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SINHALA FOLK MUSIC:
ITS VOCAL TRADITIONS AND
STYLISTIC NUANCES

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A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
ABSTRACT

This research presents the role and characteristics of vocal improvisation in Sinhala folk music, the music of Sri Lanka. This study examines the vocal nuances and expressions of Sinhala folk and identifies the idiosyncratic nature of vocal improvisation and how it is applied in Sinhala folk music.

Considered a dying art form by practitioners, scholars, nationals and expats interviewed during this research, Sinhala folk music is scarcely practiced yet holds the key to the nation's musical identity. This study investigates the philosophical and social influences on Sinhala folk music in a historical sense and observes its purposes and practices. The research presents an analysis of a traditional folk song Nelum Gee with respect to specific vocal improvisation and expressive techniques.

The introduction gives an account of my Sri Lankan and Western cultural heritages by detailing my ancestry, migration and educational experiences which continue to inform the music making practices I am currently exploring and engaging in.

Chapter 1 highlights various definitions of improvisation in several styles of music including Sinhala folk and the diverse applications of vocal improvisation that include but are not limited to ornamentation of melodies, rhythmic displacement and phrasing, scats singing and free improvisation.

Chapter 2 travels through the influence of Thēravāda Buddhism on Sinhala folk music and its conservative outlook on the arts, the acceptance and application of drumming in various contexts and accompanying instrumentation used in Sinhala folk.

Chapter 3 observes the disbanded social ranking of the Sinhalese caste system with a particular focus on the Beravā caste from which traditional dancers and singers originated from.

Chapter 4 addresses specific vocal nuances observed in Sinhala folk music in reference to improvisation techniques, vocal delivery styles and intonation. It also looks at Buddhist chanting styles and the application of chanting styles to contemporary music. Comparisons are drawn between Hindustani, Canartic and Sinhalese singing styles.
Chapter 5 presents an overview of Sinhala folk music singing styles and contains personally transcribed and analysed examples of each category.

Chapter 6 provides an in depth analysis of two transcribed excerpts from two recordings of traditional Sinhala folk song *Nelum Gee*. One is a studio recording and the other is a personally recorded live version of the same song, both interpreted by Sinhala folk music artist Chandrakanthi Shilpadhipathi. The excerpts have been personally transcribed and critically analysed in relation to significant contemporary vocal improvisation techniques such as rhythmic placement, melodic ornamentation, expression techniques and syllabic ornamentation techniques. The findings have been documented in music notation and various tables.

The conclusion addresses the reasons Sinhala folk music is considered a dying art and the current attempts at preservation. The conclusion also presents the successes and difficulties experienced in fusing elements of Sinhala folk into Western compositions.
DECLARATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that:

1. The thesis comprises my original work towards the degree, except where otherwise indicated.

2. Due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other materials used.

Signature:

[Signature]

Name in full: Nilusha Ranjini Dassenaike

Date: February 2012
DEDICATION

Dedicated to my husband Alex Pertout, Linton Asantha Rohan Dassenaike (Tharthi), Ranjini Cecelia Dassenaike (Ammi) and Linton Asantha Rajiv Dassenaike (Aiya).

To my beloved Sri Lanka you are forever in my heart and mind.
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INTRODUCTION

A DRIVING FORCE AND INSPIRATION:
MY SRI LANKAN AND AUSTRALIAN MUSICAL HERITAGES

Uncovering the vocal traditions of Sinhala folk music and its stylistic improvisatory features sparked a deep interest in utilising these facets in my current Western improvisation and composition practices. In order to facilitate this fusion, I began by reviewing my experiences and understanding of the Sinhalese culture and music so as to make informed decisions of how to go about bringing the two heritages together.

I was born in Sri Lanka at St Anne's Maternity and Nursing home, Bambalapitya, Colombo and migrated to Australia within the first five months of my life. I discovered only very recently that my mother was adamant to give birth to me in Sri Lanka despite having the option to depart from Colombo before I was due to be born, she deliberately delayed the migration so that both of her children would be Sri Lankan born. National pride and identity was something my mother inherited from her mother, a burgher woman (of European heritage).

My maternal grandmother, Beryl Ermyntrude de Silva was born in Sri Lanka and was the daughter of Portuguese and English immigrants. At a young age, de Silva began to identify intensely with the Sinhalese cultural traditions practiced by the family's domestic servants. This fascination was frowned upon by her extended European family as at this time, circa 1932, the Sinhalese social hierarchy or caste system was well in place and the idea of a burgher, mixing with the locals and their customs was not a welcomed practice. Nonetheless de Silva made a concerted decision to wear traditional clothing, become a devout follower of Buddhism and learn to speak Sinhalese and Tamil. She honoured these commitments until her death in 1995.

de Silva wedded a Sinhalese man by the name of Edward Samarasinghe Kawiratne (pronounced Kah-vi-ruhth-nuh, translates to gems of versus/poems), my grandfather and had three children. In keeping with my Grandmother's love of Sinhalese culture, she bestowed traditional names on all three of her children and named my mother, Ranjini Cecelia. My mother's heritage is a European and Sinhalese mix.
My Sinhalese father, Linton Asantha Rohan Dassenaike has a given name that reflects the colonial period which was a popular practice however, his blood line is Sinhalese. The surname Dassenaike (pronounced Dhass-en-eye-uh-ker) has been recorded in print as early at 1640 and the family tree stems back to 1750. Dassenaike translates to chief of ten.

During the various periods of colonisation, many Sinhalese families were required to change their traditional surnames to names that reflected the governing colony. Dassenaike is a traditional Kandyan (Up Country province) name from the Goyigama caste, which is the highest caste within the Sri Lankan caste system. The Kandyan province was never conquered by the Dutch or Portuguese and therefore the traditional names that came from that province are still in use. Only members of the lower sectors were forced to change their names, as in the case of my paternal grandmother Evelyn Angeline Fernando, who was from the fisherman caste known as Karäva. Her family's traditional name was changed from Waneka Wathage to Fernando. Fernando's marriage to my paternal grandfather, Linton Alexander Royden Dassenaike, caused quite a stir as she was from an inferior caste to my grandfather and castes seldom mixed.

Despite my father's rich cultural heritage, he did not indulge or explore the traditional music that was available to him. He's interests in music were in jazz improvisation and other western genres.

The curious thing is, my mother who is only part Sinhalese adapted her mother's national pride while my father who is purely Sinhalese, took it for granted and never exposed himself entirely to the cultural offerings Sri Lanka had put forward.

Once we migrated to Australia, my mother maintained her Buddhist practices to some degree but always maintained her cultural pride however, the opportunity to share this knowledge with her children became scarce within the Western context. Also issues of assimilation must have played some part in the lack of cultural practice. My mother revealed recently, that when we migrated, my brother Linton Asantha Rajiv Dassenaike was two and a half years old and couldn't speak a word of English. Apparently our parents were so anxious for him to learn English, that they ceased to converse with him in Sinhalese. Although they were and still are bilingual,

they ceased to speak Sinhalese at home all together. As a consequence neither my brother nor I speak Sinhalese.

In addition to my lack of exposure to the Sinhalese language, I had never heard traditional Sinhalese folk music apart from temple drumming. Growing up in Australia, my impressions of Sri Lanka were formed by our family holidays in Sri Lanka, encounters with relatives, the cuisine and the annual ritual my parents maintained which consisted of preparing a traditional meal of *Kiri Bath* or milk rice, various curries, and boiling a pot of milk to overflowing. This custom represented prosperity and blessings for the year ahead and was performed on first day of every year (according to the Gregorian calendar not Sinhalese New Year). Additionally, we would watch the odd documentary that featured an update on the long standing civil war. It was quite a superficial understanding in retrospect.

While completing a bachelor of music, I began taking *Carnatic* (Southern Indian classical music) singing lessons and noticed the percentage of Sri Lankan students that were enrolled was quite high, this fact intrigued me. I frequently pondered why Sri Lankan's weren't learning the music of Sri Lanka? I now realise that most of the Sri Lankan students had a Tamil background, not necessarily a Sinhalese background. Tamils have origins from the South of India and many *carnatic* songs are composed using the Tamil language. This cleared a fraction of the enigma; however the question of what traditional Sri Lankan music is and its place in Sinhalese society remained a mystery. At the time, the opportunity to study *carnatic* singing seemed to be the closest link I could find to traditional Sri Lankan music.

In 2003, I went to Sri Lanka on a holiday as I wanted to find out more about traditional Sri Lankan music however, this seemed to be a very difficult question for my interviewees. I enquired mainly of family members and I couldn't seem to find an adequate or definite answer. The responses I received varied so much that I resigned to thinking that traditional Sri Lankan music was confined to temple drumming, *Baila* which is a Portuguese influenced, 6/8 meter, festive music, usually performed at wedding receptions by an ensemble consisting of electric piano, bass guitar, drum kit, electric guitar and vocals and Sri Lankan classical music which is configured by the habitual combination of traditional Sinhalese drums, Northern or Southern Indian drums, sampled drum loops, synthesized keyboard pads, flutes,
synthesized flutes, harmonium, violin and electric piano. Sri Lankan classical music is at all times sung in Sinhalese and the subject matter can range from Buddha, to love songs, to homage to one’s parents and other topics of emotional interest. Practitioners of this popular style of music include Pandith W. D. Amaradeva, Nanda Malini and Victor Ratnayake among many others.

I found this to be dubious. For a country that was considered as a learning centre for Buddhism in ancient times not to possess a strong musical identity seemed unlikely.

In 2009, during another visit to Sri Lanka, I was invited to a concert of ‘fusion music’. The definition of fusion in this context meant a blend of various musical influences, not Western jazz fusion. That evening I saw oriental drums namely Northern Indian drums, but nothing indigenous to Sri Lanka. There was however one vocalist that provided a small insight into my plight.

I heard for the first time in Sri Lanka sounds that perhaps resembled the traditional Sri Lankan singing I had been searching for. The featured vocalist improvised using the Sinhalese language and applied what appeared to be classical Indian singing techniques to his delivery of the melodies. I had a lengthy discussion with him after the concert however I still could not ascertain the defining characteristics of traditional Sinhalese music. This may be attributed to the way I phrased the questions and possibly the terminology I used as the answers I received were quite vague and uninformative. The vocalist seemed to possess quite an extensive knowledge on the various types of traditional songs, however my enquiry into traditional Sri Lankan music, was still sketchy and formless.

Fortunately, during the same trip to Sri Lanka in 2009, I was given a cd recording of master drummer Piyasara Shilpadhipathi and his wife Chandrikanthi, a traditional dancer and vocalist. This husband and wife team had produced a recording of various traditional folk songs with traditional drumming patterns. At the time I was unaware that the music was labeled as folk music, however that recording was my guide to uncovering more about this elusive art.

My initial exposure to the recording of folk song *Nelum Gee* (verses of the lotus) by Chandrikanthi Shilpadhipathi sparked a deep interest in probing further into the possibilities Sinhala folk music presented. Hearing *Nelum Gee* was a pivotal step in
the long journey towards uncovering Sinhala folk music and finding methods of applying it to the jazz studies I had previously undergone and continue to practice.

By the time I embarked on my field work trip, I had gained a somewhat deeper understanding of traditional Sinhala folk music through the literature I had read, discussions with scholars and discussions with contemporary Sinhala classical musicians in Melbourne. However, the disjointed ideas I had of this music were sewn together by the encounters, observations, discussions, literature reviews, interviews and performances that the field work permitted.

Once I arrived in Sri Lanka, I was fortunate to have many discussions with a range of scholars on this particular topic, through contacts at the University of Visual and Performing Arts in Colombo and was able to spend valuable time with Piyasara and Chandrakanthi Shilpadhipathi. I was also able to access various articles, books, dvds and cds. I was granted permission to attend classes and interview various lecturers and students at the University.

I travelled to Kandy which is located in the Up Country region, approximately 115kms towards the centre of the island and interviewed more traditional folk musicians with the assistance of Charudaththe Illangasinghe, a lecturer from the University of Performing and Visual Arts, Colombo, who acted as a translator for interviews and songs.

Prior to the commencement of this study, Sri Lanka’s musical identity seemed to be undefined and hidden beneath layers of political, philosophical and social limitations. Through process of elimination, I was able to peel back the layers and find the heart of Sri Lanka’s cultural identity. Sinhala folk music was and still is a very quiet voice in the cultural landscape of Sri Lanka this is due to three main reasons; the distractions of the long standing civil war, musical development hindered by Thēravāda Buddhism and lingering attitudes towards the Beravā caste that traditionally performed this music.

Although considered a dying art, the University of Visual and Performing Arts is making significant attempts to preserve Sinhala folk music by including it in the undergraduate curriculum. The Folk Music Conservation Library has been established solely for the purposes of archiving folk music and academic resources.
CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS IMPROVISATION?

Improvisation enjoys the curious distinction of being both the most widely practiced of all musical activities and the least acknowledged and understood. Derek Bailey.²

Improvisation in western music can be applied through a multitude of stylistic (genre specific improvisation) and non-stylistic (free improvisation) approaches. Sinhala folk music embraces specific improvisatory nuances such as rhythmic and melodic ornamentations. Is there a connection between the ornamental elements applied in Sinhala folk music and the definition of improvisation?

Defining improvisation and its application in music can to be a thorny and complex task. Jazz and world music are synonymous with improvisation, yet there are specific examples within other contemporary music genres like soul, hip hop, and some pop music that also encourage improvisation in performance; however the application of improvisation to each respective genre and within each genre differs vastly. Vocal improvisation within Sinhala folk music usually encompasses modal explorations, rhythmic embellishments and melodic ornamentation and variation. This practice is perhaps somewhat similar to several Nineteenth century virtuosi opera singers who were commonly renowned for extended embellishments and improvisations³ within the score. More recently, there are contemporary popular vocalists like Stevie Wonder, Anita Baker, Michael Jackson and Beyoncé, who likewise apply melodic adornments and explore harmonic and phrasing possibilities within the boundaries of the composition. Taking these said elements of improvisation even further are vocalists from Bebop and post-bop jazz genres. Singers that subscribed to this tradition in jazz began implementing scat singing (the impromptu use of rhythmic vocalised syllables)⁴ over complex, fast paced chord changes. Scat singing served as a means of developing an intimate musical byplay with instrumentalists⁵ and is said to have been initiated by Louis Armstrong during a recording session in 1925, whilst recording “Heebie Jeebies” Armstrong dropped the lyric sheet and sang horn-

⁴ Bruce Crowther and Mike Pinfold, Singing Jazz: The Singers and Their Styles, (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 1997),19.
⁵ Crowther and Pinfold, Singing Jazz: The Singers and Their Styles, 132.
like nonsense syllables instead\(^6\). In addition to the interaction scat singing provided, vocalists such as Betty Carter, Carmen McRae and Sarah Vaughan engaged in lyric improvisation, which is the art of retaining the primary lyrics of a song but using improvisational inventiveness so as to change every other aspect i.e. syncopation of rhythms, motific development, variance in timbre, articulation and spontaneous re-composition of the melody\(^7\).

