1 Chasing Eurydice

Writing on Music in the Late Mughal World

Introduction

> *You should know, dear brother . . . that in every manual craft the matter dealt with consists of naturally occurring material, and that all its products are physical forms. The exception is music, for the 'matter' it deals with consists entirely of spiritual substances, namely, the souls of those who listen to it.*
>
> The Ikhwan us-Safa' (Brethren of Purity), c. 950–1000.[1]

> *It is impossible to capture the essence of music in pen and ink on the surface of a page.*
>
> Sher ᶜAli Khan Lodi, 1691.[2]

How do we write histories of the ephemeral: of emotional and sensory experiences, of ecstatic states and aesthetic journeys, of the live performance of music and dance, of the tangible yet transient texture of the experiential moment? More to the point, how do we write such histories when those moments have long passed into silence? Can experiential moments even have histories? Surely, the momentary is the very definition of something that lies beyond history, beyond historical method. Isn't that the essence of its bittersweet pleasures: that, once over, it forever lies beyond our reach? How far can ink and paint on the surface of a page transport us into the experience of those, long dead, who once tasted those intensities, and for whom those moments were the warp and weft of their deepest personal and collective selves?[3] Can reflections on the emotions,

[1] Ikhwan us-Safa', *On Music: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 5* [c. 950–1000], ed. and tr. Owen Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010), p. 76.

[2] Sher ᶜAli Khan Lodi, *Tazkira-i Mir'āt al-Khayāl*, ed. Hamid Hasani and Bihruz Safarzadeh (Tehran: Rawzaneh, 1998), p. 141.

[3] Christopher A Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 55; Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin Before Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

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the senses and the performing arts tell us critical things about the harder-edged worlds of political, economic and social history that we could never otherwise access? What *was* the relationship between the aesthetic, the affective, the ethical, the political and the personal in South Asian history?[4] And what was at stake for North Indian men and women when their cherished musical worlds were turned upside down in the final century of upheaval that saw the Mughal empire give way to the British Raj?

In a series of six interlocking essays and a summative discussion, this book addresses these compelling but elusive questions through a focus on music, musicians and writing about them in late Mughal India (c. 1748–1858). The Mughals were a Central Asian Sunni Muslim dynasty who from 1526 ruled over large parts of the Indian subcontinent from the magnificent northern cities of Delhi and Agra, ostensibly until 1858. In reality, the Mughal empire began to disintegrate after the death of Emperor Aurangzeb ^{c}Alamgir in 1707,[5] which created a power vacuum that was filled initially by a series of resurgent regional powers, most successfully the Maratha Confederacy,[6] and ultimately by their ruthless foreign competitors the British East India Company. Through an exploration of six different types of writing on music prominent in late Mughal India, this book retells the stories of nine mostly forgotten élite musicians – five men, four women – and the courtly worlds they inhabited during the consequential final century of transition from Mughal to British rule. My time frame begins with the death in 1748 of the last Mughal emperor to retain any real geopolitical power, Muhammad Shah. It ends with the British overthrow of the last emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar in 1858, as punishment for his role as

4 On emotions history in South Asia: Margrit Pernau (ed.), *South Asia History and Culture* 12.2–3 (2021), 111–355, especially Margrit Pernau, 'Studying Emotions in South Asia', *South Asia History and Culture* 12.2–3 (2021), 111–28; and Dipti Khera, *The Place of Many Moods: Udaipur's Painted Lands and India's Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020). This opening paragraph is based on my review of Kavita Panjabi (ed.), *Poetics and Politics of Sufism and Bhakti in South Asia: Love, Loss and Liberation* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2011), in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 52.1 (2015), 116–19, p. 116.

5 Aurangzeb ^{c}Alamgir I (r. 1658–1707) should not be confused with his descendent ^{c}Aziz-ud-din ^{c}Alamgir II (r. 1754–59).

6 The powerful Maratha Confederacy (1674–1818) is only occasionally touched upon in this book, and remains a major lacuna in our understanding of Hindustani music history. I would encourage historians working in relevant languages and Modi script to take up this challenge; there are certainly sources, for example in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. For general histories, see the work of Prachi Deshpande, Stewart Gordon, A R Kulkarni and Rosalind O'Hanlon; for music, Justin Scarimbolo, 'Brahmans Beyond Nationalism, Muslims Beyond Dominance: A Hidden History of North Indian Classical Music's Hinduization', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara (2014).

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figurehead of the cataclysmic 1857 Indian Uprising, the *Ghadar*.[7] For those more familiar with colonial perspectives, this was the century of the East India Company's conquest of India, from the Battle of Palashi (Plassey) in 1757 to the imposition of British Crown rule in 1858 after the Company nearly lost control of its Indian possessions entirely.[8]

The geographical heartlands of this book are the vast alluvial plains and rocky hills of northern India, known as Hindustan,[9] that stretch out beneath the Himalayan foothills for over 1,200 miles watered by the rich Yamuna and Ganges river systems, though the Deccan Plateau to the south also comes into frame from time to time (see Map, p. xxi). Because of the violent collapse of the Mughal centre (c. 1739–61), which Indian writers of the time called 'the scattering' (Chapter 3),[10] this book's time frame was one of unprecedented migration across India for Mughal service personnel of all kinds, including many of the court's greatest performing artists (alongside numerous others who claimed to be). Successive chapters follow élite musicians chronologically from the Mughal imperial capital, Delhi, with its grand new city and fortress of Shahjahanabad completed in 1648,[11] to major alternative centres of cultural patronage in Lucknow, Hyderabad, Jaipur and among the British (1748–1842). We then return to Delhi and Lucknow for final chapters on the late flowering and sudden death of the Mughal imperium (1803–58), after the East India Company finally took Delhi from Maratha control in 1803.

The transition from Mughal to British rule has been of critical interest to historians of South Asia for the past forty years.[12] The dominant historiographical debate concerns the nature and extent of colonialism's impact on

[7] Meaning 'rebellion, disturbance'; alternatively the First War of Independence, the Sepoy/Indian Mutiny, or simply 1857.

