don't need to know it, you don't need to know the intricacies of that. You will — It is so peppy that you will just enjoy it automatically. So when I play these tunes, people are just, oh, yeah, yeah, play more of this, play more of this, in settings where people don't know about classical music. So, for instance, another one [inaudible].

[Music]

Now, this is, as I said that taals also makes a difference, but this one is on tintal, it's still a folk tune. But this tune is also used as a raag. I can also use this composition as a raag in tilak kamod or raag bihag, depending on who you ask, because this composition falls in two different categories of raag, raag tilak kamod and raag bihag. But this is also a folk tune. So I can use it as a folk tune and make it lighter version or I can make it deep, bring the depth in it and play the raag. So, raag is more prominent, structured and more deep in nature. And semi-classical or folk tunes or lighter tunes are more light, almost similar to pop, popular music. Very, very close to that nature. So I can include and I can take a lot of liberty in lighter classical pieces, the semi-classical pieces, I can take a lot of liberty. In classical, I cannot take those liberties. In classical, I have to stick to that scale, that movement, those catchphrases and that nature and that mood. I cannot disturb that nature, I cannot go out of that mood. If — As soon as I do that, they will point a finger at me that, oh, he messed up the raag. But, I can do whatever I want as long as it's tuneful in semi-classical music. In folk tunes, in [inaudible]. So, that is a

major difference between the two music or forms of music. So lighter music is very liberal. And classical music is very conservative.

>> Ryan Bruce: Thank you. I'm wondering if you could explain how you're thinking rhythmically on your instrument, and how that either fits with the taal or the accompaniment, because you were talking to me at one point that that was an important part of how you think when you're performing.

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Yes. So, when I am playing, I have to — it is actually similar in both Carnatic, that is South Indian, and also North Indian or Hindu Sunni. It is very similar, but Carnatic music is more talid porset, like krithis and all those things that are very set pieces. In ours, we have to keep that cycle in mind. And that you only keep it in mind, you can only keep it in mind by practising a lot. There's no other way. There's no technique to it as such. So you have to listen to the tabla and practice with tabla a lot. You have to know the tabla or the rhythm cycle what this taal is, where is the sam, where is the kali, where is — how is this taal divided, in how many different parts it is divided. So, for instance, tintal is divided into four equal parts of four beats in each part. So this, I need to know as a musician. If I want to be accompanied by a tabla, I need to know what tintal consists of. And then where is the kali, OK, nine beat as kali, and then some is number one. So I have — Once I know this, then I have to listen to the tabla a lot over a period of time, and listen to different taals a lot. And then once I do that, then I start playing it with the tabla. And then I — when I make a mistake, then I'm, OK, I made mistakes, so I keep repeating. So it's all a very repetitive process, very repetitive process until you get it right. And once you get it right, then it kind of sets in here, then I don't even have to listen to tabla, I don't even look at tabla and I know where I am in relation to tabla. And I just keep improvising and I come where I want to come when I want to come. So for — Maybe I'll give you one example of that.

[Music]

So this is composition going on. Now I'm —

[Music]

And with only thinking about it, I pick up my composition when I'm done improvising. So I don't have to look at tabla, I don't have to think about it. So it is all about how many hours of [inaudible] practice I've put in with tabla. And now I know tabla has — back of my hand, I can just pick it up, pick him up on the shins, wherever. I can improvise wherever I can come back whenever and wherever I want.

>> Ryan Bruce: It seems the way you're describing it is how you're improvising around the cycles. But you also mentioned a couple of other terms there, some being the beat one of the taal. And tali being the weak beat

or the wave of the taal. How are those important for your playing, how you're constructing your phrases or melodies?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Well, that is very important, because, see sam, that is beat number one I just said, and mukurna. Mukurna is the starting of my composition, not the tabla. Sam is the starting of the tabla, where it starts from that, just sam. Wherever I start from, that is mukurna. Now that mukurna can be beat number seven, beat number 12, beat number nine or beat number one. It can be anywhere. So, I have to know tabla and need to know the sam and kali and my mukurna, where we're starting. For instance, this composition starts from beat number seven. And also, tabla player needs to know this very well, where my composition, what my mukurna is and what beat number it's starting from. So, I will not let him start first. I will start and then he will pick it up. So that will demonstrate that he knows where my mukurna or what beat number and then he'll come on to sam.

[Music]

So he already established, OK, from the very first line, you know that, OK, he says that and this is sam. So from the next cycle, just know with the mukurna is, and where he has to come in from. So this is coming from beat number seven, da da da da da da da da da da da da da da da da, one, two. So, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, one, two, three. So — And that is [inaudible]. And now you start and I will play.

[Music]

So we both have to be on the same page in relation to the rhythm. And he should know my mukurna. I should know his sam, and I should know some kali and the division of the taal. That just helps me to create my phrases and my improvisation. And when I'm done with it, that helps me to come back to my composition. It just makes it easier. Does that make sense?

>> Ryan Bruce: Great. Yeah. How does a tihai fit in with this?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Now, tihai is a very rhythmic thing. In our style, we don't play too many tihais, but we do play tihais. But tihai is, basically, for rhythm and anything related to rhythm. For an instrumentalist, we keep rhythm as an accompaniment, not as one highlighted thing. So it is just accompanying us. But tabla or rhythm is very much prominent in dance whether it is kathak or Bharatnatyam or whichever from Odyssey Kuchipudi. So, that is where all the fun of tihai is or in the solar recital of tabla, pakhawaj and mrdangam, then that is where we enjoy tihais because tihai is a very rhythmic thing. But tihais — And tihais are mostly set. tihai is a very set thing. Most of the tihais that tabla play or pakhawaj and mridangam play, they are already preset. Very seldom when they will come, tihai as an improvisation. But in our system, we play tihai mostly

improvisation and very seldom set tihais we play. So in our system, it's opposite. That is why we don't play too many tihais. But here, I'll give you an example of tihai that I have not set. So first, I'll play a tihai, which I have not set. I'll just come up with that tihai. And then secondly, I'll play a tihai which is already set.

[Music]

So this, I didn't set. I just thought of it, I played the taal and I just came in and I — OK, from this beat, I will come and I'll make a tihai. So again.

[Music]

So again, I didn't set this, it just came. Now, a set tihai, which is already prefixed here.

[Music]

So this is a tihai which it — and this, I can also play as a taal and also tihai. Watch.

[Music]

So this is the difference in two different ways of playing tihais. You can play set tihais, which you have already learnt and practice a lot, and that you can slap anywhere after your improvisation because you know where, in relation to tabla, you are and you know where the tihai starts from and where the tihai ends. Or you can just have more fun and create your own tihai on the spot, which is called opaj. And I just find it more fun to create tihais on the spot. Sometimes it doesn't come. Sometimes we mess up because in improvisation, sometimes if you're not careful or your calculation is messed up, then you might fall somewhere else, but then you have to make do and then, you know, come back to it. So — But it's more fun to improvise a tihai than to play a prefixed tihai for me.

>> Ryan Bruce: Great. In that example you were playing, what parts weren't considered a tihai?

>> Neeraj Prem Masih: Tihai was only that last part of it here. For instance, I will do this.

[Music]

These are all tan, these are not tihais. So only when I'm using tabla and I decided, OK, now, I'm going to get back with [inaudible]. So this is tihai. Anything that is repeated three times is a tihai. Any similar phrase that is repeated three times is a tihai [inaudible].

[Music]

This is a tihai. So same line repeated three times. OK.

[Music]

So I will be demonstrating what a raag is and how it's played in a very short manner. The raag usually is played for — anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour, but I will try to do it in five to seven minutes and see how it goes. So the very first part of raag is the alap jor jhala. I'll do alap, jor and jhala really quickly. Just give me glimpses of what it is and how it is played.

[Music]

So when I'm doing alap, I will use my three optics. Now I try to enjoy it as much as I can to my abilities in each octave, starting from the lower octave to medium and then higher.

[Music]

So for instance, I finished my lower octave, now I'm getting into my medium octave.

[Music]

Now, I'm going to work my higher octave.

[Music]

And then once I'm done in my higher octave, I'll come back to medium octave. And my alap, then start my jor from there.

[Music]

So now, I'm keeping this rhythm. This rhythm tells that this is the jor, starting on jor.

[Music]

And then I'm increasing my tempo for my jor so I'm [inaudible] the tempo, so that after [inaudible].

[Music]

Now, I'm going to my [inaudible] now.

[Music]

And then, I keep increasing the tempo, then after that [inaudible] is done, then I end it.

[Music]

And after this, alap jor jhala. I come to my second part of composition — recital, that is. The madhi laigat or medium tempo composition. Now, gat and bandish, these are the Indian words or Hindi words for a composition. So in medium composition, I'll start [inaudible] tintal. That is 15 beast rhythm cycle.

[Music]

So now, I'm building up my composition. And to start that, I'll do — I'll use alap, two phrases of alap and two phrases of jor. Then I'll implement some small tans, then longer tans. Then I'll do some phrases in between so that will all build up and make the medium part of my improvisation on this composition.

[Music]

Then I just created a tihai and I came back onto my mukurna [inaudible], beginning of my composition. Mukurna is the word, Hindi word for beginning of the composition, just that some [inaudible].

[Music]

And then I [inaudible] it and keep playing the composition for fret, and then again do my fast tempo or drut.

[Music]

1. Now — And we got — has got two parts to it. First is called tai [inaudible], that is the first part of the gat or the composition. The second part is called antara. The first I play there, first part that is tai.

[Music]

So this is called the first part of the composition tai. Now, I play antara.

[Music]

And that ends my antara. So, both parts are precomposed. These are composed composition, which I have two plains [inaudible]. And then now I can introduce my own thoughts and my own improvisation.

[Music]

And then I provide more — bring more tans and phrases. And then I get [inaudible].

[Music]

And then we tune the tihai of our writing and we end it at tihai.

[Music]

TRANSCRIPT: MUSIC OF SOUTH INDIA

[Howard Spring:] Okay, well thank you again for doing this. Why don't we start off by you just introducing yourselves briefly, so people watching this will know who you are.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Hello, everyone. I am Trichy Sankaran, who has been in the Carnatic music field performing for over 65 years. And I have been teaching at York University since 1971, and I took my retirement in 2015. So, I have taught there for about 44 years. Actually, I came along with the late Jon B. Higgins to start the South Indian Music Program. So, we were the co-founders of the new music program at York University. I think I would like to start with the instruments that I'm having, one on my lap and then one on the side. The one that I'm having on the lap is called mrdangam, which is the principal percussion instrument for any Carnatic concert. It's used in concerts, and also, it's played in Bharatanatyam recitals that resulted in classical dance. It's a versatile instrument, which is used for accompanying songs and also for playing solos. Let me talk about the instrument first. It's a double-headed cylindrical drum, two-headed drum. The — this head is tuned to the tonic.

[Drumming]

Usually, we will have a drone in our concerts in Carnatic music, which will be present throughout the concert actually. And even though this is tuned to G, my drum is tuned to D. Suba is going to be using G as a tonic.

[Drumming]

[Drum Music]

Traditionally, the drum uses the leather straps to connect both heads. But with the modern dance, we have switched from the leather straps to nylon straps. So, we find it a lot easier to deal with. That's the idea.

[Howard Spring:] Do you always tune your right hand to a fifth away from the drone?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Not necessarily, just for this occasion I have, normally I tune to the tonic itself.

[Howard Spring:] Okay.

[Trichy Sankaran:] So, I normally will have set of drums because the male singers invariably use C or C sharp as their uh-tonic. And then instrumentalists, if it is a violin solo or other instruments, you know, they will be using D or D sharp. And then for the lady artists, normally they have like F sharp, G, or even G sharp. So, even the size of the drums, you know, they vary according to the pitch, and also, the construction is different.

[Howard Spring:] But you always have to be in tune with the drone?

[Trichy Sankaran:] In tune with the drone, absolutely, absolutely. The interesting thing about mrdangam is this head called the valanthalai, which literally translates into right head. Valanthalai means — that most of them are right-handed players. So, for the left-handed player, you have the switch the drum. So, this is known as the valanthalai, and this is tunable, So, we can really tune and make like the — the sonorous sounds, you know, coming from this drum. And it will really enhance the melody when it accompanies the songs. So — or we take the tuneful strokes. [Drumming] And then the left again, called the thoppi provides the bass.

[Drumming]

You can see there are two kinds of tuning pace. One is at the centre of the right head, which is what we call karanai or black spot. This is from a special stone that's powdered and mixed with the cooked rice and applied in quantities in several layers and then polished with a polishing rock. And that gives the ringing tone to the drum.

