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Confronting the Social: Mode of Production and the Sublime for (Indian) Art Music

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This paper targets "art" music[1]—Western and Indian—as a musical practice with a distinct identity that is not only sonic but discursive and social, being sustained by, and sustaining, elite culture and ruling power.[2] It also targets art music practice as the (largely "unmarked") foundation of musical discourse (See Qureshi 1999). My intent here is to problematize the quasi-paradigmatic constellation of received musical discourse and its Western use across cultures; the specific goal is to expand the interpretive horizon for my own experience of Hindustani music. What I am looking for is an art music scholarship that engages the Social with the Sublime, or rather the Sublime within the Social, in order to break through the collective barrier naturalized by the intellectual and emotional habitus of high cultures. A pragmatic (and admittedly personal) search across the problematic of this terrain leads me to a re-engagement—and critique—of a Marxist paradigmatic approach to art music. Extending Mode of Production Theory to musical production posits a powerful and inclusive interpretive frame for addressing specific social-musical practices and contradictions in Hindustani music. An outline sketch of how such interpretation might work ethnographically also raises issues of agency and participation.

This paper, then, is not about Hindustani music—not yet. It is about using social theory for doing and thinking this art music, taking into account the interacting contexts of ethnomusicology and its varying disciplinary interests, but focusing on something very simple: social relevance, not only in theory but in the human practice of both music and music research.

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Experiencing Hindustani Music

Three years ago India's renowned Sangit Research Academy held a remarkable conference on the sarangi in Hindustani music.[3] For much of the day experts, patrons, and scholars spoke from the platform, mostly in English; later, the sarangi players present were assembled to sit, Indian concert style, on the floor of the platform, for each to speak in turn. This they did in Hindi, not being conversant enough with English; indeed, the organizers had proposed Hindi as the medium of discussion so as to enable their participation.[4] Even within this laudably integrated forum a separate category "musician" was thus formally set apart as different, both culturally (classical musicians practice the traditional sitting style to perform and teach) and socially (classical musicians belong together in a hereditary specialist group that mostly lacks English education). The most famous among them, Pandit Ram Narayan, stepped out and thus avoided being subsumed.

Thirty years ago sarangi players had fewer options. For my first teacher to eat at our table was taboo. Though he was served food when we ate, interaction between musicians and "respectable" people was kept to the strictly musical. Of course, he was paid for his service, like other service people, but how much was determined preemptively by the patron. If asked for his fee he first refused to be paid for what is priceless; then he asked for a great deal, in accordance with his assessment of the patron's capacity. As an outsider I found that a fair determination was impossible to arrive at—nor was fairness a relevant concept in a clearly unequal and ultimately antagonistic class relationship.

Once his teaching began, such dissonance was submerged in the discourse, both verbal and sonic, of music, always a shared musical experience. Inequality between us was now reversed. He commanded my deference as he inducted me into his orbit of the sublime, into the rules of sonic beauty and order which he personified.[5] My insider status as an affine and member of a middle-class milieu clearly facilitated my musical acculturation but also my participation in the inevitably unequal relationships that underlie the very existence of this music.

The endogamous, hereditary bearers of Hindustani art music have occupied one of the lowest social and economic positions in that highly stratified society, and many outstanding artists lived in deprivation, always dependent on patronage that may be generous and global but is also fundamentally unreliable. In performance, however—traditionally house or salon concerts—they reigned supreme, holding court, as it were, among their elite patrons, who responded to their music in an ongoing dialogue. In their emergent sonic display the musicians embodied all voices to create a unique musical edifice which united everyone present within its or-

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bit. Improvisation to the Western listener, this was music correctly performed. But the inequalities remained, between patron and musician above all, but also between soloist and accompanist: my teacher always came with a tabla player who was paid pittance, just as were rhythmic and melodic accompanists in concerts.

The condition of feudal servitude of hereditary musicians is not unfamiliar to historians of Western art music. But an entrenched Western habitus of engaging with this music in isolation, independent of its social dimensions, easily enables the Western student to extend this "theory of (musical) practice" to professionalized elite music in other societies. Like other aspirants, I found Hindustani music highly accessible to the Western quest for what David Gramit terms "the essential musical experience" (Gramit, forthcoming), especially since in its own milieu, too, this art music becomes the explicit object of such experience, richly theorized, as it is, in an aesthetic of tone and sentiment (Powers 1980). Perhaps not surprisingly, it has taken me until now to face exploring the social dimensions of Hindustani music, even though I did so earlier for the overtly functional music of qawwali. More specifically, then, the present argument arises from experiencing the sublime in Indian art music in conjunction with the exploitative social relation of its production. My engagement with social theory is thus essentially pragmatic, to address a challenge that is not only social but political: how to socialize art music scholarship itself, including problematizing authorial complicity in the highly idiom-specific venture of that music, without denying the special subjectivity of music as an "art."

For art music is itself social. Even what in French is elegantly glossed "l'objet sonore," cannot be separated from processes of production; relationships between creators, performers, and listeners are articulated every time music is performed. Given this mutual complicity, the discontinuity between the social and musical discourses appears not only incongruous but suggestive of a fundamental paradox in Western scholarship.