In this assortment of genres, improvisation plays a malleable role as the scope for implementing improvisation into performance ranges from melodic embellishments, implementation of 'licks' (an improvised phrase that has entered the everyday language of jazz, often used descriptively\(^8\)) and rhythmic placement to spontaneous composition and scatting. The function of vocal improvisation within the mentioned genres has a specified purpose which is determined by the context and characteristics of the genre, hence the tradition of vocal improvisation in Sinhala folk music. Conspicuous in its past and current practice and is often manifested through responses to musical surroundings, being in the moment and embellishing within a rhythmic or poetic structure.

Carol S. Gould and Kenneth Keaton refer to the unavoidable practice of improvisation in music by drawing comparisons between Western jazz and classical performers, they state that all musical performance regardless of how fastidiously or cautiously interpreted and regardless of the specifics of the score, commands the inclusion of improvisation. According to their philosophy, interpretation is the player's conceptual realisation of the musical score in performance, and, by necessity, interpretation involves improvisation. The jazz performer may do so to a greater extent; a classical performer may use it more restrictedly. Jazz and classical performances differ more in degree than in kind\(^9\). This argument seeks to promote the flexible, immanent presence of improvisation in all performance practice. However, suggesting that improvisational elements are present in exacting


interpretations of contemporary and traditional classical works may be stretching the argument too far.

In an attempt to uncover the definition of jazz singing, Bruce Crowther and Mike Pinfold relayed the difficulty of such a task and found the deeper one delves into defining its nature the cloudier it becomes. After an extensive review, they caught sight of the many nuances of jazz singing e.g. stylists, swingers, jazz-orientated, popular singers, jazz-aware pop singers, singers with 'jazz feel', vocalese and scat singers, jazz fusion singers, jazz fusion rappers or jazz-soul singers. However broad their findings, Crowther and Pinfold insert:

"Customarily, the criteria by which singers are judged in the jazz world often are either harshly restrictive or absurdly indiscriminating. Taken to extremes, the former makes it almost impossible for anyone other than Billie Holiday and a handful of lesser mortals to qualify. The latter allows just about anyone who ever approximated 'Basin St Blues' in a karaoke bar to wear the label. Of course reality lies somewhere between these extremes. Exactly where the boundary falls is profoundly subjective..."¹¹

Crowther and Pinfold's statement bears witness to the issue that a definition of improvisation is subjected to opinion based on research or intuition. They also mention that the truth of the situation most likely lies somewhere in the middle of the extremes. Gould and Keaton's submission appears to lie on the extreme boundary of what improvisation in performance practice is, by stating that interpretation involves improvisation, but is it improvisation? Posing the question alone would have to suggest that interpretation, if it were to be included under the banner of improvisation, would highly likely dwell on the fringe of the definition. Daniel Levitan suggests that even a minor divergence from musical systems with tight restraints may be more important and satisfying than complete innovations,¹² which appears to support Gould and Keaton's statement, however upon closer inspection, Levitan is addressing the creative aspects of performance practice and composition, not necessarily the issue of whether interpretation is a form of improvisation. Undoubtedly, interpretation is a creative, fulfilling act and unavoidable in

¹⁰ Crowther and Pinfold, Singing Jazz: The Singers and Their Styles, 24.
¹¹ Crowther and Pinfold, Singing Jazz: The Singers and Their Styles, 15.
performance practice, yet improvisation can reshape material into a personal statement and turn the ordinary into art.13

Gould and Keaton's submission however does spark interesting debate and openly lends itself to world music genres such as Sinhala Folk music, which is predominantly an aural transmission14. Unavoidably, improvisation and interpretation are the starting points in this type of music, from which the songs are to be conveyed. The pitch, tone colour, dynamics, tempo, oscillations are decided in the moment, at the will of the performer or teacher when being passed down from expert to novice. The degree or extent of improvisation may not be as acute as the level of improvisation found in Hindustani (Northern Indian classical music), bebop or free jazz, however the inevitable inclusion of improvisation and interpretation in this music is highly valued and practiced within its own boundaries. To paraphrase Gould and Keaton's sentiment, improvisation and interpretation in Sinhala folk and jazz differ more in degree than in kind.

As mentioned, vocal improvisation within traditional Sri Lankan folk music is an important element, ever present and idiomatic (improvisation concerned with the expression of an idiom – such as jazz, flamenco or baroque – it takes its identity and motivation from that idiom15). It manifests itself through ornamentation both rhythmically and melodically, melisma (alankara), melodic variation, phrasing and interpretation. As Deva Suryasena observed, the true Sinhala music would appear to be Kavi (poetic versus) chanted according to the metrical feet (chandas) of a poem. At the finish of each phrase, are long, drawn out vocal elaboration, with great notes, trills, melisma, ad lib. Ornamentation is the essence of Oriental singing.16 In many ways, improvisation within Sri Lankan folk music is well aligned with Stephen Nachmanovitch's proposition in Free Play, that improvisation is an innate sensibility that requires merely a submissive mind and willing spirit to make clear the pathway for creativity.17 Many Sinhala folk vocalists tend to improvise with passionate hearts and respond to intuitive impulses, however a sound knowledge of the material is the basis and works as a scaffolding for their improvisatory success.

12 Crowther and Pinfold, Singing Jazz: The Singers and Their Styles, 25.
13 Sena, Music of Sri Lanka, 4
Upon dissecting further the characterisation of improvisation and its numerous functions, be it instrument specific or in generalised terms, it appears that definitions in reference books and online resources can be detached from the actual practice of improvising as they tend to describe the act of improvising rather than successfully defining what it is. Often the terminology used to describe the act of improvising can be coloured with disparaging hues however, this is not to say that these definitions are to be dismissed all together. Derek Bailey in *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice*, writes about the term improvisation.

“There is a noticeable reluctance to use the word [improvisation] and some improvisers express a positive dislike for it. I think it is due to its widely accepted connotations which imply that improvisation is something without preparation and with consideration, a completely ad hoc activity, frivolous and inconsequential, lacking in design and method. And they object to that implication because they know from their own experience that it is untrue. They know that there is no musical activity which requires greater skill and devotion, preparation, training and commitment.”18

Some coherent reference books offer an insight into the phenomenon of improvisation while others contribute to the accepted negative overtones that Bailey reports. Portions from Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians defines improvisation as "the art of thinking and performing music simultaneously,"19 and The Grove Concise Dictionary of Music describes improvisation as “the creation of a musical work or the final form of one, as it is being performed. It may involve the work’s immediate composition by its performers, the elaboration or adjustment of detail in an existing work, or anything in between."20 The New Harvard Dictionary of Music describes improvisation as “the creation of music in the course of performance."21 The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music defines improvisation as “a performance according to the inventive whim of the moment, i.e. without a written or printed score and not from memory.”22

Online dictionaries propose these conclusions; to compose and perform or deliver without previous preparation; extemporize: to improvise an acceptance speech or to

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compose, play, recite, or sing (verse, music, etc.) on the spur of the moment. ad-lib, brainstorm, coin, concoct, do off top of head, do offhand, dream up, fake it, invent, jam, knock off, make do, slapdash, spark, speak off the cuff, throw together, wing it, according to pleasure, as one thinks best, as one wishes, at will, impromptu, made-up, off-the-cuff, spontaneous, unprepared, unrehearsed, without restraint.

Notably, common antonyms include; design, devise, plan, premeditate, deliberate, planned, prepared, rehearse, written.

Such definitions contribute considerably to Bailey’s case. Clearly these descriptions mislay the structural aspects of the art of improvising. Further, if the act of improvisation is an art form, does that not imply that technique, prior learning and skill are involved in the practice? Most practitioners would agree that the art of improvisation is accomplished in the moment however; there are predetermined elements such as structures, designs and/or personal musical languages etc. that are bought to the performance. Nachmanovitch expresses his view on this sentiment:

“The most common form of improvisation is ordinary speech. As we talk and listen, we are drawing on a set of building blocks (vocabulary) and rules for combining them (grammar). These have been given to us by our culture. But the sentences we make with them may never have been said before and may never be said again. Every conversation is a form of jazz. The activity of instantaneous creation is as ordinary to us as breathing.”

Nachmanovitch uses the analogy of conversation to illustrate the predetermined elements and structures that are brought to improvised performances. Suggesting that the structures gained or learnt prior to the performance/conversation, play a significant role in what improvisation/conversation results in. Mark Levine further enhances this notion with particular reference to jazz improvisation in *The Jazz Piano Book*:

“When you’re listening to a great solo, the player is not thinking “II-V-I”, “Blues lick”, “AABA”, “altered scale” and so forth. He or she has done that already, many years ago. Experienced musicians have internalized this information to the point that they no longer have to think

Nachmanovitch, Free Play, 17.
about it very much, if at all. The great players have also learned what the chords and scales *look* and *feel like* on their instrument."^{27}

Writer and music commentator Michelle Mercer observes in *Footprints: The Life and Work of Wayne Shorter*, "Improvising musicians are often misperceived as creatures of pure instinct."^{28} Bailey states, "An ability to improvise can't be forced and it depends, firstly, on an understanding, developed from complete familiarity, of the musical context in which one improvises or wishes to improvise."^{29}

The perspectives from Nachmanovitch, Levine, Mercer and Bailey do not diminish or dispel the nature of improvisation, but simply demonstrate that improvisation is never practiced without established prior knowledge, intention, objective and curiosity, whereas the definitions found in reference books and online dictionaries do not represent or acknowledge the structural aspects of improvisation in music.

In keeping with Nachmanovitch, Levine, Mercer and Bailey, practicing improvising musicians inform that the act of improvisation does indeed contain elements of both spontaneity and structure. Implementing creative responses to what is occurring in the moment, whilst bringing engineered techniques, ideas, motifs etc. to the performance is a standard practice for improvising musicians. This is where the definitions mentioned become inaccurate. Improvisation is 'in the moment', though it also brings with it self-organised and pre-developed ideas, sounds and languages, into the performance space. As Nachmanovitch further states, "impulse, like improvisation, is not "just anything"; it is not without structure but is the expression of organic, immanent, self-creating structure."^{30}

In an interviews conducted with improvising musicians such as vocalist Theo Bleckmann, pianist Andrea Keller and percussionist Alex Pertout, all interviewees expressed the design and premeditative aspects to their practice and performance. All agreed that improvisation contains aspects of structure and spontaneity.

Additionally, Bailey penned that improvisation in music, suffers from lack of understanding and acknowledgement and this statement seems accurate upon inspection the definitions of improvisation researched and presented.

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Most scholars and/or practitioners of improvisation, revel in the notion that improvisation in music performance is not entirely reliant on the notes inscribed by the composer instead the practice of improvisation takes the musician into realm of true artistic adventure and interaction with the composition, by using the score and context as a facilitator for creative explorations. This approach to music making gives way to varying degrees of inventiveness within the form of the composition and consequently the performer is not commissioned to strictly recite what has been predetermined by the composer, rather his or her musical ingenuity is a key component in the performance of the composition. In Effortless Mastery, Kenny Werner uses this analogy, “If you master the English language, does that make you a poet? Being able to speak in complete sentences is not an art, but a technical skill. Being a poet, a playwright or lyricist - that is art.”\textsuperscript{31} Werner appears to be endorsing that the language or structures alone are not sufficient enough for artistic undertakings; rather the technical skills are used as a method of serving one's calling in artistry.

Although there are various methods that improvisers employ to develop their practice, interestingly, after surveying a selection of improvising musicians from various genres, almost all practiced free improvisation to a significant degree. The art of free improvisation provided the arena for generating ideas for composition and performance however the most beneficial aspect that seemed to emerge from free improvisation, was the unearthing of the personal voice. Nachmanovitch expresses this notion, 'Spontaneous creation comes from our deepest being and is immaculately and originally ourselves. What we have to express in already with us, is us, so the work of creativity is not a matter of making the material come, but of unblocking the obstacles to its natural flow.'\textsuperscript{32}

Nachmanovitch's excerpt also represents free improvisation or 'non-idiomatic' improvisation (usually found in 'free' improvisation and, while it can be highly stylised, it is not usually tied to representing an idiomatic identity)\textsuperscript{33} as an inclusive practice, as opposed to an exclusive one by suggesting that the ability to participate in the practice of free improvisation or spontaneous creation is wholly innate. This is

\textsuperscript{31} Kenny Werner, Effortless Mastery, (Indiana: Jamey Aebersold Jazz, 1996), 48.
\textsuperscript{32} S. Nachmanovitch, Free Play, 10.
\textsuperscript{33} Bailey, Improvisation: It Nature and Practice in Music, xii
an intriguing submission, as it not only indicates that free improvisation is practitioner's tool to finding and unlocking his or her distinctive voice, but it also hints at the unavoidable, natural practice of improvisation in music.

In review of the many definitions of improvisatory practices, one may conclude that that improvisation isn't quite the slap dash, off the cuff, whimsical, indulgent meanderings that appear in performance, nor is it meticulously, cautiously interpreted from the score. Vocal improvisation can be characterised by melodic embellishment, ornamentation, rhythmic displacement, rephrasing, lyric improvisation, spontaneous composition, singing through rapidly moving chord changes or free improvisation to mention a few. Broad, inclusive and open to interpretation it may very well be. In the words of Crowther and Pinfold, “…reality lies somewhere between these extremes. Exactly where the boundary falls is profoundly subjective.”34

34 Crowther and Pinfold, Singing Jazz: The Singers and Their Styles, 15.
Chapter 2

The Influence of Theravāda Buddhism on Music

Sri Lanka, an island of 65,610 square kilometres in area and located off the southern tip of India, is home to several music genres and performance practices.36

The island is inhabited by four main ethnic groups: Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Moors, Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils. Descendants from European colonists principally Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom, also known as Burghers, previously formed significant portions of the population, however like the Malays, descendants from South East Asian colonists, today constitute a minor percentage of the population. The largest ethnic group is the Sinhalese totaling approximately 74% of the Island’s population.

