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Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SANTA CRUZ

SPEAKING FROM IN-BETWEEN THE NOTES ON BINARIES IN CYCLE

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

MUSIC

by

Keshav Batish

September 2021

The Thesis of Keshav Batish
is approved:

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2021

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ABSTRACT

Keshav Batish

Speaking From In-Between the Notes on Binaries in Cycle

This thesis highlights the philosophies and musical influences of Keshav Batish as they manifest in the music of his album *Binaries in Cycle*. Batish frames his cultural experience as a South Asian American through the lens of hybridity. He especially notes the work of Homi K. Bhabha, whose book *The Location of Culture* profoundly affected his means of enunciating his musical journey thus far. The songs *Count Me In*, *Gāyatri*, and *Binaries in Cycle* are analyzed and contextualized through the lens of hybridity. The conclusion gives a summation of Batish's musical thrust and seeks further decode and re-encode the meaning and application of binaries in society.

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Mentorship has played a pivotal role in my development, and I cite the following sacred individuals for their invaluable presence in my life. Pranām to my guru and father, Pandit Ashwin Batish, who has encouraged me since birth to seek my authentic self. To Stan Poplin for including me in countless opportunities to grow musically and spiritually. To George Marsh for allowing a reciprocation of energy between our instruments and hearts. To Larry Polansky for imparting the lesson of composition as a practice. To Hafez Modirzadeh for providing sanctuary in his presence. To Dave King for his spiritual sustenance and joyous friendship. To Dard Neuman for his gentle guidance and empathetic scholarship. To Michelle Lou for her patience and inspired directivity. To the work of Homi K. Bhabha for emboldening me to enunciate my story from the spaces in-between. To you, the listener and reader—thank you.

MEDITATION

What are the ramifications of living in a world of binary code? The accumulation of 1's and 0's yield synthesized pictures on computer and phone screens, in some ways connecting us and in others keeping us apart. Binaries have existed before these devices; in gender, in politics, even in day-to-day decision making. We accumulate memories through labels of "good" and "bad" rather than experiencing them as they are. Each moment is stored away for the security they assure us of, but are we truly secure? When the security of an image of the self crumbles at an action or event that does not resonate with the assembled fragments of thought that is self-image, is that security?

INTRODUCTION

In the music of *Binaries in Cycle*, I hope to allow the listener to inhabit the translational space¹ opened by my ensemble. The gathering and weaving of our individual narratives is facilitated by composition in a way that leaves spaces for self-expression. These spaces serve both as a means and an end. The cycle of being and becoming is a spiritual and literal metaphor that manifests as an aural expansion of compositional, individual, and collective kernels. Interlocking rhythmic and melodic patterns yield a gestalt narrative that is trans-harmonic, one that both constructs and deconstructs itself. I see composition as a vehicle of approaching our own uniquely forged unity that is simultaneously representative of our individualities. I highlight my musical unfolding through three compositions that serve as co-creative vessels for discovery. *Count Me In* is a composition emergent from my Hindustani roots and aims to draw the listener into aspects of traditional song form. *Gāyatri* is a song based on the Gayatri mantra, its cyclic structure paired with uneven rhythmic phrasing yielding a trance-like ritualistic repetition of form. *Binaries in Cycle* takes inspiration from the aperture of Thelonious Monk in his work within the blues form. The composition's bi-tonal progression sets boundaries from within which a

¹ I use the word *translation* here in reference to its usage in the work of Homi K. Bhabha. I have understood translation in Bhabha's universe through his book *The Location of Culture*. From my perspective, translation is an action of negotiating one's perspective as a means of subverting the colonial gaze. This is to say, in establishing oneself as an individual in the realm of the post-colonial means to negotiate space for oneself rather than assuming its ascribed narrative through the imperial lens. Bhabha engages with Walter Benjamin's work with translation, which I would like to further research.

translational aperture opens. I will move through specific excerpts of my work to elucidate this opening of a translational aperture and conclude with what shape my trajectory will take from this music.

BACK-GROUNDING

Growing up in a household of musicians, the intensity of intending was palpable at a visceral level. Each family member had a voice to speak *through* and intend *with* in their song. This communality of intending is how I approach writing for an ensemble. As each member has their own sound, it is my job to facilitate musical spaces for them to speak through. The culture of co-creative music has imparted to me the concept and feeling of communal intentionality.