[Drumming]

And then the other kind of paste is from the cream of wheat, which is mixed—

[Howard Spring:] That's the cream of wheat that we have for breakfast? Is that the same cream of wheat?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Absolutely, same cream of wheat, mixed with the water and made into a dhobi paste like this. And I adjust the amount to get that good bass tone from the bass head, and that's the idea. So, after this, the drum is ready to play.

[Drumming]

[Howard Spring:] What does the word mrdangam mean?

[Trichy Sankaran:] The original name, mrdangam, comes from the word mrtanga. Mrt in Sanskrit means

clay. Anga means body. Originally, the drum was made of clay. So, we were using clay drums, then later on, it was replaced, you know, by the wooden shell. So, now we use jack wood for making these instruments.

[Howard Spring:] Now notice that you're getting different sounds on each head.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yeah.

[Howard Spring:] How are you doing that?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Well, maybe let me start with the bass head. This is the open sound.

[Drumming]

And then this is the closed sound. [Drumming] And then there are certain inflections that are possible on this head [alternating drumbeat] with a special technique, and which is known as gumukki.

[Alternating Drumbeat]

Even I can try to raise the pitch slightly.

[Alternating Drumbeat]

So, it's all the hand technique, finger technique.

[Howard Spring:] Right. That's good. Are you actually — are you actually pushing the drum with the palm of your hand? Like you're bending the actual skin?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Actually, I'm — it's striking here for the open sound. [Drumming] And then for the inflections for the gumukki, I strike down there and then push the base of my palm down there to get–

[Drumming]

[Drum Music]

[Suba Sankaran:] So, it is indeed pushing the skin down.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Skin down, exactly. Just like this. Yeah. [Drumming] So, that's the idea. On the right

head, several sounds are possible. One thing, the outer ring, we [drumming] make this stroke. [Drumming] By the way, each stroke has a name to it. The syllabic concept is very fundamental to Indian music. When we sing the melody, we always look for the pitches, and which are identified by the swara syllables saa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni. Likewise, on the mrdangam, each stroke has a name. For example, the one that I showed — like the closed sound of the bass end, [drumbeat] tha, and then, [drumbeat] thom is open sound. On the right head, the stroke that's played here, which involves subtle technique with the ring finger down and snapping with your index finger [drumming] is called a sam [drumming] or sometimes it's even called a na. [Drumming] Same technique but striking at a different point [drumming]. This has more harmonics. This is called the dheem. And then there is a closed sound or you can call it thud, [drumbeat], ti [drumming] using these three fingers playing at the centre. Then there is a single stroke using the index finger. [Drumming] Often it's used for alternating technique.

[Alternating drumbeats]

[Drum Music]

So, there's a mixture of sounds that you can get from this because of the combination of several of these strokes.

[Howard Spring:] And each sound has its own syllable that you can speak?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yes, I'm going to demonstrate that also.

[Howard Spring:] Okay, great.

[Trichy Sankaran:] It comes from like starting with one on one, like each stroke getting a name. But as art improves, as one learns more patterns, then the relationship changes from one to several. The spoken syllables become really complex. And these spoken syllables are called solkattu. Sol means syllable. Kattu means bunch. A bunch of rhythmic syllables, solkattu, so let me finish with two more strokes. And then I'm going to recite the solkattu and play it on the drum to show the correlation of the actual, you know, drum sounds to the spoken syllables [inaudible]. The other stroke is called Ara Chapu. [Drumming] It's a slap stroke.

[Drumming]

Again, using the palm.

[Drumming]

Likewise, there's another one called Maru Chapu. [Drumming] It's a different technique using the baby finger [drumming] to dampen–

[Drumming]

And you get that harmonic, so you can really compare notes. This [drumming], this [drumming], and this [drumming], each one has different harmonics, so to speak. They are richer in tone.

[Ryan Bruce:] How many different strokes are there in total?

[Trichy Sankaran:] In total, I would say maybe 12 or 13, but the combinations is numerous.

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[Ryan Bruce:] Yeah.

[Trichy Sankaran:] You can create out of these 12 different strokes a number of patterns, hundreds of patterns.

[Ryan Bruce:] And am I right [Inaudible] — yeah, so you have separate syllables for the — for the higher pitch side and another separate set of syllables for the bass drum? Or is it you have one set of syllables—

[Trichy Sankaran:] [Inaudible], yeah. Initially that's how it's done. Initially, but in the — for the beginners, we say it's a tha and then thom. But you know, with the advancement of the art, it becomes very complex because the spoken syllables relating to the drum sounds has become an art in itself. And at the higher stage, the speaking of solkattu has become the art of Konnakkol. We have a name for that art, speaking drum patterns, actually using voice as your percussion. You can bring all the sounds. Solkattu is nothing but phonetic vocabulary imitating the drum sounds. And through this art of solkattu, one can even accompany music. You don't need the instrument. You can just to emulate all the sounds, so that's the idea. A very brief demonstration.

[Syllabic Singing]

[Drum Music]

[Syllabic Singing]

[Drum Music]

[Syllabic Singing]

[Drum Music]

[Syllabic Singing]

[Drum Music]

The different pattern–

[Syllabic Singing]

[Drum Music]

[Syllabic Singing]

[Drum Music]

If this isn't fast enough, you have–

[Syllabic Singing]

[Drum Music]

[Syllabic Singing]

[Drum Music]

And so on.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah, and so on. Yeah. Well, that was great.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Thank you. So, Suba, I noticed you were doing something with your hands.

[Suba Sankaran:] Yes. So—

[Howard Spring:] What was that all about?

[Suba Sankaran:] This is called tala keeping. And so, in Indian music, we have two main elements. One is called raga, which is the umbrella term for all of the melodic aspects of Indian music, and tala, which is the umbrella term for all of the rhythmic aspects. Now, this music is not normally notated, which means we don't think in terms of bars and measures and staff systems and things like that. We think in terms of rhythmic cycles. And this is the way that we keep track of the time. And in a way, I like to think of tala keeping or these sort of codified hand gestures as almost like compressed conducting. And so, we're really — we're giving a reference point in terms of the time grid or the metric grid. And so, what I was doing was keeping the most common tala in South Indian music, which is called Adi tala, or an eight-beat cycle, which is counted as a clap. So, the bottom hand just absorbs the sound. The top hand does all the action. So, you're clapping, and then three gentle finger counts, the little finger, the ring finger, and the middle finger, and then clap. We call this a wave. It's the turning of the palm, so the palm is facing upwards, then clap and then wave, for a total of eight beats. Or you could also look at it almost like a compound tala, with the clapping as the initiator for 4 plus 2 plus 2, so one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight or one, two, three, four, one, two, one, two. So, that's kind of the compound way of looking at that tala. And there are many different rhythmic cycles in South India, you know, ranging from three beats to a cycle to 128 leads to a cycle. And this particular Adi tala of eight beats is considered the most common tala, very similar to 4/4 in the West.

[Howard Spring:] Great. So, how does — Trichy, so how does the drum fit into the tala?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Okay, the drum patterns are used to denote the tala. We can call them like tala keeping patterns. That's one set of patterns. And then within the time cycle one can improvise, there are other patterns that can be superimposed over the tala, not necessarily just going along with the tala all the time. So, you can really see the drumming in relation to the tala and then in relation — many different accompanies relation to the melody and then the permutation, how we improvise within that structure. So, tala provides the frame, timeframe. Within that, the drummer is allowed to improvise. And not only that, as I already alluded to, the solkattu, each tala is studied through the reading of solkattu. In fact, I have been training many students to learn to keep tala using the syllables rather than counting in numbers. So, for example, Adi tala can be–Counted using the syllables, ta, ka, di, mi, ta, ka, jo, nu, four and four, which is eight. So, it goes like this ta, ka, di, mi, ta, ka, jo, nu, ta, ka, di, mi, ta, ka, jo, nu. Another important thing is, I think it's almost universal, like the concept of doubling, you see in any kind of music in any kind of drumming. So, here, I'll show how tala is helpful in doing — in different degrees of speed. That actually doubling each time, like one is to two is to four. So–

[Accelerating Singing]

You left me alone there.

[Howard Spring:] I see what you mean there. Okay. That was a great.

[Trichy Sankaran:] We all have studied, the quarter note, eighth note, 16th, 32nd, and so on.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah, I see. Yeah. Okay.

[Trichy Sankaran:] This is one concept that – yeah.

[Howard Spring:] Now, how would that show up on the drum?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yes.

[Accelerating Music]

[Howard Spring:] Trichy, I noticed when you were playing the last time that you ended off with a phrase that was repeated three times.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yes.

[Howard Spring:] How does that work? What's that about?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yes. That's the concept of cadence. And it's called mora in South Indian tradition, which is very similar to the idea of tihai in North Indian tabla drumming. The threefold repetition of a phrase, pattern, sometimes the pattern could be shorter. Sometimes the it could be really longer. So, kind of three repeats really constitute the structure of a mora. And in that connection, I want to also talk about the importance of the beginning beat of the tala cycle, which is known by the technical term sam. Always we try to land on sam, returning to the beginning of the tala actually. This really tells you that end is not an end in itself; it's also your new beginning. That's the implication you get because the music, you see, it's in a continuum. It doesn't stop right there. So, a new cycle begins. So, in western music, I have seen, you know, you end up with a base like–

[Drum Music]

[Inaudible]

And we have the double bar line showing that it's [inaudible], but it's not acceptable to us. You have to hear the ending note.

[Drum Music]

At last, the thumb is very important, arriving on sam.

[Howard Spring:] So, that ends off sections or pieces or when do you use that? Whenever you want?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Okay. In an ongoing rhythmic development, motifs are developed, and we just improvise on it and then conclude in the form of a mora. So, it happens many times within the structure. For example, within a drum solo, thani avarthanam as we call. Each idea would be improvised, developed, and then conclude in the form of a mora.

[Howard Spring:] Right. Okay.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Let me give a brief example.

[Howard Spring:] Sure.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Just a short example.

[Drum Music]

So, here I am, I have taken what we call the madhyama kalam patterns. That's a medium tempo.

[Drum Music]

That kind of pattern. Then at the end of each cycle, I'm introducing the new pattern, that's my motif.

[Drum Music]

So, you have a flow pattern followed by whatever ideas that you have to introduce. And then you develop that idea, and then conclude in the form of a mora.

[Howard Spring:] I see.

[Trichy Sankaran:] So, that's the idea.

[Howard Spring:] Nice.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Speaking of the patterns, I think I may want to add—

[Howard Spring:] Sure.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Often in North Indian drumming, we come across the tali part of the tala and then the khali part and then sam. That's how they define the tala. If you take, for example, [inaudible] 16 matras, we call our aksharas, and they call it matras, 16 matras.

[Syllabic Singing]

So, the third part, if you take the 16-beat cycle into four parts, four beats each the first two sets have that bias [inaudible] the bass [inaudible]. On the third set of four, it is sped up. That's the khali part. Many people often, I think, don't talk about what's happening in South Indian drumming. We do the same thing too. For example–

[Drum Music]

So, you have the third one and just do [drumbeat] leaving — cutting off the bass sound.

[Drum Music]

This is how we bring the tonal variation. It's very important. It's inherent in drumming, actually, even though it's not much talked about. And this gives also an antiphonal feeling to the pattern.

[Howard Spring:] You mean antiphonal like call and response?

[Trichy Sankaran:] [Inaudible], exactly. Exactly.

[Howard Spring:] I see.

[Trichy Sankaran:] [Inaudible] the bass, it really, you know, is a powerful coordinate. For example, I will use another pattern. See the role of the bass head, how it embellishes the pattern displayed on the right head.

[Drum Music]

It's nice to hear, but now listen to this with the bass.

[Drum Music]

I didn't change the pattern at all on the right head.

[Howard Spring:] Right.

[Trichy Sankaran:] But it's the bass head really, you know, gives the colour to the pattern.

[Howard Spring:] Yeah. Makes a big difference, makes a huge difference. Sure.

[Trichy Sankaran:] So, that's the idea.

[Ryan Bruce:] How much is that linked — how much of your choices of playing the bass drum are linked to the — that wave — the wave that comes in the tala?

[Trichy Sankaran:] In the tala? It is Adi tala normally — probably I would do it on beat five, six, cutting off the bass, and then seven eight, join bass, which is very similar to what we have seen in tintal, Adi tala being a 8 beat cycle, I'll just do it that way. And then it's entirely up to the drummer how to embellish a pattern. That's how it's done.

[Suba Sankaran:] And of course, as soon as the colour changes that means that the patterns necessarily change as well as.

