

THEORIZING THE LOCAL

Music, Practice, and Experience
in South Asia and Beyond



Edited by
RICHARD K. WOLF

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Richard K. Wolf

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→→ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ←←

In 2002, thinking about how to engage scholars in discussions about the music of South Asia in a broad, interdisciplinary context led me to propose and then organize a five-day-long International Council for Traditional Music Colloquium entitled “Local Theory, Local Practice: Musical Culture in South Asia and Beyond.” The program committee members—Anthony Seeger, Shubha Chaudhuri, Martin Clayton, Michael Herzfeld, and myself—all participated in the seminar, shared substantive organizational ideas, suggested the names of other participants, and aided in the formulation of grant proposals. The authors maintained an unflagging collaborative spirit throughout the seminar and the period of manuscript preparation that followed. The independent writer/dramaturge Rustom Bharucha, the late musicologist Harold S. Powers, and several others who also participated in the original seminar provided comparative and cross-disciplinary reflections that are lodged in ways not always traceable in many of the papers and in the introduction. The authors and I are all deeply grateful to the many local performers and other consultants in South Asia and Iran, too many to enumerate here, who have made it possible for us to write widely on the local musical traditions of this large region.

Several institutions provided financial and administrative support. The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study funded and administered the major part of this event, which was held over four days as a Radcliffe Advanced Seminar. The then dean of Radcliffe (and as of this writing, president of Harvard), Drew Gilpin Faust, was critically supportive at a time in which the “Advanced Seminar” as a Radcliffe program was still in the process of establishing an identity. Radcliffe’s Phyllis Strimling and Anna Chesson were cheerful and efficient in their

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C. Scott Walker, digital cartography specialist at the Harvard Map Collection, devoted considerable care and attention to creating maps for each chapter. Widener Library at Harvard University provided the book (C. E. Yate, *Khurasan and Sistan*, Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1900) from which the map used as a background on the cover was obtained. The bagpiper and other musicians on the cover participated in the Nanda Devi festival, Almora, in the state now known as Uttarakhand (August 29, 1998), are members of Bhuvan Ram and Party (a music and dance group from Jageswar). Although this book does not discuss Indian bagpipe music, and although Uttarakhand is not part of Khorasan or Sistan, the images are meant to stimulate the reader's imagination about what the "local" means over time. Bagpipes, like several other instruments, have become indigenized, while continuing to index past relations between South Asia and Europe. The domains of social and linguistic groups frequently transcend the boundaries of states and provinces; the boundaries themselves are also indices of interventions, often by colonial agencies.

At Oxford University Press, I owe a debt of gratitude for Suzanne Ryan, who saw the value of this project the first time I mentioned it to her.

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→ NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION ←

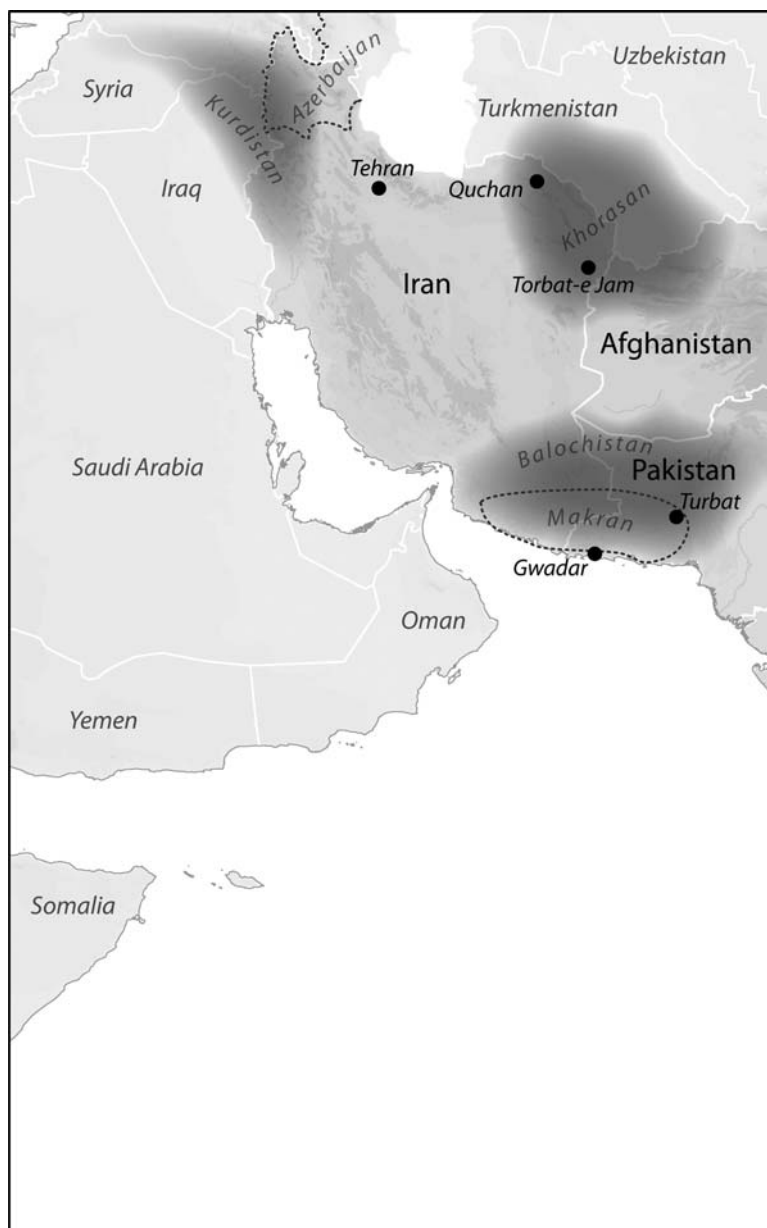
In this volume, names of cities and countries generally appear in their common, English-language spellings. Diacritics for well-known place names are not used except when they appear in titles of published works or quotations. Because local pronunciations vary, as do the scripts from which authors transliterate, words that are the same or closely related in different languages sometimes appear with different spellings. The glossary takes account of some of these variations. Very common terms associated with South Asian music, such as raga, tala, guru, and tabla, have entered the English lexicon and so appear without diacritics or italics in the body of the text. Transliterations, variations, and definitions of some of these terms are provided in the glossary. Pluralization is indicated using an “s” at the end of the word unless otherwise noted. The *ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Transliteration Schemes for Non-Roman Scripts* (1997 edition) are used for transliterating most of the South Asian language terms represented in the volume. The Kota language, which is not included in these tables and does not have a script, is transliterated in a manner consistent with these schemes; it is a modification of the system used by T. Burrow and M. B. Emeneau in *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* (1984 [2nd edition]), whereby bullets are replaced by macrons to represent vowel length. David Henderson uses, for Nepali, *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* (1994); for Newari, *Newari-English Dictionary* (1986); for words shared with Hindi, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* (1993). Stephen Blum uses a simplified version of well-known transliteration conventions for Persian. The “i”s and “u”s for Persian words in his chapter are long with the exception of the initial “i” in ‘ilm. Otherwise, short versions of these vowels are indicated by “e”