Furthermore, I find the solo-accompanist dynamic in co-creative music can be highly subversive to hierarchy as it manifests in musical practice. In my idealization of collaborative music, the roles of soloist and accompanist are fluid. I feel this kind of music can give framework to social negotiation. Both the Hindustani and jazz musician in me seeks to listen to a universal and yet individualized curiosity within consuming and performing music. This act of following one's *curiosity* is what I see as Tradition. This process of self-excavation is my experience of the translational space of perspective. To make music that reaches one's soul is to engage the modality of curiosity within oneself, and therefore each ensemble member, and therefore within the listener. The beauty of this process is that no one person's approach will be the same. It

speaks to the inherent diversity of the individual, one that is antithetical to an engagement in knowledge via comparison which I see as a threat to creativity. Therefore, my hybrid perspective does not seek to compare Hindustani music and jazz. Both traditions can sit side-by-side without quarrel. In addition, neither seeks to mimic² the other, which would result in an empty and slippery feedback loop of the mimicked and “original.” As the branches of each tree further fragment and diverge, the aperture of my curiosity lies at the roots. What aspects are fundamental to each music? How have they become manifest and organized into tradition? Is tradition not a chain, a *silsila*³ of individuals in conversation through their own curiosities rather than a tomb etched in the dots-on-a-page?

What I glean as fundamental is the act of intoning, the act of making sacred the surrounding air and space through sound. It is an act of enunciation⁴ where we speak oneself into existence. Enunciating our truth through tone is an act of translating oneself for another. In the art of conversation, one does not fill the space all the time; there is a beauty in elucidating via a give-and-take, a listening

² I invoke the concept of mimicry from the work of Homi K. Bhabha. I understand mimicry references the adopting of an imposed colonial mindset as a means of imbuing oneself with power in the eyes of the colonizer. The act of mimicry ultimately washes away the aperture of the colonized person in overt and covert ways, leading to false senses of security. On the contrary, Bhabha ascribes the act of enunciating oneself gives coordinate to the perspective of the oppressed and therefore begins the process of decolonization of the mind. Enunciation is tied to translation in the sense that to enunciate one’s perspective is to translate how one sees the world without referencing the white gaze.

³ Silsila refers to the Sufi Islamic practice of naming one’s ancestors to establish one’s authority through lineage, and the process, reaches for the sublime.

⁴ Enunciation is the act of speaking one’s truth of and into existence. This concept is in reference to work of Homi K. Bhabha. For further reference, see footnote number 2.

and responding. In my experience, the greatest misunderstanding in enunciation as it pertains to music is in the realm of self-image. The most potent interactions I have experienced occurred when self-image (ego) is transcended through translation. The roots of this translation lie in a trust between one and other, and it is the aperture of trust that I argue is the theory behind my work. While I could expand in excruciating detail on why I make music the way I do, it is ultimately frivolous if not understood in the context of trust.

While there is trust in co-creation, the threading of my enunciatory line of argument is bound by an intentionality of embodiment. In developing how to facilitate musical spaces of trust, one has to develop a trust within themselves via practice. The act of practice in a musician's life is often times relegated to a solitary act of self-maintenance such that when our time comes to make music, we are able to express music through a body that is prepared. However, the ability to play music with others requires a practice of listening that is inextricably corporeally linked. I argue that *listening-practice* is another personal through-line between Hindustani music and jazz, as music that emerges through deep-listening⁵ will happen with a response of equal depth.

⁵ I am in debt to the work of Pauline Oliveros and find her method of *deep listening* profoundly impactful on my journey to the root of creativity in my musical practice.

FRAMEWORK

My understanding of hybridity as a cultural theory is largely influenced by the work of Homi K. Bhabha, whose book *The Location of Culture* has profoundly affected my means of giving shape to the feeling of living in-between identities. In the poiesis of inscription when stating oneself, it is the weaving of words through the interstices of label and identification that helps locate the origin of one's personal journey. The concept of enunciation maps onto the movement of *speaking* through composition which produces a personal character, *shakal*.⁶

The architecture of my music is based on elements in Hindustani, Jazz, and European musical forms. From Hindustani music, I derive my understanding of ritualistic repetition in its seemingly automatic ability⁷ to transform phrasing. I facilitate this in composition via cycles of repeated *chalan*⁸ structures in rāg as well as evocative rhythmic fragments and phrases, based in tāl and chant structures. From jazz, I facilitate ensemble interactions through open harmonies and syncopated/accumulatory rhythmic phrasing. I understand open harmony to mean chords that exclude the third scale degree, an omitting of the most out-

⁶ Shakal in Hindi means “face” in describing the image of another. It is also used in Afghani music to refer to the introduction of a piece, similar to the concept of alāp in Hindustani music. Alāp is the expansion of a rāg, giving shape to its melodic contours via ritualized phrasing.