[8] See Jon Wilson, *India Conquered: Britain's Raj and the Chaos of Empire* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2016); Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* (London: Hurst, 2017); and most comprehensively the four volumes of William Dalrymple's *Company Quartet* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

[9] Manan Ahmed Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan: The Invention of India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

[10] For example, Zia-ud-din, *Hayy al-Arwāh*, John Rylands Library, Manchester, Persian 346 (c. 1785–88), f. 43r.

[11] Shahjahanabad is now called 'Old Delhi', but then it was known as the 'new city', *shahr-i no*, as opposed to the older cities of Sultanate Delhi surrounding it, known as the 'old city', *shahr-i kohna*.

[12] Going back to Bernard S Cohn's work on eighteenth-century Benares, with early landmarks Christopher A Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); and Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707–48* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986).

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the knowledge systems of the colonised, from the very fundamentals of South Asian civilisation such as caste, religion and law to language politics and artistic production. Until the mid-2000s, opposing arguments contended that British authorities either made use of pre-existing Indian knowledge systems, gradually transforming them as they gained power and territory, or, alternatively, 'invented' them largely ex nihilo in the Orientalist exercise of power-knowledge over those they ruled.[13] Jon Wilson has noted that proponents of both sides were in fact largely arguing past each other: those perceiving continuity and incremental change were mostly eighteenth-century historians, while those insisting on dramatic rupture and invention of tradition generally did so from the perspective of late colonialism.[14] But the central flaw in the whole debate was articulated by Sheldon Pollock in 2004. He noted that the argument was largely raging in the absence of sufficient, sometimes any, knowledge of those pre-existing Indian systems: very few of the main contenders were working from the early modern Indian sources that embody such knowledge, other than those translated into English during the colonial era.[15] This was not due to a lack of pre- or paracolonial Indian sources, either.[16] 'South Asia', Pollock wrote, 'boasts a literary record far denser, in terms of sheer number of texts and centuries of unbroken multilingual literacy, than all of Greek and Latin and medieval European culture combined'.[17]

Music and Musicians in Late Mughal India thus stands on Pollock's foundational proposition, that while

> the impact of colonialism on culture and power has been the dominant arena of inquiry in the past two decades . . . colonial studies has often been skating on the thinnest ice, given how much it depends on a knowledge of the precolonial realities

[13] For example, Bayly, *Empire*; vs. Bernard S Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); Norbert Peabody, 'Cents, Sense, Census: Human Inventories in Late Precolonial and Early Colonial India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43.4 (2001), 819–50; vs. Nicholas B Dirks, 'The 'Invention' of Caste', in *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). See overviews in Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook, 'Histories in Transition: Approaches to the Study of Colonialism and Culture in India', *History Workshop Journal* 32.1 (1991), 110–27; Jon Wilson, 'Early Colonial India Beyond Empire', *The Historical Journal* 50.4 (2007), 951–70; and Ricardo Roque and Kim A Wagner, 'Introduction: Engaging Colonial Knowledge', in Roque and Wagner (eds.), *Engaging Colonial Knowledge: Reading European Archives in World History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1–32.

[14] Wilson, 'Early'.

[15] Sheldon Pollock, 'Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern South Asia: Introduction', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24.2 (2004), 19–21. Crucial exceptions included Peabody, 'Cents'.

[16] On the paracolonial, see p. 16 below.

[17] Pollock, 'Forms', p. 19.

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that colonialism encountered, and how little such knowledge we actually possess … *we cannot know how colonialism changed South Asia if we do not know what was there to be changed*.[18]

In the two decades since, several scholars have enthusiastically taken up Pollock's challenge to examine 'what was there to be changed', notably in the fields of Mughal, Rajput and sectarian literary and cultural history during the long eighteenth century. By foregrounding South Asian visual and especially textual sources in Persian, Hindavi and other early modern languages that had mostly remained unstudied in modern times, this rich new scholarship has delivered groundbreaking insights into the wider social, economic and political dynamics of pre- and paracolonial North India.[19] Fewer scholars prioritising Mughal sources and perspectives, however, have moved past the 1750s,[20] or specifically engaged the thorny historiographical questions of how and why Pollock's 'precolonial realities' changed as a result of the Mughal–British transition (c. 1748–1858).[21]

Crucially, then, this book addresses both the 'what' and the 'how' parts of Pollock's challenge. Firstly, it extends the new scholarship on pre-existing Indian knowledge systems for the first time to the field of music (including dance[22]) through an extensive evaluation of Persian and to a lesser extent

18 ibid; my emphasis.

19 For example, works listed in the bibliography by Molly Emma Aitken, Allison Busch, Chanchal B Dadlani, William Dalrymple, Arthur Dudney, Walter Hakala, Radha Kapuria, Prashant Keshavmurthy, Dipti Khera, Mana Kia, David Lunn, Saif Mahmood, Anne Murphy, Naveena Naqvi, Heidi Pauwels, Stefano Pelló, Holly M Schaffer, Kevin L Schwartz, Yuthika Sharma, Nathan Tabor, Madhu Trivedi and Richard David Williams. Rather fewer new works of political history have been attempted, a stand-out being Abhishek Kaicker's *The King and the People: Sovereignty and Popular Politics in Mughal Delhi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). The tremendous scholarly production of Rosalind O'Hanlon, Francesca Orsini and Margrit Pernau remains essential reading.

