

## *Of Other Narratives*

*tracings in the ground of*  
***Collective Autonomy***  
*people–practice–theory–history*

Volume 4. Part 4.

### *String Quartet No. 1.*

#### *BEGINNING AT JOURNEY'S END*

##### THE DAWNING OF A NEW DAY

Perhaps the furthest thing from my thoughts when, in 1984 I embarked on a tour of the Indian subcontinent with Roger Frampton's Intersection, was a string quartet. And even more so that it would be me writing one. However, in hindsight it appears to be anything but an accident.

Eleven or twelve years earlier Roger and I had caused somewhat of a furor among Sydney's jazz musicians when we'd presented a concert at the Teacher's Federation Auditorium, then located, as I recall, at the Darling Harbor end of Bathurst Street, Sydney. This particular concert would be considered pretty odd these days. Back then it was "too out" to be believable, especially as it didn't remotely resemble anything of currency on the American jazz scene. So, as it had actually taken place, it was instead laughed at and dismissed as lunacy. But lunacy it was certainly not. There were only four musicians involved. In addition to Roger and myself, Jack Thorncraft and Peter Evens participated in the music-making. Prior to this event David Ahern's AZ Music had, notoriously, presented concerts that had outraged the musical public. David's presentations were, indeed, incredibly adventurous and forward looking, putting into question almost all that was considered by the establishment to be the essentials of "good music". AZ Music gave everybody who encountered them good reason to address these questions, or at least try to. There was a significant difference though between the AZ concerts and this one Roger and I curated. The first half presented music derived of a jazz aesthetic while the second, totally free improvisation stripped of any allusions to style of any sort. Its essence? Created sounds of the moment; music that was entirely about sound. This was in Sydney, 1972. It was the jazz component in this otherwise remote context that distinguished this event.

The jazz component, being entirely original and exploratory, was challenging enough. The un-gated improvisation of the second half was, for almost all in attendance, more than enough reason to walk out. And walk out they did. We continued the concert through to completion and were, I think, pretty pleased with the musical result. The audience response was a bit of a surprise, to me at least. Because of my naiveté I'd assumed that all or most would be as interested in the world of sound and its innate potential as music as we were. Interestingly, the music was not aggressive at all. Nor, being entirely acoustic, was it loud. It was mostly uncluttered and quite conversational in its orientation. I say this confidently because Roger, Peter, and I played this way one day a week for ages. And it was never loud or aggressive. Nor was it ever the same twice. The problem for the auditors was that there were no stylistic handles to grab on to. Those present were in the position of being able to hear music as sound and not music as predictable collocation. And this applied as much to the sounds qua sounds as to the way they were produced. Not only were there no common-practice linguistic handles to grab on to but there was equally no technical methodology to evaluate. From a certain perspective, you might say we were playing with musical DNA. It certainly felt that way then, and, the lessons I learned from those DNA explorations remain with me through to the present time.



This experience made an indelible impression that influenced the course my creative life has taken. The music-making itself opened up an unbound field to explore. The way it was heard and responded to, the reception of its communicative thrust, clarified the necessity for, and significance of, the pursuit of creative explorations that are, intrinsically, a challenge. I set sail on a course whose leading edge pointed in this direction. I let go of adolescent aspirations towards instrumental technical prowess, ‘mastery’ over materials, image and reputation, and set out to develop to the greatest extent possible a relationship with music-making that allows for the musical sounds to be the guiding principle. By dint this has always meant that there are new techniques and materials to develop. Although it would be years before I’d come to understand the implications of this, unbeknown to me at the time, I had already put my foot inside the door of music composition.

For a year or two prior to this concert Roger and I had spent a great deal of time together, playing, discussing, listening and mulling over music; its possibilities and inferences, its limitations or otherwise. Did it have limitations? Or were limitations a result of imposed conditions. Our thinking, playing, discussing, and listening all contributed to the one discourse; the one question: What was music, to us?

