

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: JAZZ EDUCATION IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY

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There are people in India who enjoy jazz. It is a complex art form that requires proper instruction. The early part of my own jazz education was done in India and I did find learning opportunities rare. I wanted to study the experience of another Indian who learns and performs jazz in India to be able to get an understanding of the status of jazz education in India.

An exploratory, narrative single-case study was done of Kirtana Krishna, a jazz singer and guitarist in India. The international faculty at her institution gave her world class instruction. One of them, Steve Zerlin, was able to corroborate the facts and provide his own input. Two other jazz intuitions have opened and all three serve as primers. They have increased the quality and quantity of jazz being performed and some of their alumni are continuing their jazz studies in the US.

JAZZ EDUCATION IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY

by

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Esther Daniel, who believed in me and that this was possible. I recall when I first said that I wanted to get my Master's in Music Education; it seemed inconceivable, but now has become a reality, and the process has completely changed our lives.

Thank you for your support every step of the way, and for not giving up even when we had to be apart for a year and five days. I love you!

*Who can find a virtuous woman, for her price is above rubies.*

*- Proverbs 31:10*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

Berklee: Berklee College of Music

COMPs: Communities of Musical Practice

GMI: Global Music Institute

HBCUs: Historically Black Colleges and Universities

SAM: Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

UMD: University of Maryland

US: United States of America

USA: United States of America

## **Identities**

The names of people mentioned are all used with written permission, except for Ramaswamy Prasanna, due to his being a well-known figure and the founder of Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Synopsis of Personal Story**

As an Indian jazz pianist, my jazz education took its own unique path and trajectory. I was born in 1973 and my father, a classical pianist, had me undergo classical training. He was my first teacher and also taught me how to play by ear. By eighteen, I had heard enough about jazz to be interested in it. A former schoolmate and pianist, Samuel Samson and I used to play for each other and exchange notes. He had a teacher named Dizzy Sal, who, in his prime, was India's best jazz pianist. Though Samuel was in the early stages of piano playing and had been learning some pop and playing by ear from Dizzy, through this association he knew that something fascinating called jazz existed. I did not know anything about Dizzy Sal, except the name as mentioned by Samuel. Only when preparing for this thesis, through my reading, I really learned who Dizzy Sal was (Fernandes, 2012). Dizzy met famous American jazz pianist Dave Brubeck in Bombay (now renamed Mumbai), India. Brubeck took Dizzy under his wing and helped him get enrolled in Berklee College of Music in Boston, USA. Dizzy left the US prematurely and returned to India after having contracted some undefined disease. He remained a recluse and taught a very limited number of students.

Samuel was one of the few fortunate students to have Dizzy as his piano teacher. When we were in our late teens, he often talked about this extraordinary and elusive entity called jazz that Dizzy played, much to my curiosity. Samuel also introduced me to my first jazz teacher Victor Martins, who had studied jazz at North Texas State University in the 1970s. I took lessons from Victor for just a few months,

before he immigrated to Canada. After that, I studied through books and VHS tapes for a few years while continuing classical training. At twenty-three I began my Bachelor of Music, in Michigan, at Grace Christian University, where Professor Steve Talaga was a faculty member and jazz piano instructor. I took lessons from him for five of my eight semesters.

I returned to India after getting my Bachelor of Music. After some years of running a business there, I changed careers and became a professional jazz musician and also a private piano instructor. Around 2011, I formed the group Traffic Jam and we performed until 2016. We never lacked an audience, an indication that there are Indians who enjoy jazz. Since, 2017, I have been enrolled in the University of Maryland, in College Park, Maryland, USA. While essentially a music education grad student, I have also been involved in the jazz department. In each semester at UMD I have played in two jazz ensembles, one being a big band and the other being a sextet or septet and this has been a huge learning experience.

### ***The Problem***

The study of jazz for me is ongoing and is currently continuing in the United States. The brief personal narrative serves to highlight four factors that contributed to my motivation for this research. Firstly, a part of my jazz education was done in India, mostly in the early stages. Secondly, the majority of my professional jazz career was in India. Thirdly, even though, in India, jazz is a niche genre, there are people who enjoy it. The gigs and concerts I played there always had some jazz aficionados present. The interest exists, but there are few opportunities to learn jazz. Fourthly, my recent experiences of playing in jazz ensembles in the University of

Maryland made me aware that I was a lot less exposed to jazz than my bandmates, many of whom had far higher levels of expertise than me. This created an awareness of jazz being a much larger ocean than I had conceived of and that I had to catch up.