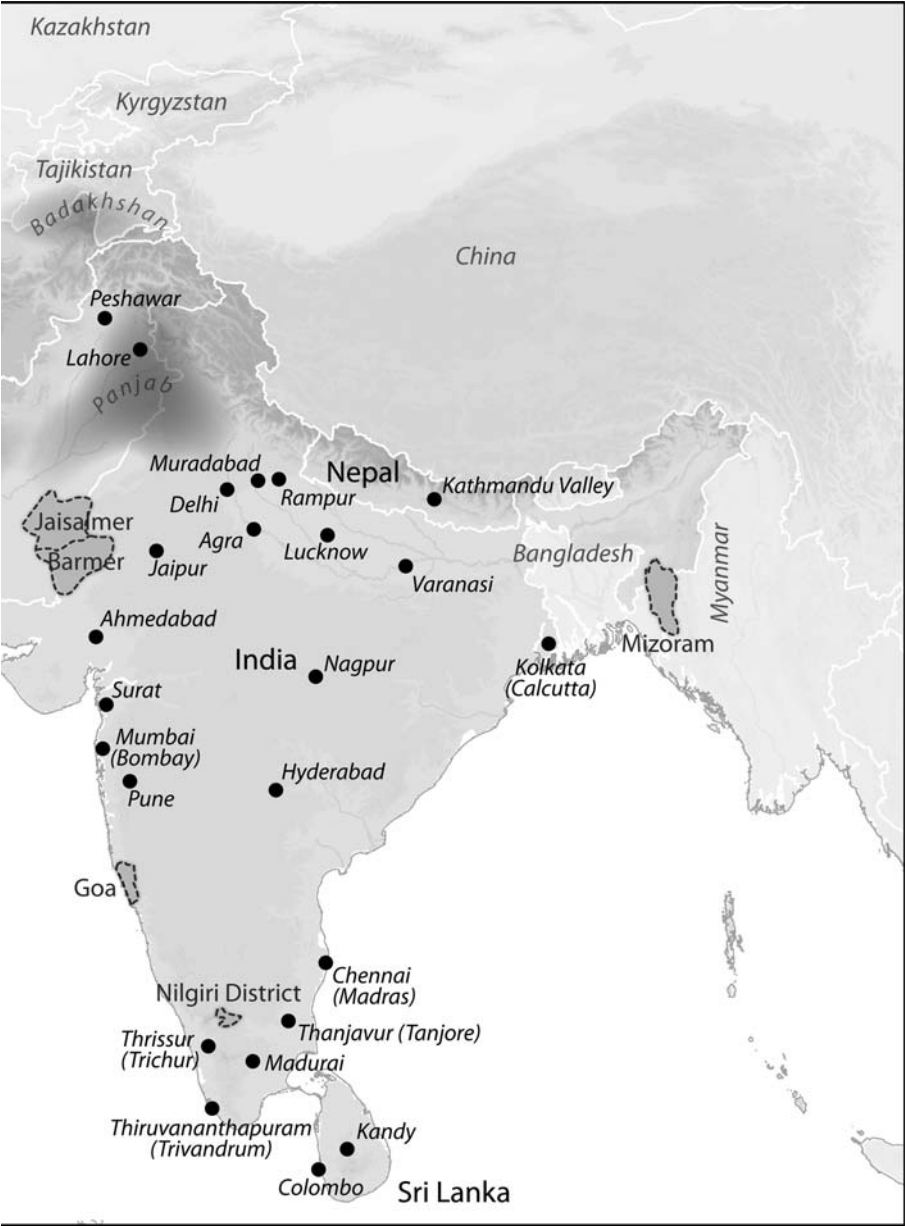
and “o,” respectively. The macron over the “i” in *radīf* and *zahīrok* is maintained so that these terms are spelled consistently throughout the volume. Azerbaijani and Khorasani Turkish are written in the Latin alphabet of Azerbaijan. The glossary indicates the languages in which key terms appear and provides additional details on transliteration.

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Introduction

RICHARD K. WOLF

In the “global hierarchy of value” only the best stuff, from an international market perspective, comes to represent a country like India or Ireland, or a vast region like Africa.¹ Sitar music, with its combination of virtuosic melody lines and thick droning, stands so closely for India that it has become cliché in advertisements and incidental music. Riverdance has brought Irish step dancing to the world stage and inspired many to learn Irish traditional music. African drumming groups, their complex polyrhythms led by master drummers and accompanying brightly dressed dancers, stand in a similarly synecdochical relationship with Africa itself. Films like *The Lion King* present their own kinds of stereotypes of African music and dance, colorful composites that have little to do with any particular place but everything to do with the idea of Africa.

From some perspectives, music that transcends locality is more interesting and lucrative than the so-called traditional music of a particular place. Colorful and engaging Māṅgaṇīār singers of Rajasthan combine the “rawness of the folk and the complexity of classical music” (Abel 2008). They capture the imagination of cosmopolitan Indians and other international consumers who see in them the animating spirit of the European Roma and the fire of flamenco. Their music taps into the musical sensibilities of a vast cross-cultural population. It is easy to forget—or never to learn—about the local social order in which the Māṅgaṇīārs operate, or the story that implicates them in a local system of patronage and the growth of a shrine complex (Chaudhuri, this volume).