[Trichy Sankaran:] That's another thing.

[Suba Sankaran:] So, some of them don't even have that wave.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Okay, maybe I should be here talk about — at least introduce one or two more talas because we've been staying in Adi tala for a while. Another interest, there are talas that are in syncopated measures, symmetrical. And there are talas which are also asymmetrical. If you take, for example, chapu tala

is a variety that we have. We have misra chapu tala, which is a seven-eight metre. It's counted at one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, one. Again, it's also counted the same way in North Indian drumming. They call it rupak tal, seven-beat cycle. One has to be very carefully with the nomenclature, of course. Because something in rupaka tala is different from rupak. Our rupaka tala is a three-beat cycle or six-beat cycle, whereas North Indian, the rupak is seven-beat cycle.

[Howard Spring:] How many talas are there?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Talas, they range from three beats to a cycle to 128 beats. That's the longest of all the talas, and each tala is codified. And it has got its own described hand gestures. And then tala divisions, like if you take, for example, we call it a kanda jati ata tala of 14 beats is divided as a five, five, two, and two. So, these talas have, you know, starting from the natyashastra period, the earliest time, like Fourth Century AD, more talas have been added by them, by the time we come to the medieval times. And [inaudible] lists about 120 talas.

[Howard Spring:] So, do most mrdangam players who are playing at a high level know how to play in all the talas, or are there certain talas that are used more than others, or?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Only certain talas are used more. Some of the older talas have gone obsolete, but only we are reviving, you know, for research purposes or sometimes for some special demonstration, we revive some of these talas. So, you know, these are all called [inaudible] talas. We started with the [inaudible] talas. I don't want to go into the long history of talas, but suffice it to say, that we started with the four and three only just like any other system, I would say. Four and three were the main talas. And then, by the time we come to the medieval time, like 12th Century or so, we have created more talas, 120 talas. And talas ranging from three beats to a cycle to 128 beats. I think this has also been an attraction to many Western composers. And I — at this moment, I recall the work of Olivier Messiaen, who was highly interested in Hindu rhythms, [inaudible] Hindu rhythms. And he has used one of the talas from the medieval times, and that is Turangalila, Turangalila-Symphonie. He has used that tala, so it's very interesting to see. And then we have other talas called chanda talas by about 15th Century. And where you have [inaudible] compositions, devotional hymns set to tala. But here the tala is determined by the specification of the poetry, not the other way. Not creating song within the tala but rather each word is its one metre, so to speak. So, just to give a demonstration, it's a 21-beat tala. It's a three-eight, three-eight, five-eight, and a five-four. One, two, three, one, two, three, one, two, three, four, five, one, two, three, four, five, one, two, three, one, two, three, one, two, three, four, five, one, two, three, four, five. We call it the chanda tala. I named it "Catch 21", not 22. Yeah, you can [inaudible] from this tala and orchestrate it. And this has been, you know, an interesting topic for me, for my research, and to introduce new talas and the talas [inaudible] in practice, you know, for a long time to reintroduce to the world.

[Howard Spring:] I see. Okay.

[Ryan Bruce:] Well, you're playing and you're constructing your phrases within the tala. You said that you are wanting to arrive — or at sam, at the end, to me would seem like there is some sort of planning that's involved, preplanning, or at least knowing where you're going to end up before you start your phrases. Could you talk about that a little bit?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yeah, many ideas are premeditated, I should say. But also, there are patterns that we improvise, impromptu. And particularly the moras and the other cadence shall form more complex known as Korvai. These are also part of a drummers repertoire, repertory. And we use the Korvais mostly during the drum song. And the korvais use a unique set of patterns. Just to illustrate–

[Syllabic Singing]

So, this kind of [inaudible] patterns form part of a korvai.

[Drum Music]

So, these all — there are many compositions that are learnt from the guru, which has been passed on from, you know, generation to generation. And we have also created our own korvais. I have composed many korvais. And this is how the tradition really continues. And there's a constant arrangement and rearrangement of korvais too. Even the word korvais we take and then we rearrange. That's happening all the time. So, certainly there is a — there's an element of premeditation because if there is a complicated korvai, I should know exactly where to start. Even the korvais are also repeated three times, and then I should land on sam. That's the idea.

[Suba Sankaran:] So, basically thinking more mathematically and geometrically.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Geometrically and mathematically. Again, speaking of mathematics, patterns have their own shapes too. For example, same pattern repeated in an ostinato style like–

[Drum Music]

We can call them [inaudible] patterns, and there are patterns, which show the diminutive form. And we compare that to the–

[Inaudible]

Drumming. You can see these shapes. At least there are five of them. [Inaudible] the one, the—

[Suba Sankaran:] Yeah, it's basically this shape. So, going from larger to smaller—

[Trichy Sankaran:] Larger to smaller, and then the opposite is this [foreign language], Sanskrit names. And then we do the [inaudible] the shape of the drum, mrdangam, just called the mrdangam [inaudible]. And then the [inaudible] patterns are [foreign language] and then this [foreign language] is the hourglass shaped drum.

[Howard Spring:] I see. I see. Okay. So, those are different shapes—

[Trichy Sankaran:] [Inaudible] pattern. These patterns are mixed in creating a korvai.

[Howard Spring:] I see. I see. Okay.

[Ryan Bruce:] Could you give us a demonstration of what that sounds like?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yes, the one that I did earlier follows the [inaudible] that is a reduction. [Drumming] And then–

[Drum Music]

After that point is the reduction, and then followed by [foreign language].

[Drum Music]

And then for the second part, also the — you at least to see like it's a binary form, A and B pattern. The second part can also be played like–

[Drum Music]

I changed the pattern for the second part.

[Syllabic Singing]

Increasing. So, we have to take into consideration the length of the pattern and how it's repeated and how it

fits in the tala. And then when you are doing three types of the same korvai, you have to know the calculation. And you should start at the right place to land on sam.

[Howard Spring:] So, that you'll end up on sam, right? Is that what you're going for? Yeah. Nice. So, you have to work backwards.

[Suba Sankaran:] Yes.

[Howard Spring:] From sam back, yeah.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yeah.

[Suba Sankaran:] Exactly.

[Howard Spring:] Okay. That's great. You know, we could do this for days, but I think we should—

[Trichy Sankaran:] Of course.

[Howard Spring:] We have to move on, I think. I'd like to get to the kanjira and then to the singing. So, maybe we should look at the kanjira now?

[Trichy Sankaran:] This is the South Indian tambourine called the kanjira. This belongs to the framed drum family. In earlier times, this was used in folk music and also in congregational singing, by [inaudible], and also what we call the [foreign language]. That is narrating story with the music, music accompaniment. But the creator of introducing the kanjira to the classical music of South India goes to my great grand guru [inaudible]. He was the one who thought of like the right size of kanjira that can be used for concerts, and this is just — this is only one set of jingles here. About 7 and a 1/2 or 7 and 3/4 of inches of diameter here, and lizard skin is stretched over the frame here. It doesn't use any cream of wheat or anything, any paste. But I'm just putting a little water just to do — get a good bass sound. Because otherwise it will just keep going higher and higher in pitch. The challenge with this instrument is all the patterns played on the mrdangam with the two hands. The kanjira player should know how to convert it into like playing into in one hand, using only one hand. And the kanjira player will also use kind of same set of drum syllables. Yet he can also modify to suit the sound of the instrument. For example, when I say–

[Syllabic Singing]

That I play on the mrdangam. Here the important sounds are dhom and tha. [Tapping kanjira] So, that same pattern be converted into–

[Syllabic Singing]

[Kanjira Music]

We'll just continue with that one.

[Kanjira Music]

[Inaudible]

Some inflections are possible by pressing down there, like this, to increase the pitch.

[Tapping Kanjira]

Mostly for holding.

[Rattling]

[Ryan Bruce:] We covered some syllables before that you were using. Are there any sort of inflections that you use in speech to indicate changing the pitch as you did there?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Actually, tonal variation, it's not prescribed. So, it's up to the drummer when he improvises. Like–

[Kanjira Music]

So, just it's left to the drummer in terms of tonal variation.

[Ryan Bruce:] I'm actually wondering if you could slow a little bit of that down. So, it's amazing. But I'm wondering if it's something really slow and even if you — or even something at a medium pace so we can get just another idea.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Maybe we can start with some bold strokes like open tone.

[Kanjira Music]

So, these are open strokes, and then I use the [inaudible] here and then the alternating technique, [alternating tapping] one and three or three and one as you like.

[Kanjira Music]

[Inaudible] same way you can also do it on the open end.

[Kanjira Music]

[Ryan Bruce:] Thank you.

[Howard Spring:] Thank you. So, when you're doing a concert, let's say, does the kanjira ever — is it ever the only rhythm instrument or are there — does there always have to be a mrdangam?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Mridangam is the principle instrument. Always, there should be mrdangam. Kanjira is considered a subsidiary percussion instrument. We call that [foreign language], always teamed up with the mrdangam player. But in many cases, the kanjira player would also have studied mridangam. Only if you play both mrdangam and kanjira because [inaudible] I have chosen mrdangam as my principal instrument. Nevertheless, I practice the kanjira, and I have also been teaching kanjira, and I have played in concerts too. But my main preference is to really use mrdangam in concerts. The interesting thing is to really compare the patterns played on the mrdangam and how it's changed to suit the instrument kanjira. That's the most important thing.

[Howard Spring:] But they're basically the same patterns that you're using on both?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Basically, exact same pattern, same korvais can be played.

[Howard Spring:] Right, okay.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Let me just give another korvai just to — on the kanjira.

[Kanjira Music]

It's spoken as a–

[Syllabic Singing]

[Ryan Bruce:] I would like to just ask about this because this is a precomposed pattern, a longer pattern. Because when you were first playing it, to me, it sounded improvised. So, how many of these patterns — or how are we to differentiate? How can we start hearing—

[Trichy Sankaran:] It's hard to draw the line between like where improvisation ends and where the composed form enters. It's hard to, you know, find out. Nevertheless, I can tell like, you know, like as a preparation to the korvai, sometimes I improvise some patterns and then get into the korvai. korvais are kind of, you know, precomposed as you say, but within the korvai you can also improvise. For example–

[Singing]

[Kanjira Music]

Like then you play the [kanjira music] or I can play–

[Kanjira Music]

There are so many variations [inaudible].

[Ryan Bruce:] I like that, the idea of variation.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yes, [inaudible].

[Ryan Bruce:] As it as a type of improvisation, I think that's [inaudible]—

[Trichy Sankaran:] [Inaudible] solkattu, one can improvise, even though I gave like a–

[Singing]

Just to beautify that piece, I can go — I can say like this.

[Singing]

These patterns can also be heard in the Bharatanatyam cycle. Because the solkattu comes from two great traditions. One is the Bharatanatyam tradition and then the concert tradition.

[Howard Spring:] I see. Okay. So, dancers would have to know all this as well, is that right?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely.

[Howard Spring:] I see.

[Trichy Sankaran:] In fact, that's what, you know, we are going to actually use one piece from the dance repertoire called "Jatiswaram", which I will ask Suba about to sing.

[Howard Spring:] Yes. Well, let's move over to the singing a little bit and figure out how all of that fits into singing or how singing fits into that. So, Suba, do you want to say just a few words about yourself, and then [inaudible]?

[Suba Sankaran:] Sure. So, my name is Suba Sankaran, and I'm Trichy Sankaran's daughter. And I have studied South Indian rhythm and singing all my life, as well as western classical jazz, acapella music, world music, a lot of different types of music under the sun. And I'm a composer and an educator and performer and touring artist and a recording artist as well. And in this context, I will be — we're talking about Carnatic music, which is the classical music of South India specifically. And the piece that we're going to do for you is called the Jatiswaram, which is a particular compositional form in the Bharatanatyam tradition. Bharatanatyam is one of the classical forms of dance from South India. Now, something we mentioned earlier was the drone that — where the mridangam is — the right head of the mrdangam is being tuned to. And so, my key is the key of G, actually G and a little bit higher than G just because of the nature of the drum today. It is a natural skin, which means it's going to change depending on the humidity, the air pressure, the lighting. All of that, it's — it can be a little bit temperamental that way. So, here's my key centre. Now I should mention that this instrument behind me, this is called a tambura or tambura. And it's a four-stringed lute-like instrument, as you can see, with a small board at the bottom that gives all its resonance between that and the metal strings. That's the kind of ancient drone instrument. Indian music does not have, normally speaking, any key changes. And so, we stick to one key, which is why the drone is so important. And so, this is our original drone instrument that later became the sort of pump organ that you can kind of see right here. This is the original pump organ called a sruti box. Sruti means pitch. And so, this is our pitch generator. Then there was an electronic version of that, which would be kind of a plugin thing. And now we have what we call the [inaudible] tambura, which is what I'm using for convenience sake. And so, you can hear, just like these four strings, you can also hear the four strings in this digital sample.