Amongst the many and varied listening objects in this discourse were the String Quartets written by Anton Webern. I’d bought a copy of the now classic recording of these by the Quartetto Italiano and listened to them voraciously. Having had no background whatsoever in so called ‘serious music’, I found myself hearing these astounding pieces pretty much in the same spirit with which we played our own music; totally open to sound and not caring any more, *or* any less, about F#s than about dotted crotchets, long durations than short, loud than soft, thick textures than thin. I found myself feeling pretty much the same about Webern String Quartets as I did about Miles Davis or Cecil Taylor, Karlheinz Stockhausen or John Cage (also on our listening agenda). The thing all this music seemed to me to have in common was that it stemmed from a creative source and it was attempting to do something constructive while expressing something deep. These were my responses and they were utterly intuitive. I had no idea what I was listening to in musicological or analytic terms and was responding in accord with the inspiration I felt. And this was abundant. There was much music around at the time that left me utterly cold and this was because I felt it to be trite. But whatever my judgements, they were based on intuition and feeling, not analysis and knowhow.

I think this is significant and now, at the age of sixty-six, I view myself as fortunate in having been introduced to meaning-full, feeling-full, music at a time when my knowledge was, more or less, naught. It gave me a chance to come to the matter of sound as a musical foundation rather than it being filtered through a bank of knowledge that had been thrust upon me *and* it. I came to be familiar with my own perceptive processes; how I related to what I was hearing and the sorts of connections this gave rise to before ‘knowledge’ regarding them had been assimilated. I had found a path into creative music-making without it having first been paved by traditional introductions and impositions. I had discovered for myself what music meant to me. This view has proven resilient, robust, reliable, and proliferative.

There is, of course, a price to pay for this lack of early traditional training. As I was to discover later, frustration stemming from a lack of competence with notated music would increase in equal proportion to my desire to write it. But, at the same time, I could always bring to the fore the countless lessons learned from these explorations with sound and the open field they provided a key to. And crucially, among the many insights gained from the exploratory journeys taken with Roger were those that embraced matters of musical structure. Somehow, we found ourselves with compatible predilections to improvising structurally and so those musical elements like texture, pitch, duration, loud, soft, silence, and so on, were given voice quite organically and as vital components in the creative process. Nowadays, as music composition assumes a large slice of my creative undertakings, I find time and again that *the* predominant aspect of a “Work” which is in the process of becoming conceptualized is the sound-world it will inhabit. And it is this that serves as its guiding light from beginning to end. And usually, together with a clear inner aural image of the sound-world, there is also a pretty clear idea as to the sort of structures that are necessary to bear its weight.

My structural propensities took a leap across the intuitive/rational divide after I’d begun the formal study of music composition. And although it would take some years before the divide would close so that the two – the intuition and the rational – could proceed in harmony with each other, entry into the formal study of composition, almost immediately, prepared me for the leap. *String Quartet No. 1* emerged from that preparatory phase.

I’d taken leave from my studies in 1984 so as to participate in Roger Frampton’s Intersection tour of the Indian subcontinent. The tour was timely. After years working as a professional musician and before that, as an apprentice tradesman in a factory, academia was no small shock. I was face-to-face with a very different take on what it is that constitutes



'knowledge'. I'd completed my second year as an undergraduate and by then my head was reeling. The first year of the B.mus. course had taken the top off my head and the second had far from replaced it. I needed a break from the hallowed halls and a return to some serious, in-the-moment music-making appeared to me as a gift. And a gift it proved to be. Roger, by this time, had developed into a formidable musician and a very able band leader. The tour was an opportunity to visit a part of the world I'd wondered about for many years and, added to this, I saw it as an opportunity to investigate Indian classical music. At that stage so called World Music hadn't degenerated to the point of it being, as is the case now, a potpourri and mishmash of East meets West superficiality. 'Cultural exchange', as those in politics like to call it while congratulating themselves on its invention, is actually as old as mankind. Nothing new there. What *was* relatively new to the music world from round the mid-1960s on was unprecedented power in the hands of com-modifiers, and this, in cahoots with an entrepreneurial ethos no longer the reserve of the rich, providing a field day for the industry at large: vinyl records followed by a stream of CDs long enough to dwarf the Ganges. The industry, as is or should be obvious to all, brought creativity to its knees, particularly as creativity relates to music-making. One only need take a glance at an Arts Council Grant Application for proof of this statement! I've digressed.

I approached Andrew McLennan who worked as a producer in the Drama and Features Department at the ABC and proposed to him the idea of my making a radio program on music of the Indian subcontinent. Andrew was enthusiastic and as a result I carried with me a professional field recorder, several boxes of cassettes, and a willful intent to collect musical material both suitable to my own study and for radio listening. The commission fee helped with financing my six-month stay and the intended radio program help focus things. Underlying the entire enterprise was my inspiration to study Indian classical music, though how I was to go about this was far from clear. Prior to departure I'd seen the Intersection tour as a link in a chain of connections, most of which were yet to materialize. I was confident things would fall into place but first, the Intersection tour which precipitated the whole journey was to be accommodated and in the doing was rewarding as a creative endeavor and a wonderfully rich experience too.