⁷ This idea is further described in the work of Dard Neuman, whose manuscript has given me profound insight into the creative process of a Hindustani musician.

⁸ Chalan comes from the Hindi word *chalna* which means “to walk.” It is therefore a grouping of essential melodic phrases that make up the character of a rāg where, once embodied, it serves as a pathway for the practitioner to walk through the landscape of melodies. See footnote on rāg.

of-tune note in Equal Temperament in relation to Just intonation. This omission has precedent in the work of Herbie Hancock in the second Miles Davis Quintet.⁹ The syncopated rhythms of jazz provide a forward motion to the music, one that I utilize as a means of accumulating energy. In addition, accumulatory rhythmic phrasing is a concept I have developed from hybrid cross-talk between jazz and Carnatic music, most notably in the work of Rudresh Mahanthappa. I find the concept of melodic counterpoint in the music of Bach profound in its ability to assemble a dense musical landscape from simple groups of notes. Bach's music is a meditation on inscription, a means of expanding thought via the aural analytic structure of fugue.

I take inspiration from the work of music-makers Ornette Coleman and Thelonious Monk who represent a vitality of expression that transcends label and classification. I must mention here that without the guidance of mentor Hafez Modirzadeh, I would have not understood these artists in the depth that Hafez-joon's work has enlightened me to. Through the interstices of their body-Traditions, Coleman and Monk's creative thrusts give precise importance to notes through a depth of intention. They chose to follow themselves as Tradition, encoding fragments of ancestral intention through body-memory as a function of

⁹ Herbie Hancock tells a story that Miles had asked him to make the harmony in a tune they were playing "like water." Hancock proceeded to omit all the thirds in the chords he was using. This shift introduced the sound of sus chords into the vocabulary of the ensemble and subsequently created a new affect in many revolutionary aspects to the music that emerged from that group.

musical form.¹⁰ Both creatives were seen as “outside” to the extent that Coleman was physically assaulted¹¹ on the bandstand for playing his truth. It is only in retrospect that these musicians are seen as a part of a continuum. The framework of tradition is typically applied after the fact, ultimately obscuring the intention of the artist who seeks to be in dialogue with lineage rather than mimicking work which has come before. The chain of tradition is made up of many Traditions, whose expression is unique such as to pass along the knowledge of their *perspective* to the next generation. Tradition is a relay-race on crossed and parallel lines.

Coleman’s concept of harmolodics represents a deep understanding of the dynamics of Human Nature in that the only constant is change. To “play the changes” means to ebb and flow with where the music leads you as an ensemble member. To play the changes, you must play yourself. Collective ensemble interaction paired with vulnerable self-expression in Colemans’s world yields an explosive intensity. There is no harmonic hierarchy, so one must hold onto

¹⁰ Amiri Baraka speaks on this subject in his book *Blues People*, where he expands on a line of argument that points to a memory of African culture within Black people in America. He argues that generations of Black Americans hold profound insight into their past through rituals and sayings that were ancestrally passed down, which became manifest in the blues. One divergence from this kind of memory is an individualization of field-hollers as a means of inscribing agency. Baraka notes that a soloist dynamic of music does not exist in Africa such that the development of Be-Bop was a breaking free from the white gaze in providing a means of expressing identity of the Black individual through the oppression of gross grouping of enslaved people in the eyes of the colonizer.

¹¹ This story is described in the documentary on Ornette Coleman entitled *Ornette: Made in America*.

themselves and each other. The corporeal form of the individual becomes the form of the music. In his words, it is a removal of the caste system from sound,¹² a decolonization of the ensemble dynamic. Ornette survived and persisted in a scene that told him he did not belong. I carry forth his light through my embodiment of dismantling the sonic caste systems we have erected.