20 But see Yuthika Sharma, 'Art in Between Empires: Visual Culture and Artistic Knowledge in Late Mughal Delhi, 1748–1857', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Columbia University (2013); Richard David Williams, 'Hindustani Music Between Awadh and Bengal, c. 1758–1905', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, King's College London (2015) and *The Scattered Court: Hindustani Music in Colonial Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023); Naveena Naqvi, 'Writing the Inter-Imperial World in Afghan North India ca. 1774–1857', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, UCLA (2018); and Arthur Dudney, *India in the Persian World of Letters: Ḳhān-i Ārzū among the Eighteenth-Century Philologists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022). Remarkably, there is still no modern history of the pivotal reign of Emperor Shah ᶜAlam II (r. 1759–1806), though see William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

21 But see the work of Margrit Pernau, Yunus Jaffery and Kumkum Chatterjee; also Robert Travers, *Empires of Complaints: Mughal Law and the Making of British India, 1765–1793* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

22 The Sanskrit and Hindavi word *saṅgīt(a)* holistically incorporates music, dance and drama.

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Brajbhasha and Urdu writings on Hindustani music and its reception between 1593 and 1869, most of which have not been examined before.[23] Secondly, by narrowing the focus to the decades of the Mughal–British political transition (1748–1858), and by placing Indian writings from this critical period into sustained dialogue with East India Company and other English-language texts, I am able to demonstrate how and why late Mughal fields of music and dance changed through this critical century of British colonisation, including via select European patronage of Indian performing arts.

Music and Musicians shows that the transitional world of late Mughal and early colonial India does look different when we prioritise the perspectives (plural) of Indian sources and triangulate them against European ones. And as we shall see, the many traces that remain on paper of the ephemeral arts of music and dance, their theory, practice and appreciation, do indeed tell us things we would not otherwise know about how very different types of people related to the arts and to each other in intense, intimate moments of both relief and tension; how those relationships and moments were experienced and understood; and what all this meant for politics, economics, society and culture in North India at this pivotal time.

The chapters in this book are thus of substantial relevance to all historians of the transition to British rule in South Asia, not simply those interested in the arts. But this time frame is also crucial to Indian music history because, as this book demonstrates, this was simultaneously the century during which the major pre-existing knowledge system known today as 'North Indian classical' or Hindustani music became fully established in its modern form. It is the discrete, socially élite field of Hindustani music, its performers and its audiences that is the specific focus of *Music and Musicians*, and thus a brief introduction to what this musical field then encompassed is essential.

The Field of Hindustani Music c. 1700

The Persian word Hindustani means 'of or from the geographical region of Hindustan'. It is most commonly used to denote the dominant colloquial language of late Mughal India that was divided into what we now call Hindi and Urdu in the later colonial period.[24] These days, literary historians tend

[23] Though see Williams, *Scattered Court*, which uses the same European Research Council-funded archive as this book.

[24] Introduction, Francesca Orsini (ed.), *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2010).

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to use the umbrella term Hindavi for the related early modern dialects of Hindustan that include the two courtly ancestors of Hindi and Urdu, Brajbhasha and *rekhta*, in which many (but not all) song genres of Hindustani music were composed.[25] But the referents of 'Hindustani music' are more particular than simply geographical or linguistic, not least because this distinct musical system was patronised in courtly centres well beyond the borders of Hindustan proper, from Gujarat and Punjab in the west to Nepal in the north, Bengal in the east and as far south as Hyderabad, Arcot and Maratha Tanjore.[26]

The term 'Hindustani music' to describe a circumscribed field of music-technical features, theoretical and aesthetic discourse, song and instrumental repertoires, performing communities and performance and listening practices was established at the Mughal imperial court before the mid-seventeenth century. The earliest uses I have found of the term are in the *Pādishāhnāma* (c. 1636–48), the official chronicle of Emperor Shah Jahan's reign (r. 1628–58), to segregate a set of Indian song genres, key music-technical features and specialist performers from the Persian and Central Asian musical systems also patronised by the Mughals.[27] In 1663/4, the Mughal theorist Qazi Hasan further narrowed down the field to northern India specifically, distinguishing the *rāga*-based system of 'the province of Hindustan' – the subject of his treatise – from the *rāga*-based systems then current in the southern 'provinces of the Deccan, Telangana and Karnataka'.[28] But Hindustani music as a recognised, delimited field long predated its labelling: by 1593 the key Mughal ideologue Abu'l Fazl had

[25] See contributions to Sheldon Pollock (ed.), *Literary Culture in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). On song lyrics, see Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, 'Collections of Lyrics in Hindustani Music: The Case of Dhrupad', in Joep Bor, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, Jane Harvey and Emmie te Nijenhuis (eds.), *Hindustani Music: Thirteenth to Twentieth Centuries* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), 141–58; and Katherine Butler Schofield, '"Words Without Songs": The Social History of Hindustani Song Collections in India's Muslim Courts c.1770–1830', in Rachel Harris and Martin Stokes (eds.), *Theory and Practice in the Music of the Islamic World: Essays in Honour of Owen Wright* (London: Routledge, 2017), 171–96.

[26] Chapter 5; Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadāsīs, Memory, and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 37–54.

[27] Both *naghma-i hindūstān* and *naghma-i hindūstānī* are used; Abd al-Hamid Lahawri, *The Badshah Nama*, ed. Kabir al-din Ahmad and Abd al-Rahim, *Bibliotheca Indica Series* (Calcutta: College Press, 1867–8), vol. i, p. 152; vol. ii, pp. 5–7; Abu'l Fazl, *The Ain i Akbari*, vol. i, tr. H. Blochmann, *Bibliotheca Indica Series* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press and Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873), p. 612.

[28] Qazi Hasan, *Miftāh al-Surod*, Victoria and Albert Museum, IS-61:1–197 (Indur (Nizamabad), 1691; orig. 1663/4), p. 6; Katherine Butler Schofield, 'Music, Art and Power in 'Adil Shahi Bijapur, c. 1570–1630', in Kavita Singh (ed.), *Scent Upon a Southern Breeze: The Synaesthetic Arts of the Deccan* (Mumbai: Marg, 2018), 68–87.