Some music combines language, images, and musical techniques for the explicit purpose of embracing a wide listening public. Take the versatile *qawwālī* singer,

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan: right arm up, head cocked to the side, eyes shut, lips curving and twisting as he enunciates the embellishments of an ecstatic melody. This image offers an unusual example of a musical style that touches the hearts of listeners beyond the Pakistani homeland, and in so doing, projects possibilities for larger human accord and Sufistic peace. Many “world music” consumers attend mainly to such spectacular aspects of cultural circulation. Indeed, the assumption that music is to be shared—and its corollary, that music is to bring people together—is so widely held in the modern, industrialized world that it seems hardly worth mentioning.

But much is left out in this world of extraordinary visibility, this world of an assumed, shared aesthetic. Many kinds of South Asian participatory circle dances and songs accompanying them, for instance, “circulate” in the sense of finding a place in local South Asian contexts and on stage shows organized by diaspora communities. Yet a group of ordinary villagers singing such songs and dancing such dances are unlikely to solicit enough interest to attract international sponsorship—unlike their more spectacular, sometimes clichéd, counterparts. As Steven Caton has observed for Arabic oral poetry, “it is virtually impossible for us [Americans, Europeans] to imagine an aesthetic that is sensitive to the specific context of its production, and if we can nonetheless imagine it, we may still have trouble appreciating its value as art” (Caton 1990, 106). This is perhaps why, when, in 1994, I approached an American recording company with a proposal to publish field recordings of folk music from south India, I received a letter back expressing interest only in music that “transcends context.” The response I never delivered was that the music they sought did not transcend context, but could rather assimilate to that of the consumer without soliciting further thought or examination.

Contemporary academia invests transcendence of place with its own kind of capital—for reasons different from those of the international music market. Do the increasing humanistic and social scientific emphases on the so-called forces of globalization, like the market’s search for music that transcends context, disguise and undermine the ongoing relevance of local music and local senses of music in the world?² While it is inevitable that ethnomusicological research on South Asia will engage increasingly with issues of globalization, many of us do not view the globalization literature as offering the only pertinent framework or point of departure for ethnomusicological studies of South Asia. We use “theorizing the local” to signal the continued value of comparative microstudies that are not concerned primarily with the flow of capital and neoliberal politics, but which take forms of interconnection, within and beyond South Asia, very seriously.³

This group of essays is probably the first major attempt to broaden the discourse among South Asian music scholars across other fields of scholarship and across genres in South Asian music since Bonnie Wade’s (1983) edited volume *Performing Arts in India*. That volume contained essays on classical dance and music, organology, *qawwālī*, and a useful and succinct introduction pointing out

their interrelationships.⁴ Just a few years before that, Daniel Neuman's landmark work (1980) on the social organization of classical musicians in north India (mainly Delhi) opened up pathways for anthropologists to study aspects of a tradition that had hitherto been primarily the domain of musicologists. Perhaps the first significant "theorizing the local" in the present context was the early work of Milton Singer, who helped bridge the anthropological study of small-scale or village-based societies with the study of complex, literate civilizations. His focus on what he called "cultural performances" as "the most concrete observable units of Indian culture" allowed him to navigate through some of the complexities of urban life in Madras via "a ladder of abstractions" leading from these concrete units (Singer 1958, 351). Since that time, many scholars have refined our tools for thinking about the performing arts of India, broadly speaking. They have produced detailed genre studies; studies of schools or styles of north and south Indian classical music; analyses of patronage; insights into melodic and rhythmic improvisation and relationships between music and dance; understandings of music in Christian, Muslim, and Hindu contexts; studies of instruments and individual performers; ethnographic studies with major musical components that focus on minority populations; and a variety of other topics, some of which are represented in the present book.

In presenting our studies, some of which concern South Asian classical music, we do not presume the reader has already acquired a vast store of insider knowledge of names and styles, terms and concepts. The technical vocabularies of many other historically robust and less well-known traditions on the subcontinent are complex, as well. Our attempt has been to represent these systems in somewhat equitable terms and to take as little as possible for granted in opening up these musical worlds to those who are not already South Asianists.

Our turn to what we call the "local" is not a departure on all fronts from what our enterprising colleagues have produced before. Rather it is an attempt to think through where we stand in our studies of music in South Asia; to consider how focusing on particular kinds of "local" can offer us ways of thinking beyond the borders of South Asia, and beyond some of the epitomizations of South Asian music (e.g., as a place of ragas and talas) that people from many parts of the world take for granted. What, then, is meant by "local"?

Locals and Theories, Scales and Margins

For many of us, the local signals attention to small-scale, microlevel, musical and bodily processes; sites of interaction and transmission; attention to the familiar in unfamiliar ways. It often involves what Tim Ingold calls a "dwelling perspective," which focuses on peoples' learning and understanding of the world through pragmatic engagement with their surroundings (Ingold 2000). The notion of the local draws attention to the "scale" (Tsing 2000a) at which a scholar or practitioner of

music envisions theorization to take place. As any given set of actors make sense of their musical activities as regional, they engage notions of what is distant and temporally removed; they create “horizons of meaning” (Munn 1990) that ought to figure in a consideration of local theorizing.

The local, then, can refer to a concrete locale where musicians make and think about music, such as a venue for performance or instruction. It also implicates the metaphorical site of theorization—for example, a musical phrase that serves as a basis for discussion or comment—regardless of where the musical tradition is located geographically or how far it extends. Musical events or objects (such as a violin), while discretely located at a given moment, are often experienced as connected with sounds, objects, and activities located elsewhere and situated differently in time. Distal traditions within South Asia and elsewhere in the world, including “the West,” may be coimplicated in the musical experiences of South Asian performers and listeners. “South Asia and beyond” as a frame of musical reference for this volume, then, urges us to ask how any geographically local tradition fits into the larger regions in which it is embedded. Answering such a question engages perspectives of the practitioners themselves as well as of observers of many kinds (including scholars) who formulate views based on implicit or explicit comparisons—synthesizing close and distant vantage points.

