

Exhibiting Music Case Studies in Imagining, Performing, and Collecting Sound

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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

Museums have long been thought of as “quiet” spaces, in which visitors walk slowly through galleries to look at material cultures in glass cases. Music and sound have begun to pervade the quiet spaces of museums in the forms of aural installations and performance-based programs. They are no longer galleries for solely visual engagement, but loud spaces in which visitors and audiences listen to recordings, experience live performances, and participate by themselves singing and playing in workshops, classes, installations, and impromptu demonstrations. This article explores three case studies in exhibiting music. The first is the exhibition *Ragamala: Garland of Melodies*, which was on display at the Royal Ontario Museum and sought to demonstrate the fluidity between the South Asian arts. The second is an investigation of some of the formal and informal performance-based programming at the Aga Khan Museum. The last case study focuses on a future project, in which collectors of Indian audio cultures will submit contributions to help construct a history of sound in India. Each case study is motivated by a series of central questions: what constitutes “exhibiting music”? What are the broader implications of and consequences for exhibiting music in each case? How does exhibiting music in a museum impact a visitor’s experience? What kinds of new stories are told in exhibiting music and sound? The three case studies respond to these questions and provoke issues and possibilities for further critical inquiry. They show that museums are dynamic spaces with incredible potential to inspire multi-experiential engagement.

EXHIBITING MUSIC

Case Studies in Imagining, Performing, and Collecting Sound

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Introduction

Museums have long been thought of as “quiet” spaces. The museum-going experience has typically entailed walking slowly through galleries to look at material cultures in glass cases, perhaps reading their accompanying explanatory labels. Though musical instruments and visual cultures depicting scenes of music and performance have contributed to gallery displays, the experience of these objects has been outwardly silent. On the experience of popular music exhibitions, Simon Reynolds (2011) writes,

...I'm not sure music of any kind really works in a museum, a place of hush and decorum. Museums are primarily visual, oriented around display, designed for the contemplative gaze. The crucial element of sound has either to be absent or suppressed. Unlike paintings or sculptures, you can't have sonic exhibits side by side; they interfere with each other. So music museums contain the ancillary stuff (instruments and stage costumes, posters and packaging) but not the main thing itself (3).

Reynold's sentiments demand louder museum spaces in the exhibition of music—a process that has begun in the forms of aural installations and performance-based programs. Music and museum scholars have argued for not only louder exhibitions, but museum spaces imbued with the potential for affective interaction between visitors and exhibition content (Baker *et al.*, 2016; Bijsterveld, 2015; Leonard, 2010; Rivera-Servera, 2009). Galleries are no longer spaces for solely visual engagement, but noise-filled spaces in which visitors and audiences listen to recordings, experience live performances, and participate by themselves singing and playing in workshops, classes, installations, and impromptu demonstrations. Musical instruments and visual depictions of performance continue to quietly

represent music on display, but are now frequently accompanied by programs and interactive media that offer museum visitors the ability to create real aural connections with sonically based installations. Museums are no longer quiet, but aurally vibrant spaces in which patrons can look, watch, listen, hear, and feel to experience and engage.

This article explores three case studies in exhibiting music. All three are recent or future projects, which I show to signify the imagination, performance, and collection of sound in the exhibition of music. The first is the exhibition *Ragamala: Garland of Melodies*, featuring paintings, instruments, and audio recordings on display at the Royal Ontario Museum. The second case study is an investigation of some of the formal and informal performance-based programming at the Aga Khan Museum. The last example focuses on a future project, in which the exhibition of music will begin by amalgamating a sample collection of recordings from various collectors of Indian audio cultures. I present the three exhibitions having been personally tied to their curation and content. I draw on my personal relationships with each example to ground my analysis—a method that presents an alternative perspective to models based on visitor surveys and feedback. In this method, I am the blurred result of curator, visitor, and patron, constructing an exhibition prior to and in the moment of its experience. The synthesized result of this method is a self-reflexive engagement with three paradigms for exhibiting music. The three presented in this article complement other exhibitions of music, including those at music and musical instrument museums, such as the Musical Instrument Museum at Brussels and Pheonix, and Philharmonie de Paris, as well as physical and virtual exhibitions that have investigated music in museum contexts, such as *Opus: The Making of Musical Instruments in Canada* at the Canadian Museum of History and *Bruits* (“Noises”) at Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.