[Tambura Tones]

[Syllabic Singing and Tones]

So, that's the fifth two upper tonics or upper octave, lower octave. So, it has its own pattern, and it has its own cycle. And normally, if we had a tambura player, they would be plucking those strings throughout a two- or three- or four-hour concert. As I said, there are no key changes in the music, so to speak. So, that's — that would be their job. So, I'm going to be using — my father mentioned earlier the terminology of the solfege in South India, which is sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, sa, sa, ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, ri, sa in the descent. And that corresponds roughly to the western solfege, do, re, me, fa, sol, la, ti, do, do, ti, la, sol, fa, me, re, do. And it works in exactly the same way. Each of these words represents a degree of the scale. So, if I did do, re, me, re, do, the equivalent sa, ri, ga, ri sa, so you get the idea of how that works. And of course, I'm tuning to this drone. That's my phonic or my do or my sa. And so, the piece we're going to do is called the [foreign language] Jatiswaram. And the Jatiswaram is — I don't know, if you want to talk a little bit about the compositional form that it is, but it's performed as part of a dance recital. And we're in the raga. I mentioned, raga is the umbrella term for all of the melodic aspects of Indian music. So, one of the ragas is called [foreign language]. So, this piece is referred to as [foreign language] Jatiswaram, [foreign language] representing the raga that is in, Jatiswaram representing the compositional form. And so, the scale, I'll just do it in kind of plain tones–

[Singing]

Same thing on the way down.

[Singing]

Now, we would never perform a scale that way. Similar to the [inaudible] that you hear getting all the nuance to the drums, we have something called gamakas. Gamakas are the microtonal inflections or the subtle bending of the notes that we get authentically Indian. We can call them decorations. We can call them embellishments, ornaments, or inflections. And so, I'll sing that scale for you now.

[Singing]

So, this is the [foreign language] raga. And we'll be performing the Jatiswaram together, and it's going to feature those solfege syllables, sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, sa, throughout the piece. And it's a bit like, — in a way, a theme and variation. I'll always be coming back to a particular theme after some variations each time, and at the end, we'll be doing something together, part of the dance tradition called the [foreign language]. And the [foreign language], again, you're going to hear us in recitation using [inaudible] syllables that are more common to both drumming and dancing. So, if you were to imagine a dancer here, their footwork would match in unison with what we're doing at the end of the piece and throughout the piece, in fact, a lot of units of activity, a lot of rhythmic activity.

[Trichy Sankaran:] A quick word about the composition form. This piece uses only solfege syllables, and they fall into certain rhythmic groupings. And these rhythmic patterns are called the jatis. Jati is another term that's used, just what we say like the solkattu. So, they form into jati, so these jatis are sung to the solfege syllables. There are very interesting patterns happening within this, and there are no lyrics to this piece, no words to it. So, fully made of swaras [inaudible]. This is actually one of the 19th Century compositions, you know, like [inaudible] who was a great dance master and composer. And so, this one is in seven-beat tala cycle So, Adi tala minus 1, so it's a clap followed by two-finger drums, and then clap, wait, clap, wait, on a seven-beat cycle.

[Drum Music]

After each [inaudible] passage, we'll return to what is known as the [foreign language] segment.

[Suba Sankaran:] The reframe.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Reframe, we always come back to that. That's the idea. So, it has a [foreign language] section followed by several passages.

[Drumming]

[Music]

[Suba Sankaran:] Tuning is good.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yeah. I think so.

[Suba Sankaran:] Yeah. It's okay.

[Music]

This is the [foreign language] Jatiswaram.

[Music]

[Singing and Music]

[Clapping]

[Singing]

[Singing and Music]

[Howard Spring:] Well, that was great. Was there any improvisation there or that was all composed?

[Trichy Sankaran:] For the drumming part, actually, it's an improvised accompaniment. But sometimes you heard like note for note synchronizing.

[Suba Sankaran:] Yes.

[Trichy Sankaran:] I was keeping like upbeat rhythms.

[Howard Spring:] Right. Right, yeah, I heard that.

[Trichy Sankaran:] [Inaudible] the dance piece to [inaudible] upbeat beat rhythm. So, within the structure, I was improvising.

[Suba Sankaran:] And the song itself is fully composed.

[Trichy Sankaran:] The song is full composed.

[Howard Spring:] So, how much interaction is there between the two of you? [Suba Sankaran:] I would say complete interaction. There's this — you want to have this feeling of being simpatico so that we can — you could hear us kind of playing with those rhythms a little bit. So, where things felt like they're almost swinging a bit or shuffling, rather than being [syllabic singing], you know–

[Syllabic Singing]

That kind of thing where we can kind of play around a little bit. I feel like that's essential. And that's — I mean, that's something that I'm blessed with having grown up in this family and having performed for a very long time together. That's something that doesn't come naturally to everyone, I would say, that feeling of really coming together and being able to sort of swim in the waters in the same way.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Drummer should be familiar with it also.

[Suba Sankaran:] Yes.

[Trichy Sankaran:] The drummer I should really, you know, know the piece really well to be able to, you know, provide an improvised accompaniment.

[Suba Sankaran:] That's essential, and drummers, you know, it's very different from something like a jazz context, where the drummers might not actually know the head of a song. In this case, you have to know not just the [inaudible] or the refrain, you have to know all of the variations. Or if you don't know it, those are the places where those korvais that come in or those moras that are inherent even in the melodic side, then a drummer can catch on to it. But really, they do have to have it memorized.

[Ryan Bruce:] I wonder, could you talk about — because you just — you mentioned the form. And if we were to go back and listen to what you just performed, which is great, we have it on a recording, there are definitely important sections. And you've mentioned that there's the Pahlavi. How would we identify that without listening to it? You know, if I was to listen to another song, I might want to identify the chorus. Right? You've mentioned this is like a refrain. So, this is something that repeats and comes back. So, what is it — could you give a demonstration of the beginning of the Pahlavi?

[Suba Sankaran:] Yes. So, [inaudible] yeah, so the Pahlavi line is the one that that we actually start the piece with. And so, that's the one that starts on the high sa.

[Singing]

That's the [inaudible]. And so, you're going to hear that — I do it twice off the top to really establish, hey, this is — this is what you need to listen for. And then after the variation, I'm always coming back to it. And you can hear that in its construction — in its compositional construction. It feels like we're basically outlining the raga.

[Singing]

So, we're coming down. We're coming up. And that gives you the kind of overarching bird's eye view of what's happening in that piece.

[Ryan Bruce:] Great. And then at the end of the piece, you guys were saying the solkattu rhythms?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yes. That's called the [foreign language] in the dance tradition. It's very common with

many dance pieces to end with the [foreign language], what we call like a korvai, which is very similar too. But they have a different term, and that's called a [foreign language].

[Suba Sankaran:] And again, in terms of its construction, we have the diminutive pattern.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Pattern here, yeah. [Suba Sankaran:] And then the repeated the pattern.

[Trichy Sankaran:] The mora within the structure of the korvai itself. So, we did like a–

[Syllabic Singing]

After that is a [inaudible], diminutive pattern. And then [syllabic singing] is a bridging phrase to — just to distinctly show the mora–

[Syllabic Singing]

That's the more part.

[Ryan Bruce:] Great. How does that relate to the — to the jati that you were talking about before?

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yeah, these patterns are called the jatis. And for example, even within the Jatiswaram, saying that it's [syllabic singing].

[Suba Sankaran:] Yeah.

[Singing and Music]

[Trichy Sankaran:] So, each passage you have, you know, this kind of, you know, rhythmic pattern that's highlighted by the drum.

[Ryan Bruce:] So, it's like you — what I'm getting is that there's the jati and the raga that are being outlined in their own [inaudible]—

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yes, exactly.

[Ryan Bruce:] The two are coming but coming together.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Coming together. Yeah.

[Suba Sankaran:] Yeah.

[Ryan Bruce:] Yeah.

[Trichy Sankaran:] She's singing in the swaras, and I'm iterating through my drumming patterns, but they form in rhythmic groupings.

[Suba Sankaran:] Yeah. [Inaudible] So, the jatis are like the variations on the swaram. So, it's called Jatiswaram, so it's like variations on the swara solfege syllables.

[Trichy Sankaran:] Yeah.

[Ryan Bruce:] Trichy, how did you — how did you learn? Because there is a lot of theory, and there's a deep tradition, are you able to give us a brief story about how you learnt and how that ties in with some of the theory and this — in this classical music tradition?

[Trichy Sankaran:] I learnt it from my gurus. In this tradition, the student learns from the guru directly. First, I studied under my cousin, who was also a great mrdangam player and also a great teacher. After studying with him, initially for four years, I was sent to his guru, my great guru, the legendary Maestro Bellamy Subrahmanyam Pillai [phonetic]. And I studied under him, and I had my debut at the age of 13. Interestingly, the guru [inaudible] to verbalize like what I'm doing here. He shows by example only, and it's just through trial and error method. You have to simply be attentive to listen. You have to listen to the patterns that he's playing. And he may repeat maybe once or twice, and that's it. You are supposed to learn that way. It's an amazing system. Particularly I remember, even my debut nothing was rehearsed. And I was teamed up to perform with the great [inaudible] experts, rhythm experts in their concert. But just the look will tell you what to play now. Now, you play. Now you don't. Just you have to be so attentive, and this is the type of learning that's fading away now, studying under the master. This is the Gurukula method. Now from Gurukula, we have come to cyber.

[Laughter]

Everything, you know, learnt from a YouTube and everything. These are the real advantages, of course, you know, it's very strenuous. And you cannot really — they won't follow any timetable to teach, and you are at the beck and call of the master. And you should be ready at any moment, and that kind of gives you discipline. And what I consider in later years looking back of my own training, I call it self-discovery approach. You have to discover yourself. You have to decipher many of the patterns that he would have played, many of

the korvais he would have played in the [inaudible], in the concert. It's an amazing tradition. And also, to get a chance to perform duos with your guru is a remarkable thing. It's a blessing. It's a great blessing. And just [inaudible]. Theory was very rarely talked about. But I developed an interest on my own, and particularly when it came to academic teaching, I developed an interest in studying the theoretical concepts of both traditions, Carnatic and Hindustani. It's very important. And of course, there is always a question saying like, you know, the performance and the practice, the theory and practice, which came first? Did we theorize, you know, what was going on as practice? Or do you always think about theory when we perform? No. It's there. It's in the back of our minds, but performance comes first. So, that's how — that's my experience, you know, in learning theory.

[Ryan Bruce:] That's great. Thank you. Well, it's definitely very rich and deep.

TRANSCRIPT: BALINESE MUSIC VIDEO 2: LECTURE-DEMONSTRATION: GILAK

[Dewa Made Suparta:] I'm going to talk a little bit about how Balinese music is constructed by using Gilak as an example. The piece that you just heard before called Gilak. It is usually played to open an event. So now we're going to use that piece as an example. So here we have — to start, we have a beat keeper called kajar. It's like the heartbeat of the Gamelan. In Balinese music, the tempo often changes. So all the players have to keep their eyes and ears on the kajar to keep the music together. And on the back, we have the gong. Gong marks the cycle of the piece. So here we have three different kinds of gongs. The biggest one is a female gong, and the one on the back is a male gong, and the medium-sized one called kempur, and the one laying down called kempli. So here is an eight-beat example. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 1 —

[Gongs Playing]

— so all the instruments on the back play melody. So in the more traditional way, we have three different sizes here. The biggest one here, the two biggest ones here, usually plays one note every four beats. And the medium-size plays one note every two beats. And the smallest one plays one note every beat. So now we're going to start with the lowest one first.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

Here, we have a two tall instruments called ugal. It varies the melody, based on that melody.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

Here we have this instrument called trompong. It also plays melody.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

This group of instruments is called gangsa. It plays ornamentation called kotekan. Kotekan is an interlocking pattern. It's a single melody line that is divided into two parts. One player will play on the on-beat and the other will play on the upbeat. The reason for this is because the tempo of the music is too fast for one player to play the entire melody. So that's why we divide them into two parts. So now we're going to start with the on-beat part first, and after that we're going to demonstrate the upbeat part.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

So here is the upbeat part now.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

Now they will play it together.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

So this instrument is called reyong. Similar to the gangsa, it also plays ornamentation called kilitan. So Andrew and [inaudible] will demonstrate the first part first.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

And now is the second part.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

Now, we're going to combine both patterns.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

So, here we have ceng-ceng. Ceng-ceng subdivides the beat into four.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

For the reyong, in addition to interlocking pattern, it also plays a percussive accent that's complimented by the ceng-ceng.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

And here, we have two drums also played in pairs. So this is similar to the interlocking in the reyong and the gangsa. One player will play on beat and the other will play on the upbeat. So please.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

Here is the upbeat part.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

Now we're going to put it together.