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already mapped what was clearly the same field as it was practised at the North Indian court of Emperor Akbar I (r. 1556–1605) – but instead called it by the proper Sanskrit term for *rāga*-based music and its connected arts, *saṅgīta*.[29]

As the term *rāga*-based indicates,[30] the core defining feature of Hindustani music, then as now, is the primacy placed on *rāga* as its fundamental melodic framework. *Rāga* refers to the unique South Asian system of highly aestheticised melodic modes that have been theoretically systematised in written treatises and performance practice for more than a millennium.[31] The Hindustani and Karnatak (South Indian) *rāga* systems began to diverge in their aesthetic conception around 1550.[32] For those unfamiliar with South Asian music, a *rāga* is not the same kind of entity as a European scale or mode, nor is it a fixed melody. In the Hindustani system, as David Lunn and I have explained, each *rāga* exists 'in both a sonic form, and an iconic form. . . . In their sonic form, *raga*s are melodic formulae – ascending and descending note patterns with special additional rules – that act as blueprints for composition [and improvisation], and produce a unique character or *soundmark* for each *raga*. The soundmark produced by specific melodic gestures in each *raga* is associated with a distinct emotional flavour . . . and with a particular time of day or season of the year. Sung correctly, every *raga* is supposed to have a specific effect on the listener's physical or psychological well-being or on the wider natural world. . . . In the *raga*s' iconic forms, these associations are assembled into painted icons and poetic imagery. Since the fourteenth century, Indian poets and musicologists have described the *raga*s as beautiful heroines, brave heroes, sages, *jogini*s and gods. . . . And since the sixteenth century, the *raga*s have been painted in suites of six male *raga*s, each with five wives called *ragini*s and known as a "garland of *raga*s" – the *ragamala*'

[29] Abu'l Fazl, 'Sangita', 'On the Classes of Singers', and 'The Akhārā', '*Ain-i-Ākbari*', vol. iii, tr. Col. HS Jarrett, rev. Jadunath Sarkar (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1948), pp. 254–73; *Áín i Akbarí*, ed. H Blochmann, *Bibliotheca India Series* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1869), vol. ii, pp. 136–44.

[30] On using *rāga*-based instead of 'classical', see Davesh Soneji, 'Exploring Complex Histories of Islamic Musical Production in Colonial South India', unpublished lecture, British Library, 19/04/21.

[31] On the development of *rāga* c. 800–1300 CE, see D Richard Widdess, *The Ragas of Early Indian Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).

[32] Matt Rahaim, Srinivas Reddy and Lars Christensen, 'Authority, Critique, and Revision in the Sanskrit Tradition: Rereading the *Svara-mela-kalānidhi*', *Asian Music* 46.1 (2015), 39–77; Lakshmi Subramanian, 'The Reinvention of a Tradition: Nationalism, Carnatic Music and the Madras Music Academy, 1900–1957', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 36.2 (1999), 131–63, pp. 134–6.

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(e.g. Figures 2.2, 5.4).[33] By the late seventeenth century, music theorists had reached a consensus on the pre-eminence of one principal *rāgamālā* system (*mat*) in Hindustani music, the Hanuman *mat* (Table 7.1).

In other words, before the Mughals even arrived in India, the *rāga*s were already richly aestheticised objects of erudite connoisseurship associated with India's courtly arts and literature. The primacy of *rāga* to Hindustani music thus further marked this field out, explicitly, as élite – as the exclusive provenance of the courtly and literate social classes who together ran the institutions of government and civil society in late medieval and early modern North India. Indeed, as it metamorphosed over previous centuries, the whole field of *rāga*-based music had been repeatedly subject to deliberate processes of canonisation, standardisation and systematisation in writing – what I have called 'classicisation' processes[34] – most recently in the fifteenth century under the Rajput rulers of Mewar and Gwalior and the sultans of Jaunpur and Delhi.[35] But it was under the Mughals, between the reigns of Akbar I (r. 1556–1605) and Akbar II (r. 1806–37), that the full constellation of élite discourse, practices, performers and modes of listening that became known as 'classical' in the twentieth century was consolidated and codified.[36]

[33] David Lunn and Katherine Butler Schofield, 'Desire, Devotion, and the Music of the Monsoon at the Court of Emperor Shah 'Alam II', in Imke Rajamani, Margrit Pernau and Katherine Butler Schofield (eds.), *Monsoon Feelings: A History of Emotions in the Rain* (New Delhi: Niyogi, 2018), 220–54, pp. 229–30. See also Joep Bor, *The Raga Guide: A Survey of 74 Hindustani Ragas* (Monmouth: Nimbus, 1999).

[34] Katherine Butler Schofield, 'Reviving the Golden Age Again: "Classicization," Hindustani Music, and the Mughals', *Ethnomusicology* 54.3 (2010), 484–517.

[35] Major monuments were the *Saṅgītarāja* (Sanskrit), the *Saṅgītashiromaṇi* (Sanskrit), the *Mānakutūhala* (Hindavi), the *Mṛgāvatī* (Awadhi) and the *Lahjāt-i Sikandar-shāhī* (Persian); Emmie te Nijenhuis, *Musicological Literature*, A History of Indian Literature Series, vol. vi (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), pp. 16–8; Shaikh Qutban Suhrawardi [1503], *Mṛgāvatī*, tr. Aditya Behl as *The Magic Doe*, ed. Wendy Doniger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Allyn Miner, '*Raga* in the Early Sixteenth Century', in Francesca Orsini and Katherine Butler Schofield (eds.), *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature, and Performance in North India* (Cambridge: Open Book, 2015), 385–406; Sama ᶜUmar ibn Yahya Kabuli [c. 1500], *Lehjāt-e-Sikāndershāhi* [sic], ed. Shahab Sarmadee (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1999); also William Rees Hofmann, 'Singing Sufis in Text: Music, and Sufi Poetics ca. 1250–1600', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, SOAS, University of London (2022).

[36] Schofield, 'Reviving'. For the wholesale 'reclassicisation' process Hindustani music underwent under the British dispensation, see Janaki Bakhle, *Two Men and Music: Nationalism and the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); but see Katherine Butler Brown [Schofield], Review of *Two Men and Music*, *Journal of Asian Studies* 67.1 (2008), 335–7; also works listed in the bibliography by Davesh Soneji (also with Indira Peterson), Lakshmi Subramanian, Amanda Weidman, Gerry Farrell, James Kippen and Margaret E Walker.