Apart from the brief few months of studying under Victor Martins, there were no other opportunities for jazz instruction that I was able to find in India. Most of the jazz musicians I played with in the 2010s in Traffic Jam and in other bands were self-taught, and some part of their learning was online. Being able to receive private instruction would have been a dream for them.

The private jazz piano students that I had considered themselves privileged to have found me, I was a rare commodity. In my city, Bangalore, of about ten million people, there were perhaps no more than two other jazz piano teachers, and as far as I knew, I was the only one who taught regular weekly lessons. There was one competent jazz guitar teacher in Bangalore, and even he did not teach regular weekly lessons, just occasional master classes. I did not know any other jazz teachers of voice or of any other instrument.

One past issue has been resolved. Today, almost any material available in the United States can be purchased through [www.amazon.in](http://www.amazon.in), and my students hardly ever lacked the books that they needed. Though jazz can be learned from books and the internet, they provide limited guidance. Developing wrong technique is one of the potential problems.

### ***The Rationale***

Based on the interest that exists, it seems logical that if there were more opportunities, there would be many more learners receiving jazz instruction. Nothing compares to having actual lessons from an expert instructor.

Because of the limited opportunities, it is important to study the reasons why these conditions exist. Regarding current practice in jazz education in India, I am not the best person to share my experience. Two of the larger drawbacks are my age, and that I presently reside outside India. A native Indian younger person, in an earlier learning phase, who has more recently been receiving jazz instruction in India and is a current performer there, would have more updated and relevant information. This led to the decision to find a participant to conduct a case study.

Of the options considered for an individual on whom to conduct a case study, jazz singer and guitarist, Kirtana Krishna stood out as the best option. I have been impressed with her knowledge of jazz harmony which indicated to me that she had studied it in depth. I knew enough about her to know she had some degree of formal jazz study within India and was therefore acquainted with current practices in jazz education.

### ***The Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of the study is to determine the status of jazz education in India through the narrative case study of Kirtana Krishna. Though I was unaware at the time I set out to do the study, a former faculty of the participant lives close to the university from where the research is based. It was opportune to be able to include his angle on the participant's experience from the other side of the desk, as a faculty member.

Furthermore, I was able to also view the participant from my lens, and included my perspective based on the four aforementioned factors under the "The Problem" heading. Therefore, it is a single case study, with three perspectives.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the rationale and purpose of the study I have formulated the following research questions, which I hope will yield a better understanding of the status of jazz education in India:

1. What are the circumstances that might cause an Indian to choose jazz as a genre to perform?
2. How does someone interested in jazz develop their musical skill in India?
3. In what ways do jazz artists build professional careers in India?

### **Scope and Limitations**

A limitation is that it is a single case study. Others might have had quite different experiences. Since this study is a primer, in new territory, it is intended to explore the topic. Hence, it is also exploratory research. There is potential for future studies to expand into having multiple cases.

A deliberate limitation is someone who did her jazz studies exclusively in India. This is because the purpose is to find out about the status of jazz education in India, and someone with mixed experiences might not fit the requirement.

Another limitation is that this would be a definitive study in the years from 2012 to 2019. I wanted the study to be as recent as possible as, the only article I found with any reference to jazz education in India is mentions the dates being in the early 1970s (Pinckney, 1990). Therefore, due to the need for research reflecting the current

situation, I wanted it to be as recent as possible, with a time span wide enough to cover the years of jazz activity of the participant in question.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In order to determine the status of jazz education in India, it would be expedient to examine the literature on how jazz education developed and progressed in the United States as it is the country of origin. Certainly, jazz is often learned and taught informally through private instructors and enculturation. However, the degree programs in US universities provide the records and the documentation to track this growth in a more objective manner. If it is indeed deemed to be a success and has had a good growth rate, as jazz education goes beyond American shores, the precedent is established. Jazz does require a demanding training regime and jazz education has become a field of study; It is a complex, intricate and intellectual genre of music (Przysinda et. al., 2017). A few worldwide examples and excerpts bear reviewing which helps in understanding the international growth trend in jazz education, and also how cultural factors affect each country differently. Finally, the history of jazz in India and the current music culture will be examined in order to understand the setting into which the current practice in jazz education is being done.