Over the course of about two weeks we visited Dhaka and Chittagong in Bangladesh; Kolkata (then, Calcutta), Delhi, Mumbai (then, Bombay), Chennai (then, Madras), and Bangalore, in India; and on to Colombo, Sri Lanka, to complete the tour. We gave performances in all these cities except Chennai which was a stop over between Bangalore and Colombo. It was an amazing tour in all sorts of ways but put us all to the test in one way or another ... or several! En route we met a wide variety of people and, because of it being a jazz oriented project, many of these were jazz fans. But there were others, too, most of whom worked for the bureaucratic infrastructure in some capacity. It was while we were still in Delhi and the result of meeting one person in particular that I decided, pretty much, to return there after the tour and seek out a teacher with whom I might spend five or six months studying. I put it this way simply because six months doesn't even constitute a drop in the Indian musical ocean. Another person I met, this time in Colombo, very kindly offered to accommodate me for a period after the tour. Thus, the other three members of Intersection returned to Australia and I stayed on in Colombo for a month where I had the fortune of striking up a very friendly and helpful relationship with some people teaching at the Institute of Aesthetic Studies. I visited them on a daily basis and attended classes as an observer. They organized for me to accompany them on a few one-day concert trips and, altogether, the month in Colombo proved to be a wonderfully enlightening experience. And the accommodation situation I found myself in utterly conducive to recovery from the exhaustion of the tour. This was late January into February, 1984. By mid-month I was ready to go back to Delhi and begin my 'crash course'. Another stroke of luck whilst in Colombo made it possible to organize a place to stay in Delhi so that when I arrived, a taxi ride from the airport took me to the place that would be home for the next six months or so: Prithviraj Road, Lodi Estate, New Delhi.

The abode at Prithviraj Road was a rooming house set up to accommodate foreigners, particularly those, who, like myself, were there for a purpose. Being there relatively long-term I came to meet several people who were in India to do research, or professional types traveling through Delhi. Although on a main road it was fairly quiet and conducive to the sort of study I was there to do. There was a main house in which the owner and his wife and their daughters lived and this incorporated a long, back verandah which served as a communal dinning room. The food, cooked by Primsingh, was sensational. And overall, whilst not cheap, the accommodation was not too expensive either. At the back of the house was another building in which four or five quarters were located. These were comfortable and private. The lady of the house, Shukla, was an incredibly efficient, effective, and kind-hearted person who never failed to arrest a problem before it became one. This ability of hers served and saved me on many occasions, a matter for which I'll always be grateful. There was never more than eight people staying there at any one time so, of course, over numerous dinners together we'd all get to be pretty pally.



After settling in I contacted a person I'd met during the tour who worked for the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. She, too, was incredibly kind and equally, intelligent. Her knowledge and contacts in the Delhi area (and probably beyond) were significant as was her understanding regarding the essentials of my purpose. She thus put me in touch with Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, the music school where I became a student of Madhup Maudgalaya and his father.

Upon meeting Madhup the difficulties of my purpose came to the fore immediately. These were in no way due to a language problem nor any lack of will to communicate. Madhup's spoken English was, as with so many Indian people I met who'd had a university education, impeccable. The difficulty regarding my purpose came down to my own utter lack of understanding vis-à-vis the process of learning that an Indian musician goes through and, in fairness to myself, Madhup's lack of understanding the reverse. His integrity and sincerity were obvious and beyond question. My confidence in our relationship was replete. For three or four lessons, try as we might, we were unable to connect. Though the problem in real terms was mine, he invested himself in finding a solution and by about the fifth lesson we were on the same page. I wasn't interested in trying to become a practicing exponent of Khyāl vocal music, Madhup's area of expertise. I wasn't there for twenty years. Not even twenty months. Yet I was absolutely clear about what it was that I sought. I wanted to gain insight into the structural principles that enable his music to hang together. I wanted to know about what for performers of that music has to become second nature; become intuitive. I wanted to know what the bricks and mortar were that held the whole edifice together. I had no desire nor intention to emulate the music or be able to reproduce its style. I was intensely committed to understanding the nature of its structure, and this because I believed that through this understanding my own conceptions of musical structure would be opened up to greater creative possibilities. I think that what was difficult for Madhup at first was for him to accept the fact that I didn't want to become an exponent of the music he'd devoted himself to under the watchful ear of one of India's greatest. Madhup's teacher was the renowned Pandit Kumar Gandharva. But after he understood that this approach could have positive ramifications and that my motivation was entirely honorable, the communication we shared was as astounding as it was utterly beautiful. And the generosity he and his entire family showed me is something that, to this day, humbles me completely. They opened up their hearts and their house to me. It was the entire experience with them, the people, that was to inspire me in a way I'd never known previously. As strongly as I'd previously thought and felt about spirit in creative expression, their open hearts showed me another dimension. So in the end, it wasn't just structure I learned about but something of far greater, long-lasting depth, namely, that which concerns the human spirit.