Though each case study presented in this article investigates something different about the exhibition of music, I am motivated in each case by the same set of central questions: what constitutes “exhibiting music”? What are the broader implications of and consequences for exhibiting music in each case? How does exhibiting music in a museum impact a visitor’s experience? What kinds of new stories are told in exhibiting music and sound? The three case studies presented here answer these questions, while also bring about issues and possibilities that call for further critical inquiry. I come to the analysis of these studies from the disciplinary lens of ethnomusicology, in which I study music, conceived broadly, in its larger

cultural context. My interpretation of the work of ethnomusicology is to understand music as “humanly organized sound,” a phrase that has been famously coined by ethnomusicologist John Blacking (1973). The study of music-making in ethnomusicology is the study of people and communities, and I extend this kind of analytical frame to my reading of exhibitions of music. The case studies presented here provoke the consideration of larger processes, questions, and possibilities in exhibiting music. In doing so, I interpret museums as dynamic spaces with incredible potential to inspire multi-experiential engagement.

Imagining Sound in *Ragamala: Garland of Melodies*

The exhibition *Ragamala: Garland of Melodies* was on temporary display in the Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) from 8 May 2010 to 20 March 2011. Featuring a total of forty objects, the exhibit was conceived to display some of the ROM’s collection of *ragamala* paintings, a form of North Indian and Deccani painting that flourished during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. *Ragamala* paintings are visual depictions of poems that arouse the mood of particular North Indian *ragas* (musical modes). Each painting is named to correspond to a specific raga in the *ragamala* system of classification (Dallapiccola, 2011: 13). Colloquially, a *ragamala* painting is thought to represent some essence of the raga that corresponds to its name. Ethnomusicologist Charles Capwell (2002), however, argues that the paintings represent the *ragamala* organizational scheme rather than their named musical counterparts. Despite conflicting claims about the relationship between music and visual representation in *ragamala* painting, the genre incites a connection between the two (Ebeling, 1973: 13-17). While the term “*ragamala*” is inextricably linked to the described genre of painting, its translated meaning as a “garland” or “necklace” of “musical modes” or “melodies” lends itself to have musical significance. The *Ragamala* Society of Toronto, for example, holds concerts and events for the performance of Indian classical music—an effort that continues among other provincial chapters across Canada. For this reason, the exhibition *Ragamala: Garland of Melodies* represents a case study in the exhibition of music, in which the objects on display invite visitors to *imagine* connections between visual objects and sound.

Dr. Deepali Dewan, Curator of South Asian Visual Cultures at the ROM, led a cross-departmental team of Museum conservators, collection technicians, editors, preparators, French translators, designers, project

managers, web designers, communications representatives, and guest curators to produce *Ragamala*, its programming, and related web content. She sought to exhibit connections between the paintings and musical modes to show the fluidity between the South Asian Arts (interview with Dewan 18 July 2011). The project began in late 2009, and resulted in an exhibition of seventeen ragamala paintings, a case of eight musical instruments, a painted textile, and an interactive touch-screen audio kiosk containing recordings of raga performances. The kiosk directed museum visitors to touch a thumbnail of one of the exhibit's ragamala paintings, following which they heard a vintage recording of its correspondingly identified raga, in some cases played on an instrument also represented in the exhibit.

My role in *Ragamala* was to curate its display of musical instruments. I began this process in January 2010, when Dewan and I visited the instruments in storage. From an array of approximately forty South Asian instruments, we narrowed our list to ten that satisfied viable resources available to repair, conserve, and display fragile or broken instruments. Those chosen had to be able to withstand the relatively invariable humidity and temperature levels contained inside the exhibition's glass case for the duration of its display. In some cases the instruments were descendants of some of the instrument families depicted in the ragamala paintings on display. We further narrowed our list to six instruments that were eventually included in the exhibit, to which we added two from the personal collection of Dr. James Kippen, Professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of Toronto.

Towards the end of January 2010, Dewan collaborated with Kippen to curate the exhibition's audio kiosk. Though the exhibit was opened to the public without this audio component, it was later added in the form of a kiosk and web component in which the displayed ragamalas were accompanied by musical performances of their corresponding ragas. The kiosk was placed at the meeting point between the exhibition's display of musical instruments and one group of paintings (see Figure 1). It contained fourteen recordings, selected and edited by Kippen, and digital images of fourteen of the exhibition's ragamala paintings. The kiosk's interface was featured on the ROM's website, which remained online until the ROM launched its new website in 2012. The kiosk and website simulated similar experiences, in which visitors watched their screens zoom in and out on the painting's details while listening to an excerpt of a raga performance.