Theorizing, like the notion of local, can be understood in more than one way: for some, all knowledge is acquired through some sort of theorizing; others restrict theorizing to self-conscious, verbal attempts at systematic explanation. For several contributors, theorizing the local means paying attention to forms of knowledge implicit in performing and experiencing music; for some, the “local” turn entails questioning the processes that have led to the creation of grand intellectual and institutional schemes. For most of the writers, theorizing is not simply the creation of theories, or building on a knowledge base with a series of hypothesis-driven inquiries, but rather a kind of contemplation of what constitutes a local musical universe. To me, it also signals a procedure of thinking through ethnographic materials, a principle of induction not unlike Singer’s ladder of abstractions.

Regardless of their positions regarding “theorizing,” ethnomusicologists have been drawn with others into an array of discourses that pit the specificity of the local with the generality of the global, but many remain uncomfortable with the dichotomy. Perhaps ethnographers fear that they will slip back into a naive localism, one unaware of or complicit in colonial or missionary encounters that gave rise to and supported the study of others in earlier times. One of the negative artifacts of this dialectical orientation is what Anna Tsing calls “a singular anthropological globalism.” The problematic implication is that today’s “local” differs from that of yesterday because it is defined (by the range of scholars in Tsing’s critique) against globalism per se, rather than in relation to many kinds of global or translocal processes (Tsing 2000b, 342). This creates a hierarchy of locals, whereby some ethnographic examples are more important (because they forward au courant

globalism discussions) than others (that do not). This is not the place to review the vast literatures that engage with more subtle local-global relationships, but Tsing's observation on the reification of discursive categories should make it fairly obvious that a restrictive notion of "theorizing the local" in this work would not be a helpful intervention.

Tsing suggests that focusing on "regionalisms and histories of place making within an appreciation of interconnection" can be productive to the extent that it avoids the implication of a single globalism. She has advocated interrogating "scale making projects," ways in which actors bring into being (successfully or not) their ways of viewing the world in spatial dimensions. These include various "scapes" (Appadurai 1997), visions of the global, commitments to regionalism, and a multiplicity of cosmopolitanisms (Tsing 2000a, 120). These would also include what Slobin identifies as the capacity of musicians to manipulate their "visibility" (Slobin 1992, 10 and passim); the representation of music as an "ocean" that can fit into "the little cup that is in your brain" (Qureshi, this volume); the claim that "tār-knowledge [i.e., knowledge associated with the dotār] is an infinite [realm of] knowledge" (Blum, this volume); and the metonymic idea that the comportment of Sri Lankan women has implications for the whole nation of Sri Lanka (Reed, this volume).

Focusing on how encompassing units such as the nation act to constrain and culturally exclude populations, to make them marginal, is another productive approach (see Tsing 1994). Those who occupy positions of marginality creatively rework their positions, play with the representations of cultural borders, to reconfigure themselves in relation to others (see also Herzfeld 2004). Marginality has figured largely in Indian national, academic, and regional discussions concerning the so-called tribal populations of India. Musically speaking, Carol Babiracki (1991a) has shown how Mundas of Chota Nagpur constructed their seasonal *karam* repertoire from regional sources outside the tribe, thereby taking ownership of a larger local and changing, musically, the terms by which Mundas can be categorically other.⁵ The Kota people of south India also use broader resources to construct statements of connections with and difference from others in musical, religious, and spatial terms. They have not only incorporated pan-local Hindu deities in their local pantheon, for example, but they have also imported (they say) a particular rhythmic pattern from Telugu-speaking, Scheduled Caste ("untouchable") drummers to use for those deities (Wolf 2000/2001a). Mundas turn the categories around completely, because they view themselves as human beings and everyone else as foreigners. Kotas play on the national construction of tribals as sons of the soil to assert their essential rootedness in the nation of India; yet they are as exclusive as the most conservative Brahmins when it comes to their village temple rituals.⁶

The complexity and systematicity of South Asia's classical musics, which has been an asset in establishing them in largely Eurocentric music departments, have had the effect of limiting the accessibility of scholarship, at a deeper level, to

nonspecialists. There is no question that classical music, in a very different way from tribal music, is marginal to the lives of most music listeners in South Asia. Karnatak and Hindustani music scholarship is heavily technical and largely focused on questions internal to these classical worlds. Our attention to local theorizing in the classical realm means bringing the fine-grained activities of musicians, musicologists, their patrons, and their audiences to bear on larger questions; it means understanding how the visions and ideas of a few do or do not have an effect beyond the quintessentially local acts of writing, teaching, and communicating by example.

Scale, marginality, and the creation of meaning horizons whereby spatiotemporal distance is brought into immediate experience are themes that, implicitly or explicitly, run throughout this book. Recently, anthropologists have suggested that spatial, geographic-oriented metaphors are limited because they fail to capture the “temporalities that inhere in cultural traffic,” whether those are temporalities of simultaneity (the subjectivity of being in two places at once),⁷ speed (rates at which movements, flows, operate), and interruptions of velocity (Mascia-Lees and Himpele 2006, 9, 11). We may usefully join space and time to view vectors of movement—for example, how quickly spectacles of musical attention might exert influence in one direction (on Indian guitarists, for instance) and not in another (back toward the creators of genres prominent in America or Europe). In Martin Clayton’s chapter, Indian guitarists draw influence and inspiration from what they view as the “West.”⁸ Many belong (or have historically belonged) to marginalized communities of Anglo-Indian or other Christians and self-identify personally and musically as quasi Western, and yet “Westerners,” as Clayton puts it, remain “largely uninterested” in them. The vectors of musical attention move toward Anglo-Indians from Western genres of rock and jazz and have done so for some time; the return influence and interest in the Western musical world is more diffuse, largely mediated by Indian films, and, perhaps, slower. These are the spatiotemporal horizons of meaning (cf. Munn 1990, 5) that accrue to the guitar for some performers in India.

