

ENSEMBLE MODERN

FRANKFURT

Deutsche Post AG

ENTGELT BEZAHLT

60316 FRANKFURT 102

No.13 10/2003

Ensemble Modern

Schwedlerstraße 2-4

D-60314 Frankfurt

Fon +49 (0) 69-943 430 20

Fax +49 (0) 69-943 430 30

<http://www.ensemble-modern.com>

e-mail:info@ensemble-modern.com



COMPROVISATION ... MAYBE A LITTLE BIT OF BOTH



Indische Virtuosen komponieren für das Ensemble Modern

Im Rahmen eines ungewöhnlichen und großangelegten Projektes mit dem Titel „Rasalila“, was übersetzt etwa „Spiel der Gefühle“ bedeutet, brachte der deutsch-indische Komponist Sandeep Bhagwati die indischen Virtuosen Shubha Mudgal, Ganesh Anandan, Uday Bhawalkar, Dhruva Ghosh, Aneesh Pradhan und Ashok Ranade mit dem Ensemble Modern zusammen. Nach einem Besuch des EM in Mumbai im Januar 2002 und einer weiteren Arbeitsphase, für die die sechs Musiker im Mai 2003 nach Frankfurt kamen, werden ihre Werke nun im November im Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin uraufgeführt. Für beide Seiten stellte Rasalila ein Wagnis dar, da niemand zuvor einzuschätzen vermochte, wie sich die Zusammenarbeit entwickeln, was entstehen würde. Nach der ersten Arbeitsphase befragte Jagdish Mistry die indischen Gäste nach Unterschieden im Musizieren und den damit verbundenen Möglichkeiten.

Ensemble Modern: The conventional wisdom is that Indian classical music and Western classical music are worlds apart and that any attempt to come together in anyway would lessen the strength of one or the other. In our short time together have you found any points of reference or points of departure for further exploration which contradict this idea?

Dhruva Ghosh: There are certain borders which have to be respected mutually. But there are doorways through which either side may walk through, enjoy, react, enrich the other's music or at the least oneself. I shall restrict myself only from the Indian standpoint: In the dimension of melody, fairly common grounds exist so far as the twelve tones are concerned. However, the striking difference begins with the micro-tonal system used in India. This is known as the shruti system. These are microtones actually performed after years of practice

and special listening. These give rise to a special energy and therefore an emotion or an artistic / poetic experience when performed. This can also be under-

stood as a feeling of elevatedness directly influenced by the use of shruti and the moves between notes.

These moves are the most sensitive activity in Indian classical music. They are broadly called gamakas encompassing MEEND (glissando or slur), ANDOLAN (subtle oscillation, etc).

The concept of development of a Raga performance is the next point

of difference. Then comes the domain of rhythm, the cyclic nature of the Indian concept known as Tala. This creates its own energy field wherein one can very easily see the flowing in and flowing out of energy. The compositions resting on these time-cycles, using their abstract phono-syllables are works of poetry in sonic art. There is not any literal language and therefore cannot be used to convey any messages or communications. They exist for their own poetic beauty and can be felt and experienced by a listener from any world Indian or Western.

Uday Bhawalkar: The delivery of content in two musical forms is influenced by cultural issues. The way of expressing feelings – for example, in Dhrupad, meend, gamak, Ghaseet,

Lehak, Dagar, Hudak (Upper, Lower) can be explored in the context of Western composition. Improvisation in Indian Classical music may be assessed for inclusion in Western musical performance. Musical techniques used for the representation of imagery could be explored further. People appreciate music if they can relate it to their moods and images. Communication with the audience

is the key to the success in an Indian Classical music concert. Much would depend upon audience response. Based on the experience at EM, one can say that the



interpretation of Indian themes by Western musicians inspired me to create further e.g.: replacing Tanpura by a harp in dhrupad performance.

EM: From the instruments presented by the EM have you found any instrument that is really far away from the Indian musical sensibility? Or put another way, is there an instrument that you will definitely not be using – and why?

Aneesh Pradhan: The Indian musical sensibility has grown to be quite composite with strains of various musical systems floating in from all sides. These may have been peripheral to Indian music, but most Western instruments have been heard in India in performance or on recordings. I, therefore, did not feel any instrument was far removed from my own sensibility and I was open to using any instrument.



Uday Bhawalkar: I don't find a horn or a trumpet suitable from an Indian musical perspective. However, here we need to consider that those Western musical instruments which

may not be suitable for playing Indian classical music, may find a suitable place in other Indian musical forms.

Dhruba Ghosh: Except for the string instruments (bowed), and wind (non-key) instruments and drums (capturing rhythmic concepts), all the other instruments are not adept at including the glissando or the oscillation.