Dewan and the rest of the project team "exhibited" music in *Ragamala* by encouraging visitors to imagine musical connections. These



Figure 1. Photograph of musical instrument case and audio kiosk in *Ragamala: Garland of Melodies*.

connections were realized in part in the kiosk's audio recordings that resounded throughout the Ondaatje Gallery. Dewan also expressed musical connections in positioning the exhibit's instruments as sound-makers, next to details of some of their organological ancestors being played and depicted in some of the paintings' scenes. Following my first visit to the ROM's permanent collection of musical instruments in 2009 I perused a set of documents that outlined their provenance. Some of these instruments hailed as gifts from the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), which were donated to the ROM in 1940 among a series of donations by the V&A to various institutions in Commonwealth countries during the 20th century. Dewan explained that some of these musical instruments were likely acquired at the V&A as ethnographic objects from Britain's previously held colonies. Collected in this context, they displayed visual beauty and craftsmanship demonstrated by artisans among "the colonized." Their function as instruments for making music was of less importance than their role as ethnographic objects, which Dewan stated would have been reflected in how they were catalogued in storage, or put on display in exhibitions—for visual and "quiet" engagement (*ibid.*).

Ragamala sought to change the function of displaying musical instruments, from artisanal crafts to tools for sound-making (*ibid*). I tried to reflect this curatorial goal in the text I wrote for their accompanying exhibit labels. In addition to organological information, I illustrated how the instruments figured into contemporaneous performance traditions. I described spaces of courtly entertainment in particular to demonstrate further connection between the instruments and the *ragamala* paintings on display that depicted courtly scenes in which musicians and dancing girls entertained intimate audiences. Spatially placed next to the exhibit's audio kiosk, and accompanied by labels that communicated their diverse roles as sound-makers in musical scenarios, *Ragamala's* musical instruments were not intended solely for visual display. They invited dynamic engagement, with instruments as visual crafts *and* tools for producing sound. Ethnomusicologist Megan Rancier (2014) writes, "...a musical instrument communicates the experiences and cultural meanings that have shaped previous generations, leaving them to resonate in the ears and hearts of present generations" (380). In the context of *Ragamala*, the instruments reconciled imagined connections between the people and instruments depicted in the paintings and those that were discussed in the labels that accompanied the recordings contained in the audio kiosk. The musical instruments in *Ragamala* brought about new questions regarding what kinds of music resulted from these sound-making tools and who produced them. How did the musical instruments on display relate to those depicted in the paintings? How did their organological ancestors function in some of the scenes that depicted music-making at the time *ragamala* painting was in vogue? Who played them? Who interacted with them? What kinds of musical genres and traditions result? I was inspired by these questions in my drafts of the instruments' label text, but also sought to leave visitors with these kinds of questions, about instruments as sound-makers in their experience of *Ragamala*.

Similarly, Kippen, as curator of *Ragamala's* audio kiosk, was motivated by another series of questions that pertain to collecting and exhibiting audio recordings. He selected recordings from among his personal archive, as well as that of Dr. John Campana, Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto, to ensure that the exhibition's recordings were free of copyright. The earliest recordings hailed from the turn of the twentieth century, during the birth of gramophone recording as an industry in India. Kippen further explained,

And so in short, I was given a list of the exhibits and I simply raided my archives for examples of ragas that effectively matched the ones in the

exhibition. There were two problems with that—some of those ragas no longer really exist, and it's even a little doubtful that the modern equivalents are really equivalent, or totally different. And the links with what we do now and what was done two to three hundred years ago are broken, and we've made up something new in its place...And then it was the case of taking quite long performances and whittling them down to something that could be encapsulated in one to two minutes of audio. The guiding principle was to seek variety, to use some of the instruments that were in the collection, and to pick different aspects of the performance—some accompanied, unaccompanied, slow, fast (interview with Kippen 28 July 2011).

He later stated that the 'variety' he sought also extended to the inclusion of both men and women performers, instrumentalists and vocalists, hereditary and non-hereditary musicians, and Hindu and Muslim performers, that illustrated "...the diversity of community, gender, and professional involvement in Indian music over the past one hundred plus years."¹ Kippen's questions and challenges demonstrate the set of issues with which he endeavoured to engage as a curator of *Ragamala*. As an ethnomusicologist who specializes in Indian classical music, he chose to take up issues of gender, community, and genre representation while editing his archival content to musically express the exhibit's ragas. Similar to my drafts of the exhibit's instrument labels, Kippen invited visitors to engage with these issues as inclusive in the study of Indian music, broadening the scope of the objects "on display."