According to the census undertaken in 2001 by the Department of Census and Statistics, the population of Sri Lanka was 16,929,698 with 14.6% in urban sectors,

35 Bryce Ryan, Caste in Modern Ceylon, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 95.
80% in rural sectors and 5.4% in estate sectors\textsuperscript{37}. Statistics also suggest that 69.9% of the population is Buddhist, 7.6% Muslim, 7.1% Hindu, 6.2% Christian and 10% unspecified.

Buddhism was brought to the island circa 236 B.C. during the reign of King Asoka of India and according to folklore, Mahinda, son of King Asoka, was chosen to introduce the philosophy to then King of Sri Lanka, Devanampiya Tissa\textsuperscript{38}. Anuradhapura was the King's capital and soon it became a centre for Buddhist studies for local and international scholars. Monasteries, statues and temples were endowed by King Devanampiya Tissa. According to C. De S. Kulatillake and Ranajan Abeysinghe, Sri Lanka's cultural image was mainly based on Buddhism and the preservation and dissemination of the religion became a high priority for those in power as it protected and consolidated their power.\textsuperscript{39}

\textit{Thēravāda} Buddhism (teaching of the Elders)\textsuperscript{40}, is highly conservative and considered to be the purist form of Buddhism which is still the principal religion of the Sri Lanka. Kunatilleke and Abeysinghe observe that given the long standing relationship Sri Lanka has had with Buddhism, Buddhist ideals are portrayed not only in art and architecture but also in music and dance.\textsuperscript{41} This is true to some extent in music, however, contrary this assertion, Wolfgang Laarde maintains that the conservatism of \textit{Thēravāda} Buddhism has stifled the natural progression of traditional Sinhalese music. Architecture and painting were accepted as useful mediums to circulate and make clear the vital moral principles of Buddhism, while the musical arts were considered the most dangerous and threatening to spiritual welfare. Consequently, liturgical chanting, notably pirith (chanting of prayers), remained the only type of singing, or rather a cappella chanting, which was considered beneficial to man.\textsuperscript{42} Sarath Amunugama puts forth an unswerving view by stating that pristine Buddhism has discouraged, if not actively condemned

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{41} C. De S. Kulatillake and Ranjan Abeysinghe, \textit{A background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka}, (Colombo: The Department of Cultural Affairs, 1976), 1.  
\end{flushleft}
indulgence in the arts. The arts were considered to be aligned with the carnal nature and proved to be of ‘this world’ and hence looked upon as an unnecessary luxury.\(^{43}\) This observation of *Thēravāda* Buddhism’s active petition against musical arts is reiterated as Suryasena noted the austerity of Buddhist religion did not encourage musical growth.\(^{44}\) Although Buddhism did not encourage vocal music, with the exclusion of chanting *pirith*, many folk and traditional songs have been composed in homage and in praise of Buddha\(^{45}\), which in a sense goes against the sentiments of art practice that *Thēravāda* Buddhism established and is most likely the influence that Kunatillake and Abeysinghe refer to.

Laarde, Amunugama and Suryasena are illustrating the extremely conventional nature of *Thēravāda* Buddhism which refrains from overt expressions of emotion through music or dance as such an engagement is seen as unessential and excessively indulgent, however, drumming practices seem to have been exempt and permissible. Most Buddhist rituals and temples, to this day, have traditional drumming programmed at auspiciously appointed times throughout the day.

As history suggests, the drum and drumming practices were and still are acceptable in Sinhalese culture and form a large part of the traditional music. There are several occasions for group and/or solo drumming without the accompaniment of voice or a wind instrument. Drumming patterns and practices have been well preserved and continue to be used in Buddhist ceremonies, ritual ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, cultural shows, village drama shows and traditional dance shows. Traditional drumming is studied privately in schools and customarily, drummers are from traditional drumming families and have learnt the patterns from their caregivers. Consequently there are a number of drums that are widely used in specific regions and for specific purposes throughout the island.

The most commonly used drums to accompany voice are the *Getabera*; a long cylindrical drum with a head on either side, one side is covered in monkey hide and the other cattle, long strings of deer hide are tightened or released to achieve the


desired pitch, Davula; a cylindrical drum with two heads, played with the hand on one head and a stick on the other, Thammattama; a twin drum or heads that are abreast resembling a pair of bongo drums usually played with two sticks, Yak Bera: also known as Devol Bera, which is a double-headed, cylindrical drum made from the wood of the Kohomba, Ehela, Kitul or Milla trees and the heads are made from the stomach lining of cows. Hand or bench Rabana; frame drum covered in goat hide. There are many more traditional drums, however the drums listed here are the most commonly used to accompany voice and dance. Udakkiya; the body is shaped like an hour glass and is made from Ehela, Milla and Suriya trees. The head is made from Iguana, Monkey or goat skin.

Figure 2.1. Geta Bera
Used in the Up Country/Central Province

Figure 2.2. Davula
Used in the Sabaragamuwa Province

Video excerpt 2.1.
Percussionist demonstrating the Geta Bera drum

Video excerpt 2.2.
Percussionist demonstrating the Davula drum

48 Personal photograph of Nilusha Dassenaike, February 17, 2011.
50 Sumaditha Suraweera, "Sri Lankan, Low Country, Ritual Drumming: The Raigama Tradition" (PhD diss, University of Canterbury, 2009), 46
Figure 2.3. Thamattama\textsuperscript{52}

Used in all provinces

![Thamattama drum](image)

Video excerpt 2.3.\textsuperscript{53}
Percussionist demonstrating the Thamattama drum

Figure 2.4. Yak Bera\textsuperscript{54}

Used in Southern Provinces

![Yak Bera drum](image)

Video excerpt 2.4.\textsuperscript{55}
Percussionist demonstrating the Yak Bera drum

Figure 2.5. Bench Rabana\textsuperscript{56}

![Bench Rabana](image)

Video excerpt 2.5.\textsuperscript{58}
Vocalist demonstrating the Hand Rabana drum

Figure 2.6. Hand Rabana\textsuperscript{57}

![Hand Rabana](image)

Video excerpt 2.6.\textsuperscript{58}
Vocalist demonstrating the Hand Rabana drum

\textsuperscript{52} Personal photograph of Nilusha Dassenaike, February 17, 2011.
\textsuperscript{53} Field video recording. Rakitha Wickramaratne, Moratuwa, January 14, 2011.
\textsuperscript{55} Field video recording. Rakitha Wickramaratne, Moratuwa, January 14, 2011.
\textsuperscript{58} Field video recording. Chandrakanthi Shilpadhipathi, Mt Lavinia, January 24, 2011.
Wind instruments are far and few between and strings of any description are entirely absent. At present the only wind instrument in use is the *Horanāva*, consisting of three or four tones. Often the *Horanāva* is replaced by voice or vice versa.

The illustration so far concludes that the acceptance of drumming practices by *Thēravāda* Buddhist monks and scholars over the centuries has assisted in the development and conscious preservation of the art of drumming in all regions of Sri Lanka. The development of voice and other melodic instruments have been unable to thrive and prosper. This restriction however did not impede the development of folk music for the Sinhalese people. Despite the philosophical restrictions placed upon the society, practitioners seem to have explored the possibilities of the accepted cultural instruments and have established a particular sound that is unique to the island.

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59 Personal photograph of Nilusha Dassenaike, February 17, 2011.
60 Field video recording. Rakitha Wickramamratne, Moratuwa, January 14, 2011.
61 Personal photograph of Nilusha Dassenaike, February 17, 2011.
CHAPTER 3

SINHALESE CASTE SYSTEM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON TRADITIONAL
AND NON TRADITIONAL PRACTITIONERS

From healers, to fisherman, to poets, to traditional dancers, the folk music of Sri Lanka is reflected in all sections of society fulfilling a variety of purposes. The caste system in Sri Lanka is said to have very little social significance in the current climate. However long before the colonisation of the island and even during this period, the society was organised according to caste principles and has left its mark on society, despite how vehemently its impact is argued against.

More than half of the population of Sri Lanka belongs to the Goyigama castes, which is concerned with agriculture and literally translates into “cultivator of the soil” which is at the peak of the Sinhalese hierarchy. Many members are not in fact cultivators of any sort and may have been distinguished from others because no low services or cultural practices were ascribed to them.62

THE CONTEMPORARY CASTES AND SUBCASTES IN APPROXIMATE ORDER
OF RANK

1. Govi-vamsa (Goyigama)
   Subcastes:*
   Radala
   Mudali
   Paṭṭi
   Kaṭupulle
   Nilamakkāra
   Porovakāra
   Vahal
   Gattara
   Guruvō †

   Cultivators of the soil
   King’s office holders
   Leaders of the people
   King’s cowherds
   King’s clerical servants
   Temple servants
   Woodcutters, axemen to the King
   Slaves, household workers to Radala
   Goyigama outcasts
   Conch blowers

2. Karāva †
   Subcaste:
   Karāva Porovakāra

   Fisherman
   Unknown

3. Salāgama †
   Subcastes:
   Hēvapanne
   Kurundukāra

   Cinnamon Peelers
   Soldiers
   Cinnamon Peelers

4. Durāva †

5. Navandanna (Ācāri)

   Artisans, including smiths of all types

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62 Bryce Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, 95.
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Hannäli*</td>
<td>Tailors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Hunu</td>
<td>Chunan (Lime) Burners</td>
</tr>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Hēna or Radā (Dhoby)</td>
<td>Washers to higher castes</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Vahumpura (Hakuru)</td>
<td>Jaggory (crystallised palm sugar) makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Hinnā †</td>
<td>Washers to Salāgama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Baadhāla</td>
<td>Potters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Panikki †</td>
<td>Barbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Velli-durayi*</td>
<td>Guardians of Scared Bo-tree</td>
</tr>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Panna-durayi*</td>
<td>Possibly grass cutters</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Beravā</td>
<td>Tom-tom beaters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Batgam Beravā*</td>
<td>Tom-tom beaters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Kontadurayi*</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Batgam (Padu)*</td>
<td>Possibly King's palanquin bearers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Olī</td>
<td>Dancers</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Pali*</td>
<td>Washers to low castes</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Kinnara*</td>
<td>Mat weavers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Gahala-beravā*</td>
<td>Funeral drummers and executioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Roḍī*</td>
<td>Outcastes, beggars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Kavikāra*</td>
<td>Dēvāle (temple) dancers and chanters</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Demala-Gattara†</td>
<td>Tamil outcastes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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* Typically found only in Kandyan areas
† Typically found only in Low Country areas
‡ Practically confined to the North Central Province.

Folk music in circulation at present appears to be from various sections of society and contains variations on the Sinhalese language. This of course is due to environment, class and caste. Gami Gee are peasant songs which may contain casual conversational idioms of Sinhalese. Whereas Se Gee were written by poets and scholars so hence the Sinhala can be non-colloquial and can contain words that are no longer in use.

Given that the country is divided into several provinces, there are three main regions that most folk music seems to have derived from and survives in today: Up Country, Low Country, and North Central Province.

Ryan, Caste in Modern Ceylon: The Sinhalese System in Transition, 93.
Low Country and Central Province. *Uda Rata* (Up Country) includes areas such as Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Matale. *Sabaragamuwa* (the land of jungle tribes)\(^6\) includes areas such as Ratnapura and Balangoda and *Pahatha Rata* (Low Country) includes areas such as Raigama and Mathara. All three regions have songs, dances and costumes, drumming patterns, instruments and rituals that are specific to that area. *Goyigama* caste is typically referring to residents from the Up Country region of the island while the *Beravā* (the caste to which drummers are traditionally from) are found in all three regions of Sri Lanka.

**Beravā Caste**

Traditional drummers, dancers and singers come from a caste known as *beravā* (the tom-tom beaters or drummers), and are of lower socio-economic sectors, as classified according to the Sinhalese caste system. Excluding the *navandanna* caste (metal workers, blacksmiths, silversmiths, coppersmiths etc.) the *beravā* (*bera* is the Sinhalese word for drum) is the only other caste concerned with conserving the traditional artistic custom in Sri Lanka.\(^6\) It is important to note that the current practitioners of Sinhala folk are from a range of castes.

In his study of the Sinhalese caste system, Ryan noted the castes he observed were generally endogamous, multifamily groups having particular birth status in the society.\(^6\) This observation still resonates especially within the up country villages, where traditional dancers and drummers were observed and interviewed. They displayed no inhibitions in stating their role as traditional dancers and/or healers, as it was explained that this practice was in fact their lineage. When asked how these forms of music were studied, it was noted that being born into these types of families, one was expected to carry on the traditions and therefore learning traditional dance, drumming and melodies aurally, by observation and attendance at rituals was a way of life.\(^6\)

These performance skills have been passed down from generation to generation in a non theoretical, apprenticeship-like setting. Of the four traditional practitioners interviewed in Kandy, two were considered as healers that perform healing rituals for

\(^6\) Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon: The Sinhalese System in Transition*, 124.
\(^6\) Field interview, Wasantha Sri Rajangana, Traditional dancer, Kandy, January 20, 2011
individuals that may require intercessory prayer for fertility and sicknesses. Rituals are also performed to attract blessings from demigods, the planetary deities and the demons. Often rituals consist of invocations and prayers, chanted spells (mantras), narrative songs, choral singing, solo and group dances, drum music, dramatic interludes, and the repeated presentation of offerings and are featured at weddings, funerals and any such situation that required the services of spiritual interceding. The other two practitioners interviewed considered themselves as entertainers only.

There remains a clear class distinction between those of the beravä caste and high caste urban practitioners of Sinhala folk music that have studied the art at universities or private cultural schools rather than by way of ancestral legacies like the lower castes. This distinction tends to encourage criticism from both sides. Traditional dancers are criticised for the excessive emphasis placed on body, emotion, and instinct while the higher caste dancers are chastised for implementing too much intellect and reason. Many of the younger traditional dancers, in fact, seemed to view theory as a weapon used by high-caste dancers, especially the university graduates, to assert their superiority in the fields of dance and drumming.