For the most part, the time I spent with Madhup was guided by the questions I'd ask. Each lesson lasted about an hour or so and some weeks there would be three. Much of this time was devoted to him pointing out to me aspects to consider that would lead to my understanding. The essentials in this concerned both rhythmic and pitch disposition. In neither area did we extrapolate. My questions to him were an attempt to connect the surface with the foundation, bypassing most of the detail that takes an exponent so many years to accumulate and put into practice in a way that embraces the tradition. As most are aware, this is not only complex stuff but varies from *ghrāṇa* to *ghrāṇa* – a particular tradition, schools or styles of performance practice usually defined by an area such as the Gwālior *ghrāṇa*, the Delhi *ghrāṇa*, or the Agra *ghrāṇa*, and so on. Furthermore, its convoluted history goes back to at least the fourteenth century. Unlike the solemnity and austerity of Dhrupad, Khyāl is characterized by compositional richness, exuberance, abundant variation, ornamentation (shakes, glissandi, grace notes, etc.), intricate *tāla* (rhythmic) patterns and structures, and its overall compositional form usually consisting of many sections. Yet beyond this complexity is tremendous scope for freedom in individual expression. Getting to understand all this is the work of years devoted to the task. And as I suggested earlier, my task was not to become a practitioner nor, for that matter, to acquire a stock of musicological knowledge. My aim was to maintain to the greatest degree possible an uncluttered field that would nonetheless enable a clear view of its profound depths. And as both Madhup and I realized at the time, this was no small nor easy expectation. But we both gave it our best shot, the results of which still, to this day, emerge in my work, usually when I least expect them to do so and often in a way that exposes a previously unseen hue.

Meanwhile, life at Prithviraj Road went along without a hitch (other than the frequent visits by the dreaded Delhi Belly and thus, my visits to the hospital) and with many a pleasant interaction over the evening meal. I remember one youngish woman stayed there with us for a week or so whose interests were in Art History. Attached to an American university's Art History Department she was in Delhi to do some research and, as they like to refer to it in academia, 'field work'. Anyway, one morning over breakfast she asked me if I'd like to accompany her on her day's schedule and I thought the break from my own intensive work would be a good thing. I thanked her and off we went. She'd hired a car and driver for the day (for me a novelty ... I walked everywhere!) and we drove a fair way out of town to an



enclosed site where countless, large statues were stored, er, thrown, dumped. These, apparently, were of interest because they were statues of important people the British had had in place round the city which, after independence in 1947, had been ripped down and put out of sight, though for some, obviously, not out of mind. But of far greater interest to me was the fact that these statues had been put to rest right along side a city garbage dump, the smell of which had to be witnessed to be believed, and even then! ... Being pretty inquisitive (and also bored by the statues of important Brits) I wandered over to take a closer look at the the garbage dump to discover no small number of people searching for whatever it is that people in such a situation search for. Having already been in India for some months, I must confess that I thought I was beginning to get the idea. After all, I'd seen the bodies in the Ganges, the prostitutes in lean-to constructions on the street waiting for whatever it is they wait for, and the vultures doing to recently deceased beings and creatures what it is that vultures do ... to recently deceased beings and creatures. But no. This was something else. The experience gave me cause to consider the meaning of life from a vastly different perspective. The image has never left me nor has the perspective on life it gave rise to. It really did give me something to think about and think about it I did, have done, do, and will continue to do. That perspective began to make a modicum more sense through my Buddhist readings because one learns that it is possible to see it all on equal footing that, at the end of the day, bears out the reality that dinner at the city dump and dinner at the Taj are the same thing, i.e., an illusion. More food for thought! While I'm far from having developed the view that enables me to dine at both places I can clearly see that both places are inhabited by humans and that a great deal that is beyond comprehension accounts for how some happen to be in one place while others in the other. Not enlightenment, I guess, but an insight just the same. One gained through being there at first hand and looking, feeling, and acknowledging, rather than turning my back on it and pretending it doesn't exist. What *doesn't* have existence in any real terms is the judgement that one is better than the other. They are inextricably connected, *and* relative.