Studying Art Music: A Western Way

The Western paradigm that has nurtured the study of art music, including its recent critical versions, is engendered by the humanities and grounded in an assumption of autonomy for cultural idioms. This implies privileging structural and ideological content, abstraction from functional contexts, and thus interiorization, hence portability across social boundaries on the basis of music's broadly shareable "essence." Within this paradigm of aesthetic significance, an ever-growing body of historically and ethnographically contextualizing scholarship serves essentially as "a platform of insight" into musical texts and processes. A particularizing discourse of familiarity

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suggests insidership while also drawing hermeneutically on universal notions. Even the new musicological scholarship of contestation privileges referents that are broadly ideational, if text-based, for its acknowledged experiential terrain remains largely individual and interior. Working thus from the inside out, critical musicologists are, however, seriously stressing these premises by problematizing primarily gender-based constituencies within the community of art music scholarship (Solie 1992). Other disenfranchised voices, notably from racial and cultural outsiders, are beginning to be heard, but as art music projects they often privilege a musical rather than a social focus. Perhaps most crucial are incipient initiatives to locate these constituencies within a postcolonial discourse (Monson 1995, Agawu 1995, and Chen 1995). Historical reconstructions of social milieus around music already canonized continue to be a safe terrain for contesting musicological authority without directly contesting its traditional premises, especially when the period or musical works are removed from the central canon (Treitler 1986 and Tomlinson 1993).

The study of art music in India presents the Western student with an enormous challenge that includes comprehension of a new musical grammar and repertoire backed up by a distinct and diverse lineage of musicological texts. To acquire musical comprehension and literacy is a formidable task of cross-cultural learning that I shall not go into here. What facilitates this process enormously is the professionalized oral teaching practice among hereditary musician families, with explanations, demonstrations, and routines of practicing. As a student learns how to listen and to feel music, the intensely personal interaction creates bonds which are inevitably social.[6] Most ethnomusicologists of Indian art music have used this social learning primarily to acquire performing and teaching skills of music. Furthermore, Indian music literature has itself been internally focused on repertoire and tonal processes, so that Western textual scholars have easily joined in the contemporary discipline of Indic musicology. Those interested in the social functions of music, on the other hand, have tended to focus on folk, popular, or religious musical practices. This is quite in line with a similar "division of interests" in Western scholarship which has been further cemented through the remarkably persistent division of Indian studies into Great and Little Traditions.[7] Interest in the social dimensions of Indian art music has mainly been focused on individual musicians, suggestively paralleling Western scholarship on composers.[8] The one outstanding social treatment of Indian music by Daniel Neuman typically focuses on the world of Indian musicians, but he leaves out music as such, thus avoiding the "art music" issue (Neuman 1991:11). Altogether, the scholarship on Indian art music quite replicates the Western conceptual separation of music from society.

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Anthropology and Dominant Culture

Neuman's social-contextual approach well illustrates the contribution of anthropology to the study of music. For most anthropologists of music, however, art music has been a problematic subject; its identification with high culture and dominant class create blocks of thinking that originate in the particular location of art music within anthropology's own (Western) society and its "unthinking idealization of high art."[9] A recent arrival within the "human sciences," anthropology has built itself by studying "down" and "out," below and beyond the circumference of Western high culture whose subjects had long been preempted by the humanities. This quasi-residual place among established disciplines within the academy reinforces the tendency within anthropology to accord separate treatment to art music (and other arts) as a domain of special status and experience.

The pragmatic split between anthropology and the humanities is, however, primarily paradigmatic. Holistic and behavior-oriented, anthropology is based on notions of cultural and social collectivity; the study of music would be subsumed within the larger goal of understanding society. And while ethnography, "the anthropological method," is qualitative and based on personal encounters, the theoretical stance embraces a conceptual separation between scholar and subject, problematizing all knowledge of Others, including "insidership." In that sense, the anthropologist is by definition an outsider, even when putting insidership to use in the ethnographic process. Anthropological theory thus creates a problematic but potentially productive dialectic with the consciously subjectivist insidership of art music scholars or musicologists.

Of course, ethnomusicologists have long been reaching into the toolbox of anthropology, both for foundational arguments and above all to create musical ethnographies. But these pragmatic adaptations have been largely untheorized; in fact, until very recently, little social theory has ever made it into considerations of process in music scholarship. Today, however, the encompassing sweep of the Foucauldian critique has defanged essentialist paradigms on both sides of the humanities-social science divide. And the anti-imperialist critique within anthropology has problematized both grand theory and the subject position of ethnographers (Fabian 1983). Under these salutary leveling conditions, I believe that a full, but ethnographically grounded, confrontation of anthropological theory with art music study may help recontextualize "the essential musical experience."

Using ethnography to generate theoretical insights is foundational to anthropology; universalizing (or rather Westernizing) such insights has been a special purview of French social theorists from Marcel Mauss to Lévi-Strauss and including Pierre Bourdieu. In fact, one of the most striking, yet

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least noticed aspects of Bourdieu's influential theorizing on culture is its ethnographic foundation. In his most seminal work he consistently invokes Algerian Kabylie practices and theories, using them as both foil and evidence for an intellectual agenda that is however profoundly Euro-centric (Bourdieu 1977). If the salutary defamiliarizing effect of Bourdieu's cross-cultural encounters is highly evident in his writings, so is his silence—and that of his later Anglo-Saxon interpreters—regarding the obvious colonial and post-colonial implications of those encounters between French scholar and Algerian subjects. In light of this, it is perhaps not surprising that Bourdieu produces a theory of social-cultural practice based on consensus, on customary social practices existing within, and taking their character from, a social field of domination. His later elaborations on European cultural production reinforce, at least for this reader, a deep sense of authorial approbation of dominant culture that reveals not only cultural insidership but a strong, if unacknowledged attachment to the class structure supporting it, and to art and art music as one of its salient diagnostics.[10]

Dominant culture and its ideology are inevitably implicated in the study and practice of art music. In turn, such involvement in art music powerfully envelops the participant within the bounds of that culture and ideology. Assessing his own involvement with Turkish music, Martin Stokes observes that "any field worker is prone to absorb and replicate dominant ideologies of the society they study" (Stokes 1992:2). For him, a shift in perspective arose from his personal involvement with the marginalized makers of a music excluded by that ideology. More problematic is a field worker's involvement with an art music culture like India's, whose musicians are marginalized but coopted to serve the dominant ideology. Any critique of this ideology, or detachment from it, tends to be resisted by the ethnomusicologist who, as a musical participant, is protecting the productive arrangements of art music in order to protect a powerful source of her personal satisfaction.