Thelonious Monk's ability to hear harmonic and rhythmic implication is something I seek to embody through furthering his creative thrust. Monk represents an ability to extend harmony via a fundamental understanding of tonality that shades in-between the black-and-white notes of the piano. Notes are like personal identity—no one cause or attribute can define the wholeness of what is wholly human. Monk takes the seemingly solid black-and-white notes and subverts their polarity through placing them in dialogue and juxtaposition. Monk's application of harmonic extension and rhythmic syncopation provide an aural understanding of the dance of hybridity. To inscribe oneself through polarity is to write a story with one's own tonality. Monk leave harmony ambiguous through voicing chords with two or three notes at a time, his left hand giving framework of root and seventh upon which his right constructs stunning melodic architectures.

¹² Ornette Coleman describes his work in a promotional video for his album *Tone Dialing*. It was published by his record label "Song X Records" in 1995 entitled "An Introduction to Harmolodics." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MO-RqnrLVcE>

ARCHITECTURE

The first iteration of my piece *Count Me In* was written in my high school practice room, originally meant to mimic my father's music for sitar and midi sequenced synthesizers. I began experimenting within the music production software *Logic*, recording myself playing melodic lines of rāg Todi's chalan until I accrued a few satisfactory strands. This was the process I had seen my father employ in his work, so it seemed a fitting place to begin. The music of Mark Turner was simultaneously in my awareness as I had just heard his tune *Jackie's Place*. His angular melody combined with rhythmic intensity in 5/4 time led me to break rāg Todi open via an emulation of Turner's compositional paradigm as I understood it then. Below is an excerpt of Turner's *Jackie's Place*.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for guitar (Gtr.) and bass. Each system consists of a guitar staff and a bass staff. Chord diagrams are provided above the guitar staves for each measure.

System 1 (Measures 21-24):

- Measure 21: Amaj7
- Measure 22: Bmaj7#11
- Measure 23: D^bmaj7#11
- Measure 24: G7sus

System 2 (Measures 25-28):

- Measure 25: Amaj7b13
- Measure 26: B/C
- Measure 27: B^bmin
- Measure 28: Cmaj7b13

System 3 (Measures 29-32):

- Measure 29: Amaj7
- Measure 30: Bmaj7#11
- Measure 31: D^bmaj7#11
- Measure 32: G7sus

My hope was the overall sound of the melodic structure of the rāg would compel each soloist to play from a similar intention, in continuance of the *feeling* of rāg¹³ Todi. I was also aware of the compositional structuring my father¹⁴ used in his composition *Raga Jazz*, which contains a ritual repeating bass-line that serves as a quasi-tanpurā drone.¹⁵ The rhythmic and melodic patterns of that song created a freedom from dense harmonic confines to assemble a structure upon which a soloistic enunciation on my father's instrument of *sitar* could take place. *Raga Jazz* is structured in 6/8 time with improvisation regulated by notes of rāg *Chandrakauns*. My father acknowledges that the music that emerged is not of the rāg itself and but rather a meeting of music strands of his own aperture. I had

¹³ What is rāg? Imagine a grouping of melodic phrases that when woven together, through ritual repetitions and at varied lengths and segments, creates a character similar to that of a natural landscape. When one gazes at rāg from afar, it takes on a distinct shape through its sonic architecture. Then, when one approaches the pathway through the landscape, let's say a trail through a forest, one finds markings that make the space unique to itself and other place that are rather ambiguous, markings that could belong to other forests and trails within. It is the job of the practitioner to make clear the pathway of rāg such that it is distinct and clear in the minds eye. However, the beauty of rāg comes at the point of those ambiguous spaces. Homi K. Bhabha in his discussion of Hybridity refers to ambivalence as a hybrid space, a meeting of ideas that could be considered confusing. I find those ambiguous spaces between rāgs fascinating, as it points to the feeling of ambivalence that I have felt as a hybrid individual. I paraphrase the mystic Rumi who said he lives in a state of "lucid confusion." I find those ambivalent spaces within rāg to aptly embody that feeling and ecstatically so.

¹⁴ My father, Ashwin Batish, has spent his professional career in pursuit of a hybrid path of his own. He learned Hindustani music and folk musics of India from his father, my grandfather, vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Shiv Dayal Batish. Without a doubt, his demagogic path inspired me early on to follow my curiosity and let boundaries of genre dissolve. His most popular work *Sitar Power* uses a variety of midi-sequenced tracks paired with live sitar and tabla, often times orchestrated for an ensemble of varied musicians. I have and continue to participate in his band, playing tabla and drum set.

