

A 'FAILED' UNISON OR CONSCIOUS DIFFERENTIATION: THE NOTION OF 'HETEROPHONY' IN NORTH INDIAN VOCAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract — Résumé

This paper is inspired in part by the necessity for examination of the cross-cultural application of musical terminology, and suggests that such examination is illuminating of both our understanding and of our own interpretative assumptions. I examine the term »heterophony«, both in general and in how it is used to describe melodic accompaniment, or *sangat*, in North Indian music. I argue that the value of hetero-

phony as a term of translation lies in its insistent multivalence, its imprecision. I emphasise the importance of understanding both musical processes and the aesthetic and socio-musical factors that help to determine and are represented therein.

Key words: Heterophony; North Indian music; Hindustani music; Terminology

The language of a translation can — in fact must — let itself go, so that it gives voice to the *intentio* of the original not as reproduction but as harmony, as its own kind of *intentio*. (BENJAMIN 1969: 79).¹

In writing ethnomusicology, the use and limits of western terminology in naming and describing the musical procedures of other cultural contexts always should be contentious. The obvious problem is that any term carries a set of implications that may or may not be appropriate, and the risk of pejorative reading is still great.

¹ Cited in ASAD 1986:157.

An example, appropriate to this paper, is the use of the word 'drone' to describe the pitch complex that accompanies all instrumental and vocal music in the Indian classical traditions. This complex consists of a pitch that is considered the tonic, the note approximately either 700, 500 or 1100 cents higher, and an upper tonic. It is traditionally and most commonly played on the *tambūrā*, an unstopped long-necked lute. The inadequacy of the borrowed term 'drone', with its folksy implications,² should be obvious, and has been challenged, in reference to both the complex, overtone rich sound of the *tambūrā* and its musical function. The sound produced by the *tambūrā* represents far more than a pitch-reference. It provides both a filling-out of the overall texture of performance, and a total continuity of sound. In a fascinating analysis of the aesthetics of the *tambūrā*, Ashok Ranade emphasises the importance of both these effects. He argues that to use word drone for what he calls the »tanpura phenomenon« is to downgrade a fundamental function in Indian music as also to display unnecessary terminological poverty combined with conceptual confusion (1997: 41).

His suggested term for the sound produced, *ādhāra-swara*, strongly reinforces the effect of »filling-out«:

neither a sustained nor a specific note. It creates a circle of certain pitches, accepted as crucial but which, by themselves, and in the way they are produced, do not create a melody (1997: 46).

In an earlier work, he suggests the use of *sur*, »more of an atmospheric agent than a mere supply of one basic note etc.«, and that the related terms *sur dena*, »to give a sur«, and *sur bharna* »to fill a sur«, »suggest the elements of continuity and fullness any sur should necessarily possess« (1990: 16).³ This may all seem a little precious or querulous, and common use seems to suggest that few have such quibbles about 'drone'. Nevertheless, I suppose I will be content when I read that Beethoven's Ninth symphony opens with a reiterated, open fifth drone, and that the highland bagpipe performs its melodies against a tonic-dominant pedal.

On the other hand, as discussion of drone, *tambūrā* complex, *ādhāra-swara*, *sur*, *gunj*, or *tambūrā-śruti* suggests, some straightforward terminological determination may be necessary, one that perhaps does not mire writers in awkward translation, verbose descriptions of what they perceive, endless neologisms, or the constant introduction of non-Western terminology, which in itself always requires a degree of translation. It was pointed out by Asad, through whose work I was originally introduced to the quote from Benjamin that precedes this article, that »the good translator ... critically examines the state of his or her *own* language«, question-

² I do not mean to be disparaging in citing Baines's statement from *Grove Online* (2005: Drone), that »the term is best known in connection with bagpipes«.

³ Dinkar Kaikani uses the term »*gunj*« or »*goonj*« (1997: 61). One of my teachers uses the expression »*tambūrā-śruti*« (Ketaki Dhongre).

ing »how she can test the tolerance of her own language for assuming unaccustomed forms« (1986: 157). What I suggest is that efforts to contort ourselves into a crippling Gordian knot by moving terminology backwards and forwards are not entirely profitless. The sort of active bending of language that is undertaken in the use of terminology cross-culturally may have a further utility, in that it forces us to re-assess both the general use of a term and specific applications of it in our own culture, undercutting its taken-for-granted-ness, and the implications of alternatives. In other words, moving our terminology from its original context to another may be mutually elucidating. This may lead to a revision of the aesthetic implications of a term, and to a deeper understanding of the social bases by which these are validated. As Brinner writes,

As tools for cross-cultural study they are *nearly* useless, yet they crop up repeatedly because they refer, however, imprecisely, to *sonic and human relationships* that are of real formative importance in the making and perception of music (1995: 192. My emphases).

In this paper I will examine the term »heterophony«, both in general and in how it is used to describe melodic accompaniment, or *sangat*, in North Indian music. Heterophony is in some ways an unusual and interesting candidate, since historically it is a term more frequently applied to 'other' musics than to music of the Western classical tradition. As McComb writes, »the term *heterophony* was invented to distinguish many world musical styles from Western *polyphony*.« (2005). It is thus perhaps more useful, as it represents almost an 'invented' term of translation. Early use of the term also distinguished between process and effect, a distinction which has persisted. Blum writes that the notion of »cohesion being left to chance«, can be traced to Guido Adler (BLUM 1991: 18), but that early usage also suggested heterophony was a step in the development of polyphony. Though serious consideration of process would discount this interpretation, it is possible to understand the *effect* of *sangat* as that of a form of polyphony, though I insist, one that is not a 'developmental step'. Thus it might be argued that the value of heterophony as a term of translation lies in its insistent multivalence, its imprecision. Taking a lead from early writings on heterophony, and from Brinner, I will emphasise the importance of understanding musical process as well as the aesthetic and socio-musical factors that help to determine *sangat*, and are represented therein. Finally, in addition to the terms heterophony and polyphony I will discuss a third term: »unison«.