So theoretically speaking these are not part of the Indian sensibility. But if one transcends these fundamental techniques and reaches out for the essence or the effect caused by these techniques, then it more or less leads to the same goal. There-

fore it depends on the sensibility of the musician to use his instrument to a different kind of musical purpose. Music, like Magic uses manipulations, illusion, camouflage and power of volume ranging from the loud to the whisper. Therefore in the hands of a highly skilled musician, virtually a vast range of musical depiction can be handled.



ser and performer is not altogether alien to India. Even so, it gives a different perspective when listening to one's composition without being a part of the performing ensemble. It gives one a more objective view of the composition and enables the composer to make changes in the composition. Unfortunately, the lack of time and opportunity to have full-length rehearsals with the Ensemble Modern, did not allow me to take advantage of this possibility. But I am sure the few rehearsals that we will have in Frankfurt leading up to the performances, will help me in this respect.

EM: In Indian music the composer and performer are the same person. In writing music for the EM with the inevitable separation are there any striking limits and freedoms that arise?

Ganesh Anandan: Western composers who write

parts for many people have obviously spent a lot of time studying arrangement and learning the art of doing so. The Indian musician / composer in a soloist tradition puts emphasis on micro tonal slides, melody, rhythm and improvisation when he or she composes. So an Indian musician composing for the EM is a daunting task considering the foreign language

and instruments and he or she will probably resort to working with familiar elements.



EM: For this project we have had “scribes” who have listened to your musical ideas and transcribed them to Western notation. Has this process brought up any surprises, pleasant and unpleasant?

Ganesh Anandan: There have been surprises both pleasant and unpleasant but generally for me the whole experience has been very positive. In the end I don't think we are going to play Indian or Western contemporary music either, but maybe a little bit of both and somehow during this process bridge gaps and try to find common ground to explore and develop.

I have been living in Canada and over the years I have become familiar with the reality of writing down parts for musicians. In terms of communicating Indian concepts and ideas it is still not obvious or easy to do so on a written score. Although some elements are common to both systems like themes, rhythm, cycles, coda and cadential material, the improvisatory nature of

Aneesh Pradhan: While the combination of the two roles can be seen in traditional Indian forms, it's not always true of popular music or other forms of music. Consequently, the concept of separate roles for compo-

Indian music is one of the keys to the development of a composition – in fact it is like “Comprovisation“ if I can use that word! So in my composition there are written parts and three ambient sections with recorded environmental sounds in which there will be improvisation. In the improvised sections there will be notation such as play-bird calls and



the buzzing of cicadas. Certain instrumentalists will also be asked to listen to the environmental sounds and react to it in his or her own way. While this is going on there will be short composed cells of material that two musicians would be asked to be played in unison wherever they choose to.

RASALÎLA -- Spiel der Gefühle

von Sandeep Bhagwati (gekürzte Fassung)

Der musikalische Austausch zwischen Indien und Europa hat Tradition – dennoch ist er bisher ziemlich einseitig verlaufen. Westliche Komponisten waren begeistert von indischer Kunstmusik – und ignorierten Indiens große populäre Traditionen. Indische Musiker dagegen fanden westlichen Pop viel interessanter als Beethoven und Boulez.

Der Faszination der Abendländer stand ein völliges Desinteresse indischer klassischer Musiker für die klassische wie die Neue Musik des Westens gegenüber. Indien ist tatsächlich die einzige Kunstmusiktradition, die sich dem Universalanspruch der westlichen Kunstmusik erfolgreich widersetzt und einen parallelen globalen klassischen Musikbetrieb aufgebaut hat. Lediglich die Begegnung von Jazzmusikern mit auf halber Kraft cruisenden indischen Virtuosen sowie der hemmungslos-kreative Raubzug der Bollywood-Komponisten in den Klangarchiven des Westens konnten über diese Kluft hinwegtäuschen. Der musikalische West-Ost-Austausch hat mit Indien bisher nicht stattgefunden. East meets West hieß: Der Westen lernt den Osten verstehen. Eine produktive Auseinandersetzung eines Sitarpielers mit

Brahms oder Ligeti, eine graphisch notierte Komposition eines Dhruwad-Sängers, geschrieben für Neue-Musik-Virtuosen? Schon die Vorstellung erschien grotesk. Westliche klassische Musik spielt in Indien heute keine Rolle im Konzertleben. Und noch vor wenigen Jahren beschied man mir auch hierzulande, allein der Gedanke daran, indischen Musikern etwas von der westlichen Avantgarde vermitteln zu wollen, sei blanker Kulturimperialismus ...

RASALÎLA versucht dennoch, einen neuen Ansatz für den musikalischen Dialog zwischen Indien und dem Westen zu finden. In einem jahrelangen Prozess haben sich indische klassische Musiker mit den Konzepten und der Praxis zeitgenössischer westlicher Kunstmusik befasst, in Workshops und musikalischen Dialogen. Schließlich haben sie – in enger Zusammenarbeit mit den Musikern des Ensemble Modern, aber auch mit mehreren Komponisten der westlichen Tradition als technisch-instrumentalen Beratern – neue Kompositionen entwickelt, die auf hohem intellektuellen wie musikalischem Niveau eine differenzierte Begegnung dieser ganz unterschiedlichen Musikkulturen spiegeln.