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Thanks to the pioneering research of Shahab Sarmadee, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, Najma Perveen Ahmad, Madhu Trivedi and Prem Lata Sharma, it is now well established that in the seventeenth century, authors associated with the Mughal court started producing a plethora of new systematic writings on the *rāga*-based music of Hindustan.[37] As I discuss in Chapter 2, they translated older, especially Sanskrit, treatises and oral lore into the two new Mughal languages of courtly power and literature, Brajbhasha and Persian, intermingling the old with new material to remake élite musical discourse for a culturally mixed courtly regime that actively delighted in difference. From the sixteenth century onwards both the Mughals and their courtly Hindu counterparts the Rajputs prized a virtuosic aesthetic of borrowing and reuse from the Indic to the Persianate realms and vice versa. Artists and writers adopted ideas, literary topoi, visual and sonic symbols and complex imagery from one realm, and repurposed them across religions, languages, media and genres. This led over time to multiple depths and tangents of meaning speaking simultaneously in any one work of art or literature.[38] The new wave of seventeenth-century Mughal writings on music were steeped in this aesthetic. Their authors translated, mixed and remade written musical discourse afresh in order to 'reclassicise' Hindustani music for the ascendant Mughal dispensation with its cognate central ideology of *sulh-i kull*, 'universal civility', in which the emperor's role was to unify India's considerable religious, social and cultural diversity under his unitary harmonious benevolence.[39] But in making *rāga*-based music *theirs* by writing knowledgeably about it, Mughal courtiers also marked themselves out as true members of India's élite classes, firmly set apart from the uneducated masses who

[37] Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, 'Indo-Persian Literature on Art-Music: Some Historical and Technical Aspects', in Delvoye (ed.), *Confluence of Cultures* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1994), 93–130; Najma Perveen Ahmad, *Hindustani Music: A Study of Its Development in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1984); Madhu Trivedi, *The Emergence of the Hindustani Tradition: Music, Dance and Drama in North India, 13th to 19th Centuries* (Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2012); Saif Khan Faqirullah, *Tarjuma-i-Mānakutūhala and Risāla-i-Rāg Darpan*, ed. and tr. Shahab Sarmadee (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Performing Arts and Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996 [orig. 1665/6]); Nayak Bakhshu, *Sahasarasa: Nāyaka Bakhśu ke Dhrupadoṃ kā Saṅgraha*, ed. and tr. Prem Lata Sharma (New Delhi: Sangit Natak Akademi, 1972); see also my articles and Richard David Williams' work on the pre-1748 period.

[38] Molly Emma Aitken, 'Repetition and Response: The Case of Layla and Majnun', *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 155–210; also Aitken, 'Parataxis and the Practice of Reuse, from Mughal Margins to Mīr Kalān Khān', *Archives of Asian Art* 59 (2009), 81–103.

[39] Rajeev Kinra, 'Revisiting the History and Historiography of Mughal Pluralism', *ReOrient* 5.2 (2020), 137–82.

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did not listen to *rāga*, and nouveau riche upstarts who didn't properly know how to.[40]

By the end of Aurangzeb's reign (r. 1658–1707), then, Hindustani music was a long-established *rāga*-based art music identified culturally with the courts of northern India, Hindu and Muslim, but now overwhelmingly connected with Mughal imperial and provincial, especially Rajput, patronage. With the *rāga*s at its aesthetic heart, the Hindustani musical field encompassed, firstly, a flourishing corpus of music-technical and philosophical writings in Sanskrit, Brajbhasha and Persian (*saṅgīta-shāstra*; *ᶜilm-i mūsīqī*); and secondly, a performance repertoire of virtuosic song genres and instrumental forms that used *rāga* and *tāla* (the metrical cycles of the rhythmic system) as the basis of short fixed compositions and extended live improvisations. These song genres, all still in the repertoire, were composed in courtly registers of North Indian languages including Persian,[41] notably *dhrupad*, *hoṛī*, *khayāl*, *ṭappa*, *tarānā* and *ghazal*; and the main instruments were the stringed *bīn* (*rudra vīṇā*), *rabāb*, *sārangī* and Persian *tambūr*, and the drums *pakhāwaj*, *ḍholak* and *daf/dā'ira* (see Glossary).[42] Thirdly, as is still the case today, except on grand occasions these forms were performed as chamber music by small professional ensembles comprised of one or two singers and accompanying instrumentalists; slightly larger troupes of women and transfeminine[43] performers also danced. By the early seventeenth century, these forms and their performance practices were the exclusive intellectual property of multigenerational hereditary guilds built around households of male professional musicians from the endogamous *kalāwant*, *qawwāl* and *ḍhāḍhī* communities, and the highest-status female

[40] Schofield, 'Reviving'; Katherine Butler Brown [Schofield], 'If Music Be the Food of Love: Masculinity and Eroticism in the Mughal *Mehfil*', in Francesca Orsini (ed.), *Love in South Asia: a Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 61–83; Katherine Butler Schofield, 'Musical Culture under Mughal Patronage: The Place of Pleasure', in Richard Eaton and Ramya Sreenivasan (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook to the Mughal Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); also Chloë Alaghband-Zadeh, 'Listening to North Indian Classical Music: How Embodied Ways of Listening Perform Imagined Histories and Social Class', *Ethnomusicology* 61.2 (2017), 207–33.

[41] Persian was the official language even of the East India Company until 1837.

[42] e.g. Faqirullah, *Rāg Darpan*; and Ras Baras Khan [1697/8], *Shams al-Aṣvāt: The Sun of Songs by Ras Baras*, ed. and tr. Mehrdad Fallahzadeh and Mahmoud Hassanabadi (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsalensis, 2012).

[43] During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the role of women dancers at court was sometimes taken by young men dancing in the persona and dress of women; Brown [Schofield], 'If Music Be'. It is impossible to know how they construed their own gender, so I use transfeminine.