In using both »melodic accompaniment« and *sangat* I have already indulged in a little translation on the one hand, introduced a non-Western term on the other, such that I must engage in description that is, I hope, not too verbose. Performances of North Indian or Hindustani classical vocal music involve three essential elements: the vocal solo, a rhythmic accompaniment, and the 'drone' or *tambūrā*-

śruti discussed above. In addition a fourth element is commonly added, a melodic accompaniment, known as *sangat*, played on either the *sāraṅgī*, a bowed, fretless lute, or the harmonium, an Indian modification of the free-reed, keyboard aerophone developed in Europe during the nineteenth century.⁴ In the most general terms, the melodic accompanist imitates or doubles the singer's lines, either completely, in outline, or with some degree of variation, and continues playing whilst the soloist is not singing. At least three perspectives may be taken on the role of the accompanist. From the perspective of 'what is accompanied', the accompanist follows the soloist at a close interval, echoing what the soloist sings. The accompanist may attempt to replicate every nuance of the soloist's line. In the case of faster or more complex improvised passages, or should the soloist so demand, the accompanist may follow in outline only. From the perspective of 'what is heard', the melodic accompanist 'fills out' the sound, and fills in the spaces whilst the soloist rests, takes a drink of water, or thinks of what to do next. From a third perspective, the accompanist shares a direct role, understood to be perceived by the audience, in developing the *rāga*. The accompanist may also suggest new ideas to the soloist, or even fulfil the rather more mundane task of 'keeping the soloist in tune'. Scholarship has understood and represented *sangat* in various ways. Discussions may emphasise performance as a site, feeding ultimately an antagonistic interpretation of the dialectic between performers. Musical authority is contested, both in abstract and as manifested in control of the particular performance. Bor emphasises an overt musical rivalry, sometimes friendly, sometimes not, that he regards as a lost but loved practice, characterised by vocalists who used to recognize the accompanist as an artist of equal merit, and welcomed a lively and spontaneous interplay between voice and instrument (1986-87: 112).

Alternatively, descriptions of and prescriptions for this practice may focus on music-sound, emphasising notions of identity and simultaneity:

the singer just sings on ... seemingly oblivious of his accompanist ... just a split of a second after him, within a hair breath's interval of time, the instrument is made to produce the same identical notes, in the same speed, and with the same embellishments (SAHUKAR n.d.: 64).

He can play exactly the same thing as you, at exactly the same time (Gunendra MUKHERJEE, interview, 1996)

In a similar fashion, accounts may emphasise generative or textural aspects:

to complement the vocal line of the soloist, by playing in heterophony a split second behind as the soloist improvises, by repeating earlier phrases during longer breaks, should the soloist so desire (WADE 1984: 33).

⁴ The term may also apply to the rhythmic accompaniment. There are other possible melodic accompaniments, but these are the main two.

Neuman similarly emphasises the generative, calling the accompaniment »heterophonic«, and coming dangerously close to implying a sort of 'failed' unison.

[The accompaniment] fills out spaces and hollows in the total musical performance, manifesting itself primarily as an echo effect - repeating as faithfully as possible the vocalist's sound (NEUMAN 1980: 137).

The skill of sarangi accompaniment depends on the degree to which the sarangiya can anticipate and immediately duplicate what the vocalist does (NEUMAN 1980: 122).⁵

Such generative descriptions evoke both preconceptions of the 'imperfection' of heterophony and the 'incompleteness' of the unison.

Heterophony: Terminological Genesis

As seen, Western descriptions of *sangat* frequently invoke the term 'heterophony'. In his article on »Heterophony«, Cooke notes that Plato coined a term »of uncertain meaning« (2005: Online). Though Sachs argued that Plato was by no means uncertain, Cooke insists that the uncertainty continues. The word itself is derived from the Greek *heteros*, meaning »different« or »other«. Thus the descriptions of Sachs, »a vague and noncommittal expression« (1961: 185), and Brinner; a »catchall term« (1995: 193), might be read ironically, in that a term of »uncertain meaning« is used to summarise descriptions of a texture that involve difference, discrepancy, variation and even »fuzziness«.

Like others, Nettl defines »heterophony« as »simultaneous variation of the same melody« (1983: 89).⁶ This definition, though succinct, is problematic in several respects. That a performance presents »simultaneous variations of the same melody« may be taken to imply that a pre-extant melody, not heard during the performance, or perhaps heard earlier, is presented in differently varied guises in two or more voices. 'The melody' becomes either something abstract, existing apart from its varied presentation, or at least an absent entity. Alternatively, the definition may be understood to imply that a 'true' or 'normal' version of a melody is presented at the same time as one or more voices actually present 'the heterophony'; the 'simultaneous variations' on that melody. This might appear to be overly pedantic, but if pedantry is to be rejected in favour of acceptance of ready under-

⁵ Neuman writes of *sāraṅgīyās*, but his comments regarding the role of the accompanist apply equally to harmonium players and others. As with Wade's study of *khayāl* (1984), the 'proximity' of Neuman's study to All India Radio contributes to an emphasis on *sāraṅgīyās*, as the harmonium was banned from that institution during that period. Such an emphasis might be untenable today. Neuman's focus is also determined by his anthropological interest in particular social groups.