The relationship between ragamalas and their corresponding ragas is elusive. One cannot be sure that there is some parallel affect that results in the experience of a ragamala and its correspondingly named raga.² Whether ragamala paintings are literal visual depictions of musical modes, however, was not the objective of *Ragamala*. The exhibit gave museum visitors the opportunity to *imagine* a connection between ragamalas and ragas—paintings and music, and think about the other material cultures and histories that make this connection possible. Each component of the

1. See Kippen (1988), Neuman (1990[1980]), and Weidman (2006) for descriptions of the social landscape of learning and practicing music in the 20th century, which includes significant changes and evolutions.
2. *Rasa* (mood) functions within an emic framework for affect in the Indian arts. There is a set of codified rasas as explained in the *Natyasastra*, an ancient treatise on the Indian performing arts (see Rangacharya, 1996[1986]:53-63). It is the goal of a performer to affectively achieve the circulation of a particular rasa, or mood, among those present. Klaus Ebeling (1973) explains in one possible claim for the relationship between ragamalas and music that a correspondingly named raga and ragamala may incite the experience of the same rasa (15).

exhibit put music on display in different ways. The categorical content of the ragamala paintings and the directives in their label text invited Museum visitors to imagine connections between these visual cultures and their aural counterparts. The exhibit's musical instruments were posed as tools to produce sound, and shed light on the traditions and communities that contemporaneously made music in some of the paintings' depicted scenarios. The audio kiosk and its online version offered real versions of reconciling the imagined connection between ragamalas and ragas that illuminated the process of ethnomusicological inquiry into music recording and performance. I often perused the Gallery during the exhibit's tenure, however, and heard the kiosk's recordings throughout the space, only to find that there was no one near the kiosk. It seemed that some Museum patrons interacted with the kiosk's interface for a few seconds and left the exhibit space, literally leaving behind a recording that played to its end throughout the Gallery. The soundscape of the Ondaatje Gallery was constantly ornamented with music during the tenure of *Ragamala: Garland of Melodies*, and achieved the curatorial aim of exhibiting music in the form of connections with sound. These continue into the next case study, which discusses the exhibition of music through performance-based programming.

Performing Music at the Aga Khan Museum

The Aga Khan Museum (AKM) opened to the public in Toronto, Canada in September 2014. As North America's first museum of Islamic art, its collections, exhibitions, and programs derive from historical and contemporary Muslim cultures, civilizations, and communities. It is funded by the international development network chaired by His Highness the Aga Khan, who, in addition to being a world leader, is also the hereditary *Imam* (living spiritual leader) of the Ismaili Muslim transnational community. Though a secular research institution, The AKM has close ties to the Ismaili and Muslim communities at large. Its mission, taken in excerpt from its website, is "...to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the contribution that Muslim civilizations have made to world heritage..." (Aga Khan Museum). It continues on to describe its commitment to tolerance and mutual understanding through its collection, exhibitions, and programs, as well as international partnerships with museums and other research institutions worldwide. As a member of the Ismaili Muslim community, I joined the community across Toronto in enthusiastically anticipating the opening of the Ismaili Centre Toronto, Aga Khan Park, and Aga Khan Museum during the site's construction.

I worked briefly at the Aga Khan Museum during the summer of 2012. I was hired as a contract copywriter to work on various media and texts, which are now represented in publicity brochures, web text, and in other media that advertise the AKM to the public. My experience as a copywriter led me to some of its other aims as an institution: to communicate the cosmopolitanism of Muslim cultures and civilizations through its exhibitions and programs. Muslim communities have always been and continue to be socially, religiously, and culturally diverse. Glenn Lowry (2009), Director of the Museum of Modern Art, addressed cosmopolitanism in Islamic art in a lecture at the Royal Ontario Museum in 2008. He explained,

France, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Spain, for example, with their sizeable and rapidly expanding Muslim populations, have to be increasingly considered as important centres of Islamic life and culture as much as any place in the Middle East, Africa or Asia. To what degree, one might ask, is the notion of “Islamic,” either as a broad cultural descriptor or as a more specific religious or social indicator, meaningful in terms of either describing or understanding a contemporary artist’s production (14)?

This very question indicates that the term “Islamic” does not necessarily indicate a unity, but rather broadens its possibilities to mean a multiplicity of cultures, societies, and time periods. These perspectives have already been reflected in the Aga Khan Museum’s public activities, permanent collection, and temporary exhibitions.

The Aga Khan Museum held two contiguous exhibitions titled *Visions of Mughal India: The Collection of Howard Hodgkin* and *Inspired by India: Paintings by Howard Hodgkin* from 21 February to 21 June 2015. The content of both comprised pieces from the private collection of Howard Hodgkin to communicate his story and life as a collector of South Asian art. Similar to *Ragamala: Garland of Melodies* at the ROM, *Visions of Mughal India* at the AKM exhibited connections to music where some of its paintings and accompanying exhibit labels asked patrons to imagine the aural environments that were depicted through image and text. The AKM reconciled some of these connections in performance-based programming that complemented *Visions of Mughal India*. Among these was a showcase series performance titled “Footsteps of Babur” on 8 May 2015. Taken from the web page that advertised the event, its publicity text states,

Bringing together remarkable musicians from Afghanistan, India, and Tajikistan, this performance celebrates the exuberant vitality of the Mughal court in the 16th century. Homayoun Sakhi (Afghan rubab),

Rahul Sharma (santur), and Salar Nader (tabla) form a sublime trio that will transport audiences to the palaces and great rooms of Mughal India and Afghanistan (Aga Khan Museum).