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courtesan communities (Chapters 4, 5 and 6).[44] The great master-teachers in the male lineages, responsible for preserving and transmitting these forms, practices and their theory and aesthetics to future generations, were called *ustāds*.

Finally, this select repertoire was performed for discrete same-sex groups of élite friends in intimate (or semi-intimate) gatherings dedicated to the connoisseurship of the arts of pleasure called the *majlis* or *mehfil* ('assembly'); this book largely deals with men's assemblies.[45] *Mehfil* is the pervasive term today for the modern private gathering of musicians and expert listeners that is directly descended in form and etiquette from the late Mughal *majlis*. But like their Ottoman and Safavid counterparts, Mughal writers most often used *majlis* (pl. *majālis*) for this highly scripted élite socio-cultural institution practised throughout the Persianate world,[46] whose specific Mughal boundaries, values, transgressions and delights were so widely recorded in painting, poetry and the biographical writings called *tazkira*s we will spend time with in Chapters 2 and 3.[47] As we shall see, what took place in the late Mughal *majlis*, and what we can make of it from the faded, fragmented testimony of its long-dead participants, is key to answering the questions I posed in my opening paragraph.[48]

Writing on Music in the Late Mughal World

Eagle-eyed aficionados of Hindustani music will already have noted key absences in my outline of the field above. This is because several crucial developments in Hindustani music towards its modern state happened during the time frame of this book – the arrival of the now-ubiquitous *tabla* and *sitār* in the 1730–40s and the *sarod* a century later;[49] the rise of *ṭappa*

44 Katherine Butler Schofield 'The Courtesan Tale: Female Musicians and Dancers in Mughal Historical Chronicles', *Gender and History* 24.1 (2012), 150–71.

45 also *bazm, jalsa*. I have always studied male *majālis* in my work on Mughal listening cultures; but art historian Molly Emma Aitken has recently opened our eyes to just how many Mughal paintings depict female-only *majālis* (personal communication).

46 Walter G Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Kathryn Babayan, *The City as Anthology: Eroticism and Urbanity in Early Modern Isfahan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021).

47 For my chief work on the Mughal *majlis* (c. 1593–1748), see Schofield, 'Musical Culture'; and Brown [Schofield], 'If Music Be'; also Kaicker, *King*, pp. 108–34.

48 Parts of this section are digested from Schofield, 'Musical Culture'.

49 James Kippen, 'Les battements du cœur de l'Inde', in Bor, Joep and Philippe Bruguiére (eds.), *Gloire des princes, louange des dieux: patrimoine musical de l'Hindoustan du xive au xxe siècle*

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and *ṭhumrī* under the Nawabs of Lucknow c. 1780–1850;[50] and wholesale shifts that we know took place in the technical conceptualisation of both *rāga* and *tāla*, from aesthetic to melodic classification and from additive to divisive cycle measurement respectively (Chapters 4, 5 and 7). The period 1748–1858 was one of the most significant eras of change for Hindustani music, in which new musical concepts, genres, instruments, performers and patrons asserted themselves on a fiercely competitive pan-Indian stage. Yet despite some vital earlier work on music-technical developments, most importantly Allyn Miner's *Sitar and Sarod in 18th and 19th Centuries*,[51] what happened to Hindustani music and musicians during this pivotal transition has never been properly mapped.

This significant lacuna exists for a curious historiographical reason: a pervasive belief that the guilds of hereditary musicians now called *gharānā*s ('house' like 'house of Dior') who exclusively possessed and passed on Hindustani music from the Mughal period down to the modern age were 'illiterate'.[52] Historians and music scholars have long highlighted the two-thousand-year-old tradition of writing *saṅgīta-shāstra*s in Sanskrit. But for reasons that are still obscure, Sanskrit ceased to be a significant medium for new works of music theory in North India (though not elsewhere) from c. 1700 until it was revived in the late nineteenth century as the 'authoritative' language of Hindustani musicology by nationalist reformers, led by upper-class Western-educated Brahmins Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande and Sourindro Mohun Tagore.[53] In the intervening years, so Bhatkhande asserted

(Paris: Musée de la Musique, 2003), 152–73; Allyn Miner, *Sitar and Sarod in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 1993); James Prinsep, *Benares Illustrated in A Series of Drawings* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1831).

[50] Peter Manuel, *Ṭhumrī in Historical and Stylistic Perspective* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), pp. 34–5; but there is no evidence for *ṭhumrī* as a distinct song genre before the nineteenth century.

[51] Miner, *Sitar*; also Madhu Trivedi, *The Making of the Awadh Culture* (New Delhi: Primus, 2010); Regula Burkhardt Qureshi, 'Other Musicologies: Exploring Issues and Confronting Practice in India', in Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (eds.), *Rethinking Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 311–35; contributions to Joep Bor, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, Jane Harvey and Emmie te Nijenhuis (eds.), *Hindustani Music: Thirteenth to Twentieth Centuries* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010); and Jon Barlow and Lakshmi Subramanian, 'Music and Society in North India: From the Mughals to the Mutiny', *Economic and Political Weekly* 42:19 (2007), 1779–87.

[52] Bakhle, *Two Men*, p. 16; Dard Neuman, 'Pedagogy, Practice, and Embodied Creativity in Hindustani Music'. *Ethnomusicology* 56.3 (2012), 426–49, pp. 426–8, 447 fn. 10; Daniel M Neuman, 'Indian Music as a Cultural System', *Asian Music* 17.1 (1985), 98–113, pp. 100–4 and fn. 6; Walter Kaufmann, *The Ragas of North India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 6.

[53] Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, *A Comparative Study of Some of the Leading Music Systems of the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries* (Delhi: Low Price, 1990); e.g. Sourindro Mohun Tagore, *Saṅgīta-sāra-sangraha* (Calcutta: I C Bose, 1875); also Bakhle, *Two Men*.