⁶ See also MALM 1959: 98, COOKE: Online.

standing, a vague and non-committal expression is useful! However, the notion of the abstract existence of a melody on the one hand, and the presentation of a 'true' version simultaneously with its variation on the other are issues of some import in the discussion of *sangat*.

Unlike those later writers who have aimed for concise description of effect, Sachs addresses heterophony as a process, albeit inadequately and inconsistently.⁷ He first states that from the time of Stumpf's (1901) reintroduction of the term, it has stood for »the simultaneous appearance of a theme in two or more voice parts with a freedom that the nature of the competing voices or instruments and the players' fancy might prompt« (1961: 185). This differs slightly from the definitions of Nettl and others, in that it focuses on the overall manner and process of presentation rather than on an implied distinction and hierarchy between melody and variant. In drawing attention to process he also draws attention to the relationships between performers: here, however, he is unclear. If the voices are »competing«, do they compete for the listener's attention, or do they compete in the sense that each tries to better the other according to some unspecified criteria? The presence or absence of competition is germane to changing perceptions of *sangat*, especially when considered in relation to social process (see NEUMAN 1980: Chapter 4, BOR 1986-7, NAPIER 2001, 2006). The evocation of the notion of »freedom« is also problematic, especially since Sachs cites several examples from notated European scores: freedom here seems to imply some degree of cultivated or predetermined difference, rather than immediate, practical autonomy for the performers.

Sachs then introduces a binary between unconscious, where »the performers are not aware of creating heterophony«, and conscious »when heterophony is an intentional enrichment« (1961: 186).⁸ After this, Sachs's definitions get into some difficulty, since he expands this distinction on the basis of how »unconscious heterophony« is perceived: »the performers as well as the listeners accept it as homophonic«. It might be said that Sachs has swept with a psychological broom as broad and generalising as his notions of 'homophony' and 'heterophony' need to be, ignoring that even within a fairly uniformly enculturated group, different listeners will hear differently. He then takes a seemingly judgemental stance: »they ignore occurring consonances and dissonances and even tolerate, as unimportant, careless entries, retarded conclusions, and the haphazard lengthening or shortening of notes«. He then offers a sort of exoneration, based on the example of congregational singing, with or without »professional« support: »such anarchic singing would be unbearable if intention and attention were focused on satisfactory sense perception, meaning, on art«. He writes of the repression of »rhythmic precision

⁷ Though Sachs' work is far from recent, it encapsulates many of the ideas that still inform the idea of 'heterophony'.

⁸ Presumably research takes care of determining who is or is not »aware«.

and pure intonation ... Apt to detract from the sacred words and the mood of devotion, they seem irrelevant or even undesirable⁹.

What Sachs is actually saying here is that this is really just a »bad« unison, justified on the grounds of contingency, and, would seem, on the naivety of its practitioners. Compare this to Bake writing of melodic accompaniment in Indian folk music:

The singer or person accompanying plays along with the voice. Owing to the free and indispensable variations, however, the accompanist usually comes some beats behind the voice, or arrives sooner at the end of each period. The effect is to destroy not only the melody, but also the musical understanding of player and hearer ... The result is a torture only fully appreciated by those who have undergone it (1931: 83-4).

Dichotomous categories have a dangerous tendency to multiply: we may be aware of »anarchic« discrepancies, and actually like them. I will offer a single example, which demonstrates the difficulty of Sach's dichotomy between »conscious« and »unconscious«. At the same time, this example may partially validate his contingent justification for the »unconscious«.

As an undergraduate student I would occasionally declare that I preferred to listen to a local symphony orchestra performing Mahler's Fifth Symphony. I insisted, amongst other things, that the lack of precision in the fast, upper register playing of the first violins gave a sort of »inchoate howling« absent from recorded performances. Though many might reject this admittedly idiosyncratic critical assessment, it may have been my first conscious inkling of what Keil was later to identify for me: that »music, to be personally involving and socially valuable, must be 'out of time' and 'out of tune'« (1994: 96). Nevertheless, though most of the orchestra were certainly conscious of the supposedly »unconscious heterophony« produced, it can hardly be said to have been an »intentional enrichment« of which Sachs writes in his description of »conscious« heterophony. The orchestra had in fact produced an »unintentional enrichment«.

Sachs is on slightly surer ground when discussing examples of what he calls »conscious heterophony«. This is in part because he is dealing with specific practices that are readily defined without (negative) reference to a perceived norm or recourse to perceptual generalisations, in part because the problems of identifying the conscious with the intentional seem less great than those of identifying the unconscious with the unintentional.

Generalising on accompaniment in several traditions of Europe, Asia and Africa, he writes that »there is never a rigid unison. So much are the two parts distinct individuals ... that strict coincidence would seem artificial, empty, and dead«. Now, leaving aside the problems of generalisation, he underlines that the

⁹ See also TEMPERLEY 1981 for the example of »old way« hymn singing.

attractiveness of difference is important. However, the jury is forever out as to the irrelevance of »whether or not coincident variation leads to dissonances and grating frictions« (1961: 187). »Dissonances« and »frictions«, which might be better served by different names, may be precisely what is desirable, relevant. The notion of awareness of vertical implications again underlies his writing that »the current concept of heterophony collapses when and where its freedom and naivety are subjected to the critical control of vertical awareness«.

When interpreting »conscious« heterophony, Sachs again gets into difficulty. Switching to a perceptual orientation, he writes that heterophony is »seemingly anarchic« but that »the wilful maladjustment of similar melodic lines has often a particular charm in its blissful impression of personal freedom against mechanistic bondage«. ¹⁰ Apart from the condescending tone, the generalising interpretive leap in the homology is just too great and too unsupported.