The function of this event was to demonstrate the capacity for a historical practice of music to live on into the present day. Premised on imagined and extrapolated connections with the past, the musicians simulated an experience of the aural environment of the Mughal courts. In advertising “Footsteps of Babur” as it does, the Aga Khan Museum in part conceptualizes its musical programming as a means to create real connections between its exhibitions of living traditions and material cultures. The AKM’s performance-based programming exhibits music by posing its affective potential in particular ways. Audiences were able to immerse themselves in “Footsteps of Babur,” entering spaces of musical performance that were visually on display in *Visions of Mughal India*.

The AKM’s Department of Performing Arts curates its programming in the forms of music, dance, theater, storytelling, film, and intersections between these media in various locations inside and outside the museum. The AKM’s auditorium and other spaces were always meant for performance—an idea I gleaned from conversations with its directorial staff during my period as a writer. The goal of curating performances is to show that Islamic art is based in living, ritual, and performance-based traditions that evolve, change, and demonstrate the diversity of Muslim civilizations. While the AKM has a full calendar of official programming, the exhibition of music is in some cases community-driven, in which patrons fill public spaces with performances for others to experience. I have witnessed these kinds of activities during several visits to the AKM, which do not seem to be officially promoted nor stopped, and are rather spontaneous exhibitions of performance that invite engagement, inquiry, and reflection. I recount one such example on Saturday, 13 June 2015, during which I observed two young adult boys reciting Muslim prayer in harmony in the Museum’s central courtyard:

My mother and I had decided to spend the day at the AKM, followed by attending the evening service at the Ismaili Centre Toronto. We arrived around two o’clock in the afternoon, and only began to peruse the galleries at four o’clock after inevitably running into friends, extended family, and other members of the Ismaili community. Upon entering the AKM, we proceeded into its courtyard, beautifully ornamented by the rays of sunlight that danced through the mashrabiya lattice pattern etched into its enclosing glass panels. We saw two young-adult boys standing toward the middle of the courtyard, facing museum patrons, who

were standing or sitting at tables. After a few moments of silence, the boys began to sing, harmonize, and beat-box while reciting a prayer that is common in the ritual practice of Ismaili Islam (see Figure 2). My mother looked around and noticed a distant cousin of hers, whom I also recognized. We went back inside the Museum briefly so that they could talk. Once inside, our relative told us that the boys were in fact Ismaili, and were visitors to the AKM for the day, rather than part of an official museum program. I returned to the courtyard to observe the boys' performance some more. I noticed that a crowd of people had gathered to watch the performance. They looked on quietly, shushed others, and some Ismaili visitors began to participate in the performance by singing or reciting along with the prayer.

The boys in the AKM courtyard were performing a form of prayer that, when recited in a ritual context, is meant to create an inclusive space in which the entire congregation recites together, similar to the tradition of



Figure 2. Photograph of two young-adult boys performing prayer in the courtyard of the Aga Khan Museum.

Sufi *zikr*.³ The visitors that participated in the AKM's courtyard on this day interpreted this exhibition of music as a space in which they could participate as they would in ritual practice. As a member of the Ismaili community, I was somewhat conflicted in this patron-driven exhibition of music. On one hand, I felt proud that the Aga Khan Museum provides a safe space for such a public exhibition of Muslim ritual practice. I was honoured that my community and one of its affiliated institutions have become so visible in Toronto and Canada, a city and country that are thought to embrace plural approaches to religious and cultural life. On the other hand, in witnessing these ritual moments, I felt somewhat uncomfortable that the Ismaili community sonically colonized the AKM's courtyard during the recitation of prayer. The space became charged with the theological practice of Islam, which could have alienated patrons and communities in a space that is supposed to be non-denominational. These conflicting feelings towards the overt recitation of prayer left me with a series of questions: How did the AKM's non-Ismaili patrons perceive and interpret what the boys were reciting? Did this exhibition of music even register as Muslim prayer, or prayer at all? Did the event indeed alienate those who did not or could not "participate," or was the exhibition rather a pleasant and perhaps educational add-on to the museum-going experience?