It was over the Prithviraj Road dinner table that I met Hans, a very tall and robust gentleman from the German-speaking part of Switzerland who had been living in India for many years, spoke the language of the locals (pretty roughly!) and knew his way round ... that is, knew his way round the country and disliked the cities to a remarkable extent. At the time, Hans was living in a place called Mussoorie and had come to Delhi on business. I never did quite work out what his business was, actually, but he appeared to be connected in some way to an institution whose task it was to collect data on natural phenomena. More accurate than this I can't be. Anyway, on his first visit he and I got to talking and had more than a few laughs in the process. He had a pretty weird sense of humor that seemed to jell with mine. A day or two later Hans was no where to be seen. But he reappeared a month or so further on. During our dinner conversations second time round his own living situation was expanded on a bit and this finally led to me being invited to go up to Mussoorie and go for a walk in the hills. I'd better explain this in a little more detail. Actually, Mussoorie is quite some distance NNE of Delhi in Uttarakhand, in close proximity to Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh. The nearest large center is Dehradun to the south, with Daramsala (the home of the Dalai Lama in exile) about as far to the west as the Nepalese boarder is to the east and the Tibetan boarder is to the north. In point of fact, the 'hills' are actually the Himalayas.

Traveling round India wasn't entirely new to me though I hasten to add here that, in my limited experience, traveling in India is *new* every time you put your foot outside your door. Prior to this planned excursion to Mussoorie I'd visited with three friends, the Tiger Reserve at Ranthambore, SE Rajasthan (then, a very closed affair), the Bird Sanctuary in Bharatpur, East Rajasthan and several other locations, staying in each a few days then moving on. None of these were exactly easy going. At the time, Rajasthan was averaging 44 degrees celsius daily and on a couple of occasions tipped the mercury at 47. But the trip to Mussoorie was something else. Mussoorie itself is a beautiful, largish town in a mountainous region. It's fairly well-to-do because it is, and has been for ages, a place people with money go to during the summer months when the temperature and humidity become unbearable down on the plains. Needless to say, it's not on every Indian's holiday list. When I visited Hans there with a dear friend it was, and had been for quite a long time, since the British Raj in fact, inhabited by a fairly large population of foreigners. But whatever the case, it was beautiful. In fact, breathtakingly so!

Hans's rented abode was half a house. A beautiful, atmospheric, dream-like place right on the end of a ridge and from where, on a clear day, one could look through the tall pines along the adjacent valley right into the snow-covered mountains of the Himalayas. This was in the middle of summer. As things turned out we spent about three weeks there, maybe a little more, with Hans and his wife. While the timeframe was bookended with peaceful, laid-back down time, the focus was on a walk in the 'hills'. In Point of fact, mountains they were and trek it was. And the location, the Kedarnath region, NE of Tehri, Uttarakhand.



Stating the case from a personal perspective and with complete honesty, the trek tested me to the absolute limit and defined, very clearly, my limitations both physical and emotional. Details of the trek story will have to wait for another occasion. Suffice for the present to mention that we four carried all our provisions ourselves (roughly 30 kgs each though Hans a few kgs more) in backpacks. This included bedding, clothes, tents, etc. We made our way without sherpa or guide and were entirely in the hands of Hans. Psychologically, it left me with a deep incision and view that very clearly defined my life in terms best expressed as a before and an after. The after was, for me, the dawn of a new day. So much so in fact that I had to engage a great deal of soul searching (for years afterwards) so as to establish a clear, realistic, fair-minded perspective on the experience in an effort to render the tremendous impact it made with positive rather than negative impetus. Regarding the others I'm in no position to comment. We never discussed the experience openly.