### **The History of Jazz Education in the US**

Jazz initially did not readily receive acceptance in the United States academic world. "Introducing jazz into the American academy was a complex and multilayered proposition, and one that not only necessitated changes at the institutional level, but also demanded initial acceptance on the part an academic community that was not fully prepared to make these adjustments"(Calkins, 2012). Classical music had been the primary music of study in educational institutions since the eighteenth century (Calkins, 2012). However, music education is changing and jazz education is growing

at a tremendous rate. It has been growing in formal and informal settings in the US and worldwide. A major milestone for k-12 schools was when participants of the Tanglewood Symposium in signed The Tanglewood Declaration which is comprised of a list of guiding principles to be followed by music education professionals. The document called for the inclusion of jazz in school music programs and was offered in an attempt to facilitate a "turning point in the struggle for jazz to be sanctioned as a legitimate academic pursuit"(Calkins, 2012).

In tracing a timeline for the development of jazz education, it is helpful to establish a date for the emergence of the genre. There cannot be an exact year, as jazz evolved out its four precursors, brass band music, the blues, negro spirituals and ragtime. (Gridley, 2016) Though the range of jazz starting point is from 1890 to 1920, a span of 30 years, a plausible and generally accepted year is 1917, making it a genre having been in existence for little over 100 years at the time of writing this article. One of the reasons for attribution of a starting date of 1917 is the first documented usage of the word jazz, though spelled "jass", through the recording of "Livery Stable Blues" by the Original Dixieland Jass Band. However, owing to the fact the band consisted entirely of Caucasian musicians, who were claiming to be the originators of the genre, this is controversial. However, 1917 is also the likely year of the launching of Louis Armstrong's prolific musical career, in construing his biographical timeline. Through his unique approach, style and ways of improvising on the trumpet, he would be more credible as a founder of jazz(Gridley, 2016; Kirchner, 2000; Whitehead, 2011). Therefore, although it was a progression and a transition, if a

specific year has to be attributed for historically dating the starting point of jazz, 1917 may be used.

From this point, jazz became a clearly distinct style of music. It is often referred to as America's Classical Music (Whyton, 2016), as it historically did start in the United States, in New Orleans. Classical Music, on the other hand, is mostly European in its origins, although there have been major American classical composers. As jazz spread, people wanted to learn to perform it, and jazz education transpired. Though it was traditionally self-taught, or picked up from peers, methods and materials did start to emerge.

Over time jazz education progressed rapidly, and became more and more recognized. This trend continued all over the world and is still rapidly increasing today. While western classical music had a head start by centuries, and advanced classical education is almost entirely through academia, this 100-year-old American artform called jazz appears to be ascending the ranks of university education both in its extent and in the degree program offerings. Some chronological excerpts of jazz educators, curriculum and programs could provide insights into this burgeoning field. Additionally, some forays into the rest of the world, with some examples, depict the extent of worldwide influence that jazz education is encompassing.

### ***The Pioneers***

The first documented jazz educator appears to be W. C. Handy (Prouty, 2005), an accomplished pianist and composer of “St. Louis Blues,” which is a standard today. The early part of his teaching career was well before 1917.

W. C. Handy, the famous "Father of the Blues" and bandmaster, may have been the first jazz educator in a school. In 1900, he was appointed bandmaster at Teacher's Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes at Normal, Alabama. While there, he taught many students the techniques and music which, in later years, would be called jazz. (Prouty, 2005, p. 83).

Being musically literate, and being involved in publishing and composing, Handy had the credentials to serve as an educator.

While there would have certainly been jazz education outside the "institution," it is far likelier that teaching of jazz in schools would be documented. There are a few records of out-of-school, or community-based teachers in New Orleans (Buerkle & Barker, 1973). Until the 1940's "institutional" jazz education took place within historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), though actual jazz degrees were not conceived of yet.

Another well-known jazz educator, Len Bowden, began teaching at college level at 1919. Prouty (2005) writes:

Educator and bandleader Len Bowden is presented as another early innovator in jazz education, having directed ensembles and likely some classes at other predominantly black colleges through the 1920s and 1930s. ... (he held) positions as director of bands at Tuskegee Institute, Georgia State University, and Alabama State University. Bowden later directed the training program for black musicians at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Chicago during the Second World War.

The extent of Bowden's influence as a jazz educator is unprecedented due to the sheer number of military personnel he taught.