Other than other Ismaili visitors' participation in the impromptu performance, I noticed only tacit engagement on the part of the other patrons in the courtyard. Some smiled while they looked on, while others watched, perhaps knowing that this moment was a ritual one, considering that it was programmed by the AKM. The Aga Khan Museum is a centre for research that is tied to the exhibition of art that relates to a broadly conceived "Islam." I acknowledge that my observation and interpretation of the boys' recitation of prayer at the Aga Khan Museum is associated with my own anxieties about demonstrating or practicing Islam in an ostensibly non-religious space. Since childhood, I have been socialized to keep religious belief and ritual separate from my life at school, at work, and in my wider social circles. Though growing up in the 1990s in Canada meant observing holidays and ritual practices that were nominally Christian, it was my experience that public life was relatively secular. I did not request absences from school to celebrate Muslim holidays, especially as a child. I did not necessarily tell my friends and teachers that I regularly attended religious services and was an active member of my religious community. While this was due in part to the secular environment of my public life,

3. See Qureshi (1995) for a description of this and other Muslim ritual practices.

it was also because I practiced a religion that was relatively unfamiliar to my teachers and friends.

Islam is no longer unfamiliar to my friends and colleagues. In fact, it has become ubiquitous in the news, popular culture, and across various media, in many cases with negative connections to war, extremism and social, cultural, and political backwardness. I find that I still keep my practice of Islam separate from and even silent in my public life. Ethnomusicologist Michael Frishkopf (2011) theorizes the silence with which Muslims in Canada practice Islam. He writes,

Modern Islamic reformism has tended to delete localized aesthetic Muslim ritual (as it had adaptively developed after centuries in Muslim regions from West Africa to Indonesia, the end product of long chains of human mediation) brought to Canada by immigrants, in favor of a deaestheticized ritual uniformity (140).

This deaestheticized ritual uniformity has resulted in a public silence of ritual practices that demonstrate the diversity of Muslim communities—a stark contrast to how Islam diversely sounds and resounds in Muslim-majority regions of the world. The boys that recited and harmonized Muslim prayer in the Aga Khan Museum's courtyard disrupted this silence by exhibiting music that is culturally associated with the Canadian Ismaili practice of Islam. How was this loud exhibition of Islamic particularity perceived by other Museum patrons? In the current landscape of news reports on ISIS invasions and the “Islamic State” we hear similar sounds against images of war and destruction. The exhibition of music in the AKM's courtyard adds to the diverse soundscape for Muslim prayer. It demonstrates the extent to which a museum can be an environment for research and learning, while at the same time one of living ritual practice with particular theological associations.

The Aga Khan Museum's array of performance-based programming in part encompasses the exhibition of music at this institution. The various programs in its series of events work to achieve its mandate of suggesting continuities between historical and living traditions in Islamic art. The musical performance of Muslim prayer in the AKM's courtyard created a space of engagement that encouraged other visitors to watch, listen, and even participate in recitation. Contrary to “Footsteps of Babur” and *Visions of Mughal India*, this spontaneous program did not necessarily seek to reconcile imagined connections with a visually-based exhibition, but rather invited critical reflection on the potential of a museum space to be ritually and theologically charged.

Collecting Sound in *The Audio Cultures of India*

The final case study in this article explores the exhibition of music in a future anthology of collected sound as part of an ongoing research project. Originally titled *The Audio Cultures of India*, the project is funded by the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society and University of Chicago Center in Delhi. Led by Southern Asia scholars James Nye and Laura Ring and ethnomusicologists Philip Bohlman and Kaley Mason, the project began with the aim of locating and studying analog and digital recordings of Indian music, language, and sound. At its outset, the project's investigators sought to deploy data mining and computational pattern analysis techniques to create a history of sound in India by examining a variety of audio cultures that exist in collections of wax cylinders, records, tapes, digital files, and other media. Now, the project has broadened to include an investigation of South Asian visual cultures along with audio cultures, spurred by the involvement of art historian Anna Seastrand.

As a research assistant and junior scholar in the project, I have participated in its three international meetings of scholars, data analysts, archivists, and collectors in Chicago in September 2013; New Delhi in December 2014; and Colombo in July 2016. While Chicago's meeting strategized the definition of the parameters of our project, our meeting in New Delhi gathered local scholars, archivists, and collectors of Indian sound to evaluate some of the practical issues associated with extant collections. Most recently, our Colombo meeting gathered institutional representatives from archives and companies across South Asia that participate in digitizing endeavours to discuss the issue of metadata in creating a central federated database to search archives of South Asian audio and visual cultures. Many of the institutions that have been represented in the project thus far feature collections of musical objects, including analog recording technologies, visual cultures that depict musical scenes, and manuscripts describing field accounts of music-making. The project's current trajectory seeks to continue efforts to cross-reference existing catalogues and collections in a central database. The exhibition of music in *The Audio Cultures of India* arises in a focused branch of the project, which will create a sample anthology of aural objects that show the processes implicit in *collecting* sound.