During the trek I truly thought, felt, and believed my end had arrived and perhaps that of my companions, too. Without exaggeration or pathos, it *was* life threatening. Seriously so and in realistic terms. At one point for example, while crossing one of several ice bridges on the side of a very steep mountain, Hans's wife slipped and came within centimeters of disappearing through a hole in the ice, beneath of which was a raging torrent of freezing water. So, back in the safety of home, I was very aware of being alive and the good fortune that embraced. Dramatic? No. Realistic? Yes! ... In whatever it is that constitutes the concept, 'real'. The picture painted here contextualizes *String Quartet No. 1*.

## ON DIFFERENT TERRAIN

The trek experience brought to the fore an aspect of myself I'd never seen before, though I'd often sensed its presence. Face-to-face with my own fear and limitations I was confronted with a side of my character I'd tried, quite successfully, to avoid since childhood. There was now no further need to invent escape routes. And although utterly confronted, I felt an inexplicable sense of relief. It was a time replete with amazement yet confusion, inspiration yet bewilderment. A day or two after we'd returned to the peace and safety of Hans' house on the ridge, surrounded by sheer beauty with Mussoorie on one side and a view into the Himalayas on the other, I took a stroll. I needed to be by myself and to contemplate. There was much to consider. I walked along our ridge towards Sisters Bazaar, at that time a one owner shop-of-sorts with a clientele that could not have amounted to much more than an extended family.

As I approached Sisters Bazaar I heard this continuous stream of wailing from a musical instrument I'd been momentarily introduced to whilst in Bombay: a *puñgi* – the wind instrument used by snake charmers which has a large oval-shaped reservoir below the mouthpiece and two tubes below that, each with a set of holes to facilitate pitch variation. I arrived to find a young Indian fellow squatting on the ground with this instrument and was immediately mesmerized. He played for, probably, forty minutes or so and the flow of lines never stopped. Not even for a split second. He was circular breathing the whole time. There was no audience and no snakes. Just him, me, and two others from the little shop. He was playing because he loved to play. It certainly felt that way to me. This, immediately on top of the trek experience was India in a nutshell. Absolute extremes between which is the broadest and deepest range of possibilities, way beyond one's imagination. This man completely transported me, though from where to where else I can't begin to know. I recall going back to our abode and saying a few words to those at home. I guess it was a private journey. As I lay on the bed, staring at the ceiling, aware that outside, just beyond the little garden, there was a deep valley which stretched and wound its way into a mountain range known the world over and gazed upon with awe. Somehow there was a connection between the flowing, weaving lines of music that I'd just heard and the magnitude of those mountains. And then, there it was. The beginning of a string quartet.

A brief digression is necessary: Some time prior to going to India I'd written a piece that explored and rendered musical structure through 'thorough composition' (my term for the writing of music that is rigorous in its compositional design and the relationships that realize it as fully notated). The "Work" I refer to here stands as the first piece of fully notated composition I'd ever written: *Percussion Music One*. Its writing brought me into contact with what it can mean to consciously design structures into which musical forms might be poured. Its writing also gave me a handle on the sorts of problems that arise in the process



and how they might be solved. Also, round the same time as writing this piece I'd transcribed from a recording by Ravi Shankar the *ālāpa* portion of a rendering in *rāga Mālkauns*. The greatest challenge here was to develop a system of notation able to transfer what I heard into visual notation. In the event I invented one which, subsequently, I've employed often in various forms. These two hands-on ventures – one compositional, the other more analytic though creative in my invention of the notation – had prepared the field. Now, as if these two ventures had coalesced into a compositional form, the string quartet began to emerge, expressing the breadth and depth of all my recent experiences while pointing the way to a future journey on different terrain.

Over the ensuing days I worked intensely on preparatory sketches. These brought together both the pitch and rhythmic domains of the String Quartet's compositional structure. Another short digression is apposite.

Juxtaposed with the lessons I'd been taking with Madhup at Gandharva Mahavidyalaya I was plumbing a couple of books I'd bought in Delhi on Indian music theory. These proved a tremendous help in my interactions with Madhup and this for a very good reason. The lessons with Madhup were power-packed, introducing me to material I had no chance of keeping abreast of. The books I'd bought furnished me with the opportunity between lessons to become more familiar with, not just some of the terminology he used but its meaning, implications, and practical application. In a sense and unwittingly, due to my enthusiasm to learn as much as I possibly could in the short time available, I'd created a dialogue between Madhup and the books, with myself as the intermediary, so to speak. Among the many insights Madhup occasioned, a crucial key came by way of the *tanpūrā* – a four-stringed instrument that provides a 'drone' and by which the overtone spectrum is accessed. Madhup had lent me one so the I could learn how to tune it and practice singing with it. Through this I came to understand the relationship between sung micro-tones and overtones. I experienced at first hand the frequency spectrum opening up like a mass of colour, depending upon the sung pitch in relation to the *tanpūrā*.