Studies resulting from this "bi-musical" ethnographic process tend to be conservative, supporting a cultural and social status quo while avoiding potentially disturbing issues of social inequality and exploitation.[11] In other words, before being used to generate theoretical insights, these studies have already been shaped by their author's theoretical position, whether explicitly stated or not. This anthropological truism bears restating in relation to cross-cultural studies of art music, especially since these often present as unmediated musical knowledge substantial descriptive—or even prescriptive—information about a musical system and its performing procedures. Rarely attended to are the agendas, ideologies, and subjectivities involved in the production of that knowledge.[12]

To generate and give direction to such a deconstructive or analytical

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project requires an explicit use of theory targeted to explicit questions. My foundational question here clearly concerns the issue of exploitative class relations in relation to South Asian musical practice.[13] This does not mean a lack of concern about other, related kinds of oppression, notably in gender relations, nor about ideational domains and their social impact, notably that of religion. Both are, in different ways, deeply implicated in class issues and must themselves also be considered in relation to class-based inequality, as my earlier work on Sufi music demonstrates for religion. But in order to problematize both "class" and "exploitation," it must be possible to open up theoretical space for addressing the class-specific political and economic-material experience of exploitation as well as to relate it to music-specific practice.

Reaching for Marx: Mode of Production Theory

The social analysis of high culture in relation to exploitation leads directly to Marxist thought. My exploratory move is to turn to a holistic theoretical position: social theory nurtured on Marxist critical theory in anthropology, particularly mode of production theory, with its focus on the social-political relations that are implicated in high culture and vice-versa. In resurrecting the anthropological use of mode of production theory from its heyday in the late seventies,[14] I am deviating from the current anti-materialist mainstream in Marxist thought, but not from what Nelson and Grossberg identify as two abiding Marxist priorities: an agenda "to transgress the line that has traditionally separated culture from social, economic, and political relations," and "a commitment to revolutionary identification with the cause of the oppressed," priorities which have a place even in the cloud-chamber of art music studies (Nelson and Grossberg 1998:1, 12).[15]

Marxist thought made its major contributions to anthropological theory before 1985. Since then its use has shifted toward Humanist and cultural studies which tend to privilege textual-conceptual over material-social concerns. While I share culturalist criticisms of the base-superstructure determinism of "vulgar materialist" Marxism, it is precisely the incorporation of material and economic forces that responds to the need for grounding music within the productive arrangements of society which also constitute a major terrain of exploitation for Indian musicians. My interest in applying Marxist theory is thus essentially pragmatic, as a tool to situate art music within a holistically and concretely defined problematic of center and margins, domination and submission, and of "art" as a practice that can be both open-ended and cosmopolitan but also hegemonic, exclusionary, and even oppressive.

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Marx's concept of Mode of Production as used by anthropologists[16] starts from the dual premise that material production is essential to the reproduction of all societies, and it requires participation in social relationships in which individual subjects are implicated. In formal terms, a Mode of Production results from the mutual and simultaneous operation of two sets of components: Forces of Production (raw materials, technology, labor) and Relations of Production (between those who produce, i.e. provide labor, and those who own or control the means of production, i.e. resources and technology). Relations of production, the central concept, comprise the social allocation of production, above all the relationships between those who produce (productive labor), those who control what it takes to create the product (means of production), and those who appropriate the product (surplus). Social relationships involved in maintaining the productive arrangements can be seen articulated as social rules like those manifest in kinship and class structures, laws, or as religious and cultural rules or "ideology." The premise is that the primary or dominant mode of production in a society has social and cultural implications[17] that come into play in both social organization and in what Clifford Geertz comprehensively terms "cultural systems" (Geertz 1973a, 1976, and 1973b). In particular, the interactive concept of social relations of production offers a way of connecting cultural premises and practices not only with social structure but also with processes of material, economic production which orient, if not directly involve, all those whose material survival is predicated upon them, both as groups and as individuals.

Material production or economy, in this approach, is not seen as an invariant "base," for technological aspects of production are subject to the way people or societies organize their productive processes socially and articulate or regulate them culturally. For ethnomusicologists committed to a cross-cultural perspective not implicitly or explicitly centered in Western "late capitalism," this approach facilitates the acknowledgment of difference by accounting for the presence of different economies and their particular productive arrangements. While this amounts to identifying such arrangements as "modes of production"—both capitalist and pre-capitalist—these are not seen as monolithic structures, but as taking on different forms and subject to change, depending on a society's way of responding to or initiating transformations of technical aspects of production.

In positing that different productive arrangements need to be factored into considerations of difference, including cultural and musical difference, this essentially relational approach to exploring art music practices does not deny individual agency and creativity, but it insists that they are situated within constraints which are inevitably shared, even among individuated late-capitalist consumers.[18] In my opinion, the current focus on resistance in humanist research can only be enhanced by a non-trivial consideration

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of "the structures of power that shape and constrain resistance," thereby avoiding what Roseberry calls "the romanticizing the cultural freedom of anthropological subjects."[19]

In line with its origin in nineteenth-century capitalist production, mode of production theory particularly addresses social inequality and structures of power as they are linked to the exploitation of direct producers through controls over their own labor, the means of production with which they work, and what they produce. Identified with the concept of Political Economy, this emphasis points toward aspects of power and domination implicated in the practice of culture and of art music, a crucial nexus still little attended to in art music scholarship.[20] In music-specific terms, the notion of social relations of production offers a salient perspective on music making as a productive process within that nexus. And while this model was developed and most successfully applied to capitalism and commodity production, its relational conception is generally useful in the social analysis of productive relations, especially where exploitation is expressed as property relations, as in feudal and other agriculture-based economies.