Laade comments on the subject of class distinction, by suggesting the beravä performers, although traditionally belonging to a low caste, are the bearers of the richest and most important musical and dance heritage and of the whole rich storehouse of mythology and folklore. Further, Suruweera notes the traditional music of Sri Lanka is perceived to be a national heritage. In reality, the music and its musicians are a marginalized sector of society. It becomes quite clear that the beravä practitioners of traditional art are poorly regarded in the social order due to the divisive social grouping that has been etched upon the psyche of the population.

Although verbally disregarded in Sri Lankan society the caste system continues to loiter in the background as the attitudes towards lower castes are still to be neutralised. Many believe that the caste system has lost its social impact although it will have been a significant fact in Sri Lanka long after the last of its specific

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characteristics are lost, for its conditioning effect upon alternative forms of social organisation cannot be escaped. Ryan suggests that society will substitute one form of social grouping for another. Susan A. Reed mentions that many beravā took great pains to obscure their caste identity for fear of caste prejudice and have on occasion taken great measures to obscure their beravā roots.

Poets, lyricists and monks are not from the beravā caste although they are major contributors to the tradition of Sinhala folk music. The songs penned by this group of composers are categorically separate to the peasant songs of Gami Gee, by falling into the division of Se Gee.

Intriguingly, beravā drummers and dancers do not label themselves as vocalists or professional singers but prefer to refer to themselves as professional dancers. This could be due to the lack of extensive melodic exploration in Sinhalese folk music, or due to the fact that Thēravāda Buddhism discourages the arts so vehemently that singers simply have no affiliation with vocal expressions and therefore cannot identify with the 'professional singer' description. This may also be attributed to the introduction of traditional dance into the national curriculum in the 1950s, when unexpectedly the skills the beravā possessed became highly valued and sought after by the Sinhalese government. The beravā dominated the education of traditional dance and popularised the art as a result.

In an interview conducted with Illangasinghe, it was indicated that the term 'singer' was not a description attributed or suitable for traditional dancers. These practitioners are from a long lineage of traditional dancing families, where the primary focus is on dancing and drumming. Singing is secondary to these two elements while poetry, prayers and/or songs differ from family to family and usually are manipulated to align with the rhythmic patterns of the drums and related dance. Further, the ability to sing is not a major component, nor a desirable skill to possess in traditional families, when trained principally in dance or drums, the voice is considered as a conduit for chanting, spells, prayers and communication, whereas melodies are more or less insignificant as in maintaining a tune in a particular key.

72 Ryan, Caste in Modern Ceylon, 89.
75 Field Interview, Charudathihe Illangasinghe, Colombo, January 16, 2012.
Pitch is established and approximated from the tone emanated from the slap of a drum head.

In Sri Lanka's contemporary urban society singing is gradually becoming a valued skill in the preservation of the folk music. Many vocalists are taking measures to train their voices at universities or privately owned music schools. They are also learning to connect melodies to scales and ragas via *Hindustani* and *Carnatic* systems in addition to learning to play rhythmic patterns specific to Sinhala folk songs. Lecturers at these institutions are from *beravā* and non *beravā* backgrounds and offer alternative approaches according to knowledge, experience and background.
CHAPTER 4

UNEARTHING THE VOCAL NUANCES OF SINHALA FOLK MUSIC

Attempting to understand improvisation within world music contexts is just as complex and thorny as in Western music. During fieldwork conducted in Sri Lanka in 2011, some practitioners of Sinhala folk music seemed reticent to divulge secrets of their practice and routines while others freely offered information for the purposes of this research. It was not uncommon to hear analogies or ethereal tales in place of tangible data or answers such as, “I don’t know, I just do it.” Reasons for these responses may be due to practitioners feeling the need to protect the trust of one’s teacher, loyalty issues i.e. it can be considered unethical or offensive to reveal secrets that have been shared only after a bond has been developed between student and guru. Also many folk melodies and ritual songs are passed down from generation to generation and are mostly kept within beravā (traditional drumming) families. The reticence may have also been due to the inability to converse effortlessly in Western or Sinhalese musical terms as the practitioners may or may not have engaged in any kind of theoretical analysis of Sinhala folk music.

Vocal characteristics of Sinhala folk music will usually entail decorative adornments and embellishments, rhythmic explorations within the beat cycles, conscious placement of sounds within facial resonance chambers and the absence of vibrato. It will include timbre manipulation, oscillations from note to note, resonance manipulation and storytelling has a large influence on vocal delivery. Singing is often accompanied by dance movements that accentuate the narrative being conveyed, the movements work in conjunction with rhythmic accents dictated from accompanying drums. Vocal dynamics are employed to express emotion and can range from speech or conversational level dynamics to nasalised twangs (minimised vocal tract due to the high larynx and high tongue. The speculation is that as breath flows out through the vocal tract the downstream narrowing if the epi-laryngeal space producing and upstream effect on vocal fold vibration), creating a shrill resonance that can compete with multiple, heavily stroked drums or environmental noises. A fair

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portion of Sinhala folk music is performed outdoors and adapting this technique will allow the vocalist to compete with crowds, drums, cars, street noise etc.

Other expressive and technical qualities include swells, glottal attacks, flexibility, staccato and register blending. Although Sinhala folk music does not have chord changes to negotiate or chordal instruments, there are harmonic and rhythmic restrictions within the framework of the compositions that one must adhere to when playing or soloing. The boundaries vary from composition to composition, however the question of authenticity comes up quite frequently, should one sway too far from the boundaries that have been established.

During the field work trip, I observed various vocalists in the folk tradition from diverse backgrounds. Some had learnt traditional Sinhala folk music by independent study and others had either first-hand experience in performing rituals and were also well versed in work related folk songs. Certain singers from traditional drumming families were not mindful of intonation or tune, but sang the poetic verses fervently, while others demonstrated an acute sense of pitch and intonation and well developed rhythmic skills. Contemporary, schooled vocalists were mostly conscious of pitch, key centers, intonation, phrasing and had studied either Hindustani or Carnatic vocal techniques which not only assisted the vocalists' melodic awareness and technique among other elements, but also influenced aspects of their improvisatory style. Carnatic vocalist and educator Shobha Sekar mentioned several times that Sinhalese vocalists tend to travel to India to study either Northern or Southern techniques. Sekar observed that Sri Lankan folk music educators generally were too transfixed with the poetic verses, rather than vocal artistry. 78 Suryasena confirms that the poetry is all important; the music is just a frame for the picture. 79

Vocalists from the Sinhala tradition ostensibly model their vocal delivery on wind instruments such as traditional flutes like the Horanäva (a conical-bore, quadruple reed oboe 80). Mimicking the sound of the flutes gives the vocalists a slight more measured, yet flexible, almost staccato type of approach to phrases when punctuating a melody, whereas, in the research I have undertaken in Carnatic music, vocalists seem to model their vocal delivery on stringed instruments such as veena

78 Personal Interview with Shobha Sekar
79 Suryasena, Music of Sri Lanka, 5.
and violin or Sitar or Sarod in Hindustani singing. Mimicking the nuances of each region’s traditional instruments is what gives these vocalists an immediately recognizable subcontinent sound. Because these instruments are region specific the mannerisms are henceforth reflected the vocal styles. Observe the nuance of each region in the examples below:

Audio excerpt 4.1. Kohomba Halle.\textsuperscript{81}
Traditional Sinhala folk ritual singing style.

Audio excerpt 4.2. Bho Shambo.\textsuperscript{82}
Southern Indian Singing Style - Carnatic

Audio excerpt 4.3. Alfat In Bin Un Bin.\textsuperscript{83}
Northern Indian Singing Style - Hindustani.

Improvising vocalists in Sinhala folk and Indian styles will slur up or down to reach intended melody notes, utilise upward glissandos, rapid embellishment from note to note displaying accuracy and flexibility. Sustained notes are commonly held within the oral cavity and manipulated by the positioning of the tongue, glottal attacks (an explosive onset of tone produced when air pressure is built up under closed vocal chords and suddenly released with a popping sound\textsuperscript{84}) are often quite heavy in the lower register, while the mid and upper registers are usually ‘twangy’ and nasal.

In a brief comparison, the Sinhalese folk tradition in general, tends to have more restrictions than Hindustani or Carnatic systems as melodic and rhythmic structures are simpler together with a large emphasis placed upon poetry/storytelling. Of the three, Carnatic music is the most conservative in outlook, proud of its rigorous conformity to Sanscrit texts and earlier saint/composers while Hindustani music tends to have a much heavier emphasis on improvisation due to approximately 4000 years of almost continuous invasion and migration and hence accommodating and integrating other influences.\textsuperscript{85} As much as 90% of Northern Indian music may be improvised and so much of the improvisation depends on understanding the spirit

\textsuperscript{81} Chandrakanthi Shilpadhipathi, Kohomba Halle “Rhythms of Sri Lankan Drums and Folk Songs,” CD. Singlanka. SLCD 200025/GEEECD 003. 2001.


\textsuperscript{84} Anne Peckham, The Contemporary Singer: Elements of Vocal Technique, (Boston: Berklee Press, 2000), 38.

and nuances of the art. Having studied Carnatic music with Sekar for several years, I have observed the fundamental nature of the vocal compositions. They are composed around a predetermined set of beat cycles which run concurrently with a Thalam which in Sanscrit means the palm of the hand. Carnatic vocalists demonstrate thalam by clapping their hands and fingers to their palms. Compositions are usually taught using solfa letters. i.e. S, R, G, M, P, D, N and pronounced Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Da, Ni. The solfa letters are abbreviations of Swarās (note names) i.e. S – Shadjam, R – Rishbham, G – Gändhäram etc.

The ragas or scales can change within one composition, however changes are always written into the compositions. In Carnatic vocal music homage is paid to the composition, failure to do so will welcome criticism. Vocal improvisation usually consists of rapid melodic and ornamental embellishments stemming from the raga (scale). Vocal improvisation is implemented in designated sections of the composition and/or through ornamentation of the melody. The melody is arranged in conjunction with the length of the beat cycle. The general vocal improvisatory nuances displayed in Sinhala folk music are very similar to those found in Carnatic and Hindustani and the Northern and Southern Indian influence on Sinhala folk melodies is quite apparent. However, as one delves further, there are many differences that set the three apart. Carnatic vocal improvisation typically consists of scalic references over an octave and a half and the voice must be extremely agile to execute the ornamentations at great speeds. Hindustani vocal improvisation can cover a wide vocal range, yet the approach is much more relaxed than the Carnatic style. Hindustani vocal improvisation usually explores the possibilities of one note before moving to the next. From discussions with practitioners, it was noted that it is important for practitioners to ‘get inside each note’. Both Carnatic and Hindustani are raga-focussed and employ varying degrees of improvisation. Sinhala folk music melodies are usually less than an octave in range and rarely will the vocal improvisation expand beyond this. Ornamentation can occur on most notes of the melody and rapidly, yet rhythmic structures (unless rubarto) are adhered to strictly. All three styles require tremendous vocal flexibility and mainly embellish stepwise

90 Suryasena, Music of Sri Lanka, 4.
despite the vocal range covered. All three styles only accept vocal improvisation within the scale or rage used. Large intervallic leaps during vocal improvisation are seldom applied.

**SINHALA FOLK MUSIC: SINGING, DRUMMING AND DANCING SKILLS**

There are no such notation systems in place for Sinhala folk melodies like those used in Indian music. Typically Sinhala vocalists are required to learn a significant number of 216 fundamental drumming patterns⁹¹, they must also learn the accompanying dance movements which vary according to time signatures and rhythmic accents. The movements also illustrate the narrative of the songs. Practicing Sinhala folk music requires dexterity in all three elements i.e. singing, dancing and drumming. Consequently, the many vocalists interviewed displayed dexterous drumming, vocal and movement skills. The following video excerpts demonstrate two folk musicians in combinations singing and drumming or singing and dancing.

**Video excerpt 4.1. Vocalist demonstrating a Roll⁹²**

**Video excerpt 4.2. Vocalist demonstrating a rhythmic pattern⁹³**

**Video excerpt 4.3. Vocalist demonstrating improvisation on a pattern⁹⁴**

**Video excerpt 4.4. Vocalist demonstrating singing and drumming in 5/8 time⁹⁵**

**Video excerpt 4.5. Vocalist demonstrating singing and drumming in 7/8 time⁹⁶**

**Video excerpt 4.6. Vocalist demonstrating singing and drumming in 5/8 and 6/8 time⁹⁷**

**Video excerpt 4.7. Vocalist demonstrating singing and dancing simultaneously⁹⁸**

**Video excerpt 4.8. Vocalist demonstrating singing and dancing in three different speeds incorporating 6/8 and 7/8 time signatures⁹⁹**

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⁹⁸ Field video recording, T.Y. Sumanaweera, Kandy, January 19, 2011.
SINHALA FOLK MUSIC: THE INTONATION ISSUE

During my fieldwork, I noticed that contemporary, trained vocalists attracted mild criticism from other traditional instrumentalists for their pitch awareness. Many traditionalists are of the opinion that pitch-conscious vocalists are compromising the soul of Sinhala folk music, which again refers the issue of authenticity raised earlier. To be criticised for paying attention to pitch seems to be an unusual insertion, and to be encouraged to forego one’s consideration of pitch is quite uncommon in Western contexts however, this assertion could quite possibly stem from the Sinhalese Buddhist tradition of reciting *pirith* (chanting ceremony100) and *kavi* (poetic verses) which are typically concerned with lyrical content and rhythmic patterns while pitch and intonation are usually of secondary importance and commonly consist of three or four notes.

Traditionally pitch, tuning or melodies were not adhered to strictly, and while listening to *pirith* during the field work conducted, it was not uncommon to hear a vocalist or leader shift key centres within one phrase, unconsciously. More recently, trained vocalists have been paying much more attention to scalaric patterns, melodies, intonation and drawing from Northern or Southern Indian methods of aural, theory and sound production. Interestingly, the lack of attention to pitch is not only unique to Sinhala folk music, in my research I have found examples of this in folkloric music from various regions around the world, for example, in a recording of “Los Guerreros” by Afro-Cuban master drummer Carlos “Patato” Valdez, of Cuban origin, on the album, entitled *Bata Y Rumba*, features an ensemble composed of drums and voice. There are a number of vocalists present, chanting a call and response and each member of the vocal ensemble appears to have his own idea of the key centre. Similarly, the Brazilian ensemble, Grupo Angolo Pelourinho, display a communal chant that explores various tones simultaneously in the recording of “Chula” on the album *Capoeira Angola Salvador Bahia*. The reasons for this unconscious or conscious release of intonation could be due to the implementation of the untempered scale which is known as *just intonation*, where the performer

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determines the pitch and checks it by ear, or perhaps the performers are hearing the music microtonally.