Background and Organization

The contributors, a majority of whom participated in a five-day seminar entitled “Local Theory/Local Practice: Musical Culture in South Asia and Beyond,” have contemplated their positions regarding local theorizing for about five years now. They acquired knowledge of their “locals” in different ways: Blum, through repeated field visits to Khorasan over about forty years; Wegner, through prolonged residence in Bhaktapur, Nepal, and apprenticeship to a drummer; Badalkhan, through growing up in Baluchistan and, later in life, entering the field of folklore and traveling extensively through his home territory; and Chaudhuri, through processing archival records of many South Asian musical traditions, organizing performances

and workshops, and conducting her own fieldwork. The writers have drawn on their diversity of experience and background and interpreted the themes of “local,” “theory,” and “practice” as they saw fit.

Their writings here span a range of musical and other performance traditions: Kandyan national dance in Sri Lanka, Kota tribal music in south India, drumming for rituals in Nepal and dance dramas in south India, narrative songs of Baluchistan (Pakistan and Iran), brass band and guitar music, bardic traditions of northeast Iran, and aspects of classical music training and colonial history. These are challengingly different in scope and codified in different degrees and ways. The availability of their written histories varies and the cosmopolitanisms of their practitioners range in depth. The authors, practitioners, and consumers of these traditions differ in their degree of emphasis on artistic products. The representation of all these traditions in one volume invites rich comparisons within and beyond South Asia.

The present organization of chapters embodies the “ground-up” orientation of our project as a whole. We begin with the materiality of dancing bodies, musical instruments, and the relationship of instruments to the body. From there we set these bodies and instruments in motion, moving from the networks Clayton specifies in his study of the Indian guitar to several other kinds of networks and configurations of musicians. These musicians create spaces and itineraries, in variously local or extensive landscapes, through ritual, story, and economic necessity. The third section moves from the rather physical treatment of bodies and instruments creating space through movement to the more mental or intellectual ways in which musicians and reciters acquire knowledge. This distinction between physical and mental should not be overdrawn, for one of South Asia’s most persistent themes in the transmission of so-called traditional knowledge is its very physicality, its involvement in skills. Ways in which people know are intimately bound up in the disciplines through which they learn to move their bodies or repeat iterations (chapters by Groesbeck, Henderson, and Qureshi). The trajectory of this section toward knowledge and intellection continues in our final section, titled appropriately, “Theorizing.”

Throughout the volume, contributors sustain a tension between discussion of microlevel workings in a particular South or West Asian context, that is, on kinds of local theorizing, and questioning what it means for something to be local—defining locality in different ways and in that sense potentially theorizing the local. Our attention to local theorizing is not radically different from the general sensitivity toward local knowledge that marks most good work in ethnomusicology, anthropology, and folklore; but focusing on different kinds of theorizing does constitute a subtle difference in emphasis. Another difference is a reluctance to allow topics that are marked today as important—the movement of capital, rapid exchanges through media and travel, responses to inequalities that have been attendant on globalism (in its many forms), and some others⁹—to divert attention from other ways in which local forms of knowledge might be connected in a larger region, or transcend the boundaries of a recognized geographical area.

In this book, the chapter groupings provide one framework for comparison in and beyond South Asia, but many themes transcend these groupings. None of them denies or ignores the larger workings of the modern world system; indeed, few would disagree that globality must be understood, at least in part, via the consideration of specific instances in which it is embedded.

The idea that the authors have free rein in their implicit or explicit uses of the local needs to be tempered with the recognition that the study of local knowledge, however one wishes to define it, has its own history and institutional form. In the case of the ethnomusicology of South Asia, issues of the local are more significantly inflected from the perspective of South Asian studies than of the field of ethnomusicology as a whole. Concepts of classical music in relation to individual styles or schools, or in relation to other genres of music, have their parallels in the ways scholars have tried to conceptualize Hinduism in relation to the diversity of practices, authorities, and beliefs on the ground. The need to localize the local in this study is signaled by such key terms as “great tradition” and “cultural performance,” which find their way (usually loosely) into academic writing about cultural processes in many parts of the world, but were most famously used in relation to India. I shall first turn to this issue of localizing the local in South Asia, then consider each chapter in order of appearance. I close with a short discussion of how the essays challenge one another and a longer treatment of themes that draw the entire volume together: gender, induction, and “the beyond.” Gender considerations are given particular care as they draw attention to sensitive interpersonal dynamics everywhere; in that sense, gender localizes all interpersonal interactions, including those involving music and dance.

Localizing the Local

Any attempt to localize what the “local” means in the history of scholarship on South Asia would be incomplete without reference to Milton Singer and Robert Redfield’s discussion of “great” and “little” traditions (Redfield and Singer 1954). Great traditions are what “professional literati” based in “orthogenic” cities and towns built up from “local folk cultures” or “little traditions.” A different group of intellectual elites (urban, modern), “intelligentsia,” transformed these great traditions as orthogenic towns underwent “secondary urbanization”—expansion through extensive contact with “alien” peoples, goods, and ideas (Singer 1958, 347). Singer saw in Madras an ideal place to study the transformation of great traditions (he recognized that there were more than one) under extensive secondary urbanization. He famously contributed not only the specifically South Asian version of the great tradition concept to anthropology (and ethnomusicology), but also the aforementioned concept of cultural performance, the observable unit in which versions of the great tradition might be found.¹⁰

Ethnomusicologists have continued to use the terms “great” and “little” even as they fell out of common use in anthropology, perhaps because they seem to parallel indigenous terminological distinctions like *mārga* and *deśī*. Sheldon Pollock, speaking of Sanskrit literary traditions, glossed the distinction between these as the “cultural practices of the great ‘way’ and those of ‘place’” (Pollock 2002, 21). Perhaps these terms seem to fit music because treatises, commentaries, and hereditary specialists fortify the art musical traditions much as they did the religious world Singer described in his early Madras studies. The problem that remains with the formulation, for ethnomusicology, is its implication of a mapping between great and little. It implies that the little is a local variant, a version of what is found in the great tradition; and we cannot assume such relationships of part to whole. Many musical traditions of South Asia cannot be placed in these boxes.¹¹ Mapping the great tradition onto the classical also functions to further isolate and perpetuate categories of musical distinction that do not adequately capture the diversity of the ways music is either performed or conceptualized on the ground.¹²