Bowden was later to direct the training and education of one of the largest number of musicians ever to be undertaken in this country. As director for the training of the black musicians at the Great Lakes Naval Base (1942-45), Len participated in the music education of over 5,000 men, all of whom were expected to function as jazz (dance) as well as military band musicians. ...The learning environment provided by the early pioneers parallels the courses suggested for today's jazz studies curriculum (Carter, 1977).

It was over a decade after the time Len Bowden started teaching in HBCU's that jazz courses started to occur on non-HBCU campuses. There were many questions surrounding the legitimacy of jazz and acceptance of it took time. "The long, arduous passage of jazz from a despised, marginal entertainment to the solid respect conferred by academe has relatively little to do with the music, and a great deal to do with class, race, jobs, and—that potent persuader—money"(Marquis, 1998). Racism and other social stigmas associated with jazz hampered jazz education in its early days.

### ***The Jazz Degree***

The first college to have a degree in jazz studies was North Texas State College, which is now the University of North Texas (Prouty, 2005). Even then, they did not want to use the name jazz and thus the degree was called a dance band degree though it was understood by all to be a jazz degree. This degree came to be through a series of small steps, spanning several years. In 1947 M. E. Hall started a big band

called the One O'Clock Lab Band, One O'Clock referring to rehearsal time. This became a world famous group (Prouty 2004, Prouty 2005), giving Hall the clout needed to introduce courses in performance and jazz history. By 1956 the (Jazz) dance band degree came into being. It eventually became called a degree in jazz studies in the 1970's (Marquis, 1998).

The next institution to develop a jazz degree program was through Schillinger House, now known Berklee College of Music. Joseph Schillinger was a Soviet immigrant, who was both a mathematician and a jazz composer. He taught his mathematically based composition system to George Gershwin, his most famous student. Another famous student was Lawrence Berk who went on to form the Schillinger House in 1944, expressly to teach jazz. On the eve of their 10th Anniversary his son, Lee Berk, changed the name to Berklee College of Music. In 1966, they granted their first bachelor's degree in jazz and in 1973 became accredited through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. (Gerritse, 1985; Whyton, 2016; Prouty, 2004).

It is interesting to note, that a classical conservatory followed suit in offering a jazz degree (though at least two other universities had started a jazz studies program in between, that is Towson University and Miami University). New England Conservatory, which, in present day Boston, is just down the street (Massachusetts Avenue) from Berklee College of Music. Gunther Schuller was a French horn player in the New York Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, also a composer, conductor and author. Even from his early classical days he started gradually changing interest towards jazz. His epitome as a jazz musician was when he was in the Miles Davis

nonet for the groundbreaking “Birth of the Cool” album. In 1967, he became the President of New England Conservatory and did not waste time seeking to gain approval for establishing degrees in jazz studies. "In 1968, Schuller proposed the creation of bachelors and master’s degree programs in two areas—jazz performance and jazz composition" (Calkins, 2012, p. 82). The jazz department officially launched in 1969. Another radical move of Schuller was the hiring of African-American professors, who were outstanding instrumentalists from New York City.

Three years later, in 1972, a total of 15 colleges and universities offered degrees in jazz studies. In another ten years, that is 1982, there were 72 colleges and universities that had degrees in jazz studies (Barr, 1983).

The jazz degree has not only grown in its ubiquity but also in availability of more advanced degrees being offered. Master's degrees, that began circa 1974 (Fischer, 1999) have become nearly half as common as Bachelor’s degrees. The doctorate in jazz, which was almost unheard of two decades ago, is also gradually starting to emerge (Downbeat, 2019). "The University of Miami is the only program at the time of this writing that offers a doctoral degree with Jazz Studies as the primary emphasis"(Fischer, 1999).

Downbeat Magazine's special edition in October 2018, has a listing of Colleges and Universities entitled “Where to Study Jazz.” This is not a work of literature, but rather as it is from a periodical magazine and not a journal. However, it contains data fields listed under each college or university through which statistics can be extracted. This serves to confirm the exponential expansion of jazz education explained in the actual literature, with data that is more recent than the articles. Also,

while the literature is confined to specific regions and institutions, this is a broad strokes overview.

Two hundred-fifty universities and colleges are in the list of where to study jazz, with two hundred nineteen within the US. In the US there are one hundred-eighty bachelor's degrees in jazz studies/ performance, eighty-eight master's degrees and seventeen doctorates. Even Canada has four universities offering doctorate degrees (Downbeat, 2019). Therefore, there has been a high growth rate of jazz degree programs and even among advanced degrees.