Audio excerpt 4.4. *Los Guerreros* 102

Audio excerpt 4.5. *Chula* 103

Audio excerpt 4.6. *Kohomba Kankari* 104

**SINHALESE BUDDHIST CHANTING STYLES**

Suryasena states that Sinhalese Buddhist monks implement microtonal ornamentation to enrich their chanting. He also mentions that during *pirith*, the monks do not sing in unison and rarely hit the same pitch, although their words are spoken simultaneously i.e. phrasing is in sync and the ornamentation is always in the same place. This fashion of phrasing thoughtfully and embellishing in selected areas may have influenced the way the peasants sang folk melodies in Sri Lanka although, fascinatingly, this appears to be a common theme for folk music in rural areas. Ex 4.1 and 4.2 are transcriptions of Buddhist chanting styles and may be considered as a representation of a typical chanted melody. The melodic ornamentation and degree of ornamentation differs from performer to performer with only the first three scale degrees of a minor scale engaged for the duration of the chant.

Audio excerpt 4.7

Noble Precepts Chanted by a Buddhist Monk.

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104 Field sound recording. T. Y. Sumanaweera. Kandy, January 19, 2011
Ex. 4.1 Chanting of the Noble Precepts* of the Buddha

Melodic ornamentation
Grace notes with a heavy glottal attack

Sinhala Phonetic Translation
Buddhang saranang gachchami
Dhammang saranang gachchami
Sanghang saranang gachchami

English Translation
I seek refuge in the Lord Buddha,
I seek refuge in the sacred law,
I seek refuge in the Priesthood

*Precepts are a condensed form of Buddhist ethical practice.

Audio excerpt 4.8. displays the basic melodic outline of the *pirith* verse. This excerpt engages the use of two tones and two different grace notes. Melodic ornamentation is present, yet minimal.

**Audio excerpt 4.8.**
Ratana Suthrya chanted by a Buddhist monk

**Ex 4.2. Excerpt of a Pirith verse from Ratana Suthraya in Pali***

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Melodic ornamentation} & \quad \text{Grace note - Bb} \\
\text{Ya - ni - dha bhu - tan - ni sa - ma - ga - ta - ni Bum - ma ní va ya} & \quad \text{Ya - ni - dha bhu - tan - ni sa - ma - ga - ta - ni Bum - ma ní va ya} \\
\text{ni va a - tha - li - ke Sab - beva buta su - mu - na ba -} & \quad \text{ni va a - tha - li - ke Sab - beva buta su - mu - na ba -} \\
\text{van - tu a - tho - pi sak - kach - cha sun - an - tu basitang} & \quad \text{van - tu a - tho - pi sak - kach - cha sun - an - tu basitang}
\end{align*}
\]

**Sinhala Phonetic Translation**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yanida Butani samagatani} & \\
\text{Bumma ni va yaniva atalikke} & \\
\text{Sabbeva buta sumana bavantu} & \\
\text{Atopi sakkachcha sunantu basitang}
\end{align*}
\]

**English translation**

If ever there be any Gods or human beings who have assembled at the place for any period of time let all those kindly hear my words.\(^{109}\)

*Pali is the language in which most of the Buddha’s teachings have been written.

**THE APPLICATION OF SINHALESE CHANTS TO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC**

As an Australian - Sri Lankan vocalist and composer, I am intrigued by the relationship I can propose between the Western music theory and improvisation techniques I have gathered to date coupled with repertoire and improvisatory

aspects of the music of my heritage. I have made attempts to infuse self-composed and traditional Sinhalese chants into my original works and have experienced beneficial criticism in relation to pronunciation, language accent and syllabic accents in my delivery. In my short journey so far, the language barriers pose an interesting dilemma i.e. the Sinhalese language itself creates a stumbling block in achieving the desired connection between east and west if it cannot lend itself to being altered rhythmically for the purposes of phrasing. By shifting the phrasing to suit the rhythms in the composition, my listeners found it difficult to recognise the presence of the Sinhalese chants. As soon as I spoke the chant using same rhythmic pattern and eliminated the written melody they were able to identify the Sinhalese language. The issue of melodic and somewhat rhythmic loyalty to language was quite a surprising discovery and curiously, Sinhalese, when spoken is very melodic and dynamically altered, it is tuneful and expressive and appears to be sung more than spoken, however when sung, those expressive nuances seem to disintegrate and transform into melodically controlled chants with uncompromised phrasing accents.

Audio excerpt 4.9.
A Sinhala-style chant within an original composition, *Between You and I*.\(^{110}\)

Audio excerpt 4.10.
A melodic rearrangement of traditional Sinhala folk song, “Male, Male” within a personal arrangement of *Free*.\(^{111}\)

From my initial observations, it seems that for many Sinhalese speaking people, true artistry lies within poetry and command of the language. However, in order to forge a relationship between my Sri Lankan and Australian musical heritage, I must investigate the lithe characteristics of Sinhala folk music and utilise the nuances in my existing improvisation and composition practices. In my case, being Sri Lankan born gives me a lifelong interest in the art of Sinhala folk. These folk songs have been composed with an emphasis on rhythms and melodies i.e. drums and voice and vocal ornamentation. Uncovering the spirit of Sinhala folk music and its foremost tenets creates a pathway to unraveling methods of coupling these tenets with my established western practice of composition and improvisation.


CHAPTER 5

SINGING STYLES FOUND IN SINHALA FOLK MUSIC

However many restrictions have been imposed on the development of traditional folk music through religion or politics, the practitioners of folk music have managed to cultivate a distinct Sri Lankan sound and a unique style through the use of rudimentary instruments and poetry. Consisting of a voice, drums or wind instruments, it can also have combinations of the afore-mentioned, depending on the purpose the song serves. There are technical expressions in the voice that communicate emotion through dynamics, attack and decay of notes in addition to the lyrical content.

There is an absence of harmonic instrumentation in Sinhala folk and every Sinhalese local will explain that the sound of strings and flutes is considered too voluptuous for the Buddhist mind. Often it was explained whilst conducting the fieldwork research that the dissonance found in group singing illustrated the very essence of Sinhala folk singing. Suryasena observed that Sinhalese peasants were mostly, through lack of exposure, oblivious to tuning, unlike their Indian counterpart. The poetry is the most significant aspect to the music, melody and drumming patterns were secondary to the communication of emotions, spontaneous expressions of adoration, love, happiness and sorrow. It was also mentioned that the folk melodies were developed as a means of passing the time and provided a source of energy during labour. Drumming patterns will often be crafted according to the rhythmic delivery of the poems. Chanting and its vocal elaboration merely serve to express the beauty and the meaning of the verse. Upon reflection, it appears that other musical elements in Sinhala folk music have a position of importance excluding the use of the voice.

Sinhala folk songs are typically chanted over 5 or 6 tones, regardless of the ability to hear or recognise pitch or key centres in equal temperament, the presentation of all songs include elaborations to some degree, improvisation, modifications and melisma. As Suryasena penned, it is the essence of Sinhala folk music.

\[114\] Field interview, Wasantha Sri Rajangana, Traditional dancer, Kandy, January 20, 2011
TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN SRI LANKA

GAMI GEE

SE GEE

MEHE GEE

ADAHILI & WISHWASA

VINODASHWADYA

SEEPADA
NELUM GEE
GOYAM GEE

PROSE NARRATION
YĀGA GEE
PASAM GEE
THUN SARANAYA

SAUDAM
JANA NĀTYA GEE
LULLABYS
ONSILI WĀRAM
KELI GEE

HATAN GEE
VIRAHA GEE
VANNAMS
SINDU
LAMENTATIONS
TALAMALA
VIRIDU OR RABAN GEE
PRAŚATHI GEE

Traditional Sinhala folk music breaks down into two main subcategories, Gami Gee (village songs) and Se Gee (written by poets and educated lyricists).\(^{117}\) Gami Gee divides down into three further subcategories: Mehe Gee (occupational songs), Adahili and Wishwas (rituals songs) and Vinodashwadya (games, lullaby’s and other entertaining songs) and are commonly referred to as peasant songs.

MEHE GEE

Mehe Gee divides into three further groupings; Seepada, Nelum Gee and Goyam Gee. Seepada, literally meaning four feet, is a sung quatraine that serves a communicative purpose.\(^ {118} \) It is the most commonly sung of all folk vocal music.\(^ {119} \) The melodies are habitually rubarto, presented in a lengthy, extended fashion and elaborated at the will of the singer. The words of these folk songs, were often improvised spontaneously and are full of topical allusions.\(^ {120} \) Seepada is a very common style of composition and melodies vary according to province. Traditionally

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\(^{118}\) Kulatillake and Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 11.


it is sung unaccompanied, conveying the hopes and desairs of peasantry. Songs include, Pāru Gee (watch hut song), Pal Gee (sung in cottages), Gāl Gee (carters songs), Baṁbara Gee (honey collecting song), Pathal Gee (miner's songs).

Audio excerpt 5.1. Pathal Gee

Ex. 5.1. is a personal transcription of the basic melodic representation of a Pathal gee, sung rubarto, with minimal dynamic changes to reflect the somber mood nature of a lonely miner. By minimalising extreme dynamic shifts, the nuance of the voice then reflects extreme sadness and loneliness. The melodic improvisation pointed out below is sung extremely rapidly, with the accuracy and flexibility varying from vocalist to vocalist.

Ex. 5.1. Pathal Gee

Ex. 5.1. Pathal Gee

Phonetic Sinhalese Translation
Kaluwan kalu ruwai Mungo dhillisenawa
Minirun thoranna dhina gananin yanawa
Minirun theyruwoth landhey kulu wenawa
Langanam ghedera arunama mama enawa

English Translation
Mungo* is glittering in black and she is so beautiful
To select the plumbago** normally takes a number of days
Darling if you go to sort plumbago you will become very black
If the house is close to mine, this afternoon, I would come home.123

*A girl’s name
** A flower native to tropical regions of the world124

121 Kulatillake and Abeyesinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 11.
123 Phonetic Sinhala and English translations by Ranjini Dassenaike.
*Nelum Gee* translates to song of the lotus and is a category of transplanting or planting songs that are traditionally sung by groups of women.\(^{125}\) *Nelum Gee* is normally sung without accompaniment. From the research gathered, *Nelum Gee* is either composed in 4/4 or 7/4 meters. There are two major forms; Óse and Sindu. Óse is sung in preparation of the transplanting season while Sindu is sung towards the end and usually embraces faster tempi. *Nelum Gee* consists of Dik Óse, Keti Óse, Horanë Óse, Pitith Óse, Nelum Sindu and Nelum Gee. Most have Buddhist references.

Audio excerpt 5.2. *Dik Ose*\(^{126}\)

Audio excerpt 5.2. was collected during field research and personally transcribed as depicted in Ex.5.2. The example below is a personal transcription of the basic melodic representation of a *Dik Ose* which is typically sung outdoors and rubarto. The areas of vocal ornamentation have been highlighted. The dynamic level is steady and the voice is clearly projected. The song consists of the first three scale degrees of an Eb minor scale.

**Ex. 5.2. Dik Ose**

![Melodic representation of Dik Ose](image)

**Phonetic Sinhalese Translation**

*Sedamuwa kadimata ran pela vilasata*
*Andimuwa kadimata selaya ina wata*
*Bandimuwa kadimata kondaya mudunata*
*Kiyamuwa kadimata sindu lathoawata*

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126 Field sound recording, Mangalika Rajapakse, *Dik Ose*, University of Performing and Visual Arts, Colombo, January 11, 2011.
English Translation
We will get ready like golden rice plants
We will wear our clothes nicely around the waist
We will get dressed, our hair tied on top
We will sing songs melodiously.\[127]

Goyam Gee is sung at harvest, traditionally by men. An auspicious day and time are selected and certain customary procedures are undertaken. A farmer initially cuts three pods of paddy in a lump and reserves it for God. The farmer to whom the paddy field belongs then further divides the three pods of paddy and keeps them aside on behalf of God. At a later date, all members get together and reap the paddy. In the process, they indulge in singing various poems known as Goyam Gee.\[128] It is usually sung in the upper register of the male vocal range. Kamath Gee (cropping songs) are also included in this category.

Audio excerpt 5.3. Goyam Gee\[129]

Audio excerpt 5.3. was recorded during field work and personally transcribed as depicted on Ex.5.3. Typically sung in a well projected, call and response type of form. Below is a personal transcription of Goyam Gee. The harmony in Goyam Gee from minor to major to minor. Line 1 and 3 – minor, line 2 – major.

Ex. 5.3. Goyam Gee.  \[=113

\[127\] Phonetic Sinhalese and English translation by Charudaththe Illangasinghe.
\[129\] Field sound recording, Mangalika Rajapakse, Dik Ose, University of Performing and Visual Arts, Colombo, January 11, 2011.
Phonetic Sinhala Translation
Udayata paayana hiru Deviyantai
Sawasata paayana Sanda Deviyantai
Sathara waram devi sathara denaaatai
Wendala grwara awasara gantai

English Translation
To the Sun God that appears in the morning
To the Moon God that appears in the evening
To the four guardian Deities (Gods)
Worship the Gurus and get their blessings.\textsuperscript{130}

AHAHILI & WISHWASA

The next division of Gami Gee is Adahili & Wishwasa which are songs composed according to belief in gods and deities.\textsuperscript{131} This category consists of Prose Narration, Yāga Gee, Pilgrims’ Songs and Pasam Gee.

Prose Narration divides into two main categories, the first category is of the Buddhist tradition Bana Ārādhana and Dorakada Asnē\textsuperscript{132} and the second stems from folk rituals Yādini and Kannalawwa.