All these diverse aspects began to weave themselves together as I sketched out ideas for the quartet: structures for rhythmic disposition, structures for the disposition of pitch material, and the possibilities for creating through these, interactions between more than one voice or line, each conceived of as horizontal in its essential nature (that is to say, bearing a propensity for melodic realization). Another digression is called for.

Through Madhup's instruction I'd very quickly realized that *rāga* material is monumentally complex. Infinitely more than being a 'scale' in the sense that Western music practice understands this term, *rāga* is particular. Furthermore, this particularity applies as a single entity in the context of a particular *ghrāṇa* and not unusually, a particular person within a particular tradition responsible for bringing a particular piece into being. So, on the one hand this material bears the weight of a long and rich history while on the other, it is open to interpretive mappings. It must have seemed pretty complex to others, too, because round the end of the nineteenth century the Indian music theorist, Viṣṇ Nārāyaṇa Bhātkhaṇḍe, worked out a system which classified *rāgas* into ten basic types bearing specific intervallic characteristic (scales only in a manner of speaking) and these he referred to as *thātas* – Kalyāṇa, Bilāval, Khammāja, Bhairava, Bhairavi, Āsāvārī, Todī, Shrī, Māravā, and Kāfī. Although my discovery of these didn't facilitate any greater an understanding of the intricacies of *rāga* proper, it enabled me to stand back and gain a bird's eye view of a very complex field. Over and above this, however, it fell into line with my initial purpose which was to find connections between the surface and essence (or structural foundations) of this music. "I wanted to gain insight into the structural principles that enable his music to hang together." And Bhātkhaṇḍe's *thāta* system certainly provided a key, if only one of a conceptual nature.

My String Quartet sketches began to develop along the lines of a contrapuntal setting. I made the decision that this quartet was going to be about Todī *thāt* in its intervallic construals. In order to form relationships between the voices I created four modal views of Todī *thāt* and assigned them the names, primary mode (PM), secondary mode (SM), auxiliary mode (AM), and secondary auxiliary mode (SAM). Each of these derived from the same seven pitch classes consistent with the intervallic characteristics of Todī *thāt*, spelt out in prime form as B, C, D<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, F<sup>#</sup>, G, A<sup>b</sup>. These four modes became the opening of the quartet (see Ex. 1).

In addressing structure in the rhythmic domain I put to work some of the lessons I'd learned while writing *Percussion Music One*. There I'd discovered the value of proportions and the limitless extent to which these can be explored. I decided to apply this to the quartet though in the doing, adopt a different approach to the one I'd deployed with *Percussion Music One*. I arrived at a meeting place for the pitch and rhythmic domains via a very simple route. I sang a melody based on the seven Todī pitches and wrote it down. I then went to work on this melody until I felt its shape and form fall into place. From the initial rough melody I arrived at a precise rhythmic realization. The pitch material now had a marriage with the rhythmic (Vn. 1., mm. 1 ~ 3, Ex. 1.). The proportions of the melody's rhythmic disposition



became the determining elements in the overall structure and the modes, rendered as PM, SM, AM, and SAM, became the determinants for pitch disposition.

After returning to Australia, I completed the first movement of *String Quartet No. 1*. As with *Building a Golden Wheel*, so too with *String Quartet No. 1*. The first movement was completed but the other movements never were. I'd travelled to other parts of the world before going to India and never, so I'd thought, experienced to any great extent that condition referred to as 'culture shock'. Though I must add that the two days I spent in Cape Town, 1968, were, horrifying. Come to think about it, Mexico City and Cristóbal, Colon (Panama Canal) round the same period were eye openers as well. But India was something else altogether. Though I did experience some culture shock upon arrival, I found myself, after the Intersection tour, adapting very quickly. Perhaps this was in part to do with the fact that I was focused and enthralled by my mission. But whatever the case, the real 'culture shock' actually happened when I returned to Sydney, my own home town. I spent about six months wondering why the hell I was there ... the excesses of an affluent life style became, for the first time in my life, *real*. And in their reality I felt shame, sadness, disappointment, and disillusionment, all of which added up to *shock*. But as time passed and the necessities of daily life pressed in as they inevitably do, the shock seemed to dissipate and I was left with the process of picking up from where I'd left off. But without doubt or exaggeration, the person picking up the pieces now inhabited quite a different headspace with a very different view of the world and a very different sense of what it is that constitutes 'cultural equality'. And even though I'd spent six or seven months in New York in 1980, it wasn't until my return home after India that I began to have some vague sort-of-an-idea regarding racism, imperialism, and the incomprehensible inhumanity caused by them. With all this in mind, then, I was in the throes of adjusting to a new perspective on our world. Where might I fit in, and how could I contribute with gut-felt honesty? It all proved to be a very long road and in the process of traveling it (still underway) I've found Buddhist thought to be an immeasurable form through which connecting, although inevitable, became, and becomes, possible.

