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3: Calcutta Slide-Guitar by Debashish Bhattacharya

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German and Polish cabaret of the interwar period. His voice is expressive and almost crooner-like, which belies the darkness of the texts (which can also be quite witty and at times funny).

This is the second CD now available of Kulisiewicz's music. The first was a studio recording from 1979 made for Folkways Records (FW37700), *Songs from the Depths of Hell: Sung in German, Polish, Ukrainian, Yiddish. Aleksander Kulisiewicz. Survivor of Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. Annotated by Peter Wortsman*. Wortsman, an author who conducted interviews with survivors in Austria, Poland, and Israel in 1975, also contributes the essay "Orpheus Raising Hell: Impressions of the Late Aleksander Kulisiewicz" here (pp. 6–13). *Ballads and Broadsides* distinguishes itself through its superior liner notes with detailed annotations by musicologists Barbara Milewski (Swarthmore) and Bret Werb (US Holocaust Memorial Museum), its excellent sound quality, and its focus on Kulisiewicz's own repertoire in the Polish language. The Folkways production, which only overlaps with one song contained in *Ballads and Broadsides*, is also excellent, but seems to be a bit less focused, with songs in other languages that were in Kulisiewicz's repertoire, but not of his own creation.

This recording expands our knowledge of folk and popular song performed by camp inmates during the Holocaust, as much of the available recordings and literature focus on the experiences and creations of Jewish camp inmates. It reminds us that the Holocaust was much more than just a Jewish experience, and that the suffering affected all prisoners, including political prisoners, homosexuals, Roma, and Slavs, among other victims. It will be of interest to those interested in music and war, music and politics, music and resistance, and music and internment, as well as East and Central European folk and popular musics.

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3: Calcutta Slide-Guitar. 2005. Debashish Bhattacharya. Riverboat Records/World Music Network TUGCD1036. One compact disc. Booklet (10 pp.) in English by David Ellenbogen with J.W. Junker, with monochrome photographs.

Of the variety of musical instruments used in Hindustani music, *sitār* and *tablā* have by far attracted the greatest attention—both popular and scholarly—outside India. Yet India is home to a wide variety of instrumental traditions, including that represented by the present recording, the Hindustani slide guitar. Despite its relatively recent introduction into India, many musicians consider the slide guitar to be well-suited for performing Hindustani music: for example, it is believed to have greater sustain than *sitār* or *sarod*, allowing for greater flexibility

in melodic elaboration (see Clayton 2001:189–90), while also permitting the incredibly fast articulations commonly heard in sitār and sarod performances. As has been recounted by various scholars (e.g., McNeill 1995 and Clayton 2001), the slide guitar was introduced into India by touring Hawaiian musicians during the 1930s and 1940s (although, as many sources recount, one story of the origin of the Hawaiian-style guitar attributes the innovation to Gabriel Davion, an Indian who landed in Hawaii toward the end of the nineteenth century). These groups, mainly performing in Mumbai and Kolkata, inspired local imitators, and eventually the use of the Hawaiian slide guitar became common in mid-century Hindi film music and renditions of Rabindrasangeet. In the late 1950s the guitar was popularized in the Hindustani music sphere through the performances and recordings of Brij Bhusan Kabra (b. 1937). Kabra tried a number of experiments in adapting the guitar for Hindustani music—trying different tuning and pick configurations and attaching *cikarī* (drone) strings, for example. Successive guitarists have continued to refine and expand upon these innovations; although a few standard models are in circulation, many performers develop their own models.

Debashish Bhattacharya (b. 1963) provides a case in point. Born into a musical family, he began studying with Brij Bhusan Kabra at the age of ten. Now recognized as one of the most technically virtuosic of Indian guitarists, Bhattacharya has also designed three of his own guitars—which he calls “the Trinity”—featured on this album. 3: *Calcutta Slide-Guitar* (the number refers to the guitars) is, suitably, divided into three parts, exploring the sounds of each guitar in one of three *rāgas*. Bhattacharya’s brother, Subhasis Bhattacharya, accompanies him on tablā.

The first track features the Anandi guitar, a four-stringed, hollow-necked “slide ukulele” (as he calls it), performing in Mishra Shiva Ranjani, a (mostly) pentatonic *rāga*. The performance commences with a brief *ālāp* before moving into a medium-fast metered section accompanied by tablā in Dadra *tāl*. The metered section, based around a brief *gat* (composition), showcases the rather bright sound of the small guitar before concluding with a succinct but lightning-fast combination of *tāns*.