Finally, Sachs becomes grapho-centric: »only European polyphony of the second millennium AD., and actually only a certain part of it, has been written down instead of being improvised«. In a gesture that somewhat betrays his entire preceding argument, writes that »heterophony is every type of part-performance left to tradition and improvisation — *contrapunto alla mente* as against *res facta*« (1961: 191). He then urges against pedantry: talking of notated Japanese heterophonies, of improvised fugues, and of »European notated music appropriating improvised forms«. He closes with the disclaimer that »Notated or not, such forms are heterophonic as long as they derive from improvisation and preserve its unmistakable spirit«. He has completed something of a circle: from how a texture is generated to perception of its intent, through its mode of transmission to »spirit of generation«. Nettl, great ethnomusicologist as he is, is too cautious to attempt to detect improvised music's »unmistakeable spirit«, even for musical styles with which he is acquainted. Are we to define »heterophony« with recourse to a spirit that even the best of us may find hard to pin down?

Apart from the empirical issue, there is a deeper problem that manifests in the tone of Sachs's writing. A delight in (what are thought to be) superb levels of coordination so underlies our discourse about music (though, as I have suggested, not necessarily our enjoyment of it), that avoiding the pejorative in discussing heterophony may seem at times to be beyond grasp.

These *suling*, accompanied by the *rebab* bowed lute, spin airy, haunting melodies in a kind of fuzzy coordination that have (sic) a distinctive, ghostly sound (TENZER 1991: 20).

¹⁰ Knudson offers a comparable homology in discussing certain practices of hymn singing in Denmark, the Faroe Islands, and the Hebrides, explaining the texture as the creation of »individual people, who in the singing fellowship [sic] reserve the freedom to bear witness to their relation to God on a personal basis« (in COOKE).

Cultivation of precision, at least hypothetically and intellectually, in discourse about music, objectification of it as a goal, predisposes certain ways of discussing such relationships. These enforce the pejorative, invoking 'difference' and 'otherness'. The standard definitions summarise musical effect in these terms, rather than in terms of sameness and proximity, whereas perception may just run in the other direction. Sachs elevates 'difference' in effect to a symbolic or homologic level, but cannot escape a logocentric predicament in the description of such difference.¹¹

Though he writes of »cultivated« and »uncultivated« heterophonies, Sachs in actuality overlooks the procedural nature of 'difference' and 'otherness', and gives us two definitions that focus on the perceptual, or what he asserts to be the perceptual. Brinner maintains that the term heterophony is too broad and »ignores the fundamental interactive difference between a number of distinct ways of making music« (1995: 193). Though his subsequent rhetorical questions pertain only to the area of rhythmic interaction, Brinner's critique does draw attention to the need to distinguish between a particular set of approaches to music making and an observed texture. Again I believe that this distinction is crucial to an understanding of *sangat*.

What Sangat Tells us of 'Heterophony', What Heterophony Tells us of 'Sangat'

I will turn firstly and briefly to the notion of 'true' melodies that I invoked in discussion of Nettl. The idea of a pre-extant melody upon which both singer and accompanist present a variation would seem to apply to the most characteristically »precomposed« sections of a performance. These are subject to a level of variation in each repetition and rendition, such that Clayton writes, »it is often impossible to determine exactly what the true or basic form of the composition is« (2000: 133). Many discussions of Indian performance emphasise that it is such pre-existing material that is worked on in performance: compositions, stock phrases, *tihais*. (See VAN DER MEER 1980: 143, SLAWEK 1998: 336-7, POWERS 2005: 3-ii-a). Existing phrases or motives from phrases are stretched or compressed, further motives may be prefixed, infix and suffixed, phrases may be broken up or telescoped with others, and motives or phrases sequenced through different registers. Thus if Nettl's definition, »the simultaneous variation of the same melody«, is applied, both singer and accompanist perform »simultaneous variation« on the absent entities of these melodic fragments. At the same time, if the authority of the soloist is accepted, and their line is understood as 'prime', it may be interpreted as the 'normal' version presented at the same time as one or more accompanying voices actually present 'the heterophony'.

¹¹ Cooke fares little better this with his distinction between »accidental« and »deliberate« (1980, 537).

I will turn now to some more concrete examples of the relationship between a sung line and its instrumental *sangat*. As part of a larger study of *sangat* (NAPIER 2001), I investigated in some detail the notions of »as soon as possible« and »as faithfully as possible«. My findings are drawn from detailed aural analysis and descriptive notations of six performances.¹² The notations used were western staff notations still favoured for readability and widespread comparative utility (NETTL 1983: 77-78, WIDDESS 1995: xii.). Electronically aided notation, giving a graphic representation of 'melody as stream' rather than 'melody as chain', to use Seeger's distinction, (1958: 185), would negate the very clear sense of note that pertains in Indian conception, transmission and perception of music. It might also compromise the rhythmic investigations I have attempted. The aim of rhythmic notation, which may give an unintended impression of predetermined rhythmic complexity, and of the data extrapolated from it, is to make *generalisations* about what happens, about trends and clusters, not to pin down exact measurements in milliseconds for their own sake.

For each sung phrase of the performances where it has been possible to notate the accompaniment,¹³ the distance between the start of the vocal phrase and the start of its replication was measured as a number of beats and as an absolute value in milliseconds. The smallest, largest and average following distances for each accompanist are given in the table below.