The idea to create a CD anthology began in discussions at our New Delhi meeting, which focused on locating, amassing, and preserving audio cultures. Many of the participants present continue to be personally and intimately involved in sound, in the forms of early analog recording technologies and digital field recordings. We arrived collectively at the

decision to represent the processes implicit in collecting sound in a CD that will represent a sample amalgamation of extant collections of the audio cultures of India. Each collaborator at our meeting in New Delhi will submit one digital recording to be reproduced on our CD, as well as text for liner notes that describe their criteria for selecting their contribution from their larger collections. The CD is therefore an anthology of several archives of audio cultures that contain parts of the history of sound in India. The CD becomes an aural map of such extant collections that contribute to constructing the history of sound through audio cultures as primary sources.

The liner notes of this CD, in addition to explaining the logic behind the contributors' selections, will also address questions that arise in collecting South Asia-based audio cultures. As collectors, how do we ensure the careful preservation and storage of media in any institution considering South Asia's hot and damp climate? How do we go about intervening with standardized methods of archiving and even documenting data? What kinds of colonial residue are implicit in these processes? What constitutes adequate content? What are the parameters defined by audio cultures? What leaks from the institution of these parameters? How are movement, visual, and print cultures part of this project, and where can they be included in our larger endeavours to map, collect, and document sound technologies?⁴

We aim for the CD to inspire a traveling exhibition, which we hope will begin at the University of Chicago Center in Delhi. The exhibit will display the beginnings of what the project has thus far achieved: a collection of collectors, whose audio contributions have not only begun to construct a map of the history of sound in India, but offer insight into the collectors themselves as finders and keepers of audio cultures. We imagine that the exhibit will feature the recordings that are contained on our CD anthology in addition to exhibit labels, photographs, and other ephemera that are related to each collector's contribution. The CD acts as an aural exhibit catalogue, which both inspires our exhibition and acts as a portable and abbreviated version that exhibits the human processes of collecting, archiving, and maintaining sound as cultural and historical objects.

The exhibition of music in this case encompasses engagement with aural media in the proposed traveling exhibit, similar to how visitors to

4. Scholars on the history of sound and performance in India have looked to visual and print cultures in the forms of photographs, paintings, treatises, and travelogues. See Wade (1999), Schofield (2010), and Walker (2013) for examples. These material cultures date back earlier than the origins of sound recording technology in India. Nevertheless, the historical scope of our project is largely limited to the birth of this technology in the first few years of the twentieth century.

Ragamala: Garland of Melodies at the ROM experienced its audio kiosk. Our project's meetings at New Delhi demonstrated that the CD anthology will exhibit music by exhibiting sound and music collecting. The contributors' selections and liner notes will tell the story of how curators and archivists encounter, select, and capture sound. *The Audio Cultures of India* CD anthology offers a survey in how collectors navigate finding and keeping music that is located and captured in various ways. The contributions of each collector will demonstrate the selection of sound bites from among the painstaking processes of locating, preserving, organizing, storing, and synthesizing sound. These processes, implicit in "collecting" at large, are exhibited in such a compilation of music, in CD and exhibit form. While *Ragamala* encouraged visitors to create connections between performing music in the past and present, patron-driven programming at the Aga Khan Museum invited reflection on the representation of voices and ideologies. The CD anthology and its future exhibit in *The Audio Cultures of India* project provoke the consideration of music as a process of collecting.

Scholars have theorized the processes and institutions associated with collecting art objects, material cultures, and souvenirs. On record collecting in particular, Roy Shuker (2010) explains,

Collectors and the collecting process are variously associated with: longing, desire, and pleasure; ritualistic, near-sacred and repetitive acquisition; passionate and selective consumption; stewardship and cultural preservation; and obsession and linked pathologies such as completism, accumulation and preoccupation with collection size (6).

Record collecting implies the acquisition of both a physical object and a sound bite, and the process is well-represented among our contributors, who began their collections from 78 rpm vintage recordings of Hindustani (North Indian classical) music. One in particular works within a network of record collectors in India, whose passion and commitment have led to publications on key figures in the gramophone recording industry. Vikram Sampath (2010) and A. N. Sharma (2012) are members of this network, and have been recognized for their collections and research on professional women entertainers as early recording artists in the twentieth century. Though Sampath and Sharma are not direct participants in our project, our project's contributor has already indicated that his selection for our CD anthology will represent this work and hail from among the corpus of early twentieth-century women recording artists. This selection represents a positioned commitment to professional women as early fixtures in the history of recorded sound in India.