¹⁵ A *tānpurā* in Hindustani music serves the purpose of drone, providing a constant hum of a fixed tonic. A tanpura has four to six strings, three tuned to the fundamental note with the remaining strings tuned to a variety of color notes to support the character of a given rāg.

played this piece with him enough to understand the song structure and his translational methods. Below is an excerpt of the A and B sections of *Raga Jazz*, with score order Sitar, Piano, and Bass.

Raga Jazz

A

Str.

Pno.

A.B.

B

Str.

Pno.

A.B.

Detailed description: The image shows two musical sections, A and B, for the piece 'Raga Jazz'. Section A (measures 15-18) features a Sitar melody in the upper staff, a Piano accompaniment in the middle staff, and a Bass line in the lower staff. Section B (measures 19-22) continues with the same instrumentation, showing a more complex Sitar melody and a Piano accompaniment with some chordal textures. The notation includes various rhythmic values and articulations typical of Hindustani music.

Both *Count Me In* and *Raga Jazz* are structured in a *sthayi-antra* form¹⁶ and use *tihai*¹⁷ to signal a movement from solo to solo. The piece was conceived as it unfolds: first the bass-line was written, then the melodic structure, back-and-

¹⁶ *Sthayi-antra* form is a common instrumental compositional structure in Hindustani music.

¹⁷ *Tihai* is a thrice repeated rhythmic phrase within a *tāl*, rhythmic cycle, with the last note of the phrase landing on the first beat called *sum*. It can be applied to melodies and often times is used as a cadential phrase in Hindustani music.

forth until I felt the rāg had been compositionally developed. I have included an excerpt of the introduction and A section melody below.

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system shows the introduction for Alto Sax, Piano, and Double Bass. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 210. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 2/4. The introduction features a piano accompaniment with a bass line and a melody line, and a double bass line. Section A is marked with a box 'A' and features a melody line for the Alto Sax and piano accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *x4*.

The unfolding of the A melody resembles the *sthayī*, or first part of a Hindustani instrumental composition, known as *gat*. After a repeat, there is a shift in rhythm

and further opening of harmony to a sustained chord. The B section begins with a quicker subdivision of 5, divided 2-3 which gives a contrasting and forward motion to the new section. After one repeat, another melody emerges and dovetails into a linkage section that leads to a *tihai*. Afterwards, we enter the solo section, divided into two parts. The harmonic information is suggestive of different faces of *rāg Todi*; each *face* is representative of the varied melodic shapes that make up the architecture of *Todi* such that the compacted and stacked tones become approximate *rāg*-chords. In addition, the rhythmic variation between A and B sections carries into the solo section, with a superimposition of the faster subdivision of 5 into the comping¹⁸ pattern of the ensemble. The piece ends with a return to the A, B, and linkage sections and finally to a *chakradār*, an extended *tihai*, which builds rhythmic intensity with a thrice repeated eight-note grouping of 5, 5, 8.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: A. Sx. (Saxophone), Pno. (Piano), and D.B. (Double Bass). The score is written in a single system with three staves. The A. Sx. staff is in the treble clef, the Pno. staff is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs), and the D.B. staff is in the bass clef. The music features a complex rhythmic structure with many eighth and sixteenth notes, and some rests. There are several measures with a circled '5' above them, indicating a 5/8 time signature. The piece ends with a double bar line.

¹⁸ Comping is a term used in the vernacular of the jazz tradition, derived from the word “complimentary,” to describe the interjections and supportive gestures ensemble members make in accompanying a soloist.



oṃ bhūr bhuvahḥ svaḥ

tat savitur vareṇyam

bhargo devasya dhīmahi

dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

- Rigveda 3.62.10¹⁹

Oh luminous Sun

Choose us as your rays

We shall show the tribesmen

That we are not separate from one and other.

-k. batish

¹⁹ Guy L. Beck (2006) *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions*.

The second piece I wish to discuss is *Gāyatri*, based on the gayatri mantra. The mantra itself is an ode to the sun, one that I interpret in reference to Mother nature rather than a Brahmanical idea of prayer as subjugation. I employs this mantra’s ritualistic cyclicity as a form and through the space it defines, threading a soloistic and collective interpretation. The piece begins with building upon an underlying poetic rhythm where, after a few pauses, the full melody is revealed. I have included an excerpt of the solo section below.

