**Engl. Interview mit Hindol Deb zu ‚Essence Of Duality‘**

Talk about the creative process that went into your new album .

Immediately after coming to Germany in Köln at the end of 2015 for my Masters in Jazz Improvisation at the Hochschule for Musik I was confronted with the cultural and musical differences even though I have been travelling to Europe and the US since 2009 for concerts. The approach to combination of notes is very different in Europe than in modal traditions like in India. I grew up listening to indian classical musicians like Ravi Shankar, Nikhil Bannerji, Zia Mohiuddin Dagar and along with my well-trained indian classical background suddenly found myself in a space where I knew very little. I started listening to a lot of different styles of European music from Gregorian Chants, Medieval music to classical music like Bach, Chopin to minimalistic and Avant Garde music from [György Ligeti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gy%C3%B6rgy_Ligeti), Arvo Pärt, Steve Reich and others  including Atonal and improvised. Along with that a lot of jazz and its sub genres by Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charles Mingus among others. At the same time participating in jam sessions gave me a feel of what was actually going on around me. Soon I realized that I was dealing with eras of information which may not be relevant in world music and what I wanted to do, yet have the knowledge of various trajectories in harmonic music till the present. That’s when I became conscious of developing my own style and story.

In my indian classical performances I have been able to move the audience emotionally, atleast having an understanding of mastery in practice. Whereas the western styles of music governed by complex harmony was too new for me. There were lots of previously created crossovers between Indian and western music but intuitively I had something different in mind than my predecessors. Often I was faced with the challenge of whether I would be able to bring a balance in my compositions to make it interesting not only to the listener but also interesting enough for my fellow musicians. I started looking at the Ragas from the western perspective trying to discover turnarounds and modulation in Ragas or how to use tension and release from harmonic stand point. This led me to figure out the harmonic structures in Indian modes and experimented with tonal shifts with complete change of Raga or even playing the same Raga changing the tonal center. Poly-rhythmic structures is another aspect in Indian classical that I consciously wanted to incorporate in my compositions. Desert Clouds, and Essence of Duality are two such compositions where one can hear the rhythm section playing a different rhythm.

As it’s my debut crossover jazz album it took me around 2 and a half years to complete the compositions. After many try outs of my ideas and jam sessions with pianist Clemens Orth, who has also arranged most of the compositions in this album, I started getting better in formulating my ideas. However, as the Sitar’s sound and capabilities was nothing like any of the western instruments, I was still trying to find a convincing role for myself. In my search for other musicians playing traditional instruments who are working with a similar setup as mine, I came across Dhafer Youssef. I became a big admirer of his music while trying to imagine myself bringing the Sitar out of its traditional context.

.              Except your own composition ............. is a selection of songs that you interpret. How did you choose the songs for your new album?

I had been listening to a lot of different Jazz bands and musicians like Esbjorn Svensson Trio, Daffer Youssef, Lars Danielsson, Avishai Cohen among the contemporaries and Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charles Mingus, Herbie Hancock among the modal jazz musicians. I started analyzing their compositions which helped me understand their individual style. I have been greatly inspired by their music however I consciously wanted to keep the compositions based on my own creative outflow without interpreting any of their compositions.

.              Stylistically you range somewhere between Jazz and Rock, combining them with elements of Pop and World Music. How do you get along with the usual genre- classifications?

Usually I am conscious of the genres that I bring together in my compositions. As I have been working with different crossover projects combining Indian music with Flamenco, jazz, Scandinavian, Medieval music it’s important for me to understand and keep the stylistic differences alive. In this album I have taken strong influences from Indian classical modes and rhythms with Jazz compositional structures, harmonies and instrumentation. However, as creating crossover music is a big creative process and involves functioning in the grey area, it is possible to embrace more than the two genres in question.

.              The album ...... - Track by track

Light & Shade – A feeling of heaviness of scorching heat in a dry hot summer searching for shade hallucinating and walking towards a mirage. It’s the 1st composition that I created for this album. I used the 11/4 odd meter with different subdivisions in Raga Madhuwanti with a feeling of heaviness of heat in a dry hot summer searching for shade. It reminded me of the summer in Delhi at times walking towards a mirage.

Desert Clouds

After a scorching heat the next composition has a natural tendency for release through clouds and rain. Raga Miyan ki Malhar which is a rainy season raga is explored in this composition. There is a lot of polyrhythmic aspect in it.