Marx, Music, and Commodification

Music has held a marginal place within a frame of Marxist engagements with culture which have been focused mainly on literature. Building on Marx's seminal distinction of class consciousness from class membership, early humanist responses against economic determinism have been firmly situated within the bounds of "high culture," and its sensibilities (Spivak 1988). That relations of production, including the productive forces which they regulate socially, are central to the production of culture is certainly implied in the writings of Cultural Marxism, but these forces are rarely brought into focus (Lukacs 1950 and Williams 1977). In my view the scope of their analyses is severely limited by the—no doubt culturally generated—quasi-superstructural definition of culture as ideational objects, symbols, texts, icons that are essentially lifted out of the productive relations which they embody. This separation goes back to Marx himself and indeed to nineteenth-century European ideation which posits an essentially autonomous conception of artistic creation. Thus, according to Marx, the piano is subject to economic relations of production as an item of manufacture, but it is exempt from them as a tool of performance, along with the musician who plays it. The difference is in labor: the piano maker's labor has exchange value, the player's labor only use value, for it is beyond materiality (Marx 1971; also Olmstead 1993).

Humanist Marxists enshrine this separation of high culture sensibilities by addressing subjectivity or consciousness within culture (read elite or high culture) through texts, including music. Thus Georg Lukacs, Theodor

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Adorno, and even Frederic Jameson, target "serious" or art music as the affective domain of educated consciousness, profiling its interiority as a site of materialist dialectic, but also dissociating it from the realm of material production (Lukacs 1971, Adorno 1978 and Jameson 1971). At one level this can be seen as introducing an "emics" of art music into Marxist analysis; what seems problematic in this literature is the standard humanist procedure of conflating individual-authorial and collective subjectivities.

In contrast, Marxist-oriented studies of popular music have been focused to production, use, and social connections, as is broadly expressed in John Shepherd's notion of music's "sociality."[21] A major intellectual context for these studies is the British Cultural Studies movement; a major focus is commodification through recordings and a major concern is agency within the capitalist domination over music (Giddens 1979 and Williams 1980). Thus Reebee Garofalo, following Gramsci and Raymond Williams, postulates some autonomy for musicians even within the small space left to them within the productive relations of the Western recording industry (Garofalo 1987). Going further, Peter Manuel sees the possibility of music makers in India taking control of (cassette) production itself by controlling their means of production (Manuel 1993). A more global orientation initiated by Wallis and Malm complements humanist individualism with a focus on the music of marginalized groups articulating identity vis-a-vis the international recording industry's dominant political-economic establishment (Wallis and Malm 1984).

Privileging commodification, however, has tended to direct attention to the recorded product, leaving music making as an unattended, yet problematic subset of record production. Furthermore, the study of commodified music inevitably engages the scholar in consumption herself, thereby playing into the textualist tendency to focus on the embodied sonic content of the music over the productive relations it articulates. These enmeshments within industrial capitalism make it difficult to attend to the presence or effect of other productive arrangements.

Among socially engaged work emerging from Marxist-oriented cultural studies, Dick Hebdige and John Shepherd problematize dimensions of political structure like class, but once again they do so in relation to the terrain of culture which is seen as the site of domination and resistance in the face of a capitalist system whose political economy is taken on, but also taken for granted (Hebdige 1979 and Shepherd 1991). This facilitates a level of analysis which tends to elide textual-representational and material-social concerns, so that even a notion like "the politics of the everyday" appears to be an exemplar of consciousness rather than of practical experience (Shepherd 1993:18).

Countering this trend, Sara Cohen has raised a salutary call for an eth-

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nographic focus on the people and processes that generate the "texts" of popular music (Cohen 1993). In her study of Liverpool Rock Culture, she explores musicians' experiences through their constructions of musical subjectivity, cautiously situating them in relation to the political economy of their music, though only implicitly so (Cohen 1994 and 1991).

Turning to Art Music

An explicitly Marxist-oriented but thoroughly pragmatic engagement with popular music is Peter Manuel's remarkable ethnographic study of "Cassette Culture" in India. Applying a Mode of Production concept to the new technology of cassette production enables him to show how capitalist relations of production are thereby extended to the folk genres that provide popular music with "raw material," resulting in changes in musical content that are related to changes in control over the means of musical production (Manuel 1993:14). But Manuel stops short of including live music making into the concept, so that the non-technological or "artistic" aspects of musical production, while richly explored ethnographically, are not considered part of productive relations but fall within a realm of "cultural phenomena," a separation once again resonating with Cultural Marxist thought.[22]

My own approach is to build on Manuel's explicitly Mode of Production framework by expanding it in two ways. One is to link the specific production of music with dominant productive processes in the society's political economy, including non-capitalist economies, as already discussed. The other is, concomitantly, to expand the production concept beyond capitalism and commodification to productive relations in pre-capitalist economies, with the feudal mode of production assuming particular relevance here. This means following anthropological applications of the mode of production paradigm (Asch 1979, Bloch 1975) and using a more generic conception of production based on value that can include food, pianos, and even music produced on pianos, rather than separating performance into a separate category of a service, as Marx himself does (Marx 1963:168, 398, and 392).