*String Quartet No. 1* was rehearsed on a regular weekly basis in the context of 'composer/performer workshop' as part of the B.mus. course I'd returned to in 1985 at NSW State Conservatorium of Music. It proved considerably more difficult to play than I'd accounted for and this, largely due I think to my own lack of experience in these matters. The 'workshops' took place once a week and in addition to my attending these as the composer, my good friend, Bob Douglas, being in a more senior year than I, was there in an official capacity as guide and advisor. Bob loved the music and was totally into it, the whole situation, meaning, it was one of discovery, adventure, sharing and learning. While two members of the student quartet shared this feeling, two were there to accommodate course requirements. We thus made the decision quite early in the proceedings to truncate the piece, the last page thus fell to the scissors of better judgement. The two members who were (thankfully) *engaged* provided energy and musical direction, making suggestions as to how performance problems might be solved and contributed enormously towards the piece coming together. Towards this end it was decided that, given the incredibly slow tempo, I'd have to conduct. For all of us, this was an intelligent decision. We worked the piece through to the 'cut' and eventually performed it at a weekly 'concert practice' in what was then the Joseph Post Auditorium. To my surprise the performance was well attended by student and staff members alike. The piece had obviously attracted quite a bit of interest. The quartet played and I conducted. It went very well and was received with more than a modest round of applause.

I'd learned an incredible amount from the process of this quartet's coming into being. Working with the rhythmic proportions I'd established in the sketch material while still in Mussoorie I'd figured out a way to expand and compress related structures. This is evident, I think, in the recording at hand. The 'cut' last page whose musical function is to give rise to the conclusion through compression, particularly of the rhythmic/proportional material, does not appear on the present recording but the score is reproduced below (Ex. 2.).



EXAMPLE 1.

25-30  
PREFERRED.

1. Vn 1

Vn 2

Vla

Vc

4

7

10

MANOPUS SCORE-SYSTEM



EXAMPLE 2.

This is a handwritten musical score for a string quartet, labeled "EXAMPLE 2." The score is written on ten staves, organized into five systems of two staves each. The notation is highly detailed, featuring a variety of musical symbols and performance instructions.

**Key features of the score include:**

- Staff 1 (Top):** Starts with a 2/4 time signature. It contains complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and rests. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like "PO" (Pizzicato) and "SP" (Sordano) are present.
- Staff 2:** Continues the complex rhythmic patterns. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like "ORD" (Ordinary) and "PSP" (Pizzicato Sordano) are present.
- Staff 3:** Features a section labeled "JETÉ PO 6" with a 6/8 time signature. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like "ORD" and "PSP" are present.
- Staff 4:** Continues the complex rhythmic patterns. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like "ORD" and "PSP" are present.
- Staff 5:** Features a section labeled "JETÉ SP" with a 6/8 time signature. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like "ORD" and "PSP" are present.
- Staff 6:** Continues the complex rhythmic patterns. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like "ORD" and "PSP" are present.
- Staff 7:** Features a section labeled "COLLEGGIO ORD" with a 6/8 time signature. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like "ORD" and "PSP" are present.
- Staff 8:** Continues the complex rhythmic patterns. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like "ORD" and "PSP" are present.
- Staff 9:** Features a section labeled "JETÉ SP" with a 6/8 time signature. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like "ORD" and "PSP" are present.
- Staff 10:** Continues the complex rhythmic patterns. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like "ORD" and "PSP" are present.

The score is written in a clear, legible hand, with many annotations and markings throughout. The overall style is that of a working draft or a composer's sketch.