Table 1: Following distances by soloist-accompanist — minimum, maximum, average

Soloist-accompanist	Accompanying instrument	Min in msec	Max in msec	Average in msec
Rajurkar-Thatte	Harmonium	190	1250	686
Girija Devi-Mishra	Sarangi	417	1800	955
Amir Khan-Ghosh	Harmonium	187	2776	1014
Sadolikar-Kunte	Sarangi	273	2578	1390
KS Pandit-Sabri Khan	Sarangi	427	3438	1456
LK Pandit-Ghosh	Sarangi	719	3238	1565

¹² Amir Khan, Jnan Prakash Ghosh (harmonium), rāga Megh. Shruti Sadolikar, Anant Kunte (sāraṅgī), rāga Miyan-ki-todi. Krishnarao Shankar Pandit, Sabri Khan (sāraṅgī), rāga Bhupali. Lakshman Krishnarao Pandit, Dhruvo Ghosh (sāraṅgī), Anant Rane (harmonium), rāga Puriya. Malini Rajurkar, Arvind Thatte (harmonium), rāga Kedar. Girija Devi, Ramesh Mishra (sāraṅgī), ṭhumrī in rāga Pīlu (excluding laggi).

¹³ The number of phrases examined ranged between 28 and 146.

The average distance ranged from 686 milliseconds (Rajurkar-Thatte) to 1565 milliseconds (Pandit-Ghosh). This might suggest that an easy judgement about the relative skill of the two accompanists should be made. However, Ghosh has recounted his decision to replicate at a greater distance (»about a second or two«), at the suggestion of a soloist (interview, 1997). In this instance, a particular soloist's preference appears to have been adopted as an accompanist's general style. Though Ghosh says that he has intentionally increased his following distance, the other averages are interesting: This suggests the possibility that, originally, Ghosh may have followed at a very close interval, or that his following distance is not actually unusually great.

In a theoretical article entitled »Improvisation: Methods and Models«, Pressing examines both the physiological and neuropsychological constraints on improvisation. Drawing on work by Welford, he states that

unexpected sensory changes requiring significant voluntary compensations require a minimum time of about 400-500 ms. This is therefore the time scale over which improvising players in ensembles can react to each others' introduced novelties (1985: 138).

If Pressing's hypothesis is accepted, and Ghosh's deliberate delay discounted, most of our accompanists seem dunces. In some cases, no replications commenced within 500 msec, and even the fastest accompanists produce very few replications in such a time. Obviously much more is at work, and that even if some flexibility in Pressing's timing is allowed, it is evident that accompanists generally delay their replication beyond reaction time, either consciously or through habit. »As quickly as possible« is not a primary goal.

Though delay is the norm, there are places, frequently involving the move to a clear goal, where soloist and accompanist are in near simultaneity. The most common of these is the *mukhda*, a short phrase, drawn from a pre-extant composition, which acts as a cadence marker at the end of one or more time cycles. An entire known composition may be performed in near simultaneity, as may the final phrase of a *tihāī*: a thrice iterated phrase, usually cadential in quality. Other places may be less predictable, such as the climactic movement to the upper tonic, or the repetition of a phrase. All of these exemplify a conscious manipulation of the following distance, and involve substantially reducing the following distance under specific circumstances. The notion of »as soon as possible« might thus be invoked, not as a 'general rule of accompaniment', but as an expressive exception.

Furthermore, moments of near-simultaneity noted above suggest one form of departure from »faithful« replication, in that the accompanist must vary the rhythm. This variation is more widespread than such circumstances require, since in five of the six performances, the greatest number (though not always a plurality) of rep-

lications are measurably shorter than the phrases they reproduce.¹⁴ In other words, though accompanists do not commence their phrases as soon as possible, they are nevertheless engaged in a constant process of 'catching up' with the soloist. I will offer a few examples.

Phrases may be shortened by simply speeding them up, or by some process of simplification or elision.

Example 1: Shortening of following phrases - 1

The image shows a musical score for voice and sarangi. The voice part has two phrases. The first phrase is marked with a time signature of 16:14 and is labeled 'simplification'. The second phrase is marked with a time signature of 24:5 and is labeled 'murkhi simplified and sped up'. The sarangi part provides accompaniment for both phrases.

The above examples, from Sadolika-Kunte, demonstrate both rhythmic simplification and acceleration of the phrase. In the first example, a six note phrase lasting an entire beat is replicated by a single rapid *mīnd* (slide). In the second, Kunte halves the value of every note, and either attenuates or omits the upper ornamentation.

Three examples from LK Pandit-Ghosh show further approaches to shortening the phrase, and thus departure from the model of 'faithful' or exact replication. In the first, Ghosh anticipates Pandit's trajectory, thereby arriving on *sa* (C) very soon after the singer. In phrase 16B, he responds more quickly to each (sequential) sub-phrase, reacts to replicate the leap *mā-ri*, (F#-D \flat) then elides directly to *ni* (B) an eighth of a beat after the singer. The third example arguably represents a case of necessity. Pandit interrupts Ghosh's *sawal-jawab* ('question-answer') type replication of the previous phrase. Consequently, Ghosh's replication commences very late. Ghosh responds by eliding the phrase substantially, responding clearly to the *mīnd* from *ni* to *mā*.

¹⁴ The percentage of shorter phrases ranged from 24% (Girija Devi_Mishra) to 85% (Sadolika-Kunte).