It is not necessary to resort to clumsy categories of great and little, and their implied historical trajectories, to recognize the many tantalizing continuities of process, idea, and experience that run through different South and West Asian places, many of which are not easily traced to one another. A brief glance at world-system theory of a few decades ago, the current and ongoing research on religion, art, and society along the Silk Road (e.g., Liu 1996), and recent literature on cosmopolitanism (with its recognition of differential engagement between locals and others) all demonstrate that interconnectedness between people and places in many parts of the world has ebbed and flowed historically. Sheldon Pollock’s monumental project of comparing Latin and Sanskrit cosmopolitanisms over time, for instance, shows the vastly different results of literary and documentary spread of dominant languages up through the end of the first millennium. Early in the second, writers consciously decided to “reshape the boundaries of their cultural universe by renouncing the world for the smaller place, and they did so in full awareness of the significance of their decision” (Pollock 2002, 16; see also Pollock 2006). Just as interconnections have ebbed and flowed historically among people of different nations, so have they remained various and diverse even within the rough confines of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Iran.

Many of us are interested in rethinking the horizons of “South Asian music.” There is often good reason to view local musical practices as variants of a classical tradition or as products of grand historical forces that have affected whole nations or states. But such views can also be limiting because they presume and predetermine the terms by which interconnection can be discussed. Recently, like Amanda Weidman in her thoughtful considerations of the politics of voice in south Indian music (2003; 2006; and this volume), Lakshmi Subramanian (2004; 2006) and Janaki Bakhle (2005), among others, have emphasized the modernity of musical classicism in South Asia. Music now seen as classical, their arguments run,

was constituted as such in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the colonial encounter and through nationalist projects.

The turn to historicizing the construction of classicism is a salutary advancement, but it may have the unintended effect of reifying the very mapping of musical system onto nation (India in this case) that it seeks to critique.¹³ Moreover, it has the potential to limit how we think of “classical” in relation to the valorization of other kinds of theoretical formulations. Blum lists six possible areas in which one might identify what he calls “incentives for theoretical formulations.” These would encompass the needs that arose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for rulers and musical elites to foster an art music that might compete with that of Europe, for example. But they would allow us to understand these historical developments in relation to other, perhaps more regional, incentives to theorize, such as needs of religious specialists, “professional networks and lineages in competition with others,” and bards and storytellers, who are no less important to our understanding of how music operates on the ground (Blum, this volume).

Qureshi makes the point that the act of writing about the principle of oral transmission contained in the phrase *s̥na ba s̥na* (lit., “chest to chest,” “heart to heart,” etc.) has the effect of “converting the oral and particular” into the “literate and universal”—the so-called “great” or “classical.” This, she argues, belittles the significance of what actually takes place between masters and disciples in the intimacy of their individual encounters; her solution is to make way for the voices of the hereditary musicians, to let them tell their own stories.

The hiddenness of hereditary musicians’ voices is not peculiar to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and neither is the establishment of art-musical authority. Under various names, traditions of cultivated, theorized, musical traditions date back several thousand years on the subcontinent. As theorists over the centuries described what they saw around them and tried to take account of what came before, they began to take up terms of geographical and temporal encompassment, *mārga* and *deśī*.¹⁴ Indian music theorists long ago recognized continuities and disjunctures between *mārga* music that operated according to established schemes and new *deśī* material that challenged them to adjust their representations of contemporary musical practice accordingly. Theorizing the local in that sense has a long history on the subcontinent. But just as the *mārga* music before 500 C.E. is not the same as “classical” music today, neither is the “local” of our study merely a modern projection of the *deśī*.

Bodies and Instruments

Bodies and instruments are sites where actors create microlevel theories, express their motivations, and react to what they perceive as encompassing discourses. As sites of the local, bodies and instruments are ideal points of departure for the authors

of articles in part I to contemplate performing artists and their arts in relation to broader prevailing discourses of gender, nation, modernization, and the West.

Susan Reed's chapter is, in part, a story of how a male ritual dance in Sri Lanka developed from the 1940s into a classical dance, an important part of the Kandyan national dance of today. Notions of feminine respectability and modernity in Sri Lanka have both influenced and been shaped by ways in which women articulated themselves through dance as individuals, as women, and as artists. Expectations of how women should project a respectable feminine image have varied across Kandyan dance genres of the folk and the classical and in relation to dancers' ideas about sexuality and modernity. As the male ritual tradition did not prescribe or codify roles for women dancers, they have considerable scope in choreographing and interpreting dances in ways they deem properly feminine.

The female Sri Lankan dancers in Reed's discussion stretch the possibilities of the stereotypically feminine, or *lāsya*, style. Depending on the particular dance and teacher, dancers may be overtly feminine in the sense of being submissive, graceful, and responsive, or they may convey "an image of strength, agility, and composed confidence." Reed's treatment of Kandyan dance at different scales—views of an individual practitioner and widely held stereotypes—shows how individual practices serve as guides to inchoate theory or as challenging counterpoints to prevailing explanatory discourses among participants in a tradition. This is an example of the kinds of tension between local theory and practice that many contributors bring to the foreground. Different artists, even within a single performance tradition, may operate according to more than one "implicit theory" (Blum, this volume).

In Sri Lanka, introducing female dancers into the incipient Kandyan national form instigated change and ambiguity in the role of both men and women in the dance. In south India, introducing the violin into Karnatak music stimulated a transformation of aesthetics that feeds into versions of the modern south Indian voice. In localizing the study of Karnatak music to the violin, Weidman unearths surprising instrumental foundations to a music south Indians consistently assert to be essentially vocal. Styles of playing Karnatak music on the violin have blossomed and faded in popularity in accordance with changing conceptions of the voice. How could an instrument that ostensibly accompanies be so influential? How could this (what Weidman terms) "colonial" instrument, introduced from the West and often used by south Indians as a sign of the West, become naturalized as part of an authentic Indian sound? The violin and the voice in south Indian classical music engaged in "a series of displacements," one standing for and influencing the other. This process moved from the making of metonymic chains to the expansion of scale because, in the late twentieth century, south Indian classical musicians and listeners articulated a desire to create an "Indian" sound distinct from anything Western.