Unknown Voyage

An unknown journey with no fixed destination letting life bring all surprises. Sometimes rough, other times calm but never the same. I used Raga Purvi to and experimented with changing few notes here and there.

Fragmented within – A non-settling feeling within with many fragmented pieces of self. Raga Kirwani, wanted to make a long odd break up composition

Offering – Repetitive phrases like a chant invoking a devotional feeling within with a blissful mood this composition is minimalistic and has polyrhythmic approach. I have mainly used Raga Yaman

Dreams from the past – Memories of someone and incidents floating in your dream leaving you with a mixed feeling. I used Raga Bhatiyar and worked with its harmonic progression.

Journey to Kedarnath – Used Raga Kedar as a baseline to start with. Also Kedarnath is a place of pilgrimage high up in the Himalayas where people go with a joyous feeling.

Essence of Duality – In this vast Universe everything starts with THE ONE and branches out into many. I have used Raga Chandrakauns with a five over four polyrhythmic pattern and shifted the tonal centre in B and in C section playing the same Raga.

Run away – It’s a fast pace composition based on Raga Bhairavi. It has two different tonal centers – D and G

.             Talk about the chemistry between you and the two other guys and A few words about the musicians who join you on the album

Clemens Orth is a dear friend has been involved with me musically before I started composing for this album. Each time I had rough ideas I came to try them out with him. He is a fantastic musician and has motivated me a lot through his inputs and suggestions. We have spent hours talking about music, philosophy and understand each other intuitively. I have known Christian Ramond, the Contra Bassist since 2013 when he came to India. We  and we played together with Jarry Singla and other Indian colleagues. Since the beginning itself I like his sound and approach. I think his vast experience playing with different musicians and genres gives him an edge in going beyond jazz.  Jens Düppe the Drummer and the backbone of the band is a highly trained and experienced drummer. He is really quick in interpreting the music. Finally, there is Tamara Lukasheva as guest vocalist in 3 songs. She has a beautiful voice and adds a unique color to the compositions.

The best part is that as they already know each other and have worked together, they have a great understanding between them. So it was easy for me to bring them together and make music. I am really thankful to all of them for believing in me and in my music.

 .              You come from a family of musicians. Your father played the Sitar. How did that influence you?

My father Sri Panchanan Sardar who is a Sitarist and a Bangla folk singer impacted me a lot in getting into compositions. I grew up watching him compose for Ballets, Choreographies apart from giving Indian classical performances. He introduced me to sitar at the age of five. During my growing up and training years I’ve hardly heard any music apart from Indian classical. We had only one cassette of western classical Tchekowsky’s Swan Lake which from time to time I would listen to as a backdoor to western music. Jazz was alien music to me until I discovered it on Radio in my 9th class.

.              Please talk about the other music projects that you do beside your album

One of the memorable performances I did was together with Bruno Merse and Hamburg Junge Symfoniker performing Ravi Shankar’s Concerto for Sitar number 1 at Kampanagel in 2017. I loved it because of the magnanimity of the sound and use of various instruments. I’ve also worked in a project called Anders Hören by Marina Abramovic and Alte Oper Frankfurt where I played Indian Classical Solo for a Housefull audience in an unconventional setup where the audience could sit on the floor or even lay. Just before coming to Germany I composed for a Dance Choreography called Crossing Oceans for Odissi Danseuse Daksha Masruhwala featuring 3 folk tales from Greek, Japanese and Australian mythology. There are also two interesting world music projects I am involved in one is with Marcus Stockhausen called Eternal Voyage and Apart from that I have curated Migrantis Aves, an intercultural music project performing mostly traditional and folk music compositions from Iraq, India, Greece and Medieval music from Europe. And last but not least, I am a part of the JUNE Ensemble playing original compositions as well covers like Lviv and Taksim by Night by Lars Danielsson, Beethoven’s Für Elise.

.              What can you already tell us about your upcoming musical that you're currently working on?

Together with Nina and Mattias Perez from Sweden and percussionist Suchet Malhotra we are working on producing a crossover music album **Northlight** involving Indian and Scandinavian music influences. The Album is also due for release this year. And I have been working on two compositions for Migrants Music Manifesto a large ensemble involving musicians from different countries and cultures living in Europe which will be perform this year on the 19th of September at Alte Feuerwache Köln.

I am also part of the group Beyond the Roots which is currently running a world music concert series presenting different groups from around Germany and neighboring countries.