Example 2: Shortening of following phrases - 2

11:14 11:21 9:21

voice

saraswati

anticipates trajectory:
shortens ga

16:6 16:6B

1 beat

0.77 beats

elided

0.75 beats 0.375 beats

25:7 25:6 25:6

elides

end of preceding phrase abandons 1.375 beats

625 beats

Authority and Difference

Though the shortening recounted above exhibits a degree of differentiation between the lines of soloist and accompanist, its rationale is aesthetic. It thus does not contradict that paradigm of *sangat*, and thus of any heterophony that may ensue, which is predicated on the absolute authority of the soloist over the accompanist. This authority is most clearly manifest in the willingness of accompanists to attempt to unexceptionally and accurately reproduce the soloist's melody. There are other types of departure, ones that may involve challenges to the soloist's musical authority, that may be more subtle than those lauded by Bor. Neuman's sociological work on traditional specialisation and hierarchy examines an ongoing, often covert musical rivalry between soloist and accompanist (1977, 1980: Chapter 4). This rivalry is only partially restrained both by the musical convention encapsulated within his definition of accompaniment, that of the hegemony of the soloist, and the social hierarchy which long supported such hegemony, the traditional recruitment of specialist soloists and accompanists from distinct, hierarchically ranked social groups. If, through the breakdown of such specialization,¹⁵ authority is not automatically underpinned by social hierarchy, it is necessary, at least at the level of discourse and probably in practice, that different concepts and processes are involved. Although soloists hold specific musical authority over decision making, both they and accompanists may claim a general musical authority based on what in English language discourse is often called 'seniority'. In addition, the musical hegemony of the soloist, frequently rhetorically buttressed by a sense of seniority, has been reinforced practically by an economic one: soloists select, engage, and frequently pay their own accompanists. The accompanist cannot lightly force his or her mode of accompaniment on the soloist: in addition to the immediate onstage reprimand that this might invite, it would also risk the far more drastic long-term sanction of unemployment. Particularly confident accompanists, or accompanists not greatly interested in accompanying a specific soloist thereafter, might play more »as they wish«. Generally, economic necessity insists otherwise. Nevertheless though, as Bor implies, acquiescence is the norm, and the authority of singers has become re-enforced by their position as the accompanist's patron (NAPIER 2006), soloists still make cautionary remarks about their accompanists: »he must help and not hinder«, »he must follow and not go ahead«, »he must not play anything that I have not already sung«. Incidents involving overt, informal competition are rare in today's performances. They tend to be restricted to those sections of a performance in which the accompanist plays alone. There are a few exceptions, however.

¹⁵ See 1980: 141-2, and NAPIER 2006.

A common wisdom is that *sāraṅgīyas* will repeat mistakes made by the soloist. This may be interpreted as complimentary of the *sāraṅgīyas* skill, (following so accurately that he plays a note or phrase that is in violation of the *rāg*), or derogatory (so ignorant of the *rāg* that they reproduce the obvious flaw in the soloist's performance). The accompanist, if aware of the mistake, must immediately decide how to deal with it: an audible repetition of the error might draw the audiences attention to it, while a correction of it might be interpreted as upstaging. Similarly, much attention has been given to the possibility that the accompanist might challenge the soloists' authority, by departing from straightforward replication in a number of ways, most particularly by playing higher pitches, faster notes, and more emphatic articulation, thus appropriating the developmental trajectory of the performance (NAPIER 2001, under review). These are complex and subtle issues. In that they represent a potentially wilful usurpation of authority, they fall beyond the scope of this paper.

Variation may be more 'neutral' and microscopic: articulation may be varied by the accompanist, ornaments reproduced as more substantial notes, slides as discrete notes, discrete notes as slides. Subtle inflections of the rhythm may be regularised, and vice versa. On the other hand, variation may be quite obvious. Complex vocal lines might be simplified by the accompanist. Though Sorrell (1980: 60) attempted to characterise this as a negative feature of harmonium players, it may occur regardless of the instrument. Conversely, elaborate replication on harmonium has been suggested by several Calcutta based harmonium players as a solution to the instrument's two most obvious limitations, the inability to play *mīnds* (slides) and the problem of tuning. The elaboration of some players replication extends far beyond the demands of such contingencies, and offers evidence that there is a particular »Calcutta style« of playing the harmonium.¹⁶

I will offer one example from Amir Khan-Ghosh. Jyan Prakash Ghosh's accompanying style is highly elaborate, often moving to an almost independent level of polyphony. Elaboration reaches a peak in *āvart* seven. The first stave of the following notation shows voice, the second the harmonium. The third shows the harmonium line stripped to the barest possible replication: all elaboration and intervening solos have been removed, leaving only those notes that have been sung.

¹⁶ The reports of accompanists, either unsolicited or in response to direct questioning, remain the main data for the difficult determination of 'intent'. This has been touched on in the summary of Sachs, should be evident from the discussion of melodic accompaniment. No amount or detail of notation or aural analysis of performances can actually unpackage 'intent' or 'motivation'. The difficulty in demonstrating how such 'intent' might translate into sound is clearly shown by Lomax's multiple definitions. »In heterophony the voices sing the same melody, but out of step with each other ... a diffuse organization of parts... deliberately [sung] out of step with each other ... a carefully planned example of diffuse co-ordination« (1976: Tape 1B). Of course, if the temporal relationship between parts (and Lomax focuses only on this, leaving alone issues of ornamentation, inflection etc) is »carefully planned«, then its successful execution must actually rely on extreme co-ordination, albeit of a negative kind: you must sing between my notes. Lomax seems to delight in the oxymoronic, talking elsewhere of »a plan-less plan« (1976: Tape 1A).

Example 3: Jnan Prakash Ghosh's elaboration

The image displays a musical score for Example 3, titled "Jnan Prakash Ghosh's elaboration". The score is presented in six systems, each consisting of three staves. The first system is marked with the number "732" above the first staff. The notation is complex, featuring many beamed notes and rests, characteristic of Indian classical music notation. The score is written in a multi-measure style, with various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines across the staves.