SOLOS: BEGIN UNISON ON MELODY, THEN AS ONE PERSON SOLOS, THE REST CONTINUE MELODY.
 - PLAYERS ARE FREE TO DROP OUT AND COME BACK IN AS THEY SEE FIT
 - DYNAMICS AD. LIB.
 - ONCE SOLOS HAVE COMPLETED, REPEAT LAST TIME IN OCTAVES (AS APPROPRIATE FOR INSTRUMENTS)

The musical score consists of two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system starts at measure 17 and ends at measure 24. The second system starts at measure 19 and ends at measure 26. The lyrics are in Sanskrit and are written below the notes. The first system includes the lyrics: 'OM BHUR BHU - VAH MA - HA TAT SA - VI - TUR VA - RE N - YUM BHAR -'. The second system includes the lyrics: '- GO DE - VA - SYA DHI - MA - HI DHI - YO YO NAH PRA - CHO - DA - YA - T'. The score includes various time signatures such as 5/4, 11/8, 6/4, 6/8, 7/4, and 5/4.

Once we, the ensemble, arrive at the melody, it is a matter of repeating the mantra with the super imposition of a soloist voice. What I find effective in this piece is its simplicity—it provides a rhythmic and melodic progression where a harmonic progression would reside. I visualize the form as a river, its ritual repeated structure forming a consistency of flow with each soloist adorning the water like sun glistening and translating the contour of the water for our eyes. As

a young child, I sang this mantra nightly with my full family. The intergenerational experience left a mark in my mind—we would repeat the mantra 9 times and often lose track of the repetitions, referring to my grandmother who kept count on the flesh between the creases of her fingers. While the number of repetitions is important through the aperture of tradition, I never forgot that feeling of losing track. To me, it did not matter how many times we repeated it as I was entranced by the poetic meter of the mantra which stood out as rhythmically angular and arresting. Ultimately, what stuck with me was the ritual of our practice. In notating this piece, I used multiple time signatures to give shape to the rhythmic content and provide section for what ultimately needed to be collectively embodied by the ensemble. The rehearsal of the cycle as a means of comprehension holds a divine homologic purpose, one which I wish to expand upon in future compositions.

*As we spin the Dao
black-and-white blur,
refracting light through prism
presides a precise locality of color
rang, manifest in spectrum,
specters recede, mayā, illusion
clears to reveal a holding
and withholding of space*

that puts opposites in motion

uncovering a third space,

a third aperture emergent

from binaries in cycle.

-k. batish

Binaries in Cycle emerged from a fascination with the blues form and an interest in subverting the feeling of oscillating back and forth in seeking name and label for emotions and personal identit(y)(ies). An idea I sought to capture was how seemingly oppositional forces can be put in dialogue within oneself to yield character and personality. Some examples of binaries I contended with in the process include masculine and feminine energies, making a yes or no decision, and inhabiting two cultural paradigms. I speak in hyperbole to give shape to my thesis and ultimately believe that these forces are not in opposition at all. It is the spinning of the *dao* of opposition that brought me to this conclusion. I have included an image of the Taijitu symbol commonly referred to as *Yin and Yang*, representing opposite forces working together to create something greater than the sum of their parts.²⁰

²⁰ Georges Ohsawa (1976). *The Unique Principle*.



I oscillate each chord of the blues progression (I, IV, V) in half-steps to give the effect of oppositional forces at work in each of their functions. I then threaded a melody through those harmonic oscillations to symbolize a call or crying out of the summation of the forces. In reference to childbirth, the emergence of the melody seeks to push through the harmonic tension in act of birthing a new being that both embodies and separates itself from the Creative Force.

Each oscillating chord couplet moves through the “blues” progression of I – IV – I – V – IV – I with the exception of the harmonic enclosure at the end, functionally moving from an oscillating V chord to IV and then to a reversal of the oscillating pattern, moving from F# to F major. In terminating the song form with a major instead of a dominant function, I seek to express a resolution of function rather

than of form, to maintain the feeling of cyclicity. Melodically, I employ quartal leaps and arpeggiated clusters to weave through the treacherous harmonic landscape. I refer to the timbral framework of Gamelan at the last moment, p(r)aying homage to the haunting interlocked and interlocuted patterns emergent in gong cycles as metaphor for the interdependence of my ensemble.

CONCLUSION

The inspiration for each of these pieces emerged from a rub of polarity, one that ultimately emerged from both and neither oppositional force. The balance of practice versus/fueling intuition comes to mind. How far should one take a concept and when should be set free? When should a permutative pattern be applied to enhance clarity of expression on my instrument and when should I forgo the conceptual mind and let the body take over.²¹ What I hope to impart is that the mind and body can be in dialogue rather than at odds with each other. To integrate a society, we must first integrate ourselves. The rub of polarity in my music is one that I hope ignites a fire within the soul of the listener, a friction that leads to inspired action.