### ***Jazz Education in k-12 Schools***

While jazz education has grown at the university level it has also grown through private instruction, and in other more informal settings (Prouty, 2004; Whyton, 2016). There also is a debate about the canonization of jazz education and how conventional and methodical it should or should not be (Reimann, 2012; Whyton 2006). Due to its enormity, the extent of non-university-based jazz education is unlikely be featured in a list, such as that found in "Where to Study Jazz"(Downbeat, 2019). However, there is likely to be a much larger contingent of jazz musicians without scholastic credentials, many of whom might have an equal or higher level of expertise (Whyton, 2006).

For those who do attend colleges and universities for jazz studies, the jazz education that they had in school was probably the biggest reasons they would have the experience and playing ability to be able to pass a college audition. Jazz has been part of many k-12 school music programs since around 1975 (West, 2015) and the



Tanglewood declaration of 1967 called for the introduction of jazz into school music programs (Calkins, 2012).

A large part of middle school and high school music education has been through jazz ensembles. Teaching improvising has been a challenge in schools as not all instrumentalists have the aptitude for it, but in a large jazz band, not all students need to improvise, only those comfortable with it. The jazz ensembles are also good for student social interactions (West, 2015), therefore, enculturation also takes place.

### **Excerpts from Around the World**

The expansion of jazz education around the world is vast, and is continuously growing even in the present time. There is a large, ever growing number of institutes, across many countries, and research information gets outdated fast. Though a few institutes that stand out could be mentioned, it would be better to feature examples of certain countries and the jazz activities and jazz education that takes place there.

Apart from Canada in its geographic and cultural proximity to the US, there are no determined correlating factors that appear to make one region of the world better than others, in terms of quality or quantity of jazz performance or education (Reimann, 2012). In the brief summary of worldwide jazz, the choice of featuring a particular nation is merely the availability and accessibility of literature, within the last ten years, on that country. Though there may be partial homogenization and overlapping themes in the summaries that follow, each article has an altogether different approach. They serve as excerpts, featuring the particular nations, to aid in understanding of worldwide jazz and jazz education.

## *Jazz in Greece*

As implied by the title, “Jazz in Athens: Frustrated Cosmopolitans in a Music Subculture,” Tsioulakis (2011) paints an overall pessimistic and morose description of the gigging scenario of jazz musicians in Athens. They are presented as being overworked, underpaid and unappreciated. The problem is that the US is constantly used as a benchmark and this is an unfair comparison. Also, through the descriptions of the lives of the local jazz musicians, there appears to be substantial live jazz activity, which in turn does not appear to justify the gloomy outlook (Tsioulakis, 2011).

Jazz education in Greece was spearheaded by the Philippos Nakas Conservatory:

In 1990 the Philippos Nakas Conservatory one of the largest music schools in Greece established a jazz department, which in 1992 became affiliated with the Berklee College of Music in Boston. This development had a dual effect: first, it gave employment to jazz musicians; and second, it gave students the opportunity, especially those living in or near Athens, to receive a jazz education without having to leave the country. On these courses, students were introduced to techniques of improvisation and jazz theory, whilst also having the opportunity to participate in ensembles directed by their mainly foreign-educated tutors. This small circuit of musicians, the single radio station, the dedicated magazine, the four specialised music venues, the educational foundation and the hundreds of eager students was what constituted the jazz music scene of Athens during the

1990s. Nevertheless, there was still one important thing missing: the audience (Tsioulakis, 2011).

There seems to be enough of an audience for live jazz for it to survive.

The negativity continues.

The jazz department of the Nakas Conservatory still exists, but in the words of one of its former teachers ‘instead of the big names of the jazz scene it now employs their former students ‘cause they’re cheaper and they don’t object to the rip off that is working for ten euros an hour’. And the audience for jazz has not grown;

The only quantity that seems to have disproportionately increased is that of professional skilled musicians. The eager hundreds of the 1990s are now qualified musicians who have either continued their education abroad or learned through obsessive album collecting and endless hours of transcribing improvisations: (Tsioulakis, 2011)

A new generation of locally trained instructors actually seems like a positive situation, indicating an increase in the skill level of the locals.

There is further lamenting about two jazz clubs that closed down with the blame being exclusively placed on a declining jazz audience (Tsioulakis, 2011).

There could be several reasons for the closing of a bar or restaurant as a failed business that may have little to do with the genre of live music being played there.