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in his famous address to the First All India Music Conference in 1916, the hereditary *ustād*s' alleged ignorance of written theory – 'the real backbone of practice' – caused Hindustani music 'to drift away and run into disorder and confusion', and writing on music itself to cease. 'Our old Sanskrit Granthas', he averred, 'having thus become inapplicable to the current practice, we naturally have come to be thrown on the mercy of our *illiterate, ignorant, and narrow-minded* professionals'.[54]

Modern scholarship has been considerably kinder than Bhatkhande towards North India's hereditary professional musicians and particularly to non-written modes of transmitting traditional knowledge. Both South Asian and foreign musicologists have come to understand that while oral, aural and kinaesthetic systems of knowledge transmission from master to disciple may be configured differently to written systems, they demonstrate equivalent levels of discursive sophistication, cognitive complexity and long-term reliability.[55] But instead of treating what was so obviously an ideological topos with suspicion, modern scholars have overwhelmingly accepted as fact the basic thrust of Bhatkhande's assertion – that the hereditary musicians could not read or write, or if the occasional *ustād* did possess a measure of functional literacy, they did not use it in teaching, performing or musical discourse. This is despite Ashok Ranade's authoritative but overlooked evidence to the contrary, that hereditary musicians frequently used writing as an essential supplement to embodiment and memory.[56] Our widespread assumption of musicians' illiteracy (or a-literacy) in the late Mughal and colonial periods has sustained an entrenched belief that there were few, if any, writings on Hindustani music between c. 1700 and the post-1857 development of printed publications in modern Urdu, Hindi and Bengali.[57]

[54] Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, *A Short Historical Survey of the Music of Upper India* (Baroda: Indian Musicological Society, 1985 [orig. 1916]), pp. 17, 40, in Dard Neuman, 'Pedagogy', pp. 427–8; my emphasis.

[55] Daniel Neuman, 'Indian Music', pp. 100–4 and especially Daniel M Neuman, *Life of Music in North India: The Social Organization of an Artistic Tradition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990 [orig. 1980]); Ashok Da Ranade, *On Music and Musicians of Hindoostan* (New Delhi: Promilla, 1984), esp. p. 25; Dard Neuman, 'Pedagogy'.

[56] Ranade, *On Music*, pp. 29–30, 38; e.g. marginalia in Basit Khan, Collection of Three Treatises: *Saṅgīt Sarāvartī [Sarāvalī]*, *Shams al-Aswāt* and *Usūl al-Naghmāt al-Āsafī*, private collection of Ustad Irfan Muhammad Khan, Kolkata (1856). See also Francesca Orsini and Katherine Butler Schofield (eds.), *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature, and Performance in North India* (Cambridge: Open Book, 2015).

[57] Bakhle, *Two Men*, p. 16; Daniel Neuman, 'Indian Music', p. 100, though crucially he has since changed his position – Daniel M. Neuman, 'A Tale of Two Sensibilities: Hindustani Music and its Histories', in Jonathan McCollum and David G. Hebert (eds.), *Theory and Method in*

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The long-standing consensus that the late Mughal was a 'silent' period has thus left a substantial hole in our understanding of Hindustani music's history that has been patched only partially with the oral histories, older repertoire and remembered genealogies of modern musicians.

If this book does nothing else, it demonstrates unequivocally that this consensus is not true. *Music and Musicians* showcases and evaluates a vast, rich corpus of writings on Hindustani music c. 1660–1860 that has mostly been overlooked to date. In a recent European Research Council project, we documented an enormous number of writings on Hindustani music for the late Mughal period in multiple North Indian languages, as well as visual records.[58] What is more, several of the most important and original late Mughal works turn out to have been written by the very hereditary musicians written off as 'illiterate'. Most of these writings on music have languished in the archive unnoticed, and the handful that are almost accidentally known to posterity have been misunderstood and very underutilised.[59]

This book explores the contents of these writings in depth to track how and why the field of Hindustani music changed over time. But in focussing on a different genre of writing on music in each chapter, I also foreground *how* to read such writings in the context of broader generic considerations and of wider historical events. For alongside fresh music-technical treatises in the canonical mould, several new genres of writing on Hindustani music arose during the period 1748–1858 whose advent in the field, not merely their content, demands explanation. Among élite Indian audiences, and those Europeans who for a time aspired to be like them,[60] this proliferation of Indian-language genres included *tazkira*s and genealogies, song collections, innovative musical notations, *rāgamālā* paintings and poetry, copies of old and the creation of new musical treatises, bureaucratic records and ethnographic writings and paintings.

Many of these late Mughal writings coincided in close proximity with colonial cultural interest and/or territorial encroachment. To help us understand late Mughal authors' varied and often surprising relationships

Historical Ethnomusicology (Lanham: Lexington, 2014), 279–308. For Hindi and Urdu print, see Miner, *Sitar*; for Bengali and Urdu, see Williams, 'Hindustani Music'.

[58] Katherine Butler Schofield and David Lunn, 'The SHAMSA Database 1.0: Sources for the History and Analysis of Music/Dance in South Asia', Zenodo (2018), https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1445775.

[59] e.g. the *Usūl al-Naghmāt al-Āsafī* (c. 1790–3); see Chapters 7 and 8.

[60] William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003).