My instrument of drum set provides me a translational vessel to direct hybrid origin through.²² I see myself as conductor of the dynamic of the ensemble. I feel

²¹ In reference to the concept of the body-instrument in the work of Dard Neuman.

²² The drum set is often referred to as *traps*, short for *contraption*. It is an amalgam of marching percussion instruments from the second-line of a New Orleans band. The assemblage of parts

I am still green in my ability to lead an ensemble let alone guide energy through my instrument, however such is the process that the more I ritualistically repeat myself, the clearer my directions will become. Each piece covered in the greater album *Binaries in Cycle* represents a ritual repetition, manifesting a precise valence of my identity in each song. The ritual repetition of a phrase, musical and otherwise, serves to further trace over a musical outline drawn in the mind's eye. To ritualize repetition is to transcend mimicry through laying an aural path for the listener to follow towards expansion and conclusion of an idea. In a ritual repeating of form, music takes on the sacred act of adorning time with sound and giving shape to time with sound. The inability for humans to perceive time outside a psychic conceptualization may become rectified in this process.

I believe it is the process of ritual repetition that spins oppositional forces to yield their synthesis. At both a micro and macro level, ritual repetition is introduced for humans to keep on schedule otherwise, how would we get things done? While I do not question the efficacy of routine, I do question mindless repetition. Within the medium of language, do we truly understand the power of the written word? To spell a word is to cast a spell of intention which I find eerily similar to the intention given through interpreting musical notes. In the

morphed into a gestalt instrument of the jazz tradition. It's primary components are the ride/crash cymbal, hi-hat, bass drum, snare drum, and tom-toms.

intentionality of Cecil Taylor, the musical notes are but an uninteresting vehicle of expression for that which is perspective and personal aperture.

What I endeavor to break through is the hyper-individualization of the artist projected to us by the thrust of American culture. The constant reinforcement of the individual is what further strengthens caste and hierarchy. By asserting and reasserting one's own perspective and specialty, there is a stark othering that occurs that I find utterly frivolous. In this way, I consider the self-other binary both creative and destructive. We must give respect to the beauty and multiplicity of realities per person just as we must destroy the illusion of psychic separateness. Both processes of assembly and disassembly of hierarchy is empathy, and therefore brings about compassion, and therefore an ending to that which divides our psyches.

I end the cycle of this thesis by leaving you, the reader, with the liner notes I wrote for this album of music.

Binaries in Cycle is a first step in my musical journey toward relating personal identity to sound. This music seeks to expose the struggles faced, oscillating between the act of feeling and naming, in the lack of arrival of settlement within one's body and soul. This visceral feeling of being caught in the in-between is symptomatic of hybridity, one I have come to accept as a paradigm of its own; a kind

of holding tension within as a means of giving framework to identity. Viewing my journey as intrinsically hybrid has helped cultivate within me a semblance of being and becoming, rearing a music meant to be both conceptually understood and viscerally felt. It must be said that the facilitation of this vision in an ensemble is only as strong as the individual voices of my musical journey-members. The importance of their contribution cannot be stressed enough, and it is my hope that these compositions facilitate a space for each of them to find a speaking-space of their own.

Each song represents a personal identification cycle that I sought to energetically understand and breakthrough. While my inner valences span a gamut, many aspects of my life have seemingly emerged from two cultural poles, the feeling of each palpable in my musical practice. To one side is *rāg*, an embodiment of musical shapes and architectures that yields a distinct and distinguishable character. To the other side is the blues, which represents a certainty in uncertainty, caught in the interstices of notes and yielding an intonation of one's identity through giving frame and shape to its location. I propose here a thrust of awareness that emerges from the space in-between the notes and in-between the polarity of labels—an arising of energy when divisiveness ceases.

This music endeavors to subvert the act of discernment by holding an in-between space to breakthrough destructive cycles of judgement and in the process, reaches for the sublime.

I thank you for indulging my aperture of vision and hope this music finds a way to express something for you that before could not find framework, words or couplets to help elucidate that which may feel unmanifest, unexplored, or unspoken.

With Gratitude and Life Energy Abundant,

Keshav Batish

Awaswas lands

June 7, 2021 SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Scores of compositions available upon request.

Please direct your inquiry to keshavbatish@gmail.com

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