A different set of stories describes the lives of guitarists in India. Martin Clayton's chapter discusses the ways the guitar—particularly as employed for such

“Western” genres as rock and jazz—is theorized by Indian musicians. Extensive quotations from interviews with Indian guitarists describe origins of the instrument, its associations with regional, religious, and other identities, and implications of the guitar in national and international systems. While musicians have found ways to include guitars in many genres of Indian music, including classical, guitarists in India have by and large belonged to Anglo-Indian and other Christian communities. Their understandings of themselves in relation to dominant notions of what is truly Indian differ in important ways from those of their south Indian violinist counterparts. Moreover, some of these guitarists are less interested in creating a purely Indian sound than in accurately reproducing musical styles associated with the guitar in Europe and America. They would like to participate actively in and affect the transnational musical world of which they see themselves a part. Clayton uses the guitar case study to argue that more studies of local theory are necessary even—perhaps especially—where mass-mediated global styles such as rock and jazz are involved.

Perhaps more than in any other section of this book, the chapters here negotiate across a range of encompassing scales of vision: bodily sites of music-making, groups of consumers and organizers, networks of media and performance locations, and other representations of gender, social group, region, nation, and the wider world.

Spaces and Itineraries

Next in our journey, we move from the body dancing and playing to aspects of the local in processions, professional networks, and the geography of shrines. “Spaces and itineraries” emphasizes how individual places of music making are connected to other places through itineraries of moving musicians. Itineraries, paths, and mental processes trace out larger geographic areas, “spaces” that depend on human acts of connection for their existence.¹⁵ Theorizing the local entails understanding these spaces, figuring out the configurations of human relationships across neighborhoods and regions of different sizes. Theorizing these forms of local also involves understanding the systems of support and patronage that make changes in geographic scale, expansions or contractions of space, possible.¹⁶

Gregory Booth outlines ways in which socio-professional organization in the commercial brass band tradition in India has been mapped onto geographic space. Brass bandsmen organize themselves into networks that cover major South Asian regions. The networks’ social bases are communities of low-caste musicians who live in what Booth calls “source nodes.” Musicians travel seasonally from these small towns and villages, where living costs are low, to perform in the major labor markets, located in larger cities and towns. The social and geographical boundaries of each network in which musicians operate make it possible for band leaders

to ascertain the likely musical abilities of a bandsman searching for employment. A bandsman's social identity and the familiarity of his home town similarly help the bandsman get gigs with a band. The implicit theory that undergirds the movements of bandsmen is a form of mapping not unlike the instrument-community mapping Clayton describes. Both represent practical states of affairs that musicians can imagine to be otherwise; some choose to act on these possibilities.¹⁷ Booth's contribution to the study of local theory is in explicating bandsmen's understandings of the "rules" that govern movement within and between these networks.

Mānganiār musicians in western Rajasthan state operate in different kinds of networks, some of which involve the relationship of musicians to shrines devoted to their patron deity, Rāni Bhaṭiyāṇī. Shubha Chaudhuri recounts local stories that continue to support the hereditary right of Mānganiārs to earn their living playing for this goddess. Variations of the story serve as ongoing iterations of local theory with respect to musical-social interactions. Earlier versions of the origin story focused on princess Rāni Bhaṭiyāṇī's act of self-immolation (*satī*) for her deceased brother-in-law. Current descendants of the in-laws' clan, who belong to a prominent Rajput Hindu community, have attempted to eradicate implications of sexual impropriety by circulating their own versions of the story. Through these reworkings of local theory, they distance themselves from the Mānganiārs and other hereditary musicians as they transform some of the older shrines into larger, more mainstream Hindu ones. Rajput clans also reap financial benefits by forbidding hereditary musicians from performing in the main shrines and thereby denying them a share of donations. But beliefs in the deified princess's powers, local notions of musicians' efficacy in helping devotees get possessed by her spirit, and the narratives themselves have led several communities to build their own shrines. This popularity has created new sources of patronage and has increased the density of performance venues in the vicinity of Jasol, where Rāni Bhaṭiyāṇī was first cremated.

The processional routes described by Gert-Matthias Wegner cover an even more dense series of performance venues: religious monuments in the Newar town of Bhaktapur in Nepal. Castes of Buddhist priests, goldsmiths, and oilpressers drum pieces from the *gūlābājā* genre to draw on the divine power of these sites. Wegner likens the drum patterns to phone numbers: each deity or power in a place has one. Such indexical links between places on the procession route and pieces performed by the various ensemble dominate local understandings of the music.

The significant sites in the procession are metonymic of the town of Bhaktapur in much the same way as processions, often with music, create scales of town or neighborhood in other South Asian traditions. At a larger level, Wegner claims, the processional design is a *maṇḍala* (a design representing the cosmos); activities of the processioners make the *maṇḍala* come alive and thereby renew connections between inhabitants of the town and the gods. Indeed, musicians make grand claims in their conceptions of both the whole world and the massive span of world

time cycles; but the “meaning horizons” (Munn 1990) they create through ritual do not involve real or imaginary transactions with others across national or cultural borders. Drummers may hold global aspirations for the magnitude of their musical influence, but that does not indicate their willingness to engage with “unfamiliar cultures and places” (Werbner 2006, 7).

The three chapters implicate space and time through travel in different ways: ongoing adjustments to economic routes of musicians from season to season; historical dimensions of change in the relationships of performers and patrons to potential performance venues; repetitive, small-scale acts of moving from place to place in relation to abstract representations and philosophies that persist historically and across regions. The persons involved in these accounts are often the ones who envision their professional lives in terms of their scale of geographical potential. Some of them recognize their marginality in the musical worlds to which they are nevertheless connected.