In terms of ethnographic process, I resonate with Cohen's socially and materially grounded approach enriched by a significant engagement with the collective aspect of musical subjectivity which is implicated in shared notions of identity and place. Her exploration of "Liverpool sound" as both a sonic practice and a notion to own acknowledges how this musical realm serves the constitution of a meaningful cultural world for those who inhabit it. I believe that Clifford Geertz addresses the social significance of such worlds in his consideration of ideology as a cultural system, when he points

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to expressive symbols as a "program" for perception, sentiments, manipulation of the world (Geertz 1973). Going further, Jonathan Friedman, relates "the constitution of meaningful cultural worlds" with the empowering practice of identity, asserting that for hitherto silenced people whose identity depends upon a particular cultural configuration, culture is not negotiable.[23]

Could it be that art music constitutes just such a "meaningful cultural world" within Indian—as well as Western—society,[24] and that their participants have been resisting a socially engaged, critical study of their music making because it signals a threat to the empowering practice of identity, especially in the face of increasingly contesting alternative identities? Such a study, to be credible to its subjects, must therefore deal with their cultural world in its own terms, even while situating this world within a political economy frame. By approaching an ethnography of Indian art music through its own discourse of individual subjectivity, while also relating it to Marxist social theory, I likewise acknowledge that this music constitutes such a cultural world within Indian society.

An appropriate inquiry into art music, then, presupposes that it be considered from an inclusive perspective as a social process, a value produced, consumed, and exchanged, articulating with fundamental aspects of social and economic structure as well as an art form and elite code, a cultural practice seen through its own discourse. This is particularly obvious in an encounter with a cultural practice which is as highly elaborated and widely circulated as Indian art music. Accordingly, a multivalent theoretical approach is called for that interposes—rather than juxtaposes—the productive forces and relations of high culture with the entire society's modes of production, an approach that integrates culture-internal exegesis with social analysis.

Targeting Difference: South Asian Others

I have dwelled excessively on the potential uses of mode of production for the study of musical culture, in an attempt to detach the concept from the totalizing scope of its earlier applications, made in the spirit of Modernism's "grand theory."[25] A differentiated consideration of materialist perspectives becomes particularly crucial when addressing non-Western subjects, for there is, even in Marxist studies, a history of European thought in which the non-Western subject is a shadowy Other, appropriated and represented by the unacknowledged "knowing subject" of the West. This tendency becomes exacerbated in a postmodern thought-scape of undifferentiated subjects in an unproblematized world of individuals, texts, and

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products which is ultimately in tune with Western intellectuals as a "dominated fraction of the dominant economy" (to adapt Bourdieu) and its horizons of global capitalism (Bourdieu 1974:122ff). Marked by the transparency (read "interest") of the Western intellectual, as Spivak argues powerfully, it fails to engage non-Western centered subject positions because it ignores the international division of labor, the large-scale presence of paracapitalist labor as well as the heterogeneous structural status of agriculture in the Non-Western Periphery.[26]

In speaking for a sophisticated postcolonial critique against a discourse that silences the South Asian other, Spivak also opens up space for addressing difference within that Other. There is a highly-developed Indian scholarship that has applied Marxist premises to Indian economic history, focusing on socio-economic difference.[27] Complemented significantly by the historical micro-studies of the Subaltern Studies project, this literature points to historically entrenched production arrangements under social arrangements of domination and hierarchy (Guha 1982–1987). This social system of great complexity and conceptual beauty is shaped and legitimized by ideological discourse while at the same time it articulates exploitative relations of production; it is, in Maurice Bloch's words, a "legitimate order of inequality" (Bloch 1975:203). Subaltern scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty observes that even today's "veneer of bourgeois equality barely masks the violent, feudal nature of much of our systems of power and authority" (Chakrabarty 1985:276). This Indian Marxist literature of the feudally-based Indian political economy forms an appropriate foundation for my own adaptation of Marxist-informed theory to my inquiry into art music.

What follows in the remainder of this paper are some preliminary ideas of how such an approach may enrich the ethnographic study of Indian art music through its makers. To explore the circumstances and contexts that motivate social/musical actors in specific places and times requires an approach that is interpretive but yields hypothesis and deduction to collaboration and discovery: a socially (and musically) integrative approach. I propose to move into the mode of an ethnography informed by a social theory that offers tools for understanding the sounds, words, and actions of art music makers in pre-Independence India by situating the relations of musical life within the broader social relations of the society's dominant mode of production. Although space does not permit hearing from individual musicians, nor addressing underlying issues of polyvocality and engagement with individual subjectivities, my commitment is to individuals and to grounding as well as nuancing the inevitable generalizations that accompany this preliminary outline of highly differentiated individual and collective practices.

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A Feudal Lens for Indian Art Music

Indian wealth has for centuries been based on agricultural surplus produced by peasant cultivators and appropriated as well as (re)distributed by land-controlling non-producers. In North India this feudal mode of production has continued to be crucial to the agricultural, landowning heartland of Hindustani music (essentially the Indo-Gangetic Plain, with its center between Delhi and Benares).[28] In this region where land revenue constituted half of provincial revenues until 1940, feudal landowners were protected throughout British rule, both directly and in the form of princely states (Metcalf 1969, Frykenberg 1969). Also for centuries, landed wealth has constituted the major source of patronage for music (Hoey 1889, Imam 1959-1960, Sharar 1975, Wade 1997, Erdman 1985).[29]