Similarly, another of the project's collaborators has grown his personal archive of Hindustani music into a larger sound archive that is housed now at a university in Kolkata, where active efforts continue among a team of faculty and graduate students to digitize endangered analog media, document metadata, and organize deposits into the collection. This collection also features some of the earliest recordings of professional women entertainers. Hindustani music enthusiasts and ethnomusicologists have rarefied and coveted these recordings, stating that they contain some of the most perfect performances of raga in the Indian classical canon. In fact, Dr. James Kippen curated a recording by one of these women performers into his selection of recordings in *Ragamala: Garland of Melodies* at the ROM. Another of our collaborators has funded and established his own institution in Rajasthan, containing a vast collection of folk musical instruments and field recordings. A selection from this collection will represent folk music, adding both genre and community diversity to our sampler of South Asian audio cultures. Yet another contributor is a scholar of Indian dance, whose archive represents the work of dancers and movement at large. While our project's CD anthology will remain at the level of an aural collection, she has expressed her enthusiasm at representing movement creatively via a sound bite, liner notes, and even photographs to demonstrate the inextricable contributions of dance and dancers to the history of South Asian sound. The aural representation of movement continues into the realm of musical instrument construction—a sample of which is captured in a field recording by another project contributor, who travels through West Bengal to explore the diversity of traditions of making and repairing musical instruments. This kind of contribution adds to the diversity of what is considered music and the soundscape of musical activity in such a documentation of sound history.

Shuker's explanation of the processes and affects that go into collecting sound media are present in the collections and life's work of our collaborators. The exhibition of music in our CD and future exhibit will display the processes of collection, and the affects of passion, desire, and pleasure that are implicit in the history of sound in South Asia. *The Audio Cultures of India* project demonstrates that the personal histories and stories of collectors *are* the history of sound, constructed by the human processes of choosing, selecting, processing, and caring for audio cultures. We aim to represent these processes as we go forward with our CD, exhibit, and project at large.

Conclusion

The exhibition of music in museums creates spaces of affective and interactive potential. Visitors, patrons, and audiences watch, listen, hear, touch, and feel what is exhibited in performances and interactive media. The case studies presented in this article offer three institutional or project-based examples that exhibit music and sound. I revisit the questions I pose in the introduction to this analysis, in which I interrogate what constitutes “exhibiting music”? What are the broader implications of and consequences for exhibiting music in each case? How does exhibiting music in a museum impact a visitor’s experience? What kinds of new stories are told in exhibiting music and sound?

In the first case study, *Ragamala: Garland of Melodies* at the Royal Ontario Museum offered patrons and visitors to the Museum’s website a means to engage with imagined connections between paintings, instruments, and raga recordings. It offered reconciled options for these imagined connections in the form of recordings that featured in some cases instruments represented in physical and depicted versions in the exhibit. It posed the musical instruments as artifacts of artisanal craftsmanship *and* tools for making sound, changing the colonial narratives with which the instruments entered the ROM’s collection, and inspiring an experience that demanded listening and looking. The second case study highlights two musical activities at the Aga Khan Museum. In one, the AKM programmed its showcase performance series to offer audiences the ability to experience a 16th-century Mughal performance affectively. Exhibiting music meant exhibiting the subsistence of a performance-based tradition that establishes an aural connection with an imagined past. In a patron-driven exhibition, two young visitors to the AKM recited a Muslim prayer in its courtyard, eliciting engagement and even participation from other visitors. The boys aurally charged the space with sounds of Islam and a particular tradition in its diverse ritual practice, provoking questions on how a space becomes one of theological association. The third case study presents an in-progress exhibition of music in *The Audio Cultures of India*. The project will amalgamate a CD anthology of contributions by the project’s collaborators, which will result in a traveling exhibit that represents the collaborators as collectors. In aiming to construct a history of sound in India, the anthology and exhibit will show that the impassioned human processes of collecting and maintaining archives constitute musical content, reflected in stories represented in sound bites, liner notes, and photographs.

The three case studies in this article show that there is a multitude of possibilities in interpreting, curating, programming, and experiencing the exhibition of music and sound. While the presence of sound has existed in displays of material and visual cultures, the diverse array of installations, programs, and even patron-driven demonstrations in this article's case studies shows the extent to which exhibiting music and sound will paradigmatically change the museum space. Extrapolating from these case studies, there is a profound potential for experiencing, programming, and analyzing the implications of exhibiting music in various projects, spaces, and institutions.

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