It is apparent from the examples offered and from further analysis that accompaniment is not characterised by an automated, unexceptionable replication of the voice, achieved in the shortest possible time. There are many variables that help to determine the distance at which an accompanist follows, and there is much variation within a performance. The singer's style, the accompanist's acquaintance with that style, the nature of particular phrases, the placement of those phrases within the performance, the accompanist's own style and background, and 'at the moment' choices would all seem to influence the following distance, how long the accompanist waits, and when and whether their replication has a demonstrable relationship to the underlying beat (see NAPIER 2002).

The notion of 'as accurately as possible', if relevant, may be one that is effected with a wide degree of subjectivity on the part of accompanists. Many of the distinctive differences between voice and accompaniment seem contingent on the limitations of the instrument. For others, no other reason should be guessed than that the accompanist liked it, or even just did it, that way. That all of these accompanists are considered 'good' is evidence that this level of difference (or sameness) remains within the notions of *sangat*. The notions of as quickly and as accurately as possible, a simple way of introducing or summarising *sangat*, do not do justice to the richness, the flexibility and the multiply determined 'messiness', to borrow Clifford Geertz's term, that go to make up this practice. Ironically, the interpretative view of accompaniment which focuses on accurate replication (see above), is the one most likely therefore to note the differences, unintentional or otherwise, that ensue, and give it the quality we call heterophonic.

Sangat, Going Together, 'Sāth', and 'One-Sound'

In discussing accompaniment, Indian musicians may make little or no distinction between the words *sangat* and *sāth*. »Accompaniment: The word conveys a sense of togetherness as well. This is also referred to as *sangat-saath*« (AMARNATH 1989: 99). Others begin by making very hazy distinctions, which may gradually be drawn out. Discussion of these terms with Lakshman Krishnarao Pandit and his daughter Meeta (interview, 1998) yielded the following metaphor:

Sāth is the person who just helps you carry your suitcase. *Sangat* is the person who does this, but reminds you which platform to go to, and generally answers you.

Ranade writes:

In essence *sangat* is to provide a tonal or rhythmic complement to the main artiste, suitably and attractively matching or responding to his expression. In case the accompanist chooses to follow the soloist mechanically, his contribution is described as *sath* which merely means 'to be with' (1990: 15).¹⁷

Rather than the varied use of these terms representing a vagueness or imprecision, in the light of the discussion above, I feel the multivalence of both terms should be acknowledged.

Invoking the manner in which *sangat* is created allows for an empirical examination of what occurs. If a name drawn from Western musicology is sought, 'imitative polyphony' might better fit this procedure: a second voice replicating or imitating the first.¹⁸ The process by which an imitative polyphony becomes a 'heterophonic effect' has been shown to be one of great variability, and is near opacity as far as 'consciousness' and 'intent' are to be understood. Before returning to the Indian term *sangat* as logically the best descriptor for what takes place, I wish to investigate one other European textural descriptor, one which at least at a semantic level better approximates the 'going together' of *sangat*. That term is 'unison'.

'Heterophony', 'Unison' and Sangat

I was surprised when not one, but two consultants told me that the accompanist can play the same thing at the same time. This seemed to fly in the face of both commonsense, and almost everything that I had heard. My surprise probably arose

¹⁷ In addition to the distinction between *sangat* and *sāth*, Ranade's definition is interesting because it states that the choice between the two possibilities is made by the accompanist. In the sense that the accompanist, in a live performance, is not easily corrected by the soloist, this is of course true. On the other hand, different soloists may hold different expectations of *sangat* or expectations of *sāth*.

¹⁸ If it is an issue, it might be noted that the following distance in *sangat* is for the most part greater than that heard at the canonic opening of the Sixth Brandenburg Concerto.

however from intuitive comparison to an innately restrictive notion of a European 'unison'. There would appear to be some reasonable correlation at a semantic level of *sāth* and *sangat*, 'so-ness' and 'to go together', to unison, 'to sound as one', but this correlation seemed to fall down in practice. However, closer attention to the way the word 'unison' is used in European discourse is telling. The definition in Grove Online accepts octave equivalence, for example.

The simultaneous execution of one polyphonic part by more than one performer or performing group (e.g. the first violin section of an orchestra), either at exactly the same pitch or at the interval of an octave, double octave etc. (RUSHTON 2005)

Harwood's notion of chunking, originally applied to 'melodic fission', might be evoked here (1976: 526): how many octave displacements might occur before the listener splits the texture into two layers? In discourse, other factors such as articulation are frequently overlooked. It would be hypothetically possible to find the simultaneous performance of the opening of the Adagio of Mahler's first symphony described as a unison, even if the double bass were doubled by the xylophone, played with *sforzandi*. More realistically, though less obviously, the unison of an orchestral string section draws much of its quality from those things that are not 'in unison': the discrepancies of timbre, tuning, vibrato and timing between the various instruments. Thinking less minutely, a well-used textbook, referring to prescriptively notated discrepancies of articulation in an orchestral 'unison' by d'Indy, writes of »an imaginative undercurrent of activity adding subtle flavour to the otherwise single-minded statement« (ADLER 1989: 461). I would not be surprised if such a description were given to *sangat*.