Yāga Gee encloses the various types of folk rituals that lend themselves to a more musical approach. Prose narration is still featured in Yāga Gee however practitioners will alternate between narration and song however, there are specific ritual melodies that are sung. Bali Gee, Tovil Gee and Kankāri Gee are three main ritual types. Bali Gee is sung to call upon the blessings of planetary gods, Tovil Gee is sung in demon rituals\textsuperscript{133} and Kankāri Gee is sung during the Kohomba-Kankāriya ceremonies (an elaborate ritual of dance and song conducted to propitiate the Kohomba and Bandāra deites\textsuperscript{134}). All rituals seek the same outcomes, but vary in practice. Bali Gee has more emphasis on poetry and singing, there is a belief in the power of words and hence drums are played softly and smoothly. Kohomba-Kankāriya is the other extreme dynamic i.e. requires hard drumming and singing consequently.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{130} Phonetic Sinhalese translation by C. Illangasinghe and English translation by R. Dassenaike.
\textsuperscript{132} Kulatillake and Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 13.
\textsuperscript{133} Kulatillake and Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 15.
\textsuperscript{134} C. de. S. Kulatillake, Ethnomusicology and Ethnomusicological Aspects of Sri Lanka, 88.
\textsuperscript{135} Field interview, Suresh Lakshan, traditional dancer, Kandy, January 19, 2012.
Pasam Gee are songs inspired by Christianity that fuse Carnatic melodies with church hymns. Pilgrims’ songs have advanced from folk melodies\(^{136}\) and are referred to as Thun Saranaya.

Audio excerpt 5.4. *Madu Puraya*\(^{137}\)

Audio excerpt 5.4. was recorded during field work and personally transcribed as depicted in Ex. 5.4. This song is from the Kohoṁba-Kankāriya ritual ceremony. The melody consists of the first three scale degrees of the D major scale. Rhythmically, the piece is quite challenging as the vocalist sang 4/4 over 6/8 in the first two bars.

**Ex. 5.4. Madu Puraya.\(^{137}\)**

![Poly rhythmic devices](image)

**Phonetic Sinhala Translation**

Raja kulayata mona malada  
Bamunu kulata mona malada  
Welanda kulata mona malada  
Govi kulayata mona malada\(^{138}\)

**English Translation**

Which flower is for the Royal Cast?  
Which flower is for the Bamunu* Cast?  
Which flower is for the Merchants' Cast?  
Which flower is for the Govigama Cast?

*Highest caste in India.

**VINODASHWADAYA**

Vinodashwaday are folk songs that were composed for entertainment purposes such as village folk dramas, games and lullabies. Examples of Vinodashwaday are

\(^{136}\) Kulatillake and Abeysinghe, *A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka*, 12.  
\(^{137}\) Field sound recording, Mangalika Rajapakse, *Madu Puraya*, University of Performing and Visual Arts, Colombo, January 11, 2011.  
\(^{138}\) Phonetic Sinhalese translation by C. Illangasinghe and English translation by R. Dassenaike.
found in games such as *Olińda Keliya*: played with Olinda seeds, *Keli Gee* and *Lee Keli Gee*: two different games that incorporate dance routines with sticks. *Kulu Dance*: a song and dance routine based on the act of separating paddy seeds from the stalks and being placed in a basket and *Kalagedi Natuma Gee*: a song and dance routine performed with a water pot.

*Onsili Wäram* (of Tamil origin) are sung on makeshift swings that hang from tree branches. *Saudam*: are salutary verses where drumming strokes and slaps attempt to mimic the melodic inflections of the voice. Lullabies are known as *Daru Nelavili* while folk dramas and plays are referred to as *Jana Nātya Gee* and are sung by masked actors. *Jana Nātya Gee* are commonly accompanied by the *Yak Bera* (low country drum) or the *Gata Bera* (Up Country drum). These songs are usually composed of 3 or 4 tones, contain humorous lyrics and are melodically repetitive.

Audio excerpt 5.5 *Kulu Natum Gee*<sup>140</sup>

Audio excerpt 5.5. is from a studio recording and personally transcribed as depicted in Ex. 5.5. The song is more like a nursery rhyme with simple melodic and rhythmic motifs.

Ex. 5.5. *Kulu Natum Gee* $\downarrow$ 85

Phonetic Sinhala Translation
Bundha vana kulu yathuru sadala
Kandha vana theytheynekuta kiyala
Andha mana alu-yantharay adhala
Handhay badhena badha pahapathkarala

English Translation
Around a woman’s waist, a bunch of keys are being tied. Inviting two beautiful girls to dance, shaking their bodies. Their bodies brighten in the glow of the moonlight.

SE GEE

Unlike Gama Gee, Se Gee were penned by intellectuals namely monks, poets and scholars. Praśasti Gee are court panegyrics sung in praise of Kings.142 Hatan Gee (war songs) and Viraha gee (parting/wailing songs) are also court panegyrics. King Narendrasinghe (reigned from 1707-1929) gave much patronage to performing arts and number of panegyrics have been composed in praise of him.143 Wessanthara Jathaka is a wailing song, which is a composition from a village folk drama about King Wessanthara, which was believed to be the last life of the Buddha before his enlightenment.

Vannams were composed for singing in the courts, at present there are 18 popular Vannams that have been turned into 18 solo dance works. The 18 vannamas of the Kandyan court were composed by Ganithalankare, depicting scenes and stories of the Buddha’s final and preceding lives,144 as well as stories about Hindu gods and their holy animals. The eighteen classical vannamas are as follows: Gahake Vannama (the Conch), Gajagä Vannama (the elephant), Thuraṅga (the horse), Uranga (the reptile), Musaladi (the hare), Ukusa (the Hawk), Vairodi (the cat’s eye/precious stone), Hanumā (the monkey), Mayura (the peacock), Sāvula (the cock), Sinharaja (the lion), Naiyadi (the snake), Kiralā (the lapwing), Iradi (the soldier), Surapathi (Lord of Gods), Ganapathi (God Ganesha), Udāra (Valour), Asadrusa (the triple gem and the incomparable knowledge of arts).145 The duration of each is approximately 3-7 minutes.

141 Phonetic Sinhalese and English translation by R. Dassenaike.
142 Kulatillake and Abeyesinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 13.
143 C. de. S. Kulatillake, Ethnomusicology and Ethnomusicoicological Aspects of Sri Lanka, 36.
Lamentation songs are predominantly a product of the Sinhala folk drama, in some areas Buddhist lamentations are sung by men in funeral houses. Talamala Gee is sung to announce the blooming of the Talamala flower of the Talipot palm. Virudu or Raban Gee differ from court panegyrics, the hand held drum is played while singing improvised lyrics sometimes inspired by audience members.

Audio excerpt 5.6. Viraha Gee

Audio excerpt 5.6. was taken from a studio recording and personally transcribed as depicted in Ex. 5.6. The voice is unaccompanied and the song is delivered in free time. The harmony and embellishment imply a G harmonic minor. The vocalist implements adornments to the melody by quickly oscillating from note to note within designated areas.

Ex. 5.6. Viraha Gee

Phonetic Sinhala Translation
Budhu bawa pathuwo dharuduka naddho
Amma num apa bandhala dhedho
Gon badha thaluwata kiri eramaddho
Sukwala Dheviyan asalaka naddho

English Translation
Although you are hoping to become a Buddha, don’t you have any feelings for your children?
Will our mother tie us up and hand over to the beggar?
Will there be any milk from the tortured cow?
Aren’t there any gods in the vicinity?

146 Kulatillake and Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 13.
147 Kulatillake and Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 12.
149 Phonetic Sinhalese and English translation by R. Dassenaike.
Chapter 6

Analysis of Two Recordings of Nelum Gee: Studio Recording and Live Recording

*Nelum Gee* is a traditional Sinhala folk song from the *Mehe Gee* (occupational songs) category and is traditionally sung by women while planting or transplanting in paddy fields.

In 2009, I was presented with a recording of traditional Sinhala folk music titled, *Rhythms of Sri Lankan Drums and Folk Songs*, by master drummer Piyasara Shilpadhipathi and vocalist/dancer Chandrakanthi Shilpadhipathi. The recording featured numerous folk songs from various Sinhala folk song subdivisions (see Chapter 5).

The subjects of this analysis are two recordings of *Nelum Gee* both sung by Chandrakanthi Shilpadhipathi. The first excerpt is a studio recording of *Nelum Gee* from *Rhythms of Sri Lankan Drums and Folk Songs* and the second excerpt is a live recording of *Nelum Gee* personally recorded at the artist’s home during the field research.

Audio excerpt 6.1. *Nelum Gee* Studio Recording, Verse 1 and 2.

Audio excerpt 6.2. *Nelum Gee* Live Recording, Verse 1 and 2.


Lyrics *Nelum Gee* (Verses of the Lotus)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonetic Sinhalese Translation</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1 - Aasa ventai goyamey sitinney</td>
<td>I'd love to stand in the midst of the paddy field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2 - Dhasa men wadha vidha rahtka ganney</td>
<td>You protect the paddy like a suffering slave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 3 - Aasawhen suth masa pasu-wannrey</td>
<td>Seven glorious months have passed by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 4 - Ghosa whenmai goyamay sitinney</td>
<td>They like to stay in the paddy field making noise to drive the birds away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† included to demonstrate the quatrain verses of *Nelum Gee*, not included in the analysis.

The two recordings of *Nelum Gee* took place 10 years apart. The studio recording was documented in 2001 and the live recording was documented personally in 2011.
The studio recording of *Nelum Gee* was arranged for voice, traditional Sri Lankan drums, violin, flute and a chorus. The Live recording was sung unaccompanied, specifically for the purpose of this research. The vocals in verse 1 and 2 of both recordings have been personally transcribed and analysed with respect to the improvisatory aspects of the singing style. The analysis includes:

- Number of notes used per bar
- Diverse rhythmic combinations used in the phrasing of the melody
- Melody notes and ornamentation note comparison
- Intervallic analysis of ornamentation groups
- Slurs, sustained notes, grace notes used in phrases
- Syllabic ornamentation (lyrics are divided into syllables and ornamentation occurs on primary vowel sounds\(^{150}\))

Harmonic analysis of *Nelum Gee* will not be address as the composition does not engage in more than the first five scale degrees of a minor scale, i.e. 1, 2, b3, 4, 5. The key centre of the *Nelum Gee* Studio recording is Dminor and *Nelum Gee* live recording is Cminor.

The analysis displays combinations of comparisons of the two entire recordings, specific verses and individual bars. One bar is considered as one phrase unless otherwise indicated, as the vocalist mostly drew phrases over the duration of one bar.

---

Ex 6.1. *Nelum Gee Studio Recording Personal Transcription. \( \dot{j} = 100 \)

Nelum Gee Studio Recording

V1

V2
Nelum Gee Live Recording

Ex. 6.2. *Nelum Gee* Live Recording Personal Transcription. $j = 93$
NUMBER OF NOTES USED PER BAR

Table. 6.1. *Nelum Gee* Studio and Live Recording Verse 1. Number of notes used per bar/phrase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bar 1</th>
<th>Bar 2</th>
<th>Bar 3</th>
<th>Bar 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Studio Recording</strong></td>
<td>14 notes</td>
<td>16 notes</td>
<td>23 notes</td>
<td>9 notes 2 grace notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Live Recording</strong></td>
<td>12 notes</td>
<td>18 notes</td>
<td>20 notes</td>
<td>8 notes 2 grace notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most number of notes per bar</strong></td>
<td>Studio Recording</td>
<td>Live Recording</td>
<td>Studio Recording</td>
<td>Studio Recording</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering the ten year gap between recordings the vocalist generally applied more notes to the studio recording in bars 1-4. Grace notes were always used in the last bar of each verse.

Table. 6.2. *Nelum Gee* Studio and Live Recording Verse 2. Number of notes used per bar/phrase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bar 5</th>
<th>Bar 6</th>
<th>Bar 7</th>
<th>Bar 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Studio Recording</strong></td>
<td>14 notes</td>
<td>17 notes</td>
<td>22 notes</td>
<td>9 notes 2 grace notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Live Recording</strong></td>
<td>14 notes</td>
<td>17 notes</td>
<td>22 notes</td>
<td>10 notes 3 grace notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most number of notes per bar</strong></td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Live Recording</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both recordings, verse 2 contained almost the same amounts of notes per bar, excluding bar 8, with a difference of one note. Although the note count totalled to the same amount in Bars 5, 6 and 7, the rhythmic placement varied in each recording. These tables represent a minimal difference in the two recordings, the vocalist added and subtracted notes at will during the live performance. The live recording of *Nelum Gee* was performed slightly slower than the studio recording.
**DIVERSE RHYTHMIC COMBINATIONS USED IN THE PHRASING OF THE MELODY**

In order to execute rapid ornamentations, the vocalist engaged several rhythmic groupings whilst phrasing the melody and embracing ornamentation. The following table provides a transcription of each rhythmic grouping applied in verse 1 and verse 2 of the studio recording.

Table. 6.3. Diverse rhythmic combinations used in the phrasing of the melody. *Nelum Gee Studio Recording, Verse 1 and 2. \( \dot{J} = 100 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minims, Crotches, Quavers</th>
<th>Semiquavers, Demisemiquavers</th>
<th>Semiquaver Triplets, Demisemiquaver Triplets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The following table presents a transcription of each rhythmic grouping applied in verse 1 and verse 2 of the live recording to compare against the studio recording.

Table 6.4. Diverse rhythmic combinations used in the phrasing of the melody. *Nelum Gee* Live Recording, Verse 1 and 2. $\frac{3}{4} = 93$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minims, Crotchetts, Quavers</th>
<th>Semiquavers, Demisemiquavers</th>
<th>Semiquaver Triplets, Demisemiquaver Triplets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
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<tr>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
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<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
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<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
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<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
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<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
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<tr>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
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<tr>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
<td>(\frac{3}{4})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.3 and 6.4 illustrate the diverse rhythmic combinations that the vocalist employed while phrasing the *Nelum Gee* melody. The melody in both recordings was heavily embellished and notes were delivered at an incredibly fast rate. At times the ornamentation was so rapid that it appeared to be the application of vibrato to a single note. The rhythmic groupings displayed in Table 6.3 and 6.4 are quite rare even when taking into consideration the idiosyncratic nature of Sinhala vocal ornamentation. Although characteristically the ornamentations are rapid, the vocalist in this case has shown an advanced level of flexibility and accuracy in the voice.