Marx makes reference to feudalism throughout his work, but always in the service of explaining capitalism; it therefore remained for scholars of non-capitalist societies to fully theorize the feudal mode of production. Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst's seminal work on the feudal mode of production starts from the basic notion that feudal production encompasses both material and social components (or forces and relations of production).[30] Forces of production include means and labor (i.e. land and farming)—the direct economic means of production. Feudal relations of production include two crucial elements of control that together create a particular complex of exploitation. The first is the appropriation of surplus labor in a form controlled by the landowner: the producer has to turn over the product of his labor beyond what he needs to subsist and reproduce himself; he is unable to realize the value of the surplus himself. The second element is the exclusion of the producer from his means of production: access and use of the land is controlled by the landowner through property and ownership. Specific legal political conditions ensure the maintenance of this control, while ideological social relations form part of "the conditions of existence" of the mode of production overall (Hindess and Hirst 1975: 15). These conditions prominently include the devaluation of labor and the mystification of the value it produces, since it is not labor but land ownership that provides surplus wealth.[31]

Without being able to expand here on the particulars of this economic-social nexus, I wish to interrogate the Hindustani music-making process through the prism of these relations of production, on the premise that it may help render concrete the social nature of music, which, just like land or products, is the result of social and economic relationships. Traditionally hereditary musicians have been considered service professionals who offer their (musical) skill to a patron, not their product. Somewhat akin to the hereditary *jajmani* system that governs other service providers, they

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enter a feudal relationship of service provider which ties the person to the patron because the patron controls access to the means of (musical) production, i.e. the performance venue and audience. Thus producers of music are essentially servants who may only get enough reward to reproduce themselves, i.e. to survive and train their successors.

Within this service relationship, however, a musician has the freedom to create what he wants, and he may be rewarded royally at any time (or not at all), for his product does not have a price tag. Music is not for sale and the labor that creates music is itself worthless. It is the person who gets rewarded, whether he performed one or five pieces, for five minutes or five days; hence music is not measured in either duration or number of units. Supporting literary accounts of feudal music making, old musicians have talked to me of luxurious subsistence at courts and of rewards that varied with the effect of the music on the audience and the noble patron's mood (Ruswa 1975, Sharar 1984, Jariwalla 1973, G. Khan 1976, Y. Khan 1984). On the other hand, perhaps significantly, the labor of acquiring the skills to produce music is a highly elaborated part of the reproductive ideology of musicians, precisely because it does not figure as a value within the productive relations of music making.

But the art musician's product is also a service, as such no different from other feudal personal services (e.g. by a barber or cook). What is different is the content and use of the product music. The musician is the specialist who controls both the musical language and its performance. This freedom gives him the possibility to exceed his own limits; it gives him a unique voice. Different from the cook, he is inseparable from his product, the only servant who shares the feudal salon as a full participant in the highest elite events. What he speaks musically is of course subject to control, but that is an arbitrary, negotiated control of the person, not of the music as such. The musicians are in charge of the rules, and there is no separate canon of musical works, since ragas and song compositions are inherited individually and transmitted orally. In fact, the musical work is created in a spontaneous process of negotiation between performer and listeners; the basis of improvisation turns out to be social, as is confirmed by numerous accounts of musicians.[32]

A Musical Mode of Production?

Meanwhile, within this productive system of the larger society, traditional hereditary musicians have their own, endogamous and closely controlled mode of producing music. Training is within families, and the means of production—musical knowledge, performance skills—are tightly controlled by the master. He exercises coercive control over the student; in-

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deed, according to numerous musicians, harsh beatings are an accepted norm, even a necessity (Husain 1969, B. Khan 1984, S. Khan 1984, and N. Khan 1984). A supportive ideology advocates labor through a mystique of practicing *(riyaz)* (Neuman 1991, Kippen 1988). Central to this ideology of transmission is the concept and ritual of discipleship (Silver 1976, 1984, Menon 1973, and Neuman 1991). Discipleship means life-long allegiance, since in productive terms it offers the student access to the means of musical production in return for a share of the surplus he will gain later as a producer of music. Understandably, teachers have been reluctant to accept students from outside, and the process of reproducing productive skills has remained internal to the hereditary musicians' kin group. Hence also the resistance of musicians to have their musical knowledge converted into writing, most notably by the great musicologist Pandit Bhatkhande in the 1920s (Y. Khan 1984, Nayar 1989), and even today the eminent disciple, patron and researcher Arvind Parikh is opposed to putting in writing what he has learned from the great sitar master Vilayat Khan (Parikh 1993).

The actual production of music, however, requires a consumer of the product and an arena for its consumption where its value is realized in performance. The event of a musical performance offers a shared moment of consumption which means entering into personal relationship with the product and directly recovering its use value. Paraphrasing Jean Beaudrillard, it is a moment of strong psychological and social charge, exactly because it avoids exchange value (Beaudrillard 1975:97). Here the musician is the master of his product; assiduous striving gives way to spontaneous ease, for masters do not practice. The earlier labor of practicing is ignored when the musical product is delivered. In this process he, the servant, takes on the ways of patrons. The art music ensemble offers a replication of the power hierarchy on which the musician depends. The lead musician controls a hierarchical performance structure of soloist over accompanist, singer over instrumentalist, melodic over rhythmic accompanist.[33] In improvising, the master acts out the arbitrariness of the power holder, he plays with, even contests the relations of dominance and subordination, all the while affirming the courtly pyramid of lead musician, support singer, instrumental accompanists, melodic over rhythmic focus, pedigreed over newly introduced repertoire. Labor is replaced by inspiration, mastery acts out the master.