The notion of 'one sound', 'going together' as opposed to walking rather differently and a little bit behind, is of course culturally bound, but I propose that what is heard in these performances may be no less 'the same thing at the same time' as d'Indy's *tutti*, or a string orchestral section: all three can be dissected into component parts, delays and discrepancies. All three may equally be experienced as a unity. I am not suggesting that delay and difference are unheard or unnoticed, it is, however, »going together«. To totalise and simply dismiss this differentiation as unavoidable, accidental, due to the fallibility of the accompanist and the limitations of the instrument, or to laud it as intentional, born of a subaltern desire to 'do it differently', are both inadequate. I maintain that the value of *sangat*, as opposed to a natural, artificial or even conceptual echo, lies in its nature as a voice *at once* derived from and complementary of the soloist. As I have demonstrated, the details of such 'derivativeness' and 'complementarity' represent a complex assemblage of intentional, contingent, accidental or maybe even unconscious revoicings and discrepancies. Moreover it seems desirable that this delay and difference be there. If richness of texture, echo-effects and continuity of sound (see NAPIER 2001, 2004) are central to the overall rationale for accompaniment,

then these might feasibly be achieved by reverberation, electronic delay, and a supporting singer, active whilst the soloist rests. But there are good reasons why the use of a liberal application of artificial reverberation, for example, is inadequate, why the role of the supporting singer shows no sign of increasing to the constancy of the melodic accompaniment, and why Modak's automated accompanying device (a crude delay unit), lies on the shelf.¹⁹ The possibility of using artificial echo is largely unexplored: an aesthetic rationale may be found in the tension between following at a distance and near-simultaneity. The sudden move from delayed replication to the coterminous arrival of voice and melodic and rhythmic accompaniment at the *sām*, the first beat of a new time cycle, is intended to provide a cadential sense, and generally evokes audience satisfaction. But I think that something more than aesthetics is implicated in the preference for *sangat*. In as much as there are social structures and economic relationships that impel towards a near-identity of the lines of soloist and accompanist, there are social attitudes which may contribute to their partial independence. Thus, in a classic division-of-labour, aesthetic qualities that could feasibly be created by electronic enhancement of the voice alone are reinforced through reliance on a differentiated voice. Qureshi has pointed out that in Indian cultures, greater prestige accrues to a person who, though capable of performing a particular function for themselves, takes on the role of patron, and engages the service of another (2000: 31). Thus it may be seen that the practice of accompaniment, call it 'heterophonic' or not, is sustained by a tension between social structure and economic relationships on the one hand, social attitude on the other. The former, by determining the subordination of accompanist to soloist, pulls the *sangat* towards identity with the replicated line. At the same time, the latter demands the patronage of a performer whose product is demonstrably individualised. The overarching impression is of complementarity and rapprochement. Unlike the corollary of a model of interpretation that emphasises exactness as an expectation, thus leading to a potentially negative focus on difference, and the evocation of the term 'heterophony', the term *sangat* emphasises this flexible rapprochement of the two or more lines, what they share in common, as much as their points of difference. It is not a heterophony aspiring to the condition of a unison. Rather I would suggest that it is a texture that may be heard »flexibly«: as a unison, as a heterophony or as polyphony.

This flexibility may be thought of as a continuum in 'ways of hearing'. At one end of the continuum, a traditional notion of a unison emphasises hearing those features in common or in proximity between two or more melodic lines. In heterophony the reverse is to be heard. It may be possible to not only subsume

¹⁹ The »automatic accompanist« was patented by H.V. Modak as early as 1955. This device consisted of a highly amplified set of sympathetic strings (MODAK 1970 2-3). The device was also an ingenious though convoluted notation tool. Indicator lamps glowed whenever a string vibrated, the indicators were filmed and the film analysed.

both terms within the ideal of *sangat*, but to reverse the way in which they are traditionally heard, hearing in heterophony common features, in unison discrepancies. Keil's »out of tuneness« and »out of timeness« emphasises the participatory, the procedural and the textural. (Perhaps) without intending it, Keil, in writing of unisons, has written the most sympathetic text on heterophony.

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Sažetak»NEUSPJELI« UNISONO ILI SVJESNO RAZLIKOVANJE:
POJAM »HETEROFONIJE« U VOKALNOM IZVODILAŠTVU SJEVERNE INDIJE

Ovaj je tekst djelomice nadahnut potrebom za ispitivanjem međukulturalnih primjena glazbene terminologije. Nakon kratkog navođenja primjera za takve probleme ispitivanjem primjene termina 'drone' (truban) sugerira se da takvo ispitivanje može osvijetliti i naše razumijevanje vlastitih interpretativnih pretpostavki.

Ispituje se termin 'heterofonija' kako općenito tako i u uporabi pri opisivanju melodijske pratnje, ili *sangata*, u sjevernoindijskoj vokalnoj glazbi. Prvo se donosi uvid u rane opise heterofonije ispitivanjem nekih trajnih pretpostavki. Tada se preciznije usredotočuje na *sangat*, ispitujući nekoliko razlikovnih točaka između solistove melodije i pratećeg sloja za koji se kaže da predstavlja njegov odjek ('eho'). Naglašava se važnost razumijevanja glazbenih procesa te estetičkih i društveno-glazbenih čimbenika koji pomažu da se odredi *sangat* i koji su u njemu predstavljeni. Sugerira se da tradicionalne hijerarhijske društvene strukture koje određuju odnose među izvoditeljima i moderne analogije takvih struktura vrše pritisak na stvaranje glazbene teksture zahtijevajući točnu i podložnu imitaciju solista od strane pratitelja. Istodobno, tradicionalni društveni stavovi insistiraju na proizvodnji pratnje od strane izvoditelja pojedinca te tako osiguravaju neizbježni stupanj neslaganja. Navode se argumenti da vrijednost heterofonije kao termina leži u njegovoj postojanoj polivalentnosti i njegovoj nepreciznosti, pa da se glazbu o kojoj se ovdje radi može slušati fleksibilno: kao teksturu koja je poseban tip unisonog, ili polifonija, ili heterofonija.