The usage of minims, crotchets and quavers in the rhythmic groupings of the ornamentation was minimal. There was a high usage of semiquaver and demiquaver triplets in both recordings and an extremely high usage of semiquaver and demiquavers in both recordings. The transcribed semiquaver and demiquaver rhythms represent the rapid nature of the ornamentation which is characteristic and fundamental to the singing style. Very rarely were the spaces between quintessential melody notes explored i.e. most spaces were filled with ornamentations or minims, crotchets and quavers.

**MELODY NOTES AND ORNAMENTATION NOTE COMPARISON**

Table 6.5. Melody Notes and Ornamentations. *Nelum Gee* Studio Recording, Bar 1-4 \( \frac{1}{4} = 100 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Studio Recording-Verse 1</th>
<th>Bar 1</th>
<th>Bar 2</th>
<th>Bar 3</th>
<th>Bar 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quintessential Melody Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamenation of Melody Notes (including melody notes)</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(including 2 x grace notes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 6.6. Melody Notes and Ornamentations. *Nelum Gee* Studio Recording Bar 5-8 \( \bar{=} 100 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio-Recording Verse 2</th>
<th>Bar 5</th>
<th>Bar 6</th>
<th>Bar 7</th>
<th>Bar 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quintessential Melody Notes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamentation of Melody Notes (including melody notes)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11 (including 2 x grace notes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.7. Melody Notes and Ornamentations. *Nelum Gee* Live Recording, Bar 1-4 \( \bar{=} 93 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio Recording Verse 1</th>
<th>Bar 1</th>
<th>Bar 2</th>
<th>Bar 3</th>
<th>Bar 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quintessential Melody Notes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamentation of Melody Notes (including melody notes)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11 (including 3 grace notes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8. Melody Notes and Ornamentations. *Nelum Gee* Live Recording, Bar 5-8 \( \bar{=} 93 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio-Recording Verse 2</th>
<th>Bar 5</th>
<th>Bar 6</th>
<th>Bar 7</th>
<th>Bar 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quintessential Melody Notes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamentation of Melody Notes (including melody notes)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13 (including 3 grace notes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.5, 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8. illustrate the quintessential melody notes found in each bar, against the number of notes used in the ornamentation of the same melody notes. There was a significant rise in the note count once the ornamentations were considered. From the data gathered, it became apparent that vocalist rarely interrupted phrases with rests, as the folk melodies require excessive ornamentation in the vocal delivery.
ORNAMENTATION AND INTERVAL ANALYSIS:

NELUM GEE STUDIO RECORDING, BARS 1-8 (VERSE 1 AND 2)

The following data, illustrates the specific ornamentation groupings appearing in each bar, the total number of notes in each ornamentation grouping and the intervallic construction of the ornamentation.

KEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor second</td>
<td>m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Second</td>
<td>M2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor third</td>
<td>m3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect Fourth</td>
<td>P4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ex. 6.3. Bar 1- Five Ornamentation Groups.

![Ornamentation](image)

Fig 6.9. Bar 1- Intervallic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1 Bar 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P4↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Ornamentation" /></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↓, M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Ornamentation" /></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↓, M2↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.9. displays a combination of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals with the exception of one ascending P4 interval.

Ex. 6.4. Bar 2- Five Ornamentation Groups.

Fig 6.10. Bar 2- Intervallic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1 Bar 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↓, M2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↑, M2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↓, M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>m2↓, M2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↑, M2↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.10 displays a combination of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals.

Ex. 6.5. Bar 3- Three Ornamentation Groups.

Table 6.11 displays a combination of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals with the exception of one ascending P4 interval.
Ex. 6.6. Bar 4- Three Ornamentation Groups.

\[ J = 100 \]

Table 6.12. Bar 4- Intervallic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1 Bar 4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P4↑, m2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>m2↑, m2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↑, M2↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.12 displays a combination of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals with the exception of one ascending P4 interval.

Ex. 6.7. Bar 5- Four Ornamentation Groups.

\[ J = 100 \]
Table 6.13. Bar 5- Intervalic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2 Bar 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P4↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↓ M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↓ M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↓ M2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↑ M2↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.13 displays a combination of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals with the exception of one ascending P4 interval.

Ex. 6.8. Bar 6- Two Ornamentation Groups.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2 Bar 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↓ M2↓ M2↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.14 displays a combination of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals.

Ex. 6.9. Bar 7- Four Ornamentation Groups.

Fig 6.15. Bar 7- Intervallic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2 Bar 7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↑ M2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>m2↑ m2↓ m2↑ m2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>M2↑ M2↑ M2↓ m2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>m2↑ m2↑ m2↓ m2↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.15 displays a combination of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals.

Ex. 6.10. Bar 8- Two Ornamentation Groups.

Table 6.16. Bar 8- Intervallic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2 Bar 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![M2 interval]</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![M2 interval]</td>
<td></td>
<td>M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![m2 interval]</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>m2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![m2 interval]</td>
<td></td>
<td>m2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![M2 interval]</td>
<td></td>
<td>M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![M2 interval]</td>
<td></td>
<td>M2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![M2 interval]</td>
<td></td>
<td>M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![M2 interval]</td>
<td></td>
<td>M2↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.16 displays a combination of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals.

From the data examined, most melodic ornamentations consisted of groupings of three notes, as in Table 6.9, 6.10, 6.11, 6.12, 6.13 and 6.15. Ornamentations consisting of groups of two notes were found in Table 6.9 and 6.13. Ornamentations consisting of groups of four notes were found in Table 6.10, 6.12, 6.14 and 6.16. Ornamentations consisting of groups of six notes were found in Table 6.11, 6.15 and 6.16. Ornamentations consisting of groups of seven and eight notes were found only in Table 6.11. Ornamentations with the largest note count were found in Table 6.14 which contained twelve notes and Table 6.15 which contained thirteen notes.

The most number of intervals consecutively sung in the same direction were found in Table. 6.14, one descending minor second interval followed by two descending major second intervals.

Although the ornamentation groups were at times quite large and rhythmically advanced, it is interesting to note that the vocalist recycled the notes of the melody. It appears that the vocalist placed a melodic restriction on the ornamentation by only improvising with notes from the quintessential melody which were the first five scale degrees of a minor scale. The ornamentation notes were also sung in the same register as the melody. The vocalist altered the direction of the melodic embellishing to create constant movement and energetic, active ornamentation to a harmonically restrictive composition. She also varied internal rhythmic placement and groupings with ornamentation.
ORNAMENTATION AND INTERVAL ANALYSIS:

NELUM GEE LIVE RECORDING, BARS 1-8 (VERSE 1 AND 2)

The following data, illustrates the various ornamentation groupings appearing in each bar, the total number of notes in each ornamentation grouping and the interval construction.

Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor second</td>
<td>m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Second</td>
<td>M2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor third</td>
<td>m3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect Fourth</td>
<td>P4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ex. 6.11 Bar 1 -Three Ornamentation Groups.

Table 6.17. Bar 1- Intervallic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Recording Verse 1 Bar 1</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P4†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>M2↓ M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>m2↓ m2↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.17 displays ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals and one ascending P4 interval at the beginning of the bar.


Table 6.18. Bar 2- Intervalllic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1 Bar 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>m2↓ m2↑ M2↑ M2↓ M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M2↑ M2↓ M2↑ M2↓ M2↑ Unison m2↓ m2↑ M2↓ M2↑ M2↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.18 displays combinations of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals, with the exception of one unison interval.
Ex. 6.13. Bar 3- Three Ornamentation Groups.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1 Bar 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>m2↓ m2↑ m2↓ Unison M2↓ M2↓ M2↓ M2↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.19 displays combinations of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals, with the exception of one unison interval.

\[ j = 93 \]

Ex. 6.15. Bar 5- Two ornamentation groups.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1 Bar 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unison, M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Including grace notes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>M2↓, M2↑, m2↑, m2↓, M2↓, M2↑, M2↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.20 displays combinations of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals, with the exception of one unison interval.

Ex. 6.15. Bar 5- Two ornamentation groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2 Bar 5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P4↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.21 displays combinations of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals, with the exception of one ascending P4 interval and two unison intervals.

Ex. 6.16. Bar 6- Three Ornamentation Groups.

Table 6.22. Bar 6- Intervallic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2 Bar 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>m3↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M2↓ M2↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.22 displays combinations ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals, with the exception of one ascending m3 interval.

Ex. 6.17. Bar 7- Three Ornamentation Groups.

Table 6.23. Bar 7- Intervallic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>M2↑ M2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar 7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M2↑ M2↓ m2↓ M2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M2↑ M2↓ m2↓ M2↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.22 displays combinations ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals, with the exception of one ascending m3 interval.

Ex. 6.17. Bar 7- Three Ornamentation Groups.

Table 6.23. Bar 7- Intervallic Analysis of Ornamentation.
Table 6.23 displays combinations ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals, with the exception of one unison interval.

Ex. 6.18. Bar 8- Four Ornamentation Groups.

Table 6.24. Bar 8- Intervallic Analysis of Ornamentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Recording</th>
<th>Number of grouped notes per ornamentation</th>
<th>Intervals sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2 grouped notes sung Bar 7</td>
<td>4 (including grace notes)</td>
<td>M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M2↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (including grace notes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M2↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.24. displays combinations of ascending and descending m2 and M2 intervals.

From the data collated and presented, some ornamentation groupings were significantly longer and more elaborate than others, Table 6.18, 6.19, 6.22 and 6.23 had ornamentation groups of ten notes or over. While Table 6.17, 6.19, 6.21 and 6.22. had the smallest ornamentation groups, consisting of two notes. Table 6.20. and 6.24. featured grace notes in the ornamentation groups. Table 6.20, 6.22, and 6.23 contained ornamentation groups of three notes. Table 6.24. contained an ornamentation group of four notes. Table 6.17 contained ornamentation groups of five notes, Table 6.18 and Table 6.24 contained ornamentation groups of six notes, Table 6.19 contained an ornamentation group of seven notes, Table 6.20 contained
an ornamentation group of eight groups and Table 6.21 contained an ornamentation group of nine notes.

The melodic ornamentations of the standard melody mostly comprised of ascending and descending minor and major second intervals. The few exceptions to the stepwise movement include unison, minor third and perfect fourth intervals, however these were seldom implemented. The vocalist remained committed to the implied minor scale (albeit the first five scale degrees) and did not depart from this.

The improvisation of the melody tended to remain within the tonality of the composition, unless the intonation drifted from the initial key centre, in which case the direction of the improvised ornamentations changed quickly.

The most times any interval was sung in the same direction (ascending or descending) was three. Table 6.19 contained three consecutive descending major second intervals, Table 6.22 contained three consecutive ascending major second and three consecutive descending major second intervals, Table 6.23 contained one descending major second, one descending minor second interval and one descending major second interval consecutively. Table 6.24 contained two consecutive ascending major second intervals followed by one ascending minor second interval.

The rapid direction changes, provides an energetic approach to the modal composition. As large intervallic leaps and exploration of range are not typical of Sinhala folk singing, the vocalist must possess a heightened degree of flexibility in the voice to execute the rapid rhythmic and melodic ornamentations.
Ex 6.19. Bar 1

Ex. 6.19. contains a slur, sustained notes and syllabic ornamentation. Melodic ornamentation always occurs on the primary vowel sounds\textsuperscript{151} ah, ay, ee, oh, oo. The first group of ornamentation occurs when the vocalist sings breaks the lyric Aasa into its two syllables and ornaments the “ah” sound followed by the “ah” from Sa

Ex 6.20. Bar 2

Ex 6.20. contains a sustained note, and syllabic ornamentation on ventai, the vocalist again improvises by breaking the lyric into its syllables and ornaments the “eh” sound of ven and the “ai” sound of tai. A diphthong (more than one vowel sound in a single syllable\textsuperscript{152}) occurs, while singing tai (tah-ee).

\textsuperscript{151} Peckham, \textit{The Contemporary Singer: Elements of Vocal Technique}, 61.
\textsuperscript{152} Peckham, \textit{The Contemporary Singer: Elements of Vocal Technique}, 62.
Ex 6.21. Bar 3. \( \frac{\text{\textit{J}}}{\text{=}} = 100 \)

Sustained Note

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{go} \\
\text{ya} \\
\text{me} \\
\text{ve} \\
\text{si}
\end{array}
\]

Syllabic ornamentation over the bar line. Begins in Bar 3 and finishes at the end of Bar 4

Ex 6.22. Bar 4 \( \frac{\text{\textit{J}}}{\text{=}} = 100 \)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{ti} \\
\text{nney}
\end{array}
\]

Grace notes

Sustained Notes

Ex 6.23. Bar 5. \( \frac{\text{\textit{J}}}{\text{=}} = 100 \)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Dha} \\
\text{sa}
\end{array}
\]

Syllabic ornamentation

Ex 6.21, 6.22 and 6.23 contain combinations of sustained notes, grace notes, and syllabic ornamentation. At the end of Bar 3 (Ex 6.21), the vocalist phrased the lyric sitinney into the Bar 4 (Ex 6.21) and sustained the last note of the ornamentation until the end of Bar 4 (Ex 6.21). This is a unique example of syllabic ornamentation, that was stretched over the bar line.

Ex 6.24. Bar 6. \( \frac{\text{\textit{J}}}{\text{=}} = 100 \)

Sustained Note

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{me} \\
\text{n} \\
\text{wa} \\
\text{dha}
\end{array}
\]

Syllabic ornamentation
Ex 6.25. Bar 7. \( \text{\( \text{\( J = 100 \)\)\)}}

Sustained Note

Ex 6.26. Bar 8. \( \text{\( \text{\( J = 100 \)\)\)}}

Syllabic ornamentation

Ex 6.24, 6.25 and 6.26 contain combinations of sustained notes, rests, grace notes and syllabic ornamentation.