[Balinese Gamelan Music]

TRANSCRIPT: BALINESE MUSIC VIDEO 3: INTERVIEW: DEWA SUPARTA AND MAISIE SUM

[Howard:] First of all, let me thank you both Dewa and Maisie for doing this. Why don't we start by you just introducing yourselves. Dewa, you want to go first?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. My name is I Dewa Made Suparta, and I am from Bali, Indonesia. I've been teaching the Balinese gamelan here at Conrad Grebel University College since 2015, and as you've seen here, we have a full setup gamelan. It's called gamelan Samara Dana. It's a seven tone Balinese gamelan.

[Howard:] Great. Maisie.

[Maisie Sum:] Okay. Hi. Thanks for having us, Howard. Excited to be part of this project. So, my name is Maisie Sum. I teach at Conrad Grebel University College as well, and I codirect the gamelan with Dewa Suparta. And so, these instruments that Dewa just mentioned were purchased in 2016, and it was, it took us going to Bali to go and speak to the pande who is an instrument maker of gamelan. And so, gamelan is the Indonesian term for "orchestra" or "ensemble." And it was just a wonderful process of, you know, finding out what kind of ensemble we wanted, how many of the instruments of the Samara Dana orchestra we wanted to bring to our university. Because some universities only have a partial set or have a mostly full set but are missing a couple. And so, in our case, we had decided because of the versatility we wanted to have, Dewa is also a composer. But also we have students in this program that take composition. So, we wanted to have the kind of maximum, full range of the instruments for students to experiment on as well in their projects. So, my own involvement in gamelan has been a while, I guess, starting, well, I don't know. As a university student myself. But it's really been, I've been fortunate to learn from a culture bearer as well before Dewa coming here. But as a university student, but it really was going to Bali that opened my eyes to the culture and the experience of being there.

[Howard:] Well, the instruments there that we're seeing really look fantastic. Can we sort of talk about each one in turn and just? I know that you demonstrate them in the accompanying video that will go with this, but maybe in more of a close up kind of discussion of these instruments to start with might be helpful.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] this one called kempur actually. And like it sounds.

[Gong]

So, when we say it in Bali, it's this kempur [reverb sound]. So, that's the sound. Let me play it again.

[Gong]

And this one is called kempli.

[Gong]

[Imitating Sound]

So, that's our, the name of it is based on its sound, actually. So, this one is.

[Gong]

Kempli

Kempur, this is the male gong.

[Gong]

And this one is the female gong or gong wadon.

[Gong]

And then, after that, I would like to introduce a little bit about this instrument here next to me, the tallest one in this group of instruments. So, in the video, I didn't mention about this instrument, actually, giving a cue to start a piece sometimes. So, in Bali, we don't have, when we start a piece, we usually have a one, two, three start. It's not like that. It's just really based on very short cue. So, for example, we want to, let me demonstrate here. You can see. That for example, we need to start a piece that start a bit slower. So, we will start like.

[Music]

Just start directly like that, just based on this one. So, that's when.

[Music]

So, we want to a bit faster. The cue will be little bit more quick.

[Music]

So.

[Music]

But, so what happened, all the players learn the cue from the ugal player. So, when the ugal player gives a cue like this, that mean they already know that going to be fast piece. So, but we usually practice together for this one. So, what I mean, this instrument, the player of this instrument give a cue sometimes to start a piece. So, just based on this or if faster is going to be. Now, let's use the Gilak as an example. So, I'm going to try to play Gilak at a certain tempo. For example. Slow.

[Music]

The slow one. If I want to play fast, my cue will be a bit faster now.

[Music]

[Howard:] That's great. Thank you. Now, does everybody in the ensemble learn how to play every instrument, or do certain people specialize in certain instruments?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] You mean, here or in Bali?

[Howard:] In Bali.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Oh, in Bali. Depending. Like some people will learn all, and some people not. It's really depending on where they are. So, like when we studied at the university, so we have the chance to learn how to play all of the instruments. And actually, it's as a composer, at least in the past, it requires for you to know how to play all the instruments because it's everything that you create is based on how people going to play your piece. I'm guessing here. So, and also, yeah. Myself, yeah. We but myself, I learn all the instrument, actually.

[Howard:] So, did you learn at a university?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] I started playing since I was pretty much, I'm exposed to, I grew up surrounding the musician in my house. So, I'm, I always seeing my uncle, my cousins playing gamelan. So, when I had the chance to pick up the instrument, I will try to imitate what they just, what I just saw. Like, that's how I start. I don't even remember what year was that. So, pretty much I just pick up the mallet and start imitating the what I just saw at that time, yeah.

[Ryan:] For people that are learning the, that start learning the instruments, is there a typical progression that they would learn one instrument first or how do people decide which instrument or how is it designated what instrument they would learn first?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah. That usually just learn with one instrument only. Yeah. So, for example, like we, in Bali, we usually learn in one-on-one lessons. So, what happen like let's say, like, in my village in the past when I started playing together. So, all the kids just gather together, and then one of the teachers in our village, just decide, okay, you play on this instrument, you play on that instrument, you play on that instrument. And after the first, after a few rehearsals, so they start kind of reorganizing. Oh, I think he's good at playing this instrument. I think he's good at playing that instrument. So, based on the progression that the kid doing it at time. Yeah.

[Maisie Sum:] I can add as well. So, in the village of Pengosekan where Dewa's from, or they have a community hall called a banjar. And there is, or there had been for, there used to be a gamelan that is available for anyone in the village to access. And so, that was just placed in this community hall, open access. Things have changed more recently where it is kind of under lock and key. So, you need to request permission. So, that was a space in which children grew up hearing this music on a regular basis, whether it's rehearsals or for ceremonies or for performances or concerts. And so, children could go and afterwards, you know, play on those instruments and try out these rhythms or patterns. But Dewa also comes from a musical family, so Pengosekan village is also known as a music family. And so, when there are events going on, that village is sometimes called on to provide musical services for other communities. And so, his particular family has a sanggar, so a kind of collective where other people from the village will come to learn. So, that is the environment in which he grew up in which is, you know, why he's mentioning his uncles and his cousins and so forth. Because it really was one of those, you know, encompassing musical families.

[Howard:] Great. So, if I got this right, traditionally, the gamelan was available to everybody, but my question is who owns the gamelan, or does anybody own it?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] In the past, usually the village who own the gamelan. Yes. And usually available for anybody that from pretty much anybody that want to play it, they can ask permission, and yeah. They have the

access to it. Like, for, as Maisie mentioned before, so the gamelan usually placed in the community housing? What is it called?

[Maisie Sum:] Community hall?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] It's called bale banjar in my village, yeah. And the instrument just available in there. And although, sometimes, they don't have a mallet, so we just make our own from home or pick up some stick or whatever you can. And then just start knocking it.

[Music]

Yes. Something like that. So, just hit and down, hit and down until become natural. And yeah. And we usually have some kind of a preference. So, like, as a child, I remember when I was a child, I like to watch a Barong dance which has a very simple melody, just.

[Music]

Gong, gong, gong. So, that's what the melody, and the interlocking was gong, beat, gong, beat.

[Music]

Yeah. That's the most favourite thing that kids did when I was growing up. So, we always playing that. And sometimes, even the yeah, someone just volunteer. Oh, you should do this, you should do that. But we that's the favourite thing that we do. It's almost like, it's like the fun thing to do for us in the past. Like that. Yeah.

[Howard:] So, did you have a teacher teaching you this particularly, or you just picked up whatever you could and played?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] In the beginning, we don't really have a teacher. That's how we just play around with it first. And then, I think when I was even wrong, I was eight years old at that time. And that my teacher and also my cousins [foreign word] form a children group in my village. So, at that time, we formally start a group in the village. So, and yeah. So, that what happened. And then I actually started by playing the melody instrument first. And then, after that, I have the chance to try the more complex instrument. And then, that's how I started. And then, actually, I always had kind of not a dream, but it's a goal. When I see my cousins or my older cousins performing, it's kind of like make me wanted to be at. I want to be on that stage, too. So, that's how actually myself. That's how what is actually motivate me a lot. So, I see all my cousins on the stage, and I was watching it, and it just make me always want to play with them.

[Howard:] Okay. So, the instrument you're playing now, it designates the tempo, I think. But does it do anything else? Does it play the skeletal melody or? [Dewa Made Suparta:] This one actually play the ornament, [of] the skeleton melody. So, for example, this is the like in the Gilak for example. So, if this is the skeleton melody like this.

[Music]

Gong.

[Music]

This is the variation.

[Music]

That's one example that you can do from this instrument.

[Howard:] So, the variation that you played, is that improvised or is that composed?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] This, what I just played before, I just improvised on the spot.

[Howard:] Okay. Okay. Great. Okay. What about the other instruments that you've got there?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah, the instruments, so I hope you can see here. So, the kajar. I think it's, as I mentioned in the video demonstration, the kajar is very important in Bali because, you know, the tempo in the Balinese music often change. Sometimes there's a sudden shift in there. It true to drown that control, the tempo. But to keep everyone together, everyone have to watch the beat keeper, especially in the faster, in the fast speed, in the fast tempo of the music. So, yeah. Some people, yeah, describe that as like the heartbeat of the gamelan. Like that, yeah.

[Ryan:] So, am I right that what you're, the way you're explaining it is that the kajar player will be following the drummer for the tempo changes? [Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. Exactly.

[Ryan:] But everybody is actually focussed on the kajar in order to make it cohesive group so everybody stays together.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. Or not. It really – the drummer and the kajar, actually, they work together. That's why I want to show you these three instruments. So, when we play in Bali, what happen often. So, if I play this instrument here and the kajar player will be next to me. And sometime, as an ugal player, as this instrument. So, you make a lot of eye contact and body language with the kajar player. So, the drummer, also, this is like a triangle inter, what's the term? Interdependent when we're working together. So, the drummer give a cue to the ugal player, and the ugal player give a cue to the rest of the musicians to get loud, for example. So, we work together, and the kajar player always next to us, and then we always see our body language how to. If I want to put, let it speed up a little bit more. So, I will, the way that I will play going to be like.

[Music]

So, I will move more. If I want to slow down, I will use my mallet more to slow it down.

[Music]

There is a drummer as well to have in contact. That's why we always working together between the drummer, the ugal player, and the kajar player. And the rest of just follow that three main instruments.

[Howard:] That's very interesting. So, why does the tempo change, and who makes the decision?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Depending. If we play for, let's say, if a precomposed piece, that's already set. So, we practice where to speed up, where to slow down. But still, during the performance, you, as you might know, we will never the same because it's still based on the energy, based on the emotional aspect of it. So, the tempo is always changed. So, but, for a precomposed thing. But if we play it for accompany a dance, so in that context, the dance movement that the drummer follow. So, in that context, again, the gong involve in there. So, the gong cycle tie pretty much the cycle, and the dance movement based on the gong cycle. And then, the dance will give a cue based on the gong cycle, and then the drummer will react according to the dance, to the dancer, and then, after that, the drummer give a cue to the rest of the musicians to respond for that one. So, it really depending on in what context who decide to change the tempo for that one.

[Maisie Sum:] And some pieces are precomposed or through composed, like Dewa mentioned. But then, others, so it's scripted. But others are more improvisatory. And so, in which case, you really do have to watch the dancers, just wouldn't you say, or?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. We just have to watch everyone what the dancer. And now, to keep the music together and neatly, we have to rely on the drummer and the kajar to keep the music together, pretty much, to go up and down. And then the tempo, usually very fast for that kind of piece. At least I'm talking about

Baris or Topeng Keras, like that kind of piece. And usually, the cycle of that kind of piece is not that long, but usually, it not 8-beat cycle, is 16 beat cycle, usually, for that kind of piece.

[Ryan:] So, Maisie, when you said that it's improvised or more improvisatory, are you talking strictly just about the tempo, or is there other aspects that would be more improvised with dance music?