Most important, the musical experience is quite explicitly identified as a shared meal, literally "food of the soul" *(rūhānī ghizā)*, but a meal that is created jointly by host and cook. Both formal banquet and circle of intimacy, the meal is shared; yet the fundamental distinction between producer and patron, performer and listener remains. Musicians, not patrons, present established dishes to be judged; they also dish up innovations to be tasted

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and accepted into the dominant cuisine by patrons. Musical judgment and even competence are not uncommonly found among feudal patrons, some of whom have been acknowledged disciples of their musicians and even accomplished performers.[34]

Feudal patrons have music performed for them, even when they are competent to do so themselves—why? I believe that the ideology of devaluing labor and thereby mystifying it is a deeply meaningful corollary of the feudal devaluation of productive labor. In fact, to have labor performed by others is a fundamental diagnostic of status in this feudally-based economy.[35] Both make it necessary for a feudal patron to have music, like other products, produced through the labor of service professionals. In North India this musical practice is further reinforced by the negative valuation of music in Islam, long the religion of the ruling elites. Indeed, it has been suggested that the combination of this ideology with feudalism have created the conditions for professionalized "fine arts" (Hitti 1970). Most obvious is the entrenchment in language (Urdu/Hindi) of the logical and above all social-economic differentiation between singing or playing (*gānā, bajānā*) and causing someone else to sing or play (*gavānā, bajvānā*).

Art Music, Hegemony and Resistance

Constitutive as well as expressive of these productive relations is a historically entrenched "habitus" of ideation and practice which shapes social relations and frames them structurally, including relations of cultural production (Bourdieu 1997, 1993). Habitus permeates historically received social processes of culture-making, thereby marking specific cultural norms and forms. At the center of what this habitus creates and re-creates is what Gramsci has termed hegemony, a lived system of meanings and values, dominant and effective, a "culture" in the widest sense, including the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes (Williams 1980:38, 1977:110). "Culture," then, is the apparatus and process of articulating hegemony in the face of contradictory experience among vast majorities of classes whose productive contribution it denies, even as they participate in producing culture. But their very participation also makes culture a distinct and possibly a safe space for opposition and self-assertion. Here we find the crux of subalternity "the composite culture of resistance to and acceptance of domination and hierarchy" (Chakrabarty 1985:376 and Spivak 1988).

Within this wider notion of culture, Indian art music, with its ability to convey interiority and its explicit substantiality as a "nourishment for the soul," occupies a special place of importance as a meeting and mediating space between feudal classes because it articulates feelingfully, engaging

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emotions that support conscious understanding, creating a unity of thought and feeling. Thus activated, bonds of shared "structures of feeling"[36] which are encoded in music can, and do, transcend boundaries and invoke an intimacy and reciprocity that are both absent from the relations of production and their asymmetrical social rules that govern feudal music makers and their masters.[37]

How musical relations interplay with social relations in the strategies of art music makers is, however, ultimately a matter of individual agency, and collective social-musical processes are constituted individually by their participants, not excluding those who study these processes. We need to know specific, real-life practice, through an ethnography of participation reflexively positioned within the productive relations, musical as well as economic and political. Such knowledge is bound to be local, particular, grounded in individual lives, so that it may be better understood how the cosmopolitan "art" dimension of music becomes experiential, active, and thus lived both within, and across social boundaries.

Problematizing Subjectivity and Music Scholarship

The lens of social theory, then, draws the gaze toward art music making as an act that embodies social affirmation, contestation, even transcendence, and toward its sonic message as a complex site of socially-coded intertextuality. If this is an act of border crossing, it also highlights the lack of Shield's "sociality" within the bounds of established art music scholarship. Why do those powerful sonic connections remain unverbalized, why is their "valued world" cordoned off by a pervasive scholarly consensus, Indian as well as Western? To address this question is also to problematize music scholarship and what motivates its expansion into social terrain.

As a deeply enculturated participant in the world of Indian art music, my own motivation to pierce that "sounding bubble" has not been music-internal but social, political, and even historical. If mode of production theory can concretize the well-guarded social power of art music, it will, however, also endanger existing musical and scholarly canons. As music academics, can we risk abandoning the covert exemption of our own power structures from critical scrutiny?

Veit Erlmann, in his remarkable exploration of South African *isicathamiya,* interrogates how a given performance practice makes sense for those involved in its production and reception, and how exactly this sense is socially organized and controlled, including the identification of what he calls "determining forces" (Erlmann 1996:44-5). Pursuing such a social engagement in the world of Indian art music is also an attempt to come to terms with the inevitable participation in an exploitative nexus that extends

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to whatever role I may assume in my quest for the Sublime in Hindustani music. How such participation can be put to responsible use is a crucial question that has had little echo among scholars of the musically sublime. For me, it begins with taking the risk of thinking art music socially, and opening it—and myself—to new problematics, but also to new, more humanly oriented musical horizons.

Notes

1. I gratefully acknowledge incisive comments by Jocelyne Guilbault, Daniel Neuman, and David Gramit, as well as participants of the Border Crossing Conference (Ottawa 1995) where a first version of this paper was presented.

2. For India this is best summarized and bibliographically supported by Powers 1980. "Art" music is used here as in standard writings on Indian as well as Western music, implying connotations of high culture, elite patronage, professional specialization, canonicity, gatekeeping standards and boundaries of aesthetic and practice, all of which are found operative in both musical practices. The "Sublime," following recent Western usage, denotes the experiential impact of art music termed "deep lofty emotion by reason of beauty" (*OED*) and implying aesthetic and sonic autonomy.

3. Principal bowed string instrument of India used in Hindustani Sangit (Northern Indian art music, as against Southern Indian art music or Karnatak Sangit). See Seminar 1984 and Bor 1986–7.

4. Even though this shut out some foreign participants not conversant with Hindi.

5. His family, however, remained invisible, despite my theoretical ability, as a woman, to meet his veiled wife.

6. Western art music, too, has its "oral traditions" of musical transmission; these have so far received scant attention within art music scholarship; for ethnomusicological initiatives see Henry Kingsbury (1988), Bruno Nettl (1995), and Melinda Cooke (1994).

7. First seminally outlined by Robert Redfield (1955); for how this has played out in Indian music research see Carol Babiracki (1991).