The second section of the album (tracks 2 and 3) features the fourteen-string Gandharvi guitar in the popular *rāga* Tilak Kamod. Tilak Kamod is a highly melodic *rāga*—in the sense that there is much pre-given melodic material for the performer to utilize. All seven natural notes of the Hindustani scale (similar to the Western major scale) are present, albeit in a distinct melodic arrangement. The first track of this section, “Prema Chakor,” is an *ālāp* that introduces the sound of the Gandharvi as well as the melodic motifs that provide the basis of the following movement. The succeeding metered section, “Nata Raaj,” begins at a brisk pace that seems only to increase as the performance progresses. Despite

the speed, Bhattacharya manages a great deal of variety with his improvisations, modulating dynamic levels and alternating relatively languorous riffs in the lower and middle registers of his instrument with highly complex—and increasingly lengthy—runs in the upper register. Subhasis's *tablā* performance is equally diverse on this track, ranging from delicate to ferocious. The performance ends, as may be expected, in an incredible flurry of *tāns* and *tihāīs*.

The final and most substantial section of the album (tracks 4, 5, and 6) comprises an exploration of the septatonic *rāga* *Basant Mukhari*. It is also programmatic in a sense, with the three “movement” titles suggesting a “sun” theme. The liner notes mention only that the *rāga* expresses “peace, ecstasy and joy.” Interestingly, *Basant Mukhari*, as Deepak Raja (2010) has pointed out, seems to be a Hindustani adaptation of the Karnatak *rāga* *Vakulabharanam*, and its Hindustani “personality” remains rather unstable. In fact, it also shares most of its characteristics with the now mostly defunct *rāga* *Hijaz* (which does indeed share a scale pattern with the *maqām* of that name). Despite its name, *Basant Mukhari* bears little relation to *rāga* *Basant*, sounding more like a combination of *Bhairav* (in its lower tetrachord) and *Bhairavi* (in its upper tetrachord) (see *ibid.*). Thus performers can signify these other *rāgas* by giving prominence to one or another of *Basant Mukhari*'s aspects. Bhattacharya, for his part, gives a fairly even-handed performance to my ears, displaying throughout the full scalar range of the *rāga*. This section also showcases Bhattacharya's *Chaturangi* guitar, a twenty-two-stringed instrument that includes twelve sympathetic strings. Although they are a common if not universal attribute of recent Hindustani-style guitars, Brij Bhushan Kabra reportedly argued against the use of sympathetic strings, claiming that their sound can “have the effect of drowning out microtonal subtleties” (Raja 2005:348). Be that as it may, I do not find their effect here displeasing, and Bhattacharya's occasional strumming of them provides surprising, strategically placed accents over the course of the performance. There is as well some exotic chordal experimentation in the third movement, not uncommon in Hindustani guitar performances.

Like most recordings of Hindustani music, the sound quality on this album aims toward the “natural”; the sound is clear and well balanced, allowing the timbre of the three guitars to be distinguished and appreciated. The CD inserts are attractively printed, and the liner notes contain a biography of the artist, descriptions of the three guitars, and brief notes on each track.

Released on the British Riverboat Records label—part of the World Music Network that also produces the *Rough Guide* CDs—this album is oriented firmly toward the “world music” market. In this respect it has two potential audiences: those interested in the guitar and those interested in Indian music. It will probably serve both markets well, providing both a display of innovative guitar technology and technique and an exciting exercise in Hindustani

music-making. Although I don't feel that the world music orientation affects the performances in any particular way, I do wonder if the unusual structure of the album—it begins with the lighter performance and ends with the more serious item, rather than the other way around—is due to this factor. (A bonus DVD available with a “special edition” of this album contains a live performance of the album's material—but in reverse order.) Regardless, Bhattacharya has himself claimed to seek a global audience (see his interview in Clayton 2001:190), and his instrument is essential in this: “It is always better to communicate [with] people of the world and of different culture [*sic*] with an instrument which is already popular . . .”; despite the many differences between people, “guitar all over the world sounds the same, the language is the same” (*ibid.*). The guitar and guitar music travel well, and one may be tempted to ask: Is Bhattacharya playing Hindustani music on guitar, or is he playing guitar in the Hindustani style?

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