[Maisie Sum:] In terms of the gestures. So, there are stock movements for, I'm going to let Dewa speak to this because he also was a dancer growing up but chose the music side of things. But yeah, you have stock gestures for these dances that Dewa mentioned. But how they play out, like you were saying, adhere to the gong pattern, adhere to, you know, the melodic pattern. And so, how the dancer chooses to make those moves or which move he wants to do at which time is improvised.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Improvised.

[Maisie Sum:] Yeah.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] We, you actually are tied by the gong cycle. You cannot just make a movement in any beat. So, the music will be like broken pretty much, so.

[Maisie Sum:] Yeah, so there are, it's improvised, but there are, of course, rules, you know, when you do certain movements and when it would make sense, when it doesn't. And so, you know, there is this, at least I find as someone who has watched gamelan in Bali but also outside of Bali where there is an important interaction between the dancer and the drummer. Whereas they need to understand all of them have to be on the same page with regard to rules. And sometimes, if you have some people who are a little bit less experienced, they may not know exactly where to give that cue as a dancer because for these improvised dancers, it's really them who are usually, would you say, giving the cue?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah.

[Maisie Sum:] And sometimes it doesn't come at the moment that it's expected to, and so that can throw off people. Although, it's skilled drummer will still be able to make the best of it and respond and cover that all and, you know, bring everyone together with it. But it will be something that is picked up as by musicians that are familiar that it was not the correct kind of space to be doing that kind of movement. So, it is improvised but with rules as we know for a lot of different kinds of music. But I also want to say just with regard to the kajar, the tempo changes, that sometimes in Balinese gamelan, it's rather gradual, which is why it's important to be listening to and, you know, keeping this interdependent relationship going and everyone listening to the kajar.

But in other cases, it could be pretty kind of drastic. And so, that's why, you know, this interdependent trio is really key to having a tight performance and, you know, frequent rehearsals.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah. The frequent rehearsals, as she mentioned, is I think that's the most important aspect of the, to playing gamelan well. As maybe as you might know, the in Bali when we have a performance coming, we actually practice every day for many hours until we have everything memorized, and we, until we don't need to think about it. That's how we say it in Bali. We don't have to think about doing it anymore. But just at the end, before the performance, the level of the musician usually just about how to make the sound beautiful. Not just about I hope I don't make a mistake tonight. It's not about that, but it just about how to make it, how to make the sound beautiful tonight. Yeah.

[Howard:] What about some of the other instruments?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Other instruments. So, this instrument is let me show you it. This instrument called calung. It plays melody. So, the melody instrument actually is a bit lower. The one that play melodies actually a bit lower than the more density subdivision instrument. So, also we using the rubber mallet to play it. So, here, let, important to mention that the Balinese gamelan has a tuning system called ngumbang-isep which is the same note but slightly different in order to create ombak or beating.

[Howard:] I've read about that in books. Usually the word they use is like a shimmer.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes! Shimmering. Shimmering. Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Howard. Yes. So, yeah. So, that instrument is, can you play that one?

[Music]

It's the same note but slightly different. And then, when we play it together, it create that shimmering sound.

[Music]

So, all the gamelan, it in one set. Tune according to the same bidding pretty much. So, and also, now, I would like to mention a little bit about the basic technique of playing gamelan. So, this one, so yeah, the basic technique of playing Balinese gamelan consists of hitting and damping. So, hitting it with this one, for example.

[Music]

So I use the other hand to mute the note. So, when we hit the next note, so we hit and damp. We hit, we damp. One moment. The.

[Music]

So, we damp the previous note at the same time as we hit the next note. So, for example, if we played this two note.

[Music]

So, without mirroring the note, without damping the note, what sounds like this.

[Music]

So, we do not that sound. Traditionally, we don't want that kind of sound. We want the sound more clear. So, if we play, let's say we play five notes here for example.

[Music]

So, only one note ringing at a time. So, without damping, again, I will show you how it sounds.

[Music]

Yeah.

[Maisie Sum:] Yeah. So, the other reason is so that you can hear that ombak, that shimmer sound. So, if you're not damping, you won't be able to appreciate that beating sound that is very much appreciated. It's kind of a key aesthetic. And you might have noticed in the gong when Dewa was playing that as well, that there is a beating on its own. So, the gong itself is manufactured or made in that way so that it has its own beating without needing another instrument.

[Ryan:] I have a question about that Maisie because you've referred back to the original, to the gongs in the back. And Dewa, you were mentioning that they were, I don't know if the right way to say this is they're gendered. Or at least there's a female gong and a male gong. Is that what's happening here is that we have? How are these instruments divided among the orchestra, and is there always a set of two?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. In Bali, we believe in [foreign word]. It's a good or bad or high or low. Those

kind of thing. It's about balance here. That's why we always tune it in two different way because we believe in the beauty. You can make beauty with two differences like that. So, like the, as you mentioned, the gong has a male and female, and the tuning system called ngumbang and ngisep. So, we often pair them together. The two different thing, but when we mix them together, we can create a beauty. So, that's the concept behind it.

[Maisie Sum:] It's interesting. Sometimes, we refer to this in the gamelan world as paired tuning. And so, when the instruments start sounding in tune, according to Western ears, it's actually out of tune for the Balinese ear. And so, we want to maintain a certain beating, like Dewa was saying, throughout the entire gamelan, and often, is it tuned to the gong would you say, or is the gong chosen based on the beating of the instruments? How does that, how is that decided, if I may ask?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] So, these days when we buy a gong, we actually try to match. Because we made the gamelan first, and then we find the gong that match the rest of the ensemble. So, the process of choosing the gong can be quite challenging because it has, we have sort of kind of expectation what kind of gong we would like to have, but also, it has to match the sounds of the rest of the instruments. That's the challenging part of it. And sometime, it can take days to choose gong for gamelan. So, I and my friend in Bali, I have a good time to choose a gong for our gamelan in my group in the past. So, we pick up the gong, bring it home, and then we don't like it. We return it, and then we just keeping and doing it until we get what we wanted. But if you have a good gong, you don't want to use it too often. That's how we say. We often just keep it in the back, only for special event only. For practising or to teach a kid playing, we don't use the good gong because it's very challenging to get one, the one that match your gamelan. That's how we put it in Bali, actually.

[Maisie Sum:] And even though the technique of playing is particular, I mean, it's you know, hitting the gong, but there is a sweet spot, and so there's some gong players, technically, it's not as challenging, perhaps, as some of the faster paced instruments. But there is a sweet spot. Not everyone can quite get that sweet spot.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] It's true. Yeah. In Bali, we have a gong player where it call it gong player. They just very good at hitting the gong. It's not too loud, not too soft. It just the right, the perfect sound. So, they can create that.

[Ryan:] I have a follow up question. It may be quite short. But first I should ask when we have a pair of instruments, what do we call them? Call them a and b, or do they have a certain designation as?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah. That's why in Bali called pengumbang is the lower one. Pengisup is the higher one.

[Inaudible Comment]

[Music]

[Maisie Sum:] Dewa mentioned that it's a seven tone gamelan called Samara Dana. And Samara Dana is a new instrument that was created in 19.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] '80s.

[Maisie Sum:] 1980s that actually amalgamated two different types of instruments. One called the gamelan Gong Kebyar which is a five note scale or five tone gamelan, and then also the Semar Pegulingan which is seven toned gamelan from, you know, centuries ago. So, an old, old instrument. And so, the inventor. I Wayan Beratha

[Maisie Sum:] Yeah. I Wayan Beratha was the inventor of the Samara Dana gamelan, and so he brought those two kind of instruments together and created the Samara Dana. And you know, similar to, you know, what we're talking about in terms of acquiring the full orchestra, having those seven, the seven tones allows composers to be more innovative and also for pedagogical purposes that you're able to play the really old pieces from the Semar Pegulingan repertoire, the pieces from Gong Kebyar in the 20th century, and also these newer, modern Kreasi Baru, or new creation pieces. And so, this is the one that we just played is the selisir mode. So, we can yeah. So, it uses these five pitches, the.

[Music]

But there are other modes, right Dewa? Did you want to demonstrate?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. Yeah. Because we have two extra note in this instrument, so that's why we able to play different mode. So, the one you just heard before called selisir mode. And if we, for example, if we change just one note only, it will just, it will change the mode of the scale a lot for us in Bali. So, let's say, like, the one you just heard before, I play one, two, three, five, six that called selisir. If I played the same thing, but I do one, two, four, five, six. Let me demonstrate the one, two, three, five, six, and then one, two, four, five, six in the, It change sounds a lot, actually. So, at least for me, for us in Bali. So, like this. This is patutan selisir.

[Music]

This is patutan tembung.

[Music]

So, for example, we want to make a sweet transition by using the same melody, for example. Like.

[Music]

Because this two extra note allow us to make a moderation like that. So, the, so another instrument only have five scale, you restricted by this.

[Music]

So, that's why this instrument created. From what I heard, the creator called it Samara Dana which mean, Samara mean beauty. Dana mean richer. So, it's rich in notes, rich in sound. That's what this instrument's meaningful for the creator.

[Ryan:] That's great. Some of the, you mentioned that there would be some, or that we have a tuning system that seven note means it's been around for centuries. At least the older kind. That traditional music that would be from, you know, or not newly composed, did it modulate in the same sort of way, or [inaudible].

[Dewa Made Suparta:] No, actually. Only use one mode at a time. For example, let me use.

[Music]

The entire piece only going to base on that one only. One, two. Four, five, six. And they just going to use that one or if they use a different mode for example.

[Music]

It just going to stay in there. They only use that notes only. But nowadays, people are creating with this kind of ensemble, this kind of instrument, so they can create more modulation. They can mix all the mode in one piece.

[Ryan:] So, for the older traditional music that had a mode of seven notes or if there was a gamelan with seven notes available, would composers be using all seven notes, or would they typically be making a selection of five notes for a mode?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] They making a selection of five note, four note.

[Ryan:] And that's typical. Is there a reason for that, why the music would only stay within five notes, or?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] The older pieces, for example, was Semar Pegulingan often plays for a dance drama. So, in every dance, in every mode, for us in Bali has a different function. For example, if we need to accompany, let's say, a minister. It's a male and strong dance. So, we will use a mode that called tembung. The one that I just showed you before.

[Music]

So, we will use that mode. So, yeah, it's important for me to mention here. So, now, I'm going to demonstrate, it's the same melody, but it has a different function. The same melody but using a different mode, it can be for a different function like that. For example, as I mentioned, for a minister, for example, this is a strong, male dance. It's going to be, let's say.

[Music]

So, we're going to use that mode. So, this is for a minister, for example.

[Music]

So, we will use that mode. So, now, use the same melody, but using a different mode can be for a villager, a villager. I mean, like a little bit funny. It's more like a we call [foreign word]. It's like a funny thing in Bali, but we use the same melody but in a different mode.

[Music]

So, we make a little bit faster using a different mode. And then, yeah. For more traditional pieces, so when we choose a mode, the mode itself has a correlation to what kind of mood that we try to create in there. I hope I say it well there.

[Ryan:] Yeah. That's very interesting. That's, yeah, very interesting.

[Maisie Sum:] In Bali, there's a big, you know, we have instrumental music. You have music for dance, but you also have dance drama. And so, very much, I guess, similar to opera is here or in the Western European world. That's a large part of their practice as well, and there still are the older traditional instruments that I mentioned Semar Pegulingan and the people continue to use. But many also just use these newer instruments now to play. Right. So, the dance drum I have all these different characters that Dewa mentioned. Not unlike,

say, Shakespearean play where you have a jester. So, the villager acts kind of like the jester, and so that music will be symbolic of that particular character. And you know, Balinese people listening will recognize right away by listening to that melody and hearing that mode that that, you know, there's going to be a villager that's coming out now soon, too, to talk and sing a bit and dance a bit. And vice versa. So, they'll know that mode is being played and the minister will enter the scene again, and so forth.

[Ryan:] And so, is it typical even outside of drama that we would have these shared melodies where we would have the same melody and, I guess, this is a sequence of pitches between one and five. I don't know if I'm explaining that the right way. But we would have these shared melodies that would be transposed into different modes. Is that typical of every genre, or is that just, where would we hear that?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] I think we, you can, we can find this in many different ensemble actually in Bali, the same melody, just in a different mode. And then, they just change the tempo a little bit. I can be for different function like that, for example.