Jazz clubs close down even in New Orleans and New York City which certainly would have larger jazz audiences than in Athens. Overall the negativity overshadows the actual description of unique qualities and experiences of Greek jazz.

## *Jazz in Israel*

In this article, Caplan asserts that Israel is a great place for jazz. He was inspired to choose this topic when he came across a jam session in a bar on Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem, Israel. He participated in the jam, playing the standard "How High the Moon," though he does not state what instrument he played (Caplan, 2017).

While there are several institutions where jazz is taught in Israel, The Rimon School of Jazz, founded in 1985, appears to be the most prominent. This school operates in partnership with Berklee College of Music both as a platform and an International student exchange program. As in the previous article (Tsioulakis, 2011) the second generation of instructors at Rimon were former students. However, in this case, it is portrayed as a benefit to have locals who are competent to teach at the same standard as Berklee instructors. It also reveals Berklee's strategy of forging partnerships worldwide and thereby boosting its recruitment among international students (Caplan, 2017).

The late Arnie Lawrence, jazz musician and music educator, co-founded the New School of Jazz and Contemporary Music in Israel in 1986. He is an alumnus of the New School of Jazz and Contemporary Music in New York City. The Israel Conservatory of Music serves as the platform for the US based institution (Caplan, 2017). Other institutions which have thriving jazz departments are the Jerusalem Academy, the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University and Thelma Yellin High School for the Arts.

Caplan goes through biographical information of 15 different musicians, a majority of whom were born in, or began study, in Israel but eventually moved to the US to study at Berklee College of Music or New England Conservatory and stayed on with successful careers. While the information indicates that Israel is a significant contributor to the jazz world, it is also likely that most of the musicians would have a higher degree of fame in Israel than in the US (Caplan, 2017).

While fifteen Israeli musicians are listed, two of them, bear special mentioning. Anat Cohen is clarinetist and tenor saxophone player. She has received numerous awards for her clarinet prowess. In addition to being a solo artist she is known as part of the Three Cohens, that band she formed with her two brothers, Yuval Cohen on the soprano saxophone and Avishai Cohen on the trumpet, having recorded albums and performed with them for a number of years. The other artist is double bassist Avishai Cohen (Not the same Avishai Cohen who is Anat's brother). He recorded and toured extensively with Chick Corea. He also collaborated with a lot of big names including Bobby McFerrin, Roy Hargrove, Herbie Hancock, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Nnenna Freelon, and Paquito D'Rivera, Claudia Acuña, Alicia Keys and the London and Israel Philharmonic Orchestras (Caplan, 2017).

Cohen is among the Israelis who moved to the US to advance his studies in jazz. This phenomenon of the interchange of jazz musicians between Israel and other countries, particularly the United States is described by the interview subjects. Due to the Jewish diaspora in North America and Europe, there is a lot of back and forth travel, including jazz musicians that are making Aliyah. Dr. Arnold Palty says that there are 6 million Jews in Israel and close to that in the United States. He also

mentions American Jewish composers such as Gershwin and Copeland. When Yair was asked about the Israelis who graduate from the New School in New York, he replies "I think they are great. But, I am surprised that so many Israelis are in the front of the Jazz scene in New York. I ask myself are they really that good? Or, did the American Jazz musicians move on and left the scene for them I don't know what to say about this. Maybe it is because you can't just be a Jazz musician in New York you have to be everything. So maybe they just left the scene a little bit open. But the Israeli musicians are very good of course." (Caplan, 2017, p.98) Thus, exposure has been an important factor for Israeli musicians to become good.

Another factor that makes jazz in Israel flourish is the festivals. There is the Israel Festival in Jerusalem, the Tel-Aviv Jazz Festival, the Haifa Jazz Festival. The biggest and most successful jazz festival however is the Red Sea Jazz Festival at Eilat which began in 1987. Some of the notable performers who have played there are Bill Evans, Christian McBride, Randy Brecker and John Scofield. Avishai Cohen being the current artistic director plays there regularly (Caplan, 2017).

Israel seems like a great, thriving, jazz scenario, and certainly has a tremendous output from its small population size. Sometimes the lines are blurred as to whether they all are actually Israeli citizens, if they have an Israeli origin, whether they have some ties to Israel, or if they just have Jewish ethnicity and may have never actually lived in Israel (Caplan, 2017).

### ***Jazz in Australia***

This is an insightful and relevant article and some aspects of it would benefit it serving as a model for exploration of jazz in India. