

Final Report from Pritam Singh, Feeney Fellow 2013

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I would first of all like to thank the John Feeney Charitable Trust for awarding me the Feeney Fellowship; it has proven to be of immense value in my musical development, creativity and collaborative work.

My initial proposal stated my desire to extend my Indian classical music knowledge to being able to write and create new music for Big Band Jazz. A rather ambitious task since I had no knowledge of western notation, instrumentation or the compositional structure for this genre.

This idea and ambition arose from having worked with many diverse musicians from various music genres with whom I shared my creative input as an Indian percussionist and vocalist. These collaborations led me to want to create my own music with an innovative idea of writing Indian classical Raga music for western Big Band Jazz specifically.

The Feeney Fellowship award

The Feeney Fellowship award was a stamp of approval and gave me the motivation and financial support to pursue my desire to learn to write western notation; instrumental understanding and composition development from transposing my knowledge of Indian Raga in creating a new Indo/Jazz sound.

I began by discussing the idea with a few close western classical and jazz trained musicians. I was absorbing all this new information, which I followed up with research and reading.

My initial contact was John Roddick, conductor of the Midlands Youth Jazz Orchestra (MYJO). I discussed my idea and desire with John to write and work with MYJO; he was interested and willing to try it out.

I further met Phil Rose, Head of Birmingham Jazz, who introduced me to Jonathan Silks, a graduate drummer from the Birmingham Conservatoire. Phil advised me to work with Jonathan and his Big Band. He felt I would gain more by working with professional musicians which would allow me to explore my ideas more intently and creatively.

My meetings with Jonathan were of great value as he helped me to understand the Big Band set up and compositional structures. Having an understanding of the instrumentation is essential to being able to write the various parts of the composition. This was a very different way of thinking from writing an Indian composition where the part is written first and later decided which instrument would be best suited for it.

I was led to work with a student of mine, Simone Maggio, a pianist, teacher and composer working in Rome. He studied Indian classical music with me for five years and I felt he was the perfect person to help me bring the two elements of

Indian and Western music traditions together. I flew over to Italy, San Benedetto del Tronto, a small town near Ancona. I worked together with Simone and Juan Sgolastra, an equally accomplished musician. We discussed compositional structures and instrumentation. They encouraged me to simply write and not be restricted by rules and theories. Again, this was a very different approach in comparison to Indian classical compositions.

Over the next days we worked on a piece I had started composing which I wrote in Indian notation. This was then transcribed in to western notation. Then came the most interesting part, harmonizing the various parts.

Indian music is basically monotone (without chord structures) working with a particular scale or Raga, which follows very strict rules. Here, I was breaking those rules and crossing boundaries with jazz scales and chord structures. This was largely Simone and Juan's input who imparted their knowledge to help me understand how, where and for whom I was writing.

We completed the basic lay out of the piece and it was down to me to work on it to develop it further and add as much detail and intricacy as I wanted.

After returning I was raring to go and start work with Jonathan and his Big Band. But, before that, I met with Carlos Munoz, a South American operatic singer and guitarist and Leo Turner a classical guitarist teaching music programming to A Level students. We initially met just to overlook my new piece.

This again took a new turn in my musical development. I thought it was performing the piece that was my ultimate goal but actually I realized learning to compose and write western notation for different instrumentation was the most important and creative part of my learning. Understanding harmony and compositional structures also expanded my knowledge of India classical music.

Through this process I learned more about different music computer programs for writing western notation. Sibelius is quite advance and mostly used by students who already have an idea of writing. A more recent program, Cubase, allows a beginner, like me, to work and write in a simpler format.

I bought both programs and am learning to create pieces by using them with the aid of a Midi-keyboard. With Cubase I simply play the music I create using Indian notation and it automatically writes it in to western notation.

I continue to take lessons in programming and I am also working on creating and recording my own music, a fusion of Indian classical music with a Big Band Jazz sound.

As a result of my composing and creative study, I have recently been commissioned to write a new piece for Magna Music Band in Leicester. This is a fusion of Indian classical percussion, vocal and a brass section made up of trumpet, French horn, bass tuba and flute. I am currently working with the band

and rehearsing the new piece that is to be showcased in Leicester on the 20th December as a cross-cultural event.

The Feeney Fellowship award has allowed me to grow and expand as a musician, dissolving boundaries and exploring new ground. I hope to continue on this creative musical journey and share my knowledge and music with all.

Financial expenditure

Pritam Singh (Creative study)	-	£30 a day x 2 days a week 29 weeks Jan – Oct 2014	= £1740
Sibelius Computer music program	-	£100	= £ 100
Cubase Computer music program	-	£100	= £ 100
Midi Keyboard	-	£ 80	= £ 80
Tutor fees	-	£10 per ½ hour twice a week x 15 weeks	= £ 300
Simone Maggio and Juan Sgolastra - (Compositional/ notation study)	-	£100 per day x 4 days	= £ 400
Travel (flight and coach – Birmingham to Ancona)	-	£140 + £40	= £ 180
Total			= £2,900