[Maisie Sum:] I was just going to add to Dewa saying how you can find these melodies in different instruments. I also, it brought to mind how similar melodies become transformed when a composer will teach it to a different, let's say, gamelan ensemble. And so, we're going back to this idea of tuning. We talked about how the instruments are, you know, tuned in pairs. But I also wanted to mention that all the gamelan are uniquely tuned. Every gamelan ensemble is uniquely tuned. And so, that means there's no other ensemble that really sounds exactly like the ensemble we have here. And so, even if you start with the same, let's say, frequency. Everyone has the same thing. It will move and change over time a little bit. But essentially, what happens is Dewa will speak more to this or can speak more to this with regard to how they choose this pitch. But every village gamelan or ensemble might have a slightly different tuning. And they can vary quite a bit by, you know, a whole note or more than. And what happens is, and I've read about this, I've heard stories, and maybe Dewa can say more as well. Where when a composer comes and is commissioned to teach a piece and/or to teach a piece that they've taught to another ensemble, they sometimes might change that piece, and it'll still go by the same name. And sometimes, as a listener not familiar with it, we might wonder, well, why is it still the same piece? And part of it, from my understanding is that it has to do with how that particular village or group has their instruments tuned. I remember us talking months about that with regards to some of the older pieces.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah. One composer, I Wayan Lotring for example. When he was composing a piece called Gamangan for the group in Denpasar and group from Gianyar, he just created two completely different piece, but he call it the same name. Because of the, from what I have read, because of the gamelan in Denpasar tuning is a lot lower than the one in Gianyar, for example. So, he just changed completely his piece, not just the melody, the tempo, the trying to make it just sound like two different pieces, actually. But it's the same name, the same idea. Just because of the tuning system, the tuning of the gamelan are very different, might be also

the player's technique a bit different. Like that, yeah. You know, when in Bali, when the gamelan tuning is a bit higher, it can sound a bit faster sometimes. When it higher, when the tuning is higher when you play a bit faster, it's going to sound a bit more clear. When the tuning lower, when you create something a bit slower, it can sound a bit more expanse. So, the tuning very high is sometimes when I play fast, you can hear it very clear. But the low tuning, when you play too fast, it can be a bit blurry like that for us in the way that we hear it in Bali sometimes.

[Ryan:] Well, that strikes two follow up questions for me, and so I can remind you of the second if you want to answer the first one. Maisie, you said that Dewa could speak to why certain villages or certain regions might choose a certain tuning system or way of tuning the gamelan versus one. That would be, I would like to hear you speak to that. I would also like to hear your perspective as a composer when a piece is changed, like you said, to change a melody or to change these parts that we would think are essential for defining a musical unit like a composition, what is it that still makes them the same composition if they sound completely different?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Let me answer your question from the first question first. That how the village decide what tuning to chose. It's really depending on who's the leader at that time in the village. For example, like the tuning, I can speak for the gamelan tuning that I have in my group in my house. So, this is based on my uncle. So, the reasons why he choose the tuning like what we have at home, it's similar to the one that we have here, actually. So, this gamelan was based on the tuning system, the gamelan tuning that I have in my house in Bali. So, this one is the reasons why we choose this one is a bit higher and also a bit closer between one note to another. So, the reason for that, because we have a seven tone, so we can make a modulation more smoothly, at least for our taste and from my family for taste for that one. So, for example, this one.

[Music]

[Singing]

Some tuning can be a broader.

[Singing]

So, they can expand it, so in one note to another, it's a bit broader. So, in this particular tuning, we actually, we choose a bit closer.

[Singing]

So, when we come modulation, it's going to be sound not too far from one note to another. So, that's the

reason why my uncle choose this tuning, actually. And then, some, from what I heard, because they just do one to play sort of kind of this is only that only required the high tuning, the high tuning gamelan. So, they just choose, oh, let's just make the gamelan very high. Based on that, who's the leader, I mean, who's the leader of the group in that village. Because they usually decide. And sometimes, people just give it like a bland, they just trust the gamelan maker. Okay. Just make whatever, so they're going to accept. And sometimes, like that. But mostly, these days, people will choose, oh, I want a gamelan similar to that gamelan. So, we choose that often.

[Ryan:] And so, is there a somewhat of a process where the gamelans are becoming more similar to one another, or are they still, or is there still a very large variance in pitch?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] It's still very large. It's still very large variety right now, because it just, as Maisie mentioned before, it's very hard to duplicate a tuning of a gamelan that's already exists for a long time. It's a lot of people want to have a gamelan, for example. Like there's a well-known group in Bali called Gamelan [foreign word]. They have a very high tuning system, high pitched tuning system. And gamelan maker trying to imitate that, but in the end, ten years old metal and the new metal will not sound all the same way. And it doesn't produce the same sound. So, yeah, people trying to imitate the sort of tuning.

[Maisie Sum:] And there is a certain degree of [inaudible] and you know, that there is a standardization with regard to the newer gamelans that are being made. I think the village gamelans continue to exist, and so there remains that variety of the different types of tuning. But the newer ones, or maybe particularly the ones that come to North America might be a little bit more standardized. Would you say that, too, Dewa, or?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. For practical reason. For example, like this gamelan tuned the same way as my gamelan in my house. So, just in case one key broken, it's easier for me to get another replacement. I just, the note number seven the same as my gamelan at home. I want to mention, so the it called petuding. What is that? The way that the gamelan maker make the tuning is by using a bamboo called petuding. Yeah. So, that one is like it's a piece of bamboo. At least this is in the past. So, they use that. It's a piece of bamboo, and sound like.

[Singing]

So, they will sort of, you know, over time, bamboo can change. So, for example, like ten years old bamboo not sound the same anymore like when it new. So, if you order the same gamelan, I want that gamelan. So, the tuning is already changed, so of course, the gamelan maker will make like what he has.

[Ryan:] The tuning that you've chosen, I think speaks to a kind of a practical nature of modulating which is interesting. What other reasons, why would somebody choose a different tuning system that might be with larger gaps between notes or with a different set of notes?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] If I think just taste. I cannot speak for other people, but from what I heard from another village that close to my village just because of the taste. They just like gamelan that has a lower tuning so they can play more piece called lalambatan in Bali. That's a slower tempo piece. Like there for some villager, they like to play a little bit more slower pieces, so they choose the tuning that a bit lower. Sometimes just that.

[Ryan:] As in the tuning might kind of reflect the repertoire of pieces that they prefer to play or, yeah?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. Yes. One type of gamelan called Gong Gede in Bali. It means the big ensemble, is about require about 60 people to play it. And actually, the tuning is very low. It can be like one note lower than this one. So, this one is.

[Music]

[Singing]

Can be that low the tuning. It's almost, yeah. That's one note lower. It can be two sometimes. The, and the piece usually very slow for this kind of gamelan, and they don't play interlocking similar to this one, but they just most of the instruments playing a melody. And some of them are playing more one note every beat. Some of them one note every two beats. And some instrumentally play one note every four beat, and it just expand like that. But it's usually the tuning is very low for that kind of instrument.

[Ryan:] I would like to return to the second question, if I could, which was composer would have the same piece but be changing it drastically. So, the question is whether there is an exact answer or at least from your perspective as a composer, what is it when a composer will change some aspects like the melody so drastically they sound different. What is it that makes them the same piece?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] It's actually the skeleton of the piece as, are the same.

[Ryan:] So, it's just the skeletal melody, and then it would be what other parts of it that change?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] The variation of it change, and then the ornamentation of it and the tempo, the, it just make everything sound completely different piece, but actually the skeleton of it are the same.

[Ryan:] Interesting. And so, would members of the culture recognize the pieces the same, or is that also something that most people recognize as something different? [Dewa Made Suparta:] In Bali, when one particular piece composed for certain village, they just call it, oh, this is let's say this is that style. They call it

a style Denpasar. Or this is style Singaraja. Like that, for example. It's the piece become like identity where it from, like that, for example. For example, there is a Kebyar Duduk in, the piece called Kebyar Duduk is from west region of Bali, and then there's a Kebyar Duduk created in east region of Bali. So, they are both Kebyar Duduk composed by the same composer but just the variation of it very different. Like that.

[Ryan:] That's interesting. So, the identity of the sound is bound to or is informed by the tuning and by the kinds of choices that are based on scales and the instruments available. I'm just, maybe I'm making more of a comment. I can see a lot of connections there between something that's musical and repertoire and the identity of a particular area.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah. I think also important to mention here because what happen often, the piece also taught by the composer itself. That's why they able to do that. So, it's nothing written down, and then, so usually the composer the one who teach it directly. So, they just, they change the piece all the time from one spot to another spot, depending on the context, depending on the tuning of the gamelan, and also because of the ability of the musician to play the piece. Then, for at least for myself, if I compose something, if I see the musician is very good, for example, I'm going to try to use their ability. What can I do best for them? What they can, what I mean like, what kind of thing that they can do best, you use that as, take advantage of that for your piece. For example, if it on the other side, if you have the player not that skilful, you will try to work something around it, how to make your piece sound nice with limited kind of technique. So, like, as a composer in Bali, we work with those kind of, we work with those kind of aspect a lot, actually. So, we just based on what we have in front of us, that's how we work around it.

[Maisie Sum:] Yeah, it seems like in Bali, the composers are very adaptable, you know, based on a particular context that you're seeing, Ryan, in the situation. That the key is to, Dewa was saying in the beginning to make a piece sound beautiful. And so, that beautiful, the beauty can manifest in these different ways, depending on the different skill levels, different tuning, also different style of playing. And so, you know, from north Bali to south Bali, you know, often there is this difference in the way they play, their technique of playing. And it's not to say it's a good or, you know, bad. It's just a different way of articulating or interpreting music.

[Ryan:] I like that a lot. I just want to say I think that way of thinking is something we all can learn from, the very inclusive nature of being musical and making something happen with what we have available is a great way to think about making music together.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. Actually, the composer in Bali, they actually sing the piece first before they teaching it. So, they kind of have some kind of expectation before they arrive where they teach. As I mentioned before, all gamelan slightly different tuning. So, what you think at home by singing on your voice, it's not going to sound the same when you get there. So, in that case, at least for myself, I would tweak something to make

it work, sounds like what I expect in that, for that particular gamelan. So, yeah, the composer in Bali often see those kind of situation. So, they have to adapt themselves. They have to adapt their composition according to tuning system and the certain way of people playing the instrument from that particular group like that. So, let me give an example, for example. This tuning, I'm very comfortable with this tuning because I hear this in my house 24/7 pretty much. So, when I singing a gamelan, my tune was just stuck.

[Music]

So, I just get used to this kind of tuning and also because it's easy, it's very comfortable for my voice. So, some village might be have a lower tuning system, and they get used to that kind of tuning. So, let's say if I compose a melody here, for example.

[Music]

So, for this gamelan work for me. Let's say now, if the gamelan tuning is.

[Music]

[Singing]

Maybe that doesn't sound nice. Let's just change it. Instead of.

[Music]

You move a note higher.

[Music]

So, it just trick a little bit to make it work. But what happen often is the, we were surrounding it by you didn't want to change the melody. We just change the ornamentation of it and change the dynamic and the tempo of it. It can make a big difference between what we thought and what we can do on the spot. Like that, for example.

[Ryan:] And so, as a composer, are those kinds of decisions when you're doing that as part of the teaching and developing the composition, are those kinds of things planned out, and then handed down to the performers? Or are those things improvised on the spot?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Usually planned from home, but what we change on the spot sometimes that is just spontaneously. And that happen quite often, actually. Yeah. One particular composer in Bali, for example, like my teacher in the past when I was at university. He pretty much composed like in front of us. It's not even prepared. He just like mimicking something in front of us like.

[Singing]

And then, he just stopped teaching us on the front. But in that case, you have to have a very good musician. The musician have to have a very good memory. They have to have a good memory in order to memorize what the composer idea that time. Because it's, they just teach you there. You have to get it right away. Otherwise, it is going to be gone already. That's the good thing, these days, with all the technology that we have. Like we have recorder because it's like myself for example, if I have an idea, I just use my phone, and I just sing it. And later, I play it back because that kind of idea can just disappear in the blink of an eye. You're not going to remember anymore like that. Yeah. So, also, some composer in Bali write down their stuff, but the more traditional composer, they actually sing it first and then write it down. That written down is not all the detail. It just maybe just the skeleton. And the rest of it is just they going to compose it on the spot like that, for example.

[Maisie Sum:] And sometimes, it's almost like the, again, picking up on the strength of the musicians. It's almost like something like that is spontaneously done because it's created with the musicians and what they're able to bring to that skeleton melody. So, what they hear and what they think might sound good. So, sometimes, it's almost like a collaborative composition in some ways, and also in the way that the composer, some composers, I should say, rely on, like Dewa was saying, the memory of the musicians to retain it. I remember playing in Bali, and there was this amazing, amazing composer, but he did not have a memory for even his own pieces, and he would say that straight out. And say that he's counting on us because he won't remember the next time. And so, there is an onus placed on musicians by certain composers, not all.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah, that particular composer actually is like when he composed for certain group, his piece can be very amazing and can be, if you, if there is not that good group playing his piece can be not that good. Because of they just cannot memorize what his idea is that. So, the musician have to be like very quick to memorize everything. To memorize the composer's idea in that context.