8. North Indian musicians "compose" their music as they perform it.

9. Grossberg and Nelson 1988:3. Two telling examples are Clifford Geertz's treatment of "art" in the context of his series of writings on "cultural systems" (Geertz 1976) and Victor Turner's shift into the "art" mode when addressing Western theater rather than African ritual (Turner 1982).

10. See his *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984) and further writings on "cultural capital" (1993). To be fair, it should also be mentioned that Bourdieu has recently made a powerful public statement of solidarity with those excluded from the cultural elite (Bourdieu 1996).

11. By singling out musical ethnographies to make a point relative to music scholarship I do not mean to ignore models and parallels in the general ethnographic literature, especially of a functionalist orientation.

12. Most studies of Indian art music are cases in point; they are also excellent models of received musical knowledge.

13. I first struggled with this issue in my study of Sufi music (Qureshi 1995).

14. For critical overviews, see Sherry Ortner (1984) and William Roseberry (1988).

15. Inverting an expression from Daniel Neuman (1974, see note 13).

16. As filtered through the work of Althusser and Balibar 1968 and others, especially Godelier 1975, Friedman 1975, 1992, Terray 1972, and Bloch 1975.

17. And vice versa, of course, but that is already a major assumption implied in the current culturally-focused Marxist critical literature.

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18. Spivak goes as far as to causally connect humanism and late capitalism (1988:272).

19. Roseberry (1988:171-72). The fact that Gramsci was imprisoned when he created what has become a post-modern manifesto of resistance deserves just this kind of attention.

20. Initiatives have come from music directly associated with the voice of marginalized constituencies. Susan McClary (1990) and other New Musicologists are pioneering such studies mostly textual-ideological in scope, though feminist and gay-lesbian perspectives strive to embody the materiality of their constituency.

21. See Shepherd 1991. Sociologist Robert Shields has theorized this concept with reference to Simmel, focusing on the constitution of "affective social groups" (1992).

22. Manuel 1993:11. Given his focus on mass media commodification, he goes as far as to warn, with Walter Benjamin, against an "artificial emphasis" on non-technological or "artistic" aspects of music production; see Manuel 1993:16, and Benjamin 1968.

23. See his seminal discussion of history and the politics of identity, Friedman 1992, especially pp. 837, 854.

24. The term "Western" itself assumes such an identity by choosing to ignore obvious and fundamental national, geographic, and linguistic disjunctures within a quasi-global concept.

25. Particularly associated with World Systems and Dependency Theory.

26. Spivak 1988:279-80. In the post-modern marketplace of ideas, if particular theoretical positions vary in relation to the issues prioritized by those assuming them, one has to wonder why the class-power-production nexus is decidedly out of focus in the current climate of Marxist theorizing. Clearly, a theory may be "out of style" because it interferes with current agendas of theorizing. Theoretical pluralism in ethnography remains to be fully problematized; see Marcus 1986.

27. Often enriched by Marxist theoretical orientation, and by extensive documentation on production and surplus appropriation generated by imperial and colonial interests. A good basic source is the *Cambridge Economic History of India* (Raychaudhuri and Habib 1982, and Kumar and Desai 1982).

28. There is a rich literature on the economic history of this region. See Bayly 1983, Raychaudhuri and Habib 1982, Fisher 1988, Ganguli 1964, Sircar 1966, Habib 1963, Sharma 1965, Mazumdar 1960, and Singh 1965.

29. The twentieth century has seen a rich literary and film production, evoking contexts and relations of feudal cultural and musical patronage. After early retrospective works (Ruswa 1982 [1905], Sharar 1975 [1913-20], Satyajit Ray's film *The Music Room* (Jalsaghar) stands out, as does Vikram Seth's highly readable and intelligently synthesized novel using Neuman (1991) among others as an (unacknowledged) source (Seth 1993, especially chapters 2 [2-5] and 6 [1, 2, 27]). In connection with the British support of landed elites in India, an aside worth noting is that in Britain the same ideology continues to support large landed estates to this day.

30. Theirs remains the standard theory of pre-capitalist modes of production (Hindess and Hirst 1975). Important applications of the mode of production model to surplus-producing pre-capitalist societies are by Perry Anderson (1974) and Maurice Bloch (1977). In this context, it needs to be emphasized that Marx's own concept of an "Indian" mode of production, based on nineteenth century Indological constructs has long been invalidated by later scholarship; the seminal critique is by Daniel Thorner (1966) see also Hindess and Hearst 1975.

31. This ideology has extended to the commodity production by artisans and persists to this day, see Chakrabarty 1985.

32. Historians of Western art music have identified many of these features of feudalism, especially in the context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century absolutism, and most prominently in the literature on Haydn. What the conceptual approach of mode, and especially relations of production, can add here is a systematic consideration of music making as integral to the political economy of feudalism.

33. In recent decades this ranking among accompanists (and their seating order) has been reversed in favor of rhythm, as drummers, now seated at the right side of the soloist, have gained popular acclaim on the now public concert stage.

34. E.g. the Nawab of Rampur and feudal lord Radhika Mohan Maitra respectively.

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35. Hindi/Urdu transitive verb forms strikingly articulate this value, culminating in a hierarchical trinity of the foundational verb "to do"; karna, karana, karvana respectively designate "to do (something)," "to have (something) done," and "to cause (someone) to have (something) done," the last form taking care of non-laboring intermediaries who pass down orders to producers. For an early Western report on this from a late-eighteenth-century Lucknow feudal establishment, see Mir Hassan Ali 1917.

36. The evocative term is Raymond Williams' (1977:131ff).

37. A telling example is Nita Kumar's discussion of musical events sponsored by the Maharaja of Benares (1989:143-44).

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