Learning and Transmission

As we progress from playing bodies to moving bodies, we pause a moment to consider a site of theorization that, in the life of any individual, is prior to both playing and moving: transmission of knowledge. In South Asia, performers and listeners continually rearticulate a tension, common to many performance traditions, between faithfulness to received versions of the past and aspirations to create something recognizably new. We commonly speak of the transmission of musical knowledge, but this must be obtained by the development, in each generation of performers, of new skills; and this presupposes an environment in which skills can be incrementally developed, by individuals, reacting to their teachers, their codisciples, and adapting to schedules, local tastes, and economies specific to their situations (see Ingold 2000, 291 and *passim*). Individuals assert their traditional roots, the foundation of their arts in faithful reproduction of techniques, ways of building melodic and rhythmic interest, and utterances of texts. Performers disagree about what innovations are superficial or substantial, but they all strive to keep their arts alive, keep them new. In some ways performers perpetuate a model of absolute, master-to-disciple hierarchy that demands perfect reproduction of sounds; and yet, in their search for creativity, they may undermine it.

Two forums for training serve as points of departure for Rolf Groesbeck’s examination of how actual practice challenges commonplace assumptions about the master-disciple relationship in South Asia. Drumming for Kathakali dance drama is one of many arts taught at the Kerala Kalamandalam, the premier educational institute for performing arts in the south Indian state of Kerala. In one forum, the open-air pedagogical arena, students learn to reproduce percussion patterns more or less exactly. In the other, more advanced drumming students join with singers

and actors to rehearse as a group. Training in the open-air arena does not fully prepare drummers for improvisation and accompaniment in the group rehearsal. Drummers must find their way by watching the dancers and drawing from lifelong intuitions about drum accompaniment that have not been taught directly. The significant insights students gain from “peer-group immersion” show that a significant horizontal dimension of learning accompanies the vertical (master-disciple) structure of transmission in Kathakali. The particularities of this art form and the institutional form and history of the Kerala Kalamandalam account for some of the distinction between horizontal and vertical forms. However, one suspects that the discourse of vertical hierarchy in many South Asian musical traditions that feature gurus or ustāds may mask important forms of horizontal learning.

In the milieu of hereditary sārāṅgī players, Regula Qureshi directs our attention to processes of musical enculturation and socialization that form part of the broader, family-based, teaching of Hindustani music. The phrase *sīna ba sīna*, meaning to give something valuable and creative from the heart of one, as we might say in English, to the heart of another, refers specifically to the passing of a tradition in the male line. This is marked by acts establishing and affirming discipleship, not unlike rituals associated with discipleship in Sufism (the focus is mainly vertical here). Some such acts form the ritual of *shāgirdī*, which Qureshi describes as part of a musical conversation in which both the content of the student’s playing and aspects of the relationship of teacher to student are subjects of commentary. The ustād shows how one musical idea can give birth to fifty more ideas. Musicians must apply elaborate and flexible procedures to their store of musical knowledge to generate interesting musical structures in performance. This notion of “expansion” (*barhāt*) is superficially similar to the idea, in Indonesia, that performers keep “pieces in their memories in compressed form, along with information about how to decompress them during performance” (Spiller 2004, 76). One of the differences is the lack of emphasis on composed pieces in the Hindustani tradition, and the great emphasis on the physical process of practicing (*riyāz*), which itself, as if by magic, transforms rote repetition into real music.

Getting knowledge into the body and feeling that knowledge as self-evident and self-contained involve more than one kind of theorizing. David Henderson brings experiences of studying both the classical tabla and the Newari drums prominent in Bhaktapur processions into dialogue with neurological, phenomenological, and anthropological perspectives on bodily knowledge. Drummers in Nepal face challenges not unlike those of Kathakali drummers when they move from the security of learning fixed compositions to the unpredictability of accompanying and responding to dancers. Learners not only mimic the actions of their teachers until they can feel the proper motions of performance in their hands but they also engage in multiple layers of communication with their bodies and through language. Knowing entails being able to feel proper ways of striking an instrument or combining recognizable passages. Feeling here is a measure of value that

counterposes forms of value Henderson's teachers express in their verbal assessments of modern Nepali taste. The experience of drumming properly is localized value, seemingly impervious to regional or global hierarchies.

All three chapters show how issues of knowing in South Asian musical performance are tied up in specific kinds of repetitive bodily experiences. They show the multiple agents and techniques that help guide bodily mimesis and transform the practice, the doing, of music into knowledge, into being able to think and do independently. Yet they also show how complex and important are interactions with others in the learning process: watching, conversing, gesturing, and otherwise responding. "Transmission" as a key concept in our collective theorizing subsumes, in some ways, those of body/instrument and movement in parts I and II.

Theorizing Social Action

Theorizing the local and explicating what purport to be native theories of music obviously implicate spheres of social action that extend beyond the performance of music and dance. Musicians sometimes represent scale in terms of musical knowledge: music is often compared to a vast ocean in South and West Asia; but an individual's understanding may be rather shallow. Musicians and other listeners evaluate and otherwise respond to a musical performance in part by comparing what they hear with other possibilities made available through a larger body of knowledge. People may attempt to access such possibilities through introspection, dialogue with others, study and discussion of texts, deepening engagement in performance genres and rituals, and so forth.

These dynamics of understanding performances form part of Stephen Blum's consideration of modes of theorizing in the Khorasan province of northeast Iran. Using statements of bards in Khorasan and neighboring regions and formulations offered by South Asian musicians and those who have written about them, Blum provides a useful model for thinking more generally about the relationship between what a performer knows and the forms of access others have to that knowledge: performances and pedagogical presentations. The model suggests that the dynamics of interaction between musicians' performances and their pedagogical presentations remain uncertain. This draws attention to the limits to which musicians can control and communicate relevant portions of their knowledge.

Theorizing, in Blum's formulation, takes in many sorts of "episodes of generalizing" and begins whenever an agent draws together a body of perceptions and ideas and acts on them, as against remembered or imagined alternatives. Theoretical statements made by a local body of practitioners may themselves take conventional formats, a list of which reveals the principle categories and names that act as building blocks of local theorizing.