[Ryan:] And so, are all of the parts that are in the gamelan, I know that, and I'm thinking of the video that you made. You described some parts as melody, which I think were either skeletal melodies or, you know, melodic lines. You used some terms that were ornamentation. You used one that was called kotekan and another one that was kilitan. I don't know if I'm pronouncing.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Kilitan, yes. Kilitan.

[Ryan:] So, of those different parts or, and I'm sure that there's more, this part where there's the exchange between the performer and the composer. Is it for all of the parts, or for some of them, and which ones?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] The whole thing, pretty much. Yeah, because we, as you seen in the video demonstration is between one instrument and the other actually is linked. So, there is a connection between one to the other. So, when the composer has an idea between they create the melody first, for example, and the melody player have to memorize that part right away on the spot. And then, based on that, that he can develop his composition on the spot. Because he already memorized it, okay, and then while you're repeating it, and then the composer come out with new idea sometimes. Because the process of teaching it, it's important for me to mention, might be they break it up into like eight-beat cycle only. And then, they add another eight-beat cycle. So, while you learn that eight-beat cycle, and then they ask you to, let's repeat. And while you're repeating, while you repeat the part that he just did, he just taught. And then, he can think about a new idea how to make an ornamentation based on this melody right now. So, sometimes myself, for example, when I teach, that, I'm in that situation quite often, actually. So, I teach the, let's say my student an eight-beat cycle, and let's repeat until you memorize it. While they're repeating that section, and then I'm thinking about I should do this now with the other instruments. So, yeah. The, we, in Bali, we work with this kind of situation often. That's why the good, the musician has a good memory, but it important for us in Bali. It has to be. So, yeah. Otherwise, it's you have to write down your piece. You cannot create thing on the spot because it's going to take too much time to create something.

[Ryan:] That's great. Maybe we could move on to some of these questions about tempo changes and. [Dewa Made Suparta:] Okay.

[Ryan:] Accelerandos and so, if you would, if you wouldn't mind maybe switching over to the drum. [Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah.

[Ryan:] So, what's the name of the drum, how is it played, and what's the relationship between or how is it used to signal tempo changes?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. This drum called kendang in Balinese. So, the basic technique of playing it is we use the left hand to make sound which is closed here.

[Drumbeat]

Like that. And the bigger one played.

[Drumbeat]

One moment. We should have to repeat. The drum is too high right now.

[Drumbeats]

There you go. So, yeah, so yeah. This is called kendang. It's as I mentioned in video demonstration, it's the leader of the gamelan. So, the drum will give a cue to change in dynamic and tempo. It can be by using a pattern or body language in order to give a cue to the rest of the musician. So, we're going to use Gilak as an example, an eight-beat cycle here, and then how do we give a cue for the rest of the musician to get loud, for example, here. So, in this context, because an eight-beat cycle, we're going to be.

[Music]

And then, the rest of the musician usually get loud on the gong. So, they're going to get louder. Gong. So, then, and the cue have to be before that. That's where the drum come in to give a cue for that one. So, let's see. If a play a regular pattern, it's like called Gilak.

[Singing]

So, if I'm going to give a cue, it's going to be.

[Singing]

And everyone gets loud on the gong. It's like that. So, let's demonstrate that right now. Three and four and.

[Music]

And everyone get loud in that gong cycle.

[Ryan:] Is there a term? What are those called, the patterns that you're using and the variant patterns?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] It called Gilak pattern this one. So, the skeleton of it is three and four and.

[Music]

But when we play it in context, we're not just going to play it plain like that. We're going to add the, every time there's a gap, we add a little bit. We call it [foreign word] in Bali which mean it's not the, it child. [Foreign word] mean child. So, we cannot play drum like this in Bali.

[Drumbeat]

We will play it.

[Drumbeats]

That is too clean. So, instead, we're going to play.

[Drumbeats]

So, it will never be.

[Drumbeat]

Like that, but usually when we want to make the note da is going to be.

[Drumbeats]

So, we add the de before the da. So, for example, we're going to play.

[Singing]

Like that. Three and four and.

[Music]

[Ryan:] And so, what kind of pattern would you play if you were going to be changing tempo?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] If I want to change tempo, I, not the pattern that make the, in the Gilak, so we just play it louder, and everyone will get loud. If we want to play faster, in this context, depending what pattern that we play. So, in this context, I'm using my left hand. So, I just go ahead of the beat. Okay. Let's, as an example here. If I want to play regular beat. If I want to keep the beat steady, this what I'm going to do. Three and four and.

[Music]

So, if I want to speed it up, three. I'm going to try to go ahead of the beat a little bit intentionally like this. Three and four and.

[Music]

So, I'm using the pattern and also a body language try to push it. Let me demonstrate it again. Three and four and.

[Music]

So, if I want to be softer, so I just use my body language like that.

[Ryan:] What other kind of things do you do as a drummer to lead the ensemble? [Dewa Made Suparta:] So, for example, to start a piece, maybe you've seen, yeah to start a piece, we use a drum or usually give a cue for the rest of the musicians to just to pick up the mallet. So, we just.

[Drumbeat]

Very subtle, and then the rest of the musicians will pick up their mallet like that. And then, another gesture, for example. To play, let's say we wanted to play faster, similar to when I played here before. I'm going to use a gesture like that to play go faster, go faster. Let me show you a little bit as an example. Let's play the regular pattern. This is when I, in context, if I play as solo drum, not with a mallet. So.

[Drumbeat]

I'm using my hand. So, three and four and.

[Music]

So, that's to get loud. Now, if I want to, if I would like to speed up the tempo, let's keep it steady first. Three and four and.

[Music]

[Ryan:] And so, are you speeding up the tempo, or is that all that you're doing for a gesture to signal those changes, or is there anything else happening? You mentioned the body language as well.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah. To change in tempo and also changing in dynamic. Sometime, I'm using, I use, we use a lot of this tune, tuning the pak in order to make the tempo speed up or slow down or to make dynamic louder or softer. And also it follow by the body langue as well. So, for example, this is if we wanted to speed up, so I will use my body like.

[Drumbeats]

Like that. To speed it up, and if I wanted to make it to slow it down.

[Drumbeats]

So, to slow it down, and to make it loud.

[Drumbeats]

So, sometimes, they're going to get loud in there. And if I want to make it softer.

[Music]

Somethings like that.

[Maisie Sum:] And it's a lot of rehearsal together to really get the timing right. One of the key things, too, in playing in the ensemble in my own learning is just always kind of starting together on time, breathing together, exhaling together. So, you know, even when we finish a gesture, if what you watch Balinese gamelan performers, you know, they end at the same time. So, everything is choreographed, but in a way that is natural or seems natural to me because of the, you know, intensive rehearsals that they have. Like Dewa was saying, before they perform.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah. Yeah. Also, important for me to mention here, so the way that I give a cue with the people that I play for long time. The player that I grow up with, it's very subtle. Sometimes, if you not familiar with the music, you can even notice that I am, that we actually giving a cue. But very different when I teach, let's say, a student here, for example. My cue have to be very clear. So, what I'm showing you before, that is more like the exaggerate version of what we're doing in Bali, but when I teach here, my cue will be like what I just demonstrate before. And to get loud.

[Drumbeat]

So, very loud and very, you can see it very clear. But if I play with my group, it sounds like I'm playing a pattern, but it doesn't look like a cue.

[Drumbeats]

That's already loud beat because we practice a lot. So, just very little, subtle cue that you give. They just, they will respond it very well. That's, yeah. From one player to another player can be very different cue as well. So, this is the way that I give a cue.

[Howard:] You know, tuning is so important, and you know the actual pitches are so important. I was just wondering about who makes the gamelan, and because it's so important, do they have a special status in Balinese society?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yes. The only people, maybe you might know. We still have a caste system in Bali which is a Brahmana, Kshatriyas, Wesia, and Sudra. So, like, this kind of social symbolism in the past, and then even these days, we still use that system. But the pande, the gamelan maker, or the, they also make other type of metal thing. So, they only particular kind of people can make gamelan in Bali. So, that is called pande caste in Bali. Their house is, they the only family allowed to have a fire, a big fire in order to melt the metal. So, it has to be a special type of a family in order to make the gamelan. So, I'm not allowed to build that in my house, at least for what it used to in the culture. Yeah. So, I'm not allowed to melt the metal in my house. It's not the right thing to do, and also it can be very hot. In Bali, the weather is already very hot, and then if you boil something like try to melt metal in your house can be very hot. So, yeah. So, their house is usually equipped for melting metal. So, it's only, yeah. It's a one type of caste in Bali making the gamelan called pande.

[Maisie Sum:] I was going to say but the pande, the gamelan maker, also their house is distinct. Right. They have a particular colour or gate.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Red usually. Their house is colour in red. The gate is red already. So, yeah.

[Maisie Sum:] Yeah. So, they do have a, I would say, a special status in society in that their houses, the gates. So, in Bali, people live in house compounds. And so, every house compound usually will have a, you know, a gate and a wall around that perimeter. And so, you can recognize in a village if that village has a pande by the red coloured wall.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah. Usually brick. Their wall is made of brick. That is red, so yeah.

[Maisie Sum:] Yeah, and so this is, so then, because of this and of course the secrets of the blacksmith or gamelan makers are passed on from one generation to the next.

[Howard:] Do they do that with families, or can anybody do it?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Within the family.

[Maisie Sum:] Yeah, so it's a lineage.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah. A lineage. Yeah. Yeah, sorry.

[Maisie Sum:] No, go ahead.

[Dewa Made Suparta:] I can learn how to tune it, but I don't think in Bali people will appreciate that, actually. Because I'm not from that caste.

[Maisie Sum:] Yeah. And we met with, of course, the gamelan maker and even had some conversations with them about the tuning. And there's certain things that they, I think, were pretty up front in saying that they can't say or can't share with us. And so, it still is a tradition that's, it's very, you know, private and maintained only within their lineage. And actually, the gong makers are different than the gamelan makers. Some gamelan makers make gongs, too. Do they?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] Yeah. But in Bali, they only make the small one for the reyong only. But most of the gong these days is from Java, actually.

[Ryan:] Why is that?

[Dewa Made Suparta:] I think it's big and very big, and then maybe we don't have a source of metal in Bali. All the raw material is come from Java. So, it's issue for them to get the access from there. Yeah.

PRESSBOOKS ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Adapted from BC Campus pressbook statements

Accessibility Statement

The University of Guelph believes that education must be available to everyone; this means supporting the creation of free, open, and accessible educational resources. We are actively committed to increasing the accessibility and usability of the textbooks and resources we produce.

Accessibility features of the web version of this resource

The web version of *Beyond the Classroom: World Music from the Musician's Point of View* has been designed with accessibility in mind by incorporating the following features:

- It has been optimized for people who use screen-reader technology.
  - all content can be navigated using a keyboard.
  - links, headings, and tables are formatted to work with screen readers.
  - images contain alt tags and link to longer image descriptions when necessary.
- Information is not conveyed by colour alone.
- Embedded videos have closed captions and full transcripts

Other file formats available

In addition to the web version, this book is available in a number of file formats including PDF, EPUB (for eReaders), and various editable files. Here is a link to where you can download this book in another file format. Look for the "Download this book" drop-down menu to select the file type you want.

Print Version

If you are using the print version of this resource, you can find a full list of links referenced in this resource and their web addresses in the back matter of the book in the "List of Links by Chapter".

Known accessibility issues and areas for improvement

While we strive to ensure that this resource is as accessible and usable as possible, we might not always get it right. Any issues we identify will be listed below. There are currently no known issues.

Accessibility standards

The web version of this resource has been designed to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, level AA. In addition, it follows all guidelines in Appendix A: Checklist for Accessibility of the *Accessibility Toolkit – 2nd Edition*.

Let us know if you are having problems accessing this guide

We are always looking for ways to make our resources more accessible. If you have problems accessing this resource, please contact us to let us know, so we can fix the issue.

Please include the following information:

- The location of the problem by providing a web address or page description
- A description of the problem
- The computer, software, browser, and any assistive technology you are using that can help us diagnose and solve your issue
    - e.g., Windows 10, Google Chrome (Version 65.0.3325.181), NVDA screen reader

You can contact us at:

- Email: info@OpenEd.uoguelph.ca

This statement was last updated on February 28, 2022.