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with colonial presence without downplaying North Indian writers' considerable agency, I make gentle use throughout this book of a novel theoretical concept: the 'paracolonial'. This concept was first articulated by Stephanie Newell in her work on West African literary communities, and denotes 'alongside' and 'beyond' the colonial.[61] Paracoloniality has become increasingly key to our understanding of South and Southeast Asian written, visual and auditory sources during the time frame conventionally marked off as the 'colonial period'.[62] In relation to the performing arts, we have theorised the paracolonial to refer to systems of musical knowledge and practice – Hindustani music being a principal example – that operated alongside and beyond the British colonial state. These knowledge systems were often facilitated by colonial infrastructures and technologies, and constrained by colonial law and violence. But they were not necessarily, or indeed even often, in thrall to colonial systems of knowledge. Rather, they coexisted in many differing relations and tensions with colonial thought and action on music, 'noise' and their proper place in society.[63]

Listening to writings on music during the Mughal–British transition through the filter of the paracolonial opens up revolutionary historical soundscapes, and allows for the autonomous agency of a plurality of Indian voices within the conditions of possibility afforded to them during this time frame. But to understand these conditions, we must deal not just with the views of the Mughal and princely states, but with colonial perspectives on Hindustani music. While I prioritise Indian and mixed-race (Eurasian) voices in this book, the period c. 1770–1840 was also when leading British interest in the Indian arts was at its peak. Many European colonisers in this century collected and even commissioned Indian musical manuscripts and paintings; and their marginalia, private papers, musical transcriptions and treatises, published travels and the official records of the East India Company illuminate shadowy corners that the more brilliant lights of the Indian materials don't always reach. When these rich and diverse Indian and European writings are read in context and, crucially, in conversation with each other, this extraordinary

[61] Stephanie Newell, '"Paracolonial" Networks: Some Speculations on Local Readerships in Colonial West Africa', *Interventions* 3 (2001), 336–54.

[62] Katherine Butler Schofield, 'Musical Transitions to European Colonialism in the Eastern Indian Ocean: Final Summary Report', Project ID 263643; Principal Investigator Katherine Butler Schofield, European Research Council (2016) https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/263643.

[63] David Lunn and Julia Byl, '"One Story Ends and Another Begins": Reading the *Syair Tabut* of Encik Ali', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 47.133 (2017), 391–420, pp. 416–17.

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written and visual archive dramatically changes what is possible to write about the history of music, musicians and their audiences in late Mughal and early colonial India.

Chasing Eurydice

But this book is not just concerned with the content and historical emergence – the 'what' and 'how' – of these writings on Hindustani music. My deeper interest lies in the *act* of writing on music in late Mughal India. *Music and Musicians* seeks to answer the question *why* all these Indian, mixed-race and English intellectuals and musicians chose to write about Hindustani music so copiously in this particular century, when all of them believed – as Sher ᶜAli Khan Lodi put it so eloquently in 1691 – that the task was impossible. Before the advent of the sound recording, once music stops sounding all we are left with is what Persian writers called the scratchings of a 'broken pen', a common idiom expressing authorial inadequacy,[64] but one that I will take seriously in this book. What were writers on music in the late Mughal and early colonial world trying so desperately to hold onto? Why? And what can we learn from their attempts?

The underlying quest of this book takes its inspiration from the figure of Orpheus inlaid in *pietra dura* in solitary splendour above the throne in Shahjahanabad's Exalted Fortress (Qilᶜa-i Muᶜalla) at the heart of the Mughal imperial city of Delhi (Figure 1.1) – a figure with whom the Mughal emperor personally identified as a sonic symbol of his divinely ordained power (Chapter 2). My fundamental philosophical question is this: if writers are akin to Orpheus, and if Eurydice is the music of late Mughal Hindustan in all its fullness – all its sensory, emotional, intellectual, ethical, social and political manifestations – is it ever possible for Orpheus to bring Eurydice back from the dead? To what extent, in other words, were writers on Hindustani music at the time able to pin music's experiences and meanings down on the page; and to what extent, centuries later, can we use what they wrote to understand what Mughal listeners heard and felt then, when we can no longer hear a single note of the music they were so desperately trying to capture on paper with broken pens?

The ultimate answer is no. For music is fundamentally an impossible object of historical enquiry. Music is only ever fully realised in the living

[64] Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), pp. 174, 184.

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Figure 1.1 Painting of the *pietra dura* inlay of the figure of Orpheus behind the throne in the Hall of Public Audience, Shahjahanabad. Delhi, 1845. 292D-1871. **© Victoria and Albert Museum, London**

moments of our experience of it; once its sounds have died away, those moments cannot be recaptured. In theory, the music-technical treatises I deal with in this book, especially those written by the hereditary Mughal *ustād*s who sang Hindustani music into being, should give us privileged access to its sounds. And indeed, as always, the devil does lie in the detail; there are whole worlds in these manuscripts that I am unable to explore here. But in my decades' experience of working with Mughal treatises, when it comes to the essence of what they truly believed music to be – 'the arousal of tender sympathy in the heart'[65] – Mughal music-technical writing can be as dry and unyielding as old bones.[66]

More than a thousand years ago, the Sufi Brethren of Purity knew that the matter of music did not lie in such things, in any case, but in the souls of

[65] Faqirullah, *Rāg Darpan*, p. 152.

[66] Katherine Butler Schofield, 'Emotions in Indian Music History: Anxiety in Late Mughal Hindustan', *South Asian History and Culture* 12.2–3 (2021), 182–205, pp. 184, 190–3.

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those who listen to it. The performers and listeners whose souls once delighted in the refined emotions and sensory experiences of the late Mughal *majlis*, too, have long turned to clay. And yet, we still have their writings. Theirs are the very same voices that echo back to us through the pages of our extraordinary primary sources. And they did not just write technically; they wrote other things, in other places, other voices and other genres that enable us to breathe back into those skeletal remains some vestige of the spirit that once enlivened them. This is why I have chosen to focus, not so much on the 'music itself' in this book, as on the life stories of musicians and those who loved them. Because it is the collective experiences of all those human souls, living through an era of terrible disquiet, that are the true substance of Hindustani music in late Mughal India.

Writing on music can never bring Eurydice back. But *Music and Musicians* shows that it is the journey into the underworld of the written archive itself, where her many echoes still resound, that tells us more about those lived musical worlds than we ever imagined. Music in late Mughal India existed to move the emotions of men and women in collective experiences; music was a whirl of sound and emotional response and search for meaning. In the writings of long-dead musicians and their élite patrons, we hold in our hands the earwitness testimonies of historical listeners. Although we have lost the sounds of late Mughal India, their writings – their own histories of the ephemeral – not only give us qualified access to what music meant and felt like then to all those who loved it, but may also enable us to sense those things too.

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