**ANALYSIS OF EXPRESSION TECHNIQUES: SLIDES, SUSTAINED NOTES,ORNAMENTS, GRACE NOTES AND SYLLABIC ORNAMENTATION. LIVE RECORDING, BARS 1-8**

Ex 6.27. Bar 1 \( \text{\( \text{\( J = 93 \)\)\)}}

Slur. Sustained Notes. Syllabic ornamentation

Ex 6.28. Bar 2.  **Time Signature changes from 6/4 to 7/4**

Ex 6.29. Bar 3.  **Sustained Notes** Syllabic ornamentation (with diphthrong on tai)

Slur Syllabic ornamentation

Ex 6.27, 6.28, 6.29 and 6.30 contain sustained notes, a slur and syllabic ornamentation. Bar 1 (Ex 6.19) begins in 6/4, although at bar 2 (Ex. 6.20), the vocalist resumes the 7/4 time signature. The phrasing of the last lyric in Bar 3 (Ex 6.21) (Sitinney), finishes at the end of bar 4 (Ex 6.22), as in the studio recording.

Ex 6.31. Bar 5. \( \frac{\text{\textbullet}}{5} = 93 \)

Ex 6.32. Bar 6.

Ex 6.33. Bar 7.

Pitch rises by a major second (back to original key centre) Pitch drops major second from initial key centre
Grace notes  Syllabic ornamentation  Sustained note

Ex 6.23, 6.24, 6.25 and 6.26 contain combinations of slurs, sustained notes, grace notes and syllabic ornamentation. At the beginning of Bar 5 (Ex 6.23), the vocalist's pitch shifts hence moving the key centre from Cminor to Bminor. In bar 7 (Ex 6.25), she resumes the original key, however by the end of bar 7 (Ex 6.25), the pitch drops again to Bminor. The live recording of *Nelum Gee* was sung unaccompanied. The vocalist relied on her ear to estimate the pitch and time signature.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the introduction, Sri Lanka’s musical identity seemed to be amorphous and Sinhala folk music which encapsulates the nation’s musical identity appeared to be in a fragile state with very few practitioners left.

Before the commencement of this research, I had heard Buddhist chanting at temples, impromptu baila at numerous social gatherings and various selections from Sinhala classical music, which prior to the onset of this study, had characterised the essence of the music of Sri Lanka.

This hasty understanding was not due to any indifference or lack of interest, in retrospect, much of it had to do with the poor preservation of Sinhala folk music and the lack of promotion locally and internationally alongside the political, philosophical and other social issues found in the research.

After many conversations with practitioners, academics, nationals and expats, it was made apparent that traditional Sinhala folk music is a dying art. Other forms of Sinhala music such as pop and classical music are appreciated at large however folk music is yet to be adequately recognised.

The three main reasons Sinhala folk music is not celebrated as much as other forms of Sinhalese music are identified as political, philosophical and social. Politically, the long standing civil war (1983-2009) drew significantly from the financial resources of the country and the arts were not a priority during this period. Socially, the disbanded caste system meant that occupational roles within society were no longer allocated to specific groups therefore the work songs are not being passed down.

Through my extensive field work I also discovered that majority of the Sinhalese population are from Goyigama caste which is at the top of the social hierarchy and historically the castes seldom mix therefore the chances of Goyigama castes having exposure to the work songs lower castes perform is quite slim.

Philosophically, the manner of Buddhism practiced in Sri Lanka is Thēravāda, which is known to be the most conservative form of the philosophy. Thēravāda Buddhism
does not encourage involvement with the arts as it can be lead to identification with the carnal self, rather that the spiritual self.

During field research, I literally stumbled across the Folk Music Conservation Library after a session at The University of Visual and Performing Arts. I had a brief discussion with the administration assistant and he informed me that the current government had established the library in 2010 for the purposes of preservation and archiving musical and academic resources.

At the time all of the research papers on the topic of Sinhala folk music had yet to be translated into English. Clearly, the government recognises the art form of Sinhala folk and is making attempts to preserve the dying art.

In 2009, I caught a glimpse of the spirit of Sinhala folk music. Chandrakanthi Shilpadhpathi, professional dancer, had recorded a compilation of traditional folk songs with her husband, master drummer Piyasara Shilpadhipathi. This recording had found its way into my possession and for that I am eternally grateful. This couple are essential to the preservation and development of the art of Sinhala folk music. They were both lecturers at The University of Performing and Visual Arts in Colombo, Sri Lanka and remain practitioners of folk music. Their recording did not come by easily; it was the result of persistent questions over a number of years.

Upon listening to Shilpadhpathi’s recording of Nelum Gee, I became aware of the unique characteristics of the music of my ancestors and was captivated by the idea of bringing the vocal technique and improvisatory aspects of this music to the Western improvisation and composition skills I had garnered so far.

As a result of this research, I have arranged several Sinhala folk songs from the various style categories, that illustrate the relationship I proposed earlier in this study; the fusion of jazz and Sinhala folk stylistic and improvisatory practices in performance and composition. In some of my attempts to fuse Sinhala chants with contemporary composition, I experienced a criticism of not only my language accent but also rhythmic accents within the bar, as I need to dissemble lyrics and mould them according to rhythmic placement.

Initially I thought this was going to pose a major problem, however after observing Shilpadhpathi’s syllabic ornamentation, I knew that my phrasing was only a minor
issue rather than a stumbling block. Shilpadhipathi received similar criticism for her phrasing. Reinstating the observation that the Sinhala language and poetry are of utmost importance to Sri Lankan audiences.

Through the personal analysis of this work, I have unearthed the vocal traditions and stylistic nuances of Sinhala folk, by realising that vocal ornamentation of a melody is fundamental and always included in performance. Suryasena described this aptly by stating that vocal elaboration is implemented to express the beauty and meaning of the verses or poems\textsuperscript{153}.

Suggesting that improvisation in Sinhala folk music terms is used to communicate is an emotion attached to the material being played. It also became apparent that rhythmic dexterity is portrayed through the use of poly rhythmic applications, also basic drumming techniques are required in order to understand, participate and improvise vocally in folk songs.

The melodic ornamentation or improvisation as it can be labelled, rarely uses large intervallic leaps but prefers step-wise movements within the tonality established at extremely high speeds. Vocalists in this tradition do not cover an extensive vocal range and most tunes are located in the mid-range of a standard voice. Most folk tunes do not engage more than four or five notes.

Songs composed over six notes are quite rare. Henceforth, the vocalist will improvise with the same notes of the melody, using rapid ornamentation, swift direction changes and rhythmic displacement for creative phrasing. Folk songs can be sung \textit{rubato} or accompanied by drums, depending of the purpose they serve.

The field research provided the opportunity to personally interview and observe not only Mr and Mrs Shilpadhipathi, but also practitioners such as Mangalika Rajapakse, a current lecturer at The University of Performing and Visual Arts, Colombo as well as traditional dancers. Rajapakse displayed dexterous vocal ability, however like so many practitioners, did not have access to resources for recording or documenting her work in the Sinhala folk tradition.

T.Y. Sumunaweera, Wasantha Sri Ranjangana and Suresh Lakshan were fundamental to unlocking the mysteries of Sinhala ritual music. These interviews and

\textsuperscript{153} Suryasena, \textit{Music of Sri Lanka}, 5.
discussions were pivotal to the direction of this research. The completion of this research provides an additional resource and method of preserving the art of Sinhala folk music.
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*Bench Rabana*. SAA Tunes, 18 February, 2012  


*Hand Rabana*. SAA Tunes, 18 February, 2012  


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Suraweera, Sumuditha. Personal Interview, 18 January 2011.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adahili &amp; Wishwasa</td>
<td>ritual songs composed with references to various gods and deities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alankara</td>
<td>vocal embellishment, melisma&lt;sup&gt;154&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bañibara Ge</td>
<td>honey collecting song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baila</td>
<td>a Portuguese influenced 6/8 meter, festive music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bera</td>
<td>drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beravā</td>
<td>caste of drummers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bummadiya</td>
<td>a clay pot with a single opening, covered by goat, monkey or iguana skin, played as a musical instrument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnatic</td>
<td>Southern Indian classical music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davula</td>
<td>a cylindrical drum with two heads, played with the hand on one head and a stick on the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gál Gee</td>
<td>carter’s songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gami Gee</td>
<td>village songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getabera</td>
<td>a long cylindrical drum with a head on either side, one side is covered in monkey hide and the other by cattle, long strings of deer hide are tightened or released to achieve the desired pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glottal attack</td>
<td>an explosive onset of tone produced when air pressure is built up under closed vocal chords and suddenly released with a popping sound&lt;sup&gt;155&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goyam Gee</td>
<td>harvesting songs, traditionally by men&lt;sup&gt;156&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goyigama</td>
<td>literally translates into “cultivator of the soil” and is at the peak of the Sinhalese hierarchy&lt;sup&gt;157&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatan Gee</td>
<td>war songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horanāva</td>
<td>a conical-bore, quadruple reed oboe&lt;sup&gt;158&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustani</td>
<td>Northern Indian classical music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idiomatic improvisation</td>
<td>improvisation concerned with the expression of an idiom — such as jazz, flamenco or baroque — it takes its identity and motivation from that idiom&lt;sup&gt;159&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jana Nātya Gee</td>
<td>songs from Sinhala folk drama shows sung by masked actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kavi</td>
<td>poetic versus&lt;sup&gt;160&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keli Gee</td>
<td>sung for folk games and dances&lt;sup&gt;161&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulu Gedi Gee</td>
<td>sung for folk games and dances; water pot dance&lt;sup&gt;162&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamentations -</td>
<td>predominantly a product of the Sinhala folk drama, in some areas Buddhist lamentations are sung by men in funeral houses&lt;sup&gt;163&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Keli Gee</td>
<td>songs of the stick dance&lt;sup&gt;164&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licks</td>
<td>an improvised phrase that has entered the everyday language of jazz, often used descriptively&lt;sup&gt;165&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyric improvisation</td>
<td>the art of retaining the primary lyrics of a song but using improvisational inventiveness, change every other aspect i.e. syncopation of rhythms, motivic development, variance in timbre, articulation and spontaneous recomposition of the melody&lt;sup&gt;166&lt;/sup&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehe Gee</td>
<td>occupational songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navandanna</td>
<td>a caste of metal workers, blacksmiths, silversmiths, coppersmiths etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasalised Twangs</td>
<td>minimised vocal tract due to the high larynx and high tongue. The speculation is that as breath flows out through the vocal tract the downstream narrowing if the epi-laryngeal space producing and upstream</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>154</sup> Suryasena, Music of Sri Lanka, 5.  
<sup>155</sup> Anne Peckham, The Contemporary Singer: Elements of Vocal Technique, 38.  
<sup>156</sup> Personal Interview with Kandyan Dancer, Wasantha Sri Rajan, January 2011.  
<sup>157</sup> Ryan, The Caste in Modern Ceylon: The Sinhalese System in Transition, 95  
<sup>159</sup> Bailey, Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music, xi.  
<sup>161</sup> Kulatillake, C. De. S. and Ranjan Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 12.  
<sup>162</sup> Kulatillake, C. De. S. and Ranjan Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 12.  
<sup>163</sup> Kulatillake, C. De. S. and Ranjan Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 12.  
<sup>164</sup> Kulatillake, C. De. S. and Ranjan Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 13.  
<sup>165</sup> Kulatillake, C. De. S. and Ranjan Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 12.  
<sup>166</sup> Mark Levine, The Jazz Theory Book, xi.  
transplanting or planting songs that are traditionally sung by groups of
women, including Dik Òse, Keti Òse, Horané Òse, Pitith Òse, Nelum Sindu
and Nelum Gee.

Nelum Gee
Non-idiomatic
Improvisation
usually found in ‘free’ improvisation and, while it can be highly stylised, it is
not usually tied to representing an idiomatic identity.

Onsili Wäram
songs of Tamil origin, sung on swings that are tied to tree branches

Ose
sung in preparation of the transplanting season. A division of Nelum gee.

Pahatha Rata
low country, southern province in Sri Lanka

Pal Gee
sung in cottages

Pasam Gee
songs inspired by Christianity that fuse Carnatic melodies with church
hymns.

Pathal Gee
miner’s songs

Päru Gee
watch hut (treehouse) songs

Pirth
Buddhist chanting ceremony

Präšathi Gee
court panegyrics sung in praise of Kings

Precepts
are a condensed form of Buddhist ethical practice.

Prose Narration
commonly executed during ritual ceremonies

Rabana
frame drum covered in goat hide.

Raban Gee
hand held drum is played while the performer improvises lyrics that are
sometimes influenced by audience members.

Raga
a scale or mode in Indian classical music

Sabaragamuwa
a province located between the western and Uva provinces in Sri Lanka

Sarod
stringed instrument used in Northern Indian classical music

Saudam
a salutary verse where the drumming mimics the phonetics of the voice.

Scat singing
the impromptu use of rhythmic verbalised syllables

Se Gee
songs written by poets and educated lyricists

Seepada
is a sung quatrains that serves a communicative purpose.

Sindu Gee
a set of compositions identified thus by Sinhala traditional singers, different
to the quatrain form of poetry.

Swaräs
Carnatic solfa

Syllabic Ornamentation
lyrics are divided syllabically and melodic ornamentation occurs on
consonants or vowels.

Talamala Gee
sung to announce the blooming of the Talamala flower of the Talipot
palm.

Thalarn
rhythmic groupings and patterns that are clapped in Indian classical music

Thammattama
a twin drum or heads that are positioned abreast resembling a pair of
bongo drums usually played with crafted sticks,

Thēravāda Buddhism
conservative tradition of Buddhism practiced in Sri Lanka

Thun Saranaya
pilgrim songs that advanced from Sinhala folk melodies

Uda Rata
Up Country, central province in Sri Lanka

Untempered scale
known as just intonation, where the performer determines the pitch and
checks it by ear.

Vannams
songs composed for singing in the royal courts. At present there are 18
popular Vannams that have been turned into 18 solo dance works.

168 Bailey, Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music, xii
17, 2012)
January 10, 2011).
Canterbury, 324.
172 Crownther and Pinfold, Singing Jazz: The Singers and Their Styles, 19.
174 Kulatillake and Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 11.
175 Kulatillake and Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 16
176 Kulatillake and Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 12
177 Wiki
178 Kulatillake and Abeysinghe, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, 12
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veena</td>
<td>a stringed instrument used in Southern Indian classical music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viraha Gee</td>
<td>parting/wailing songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinodashwadya</td>
<td>songs for games, lullaby's and other forms of entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viridu</td>
<td>see <em>Raban gee</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yāga Gee</td>
<td>songs of folk rituals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

180 Kulatilake and Abeysinghe, *A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka*, 12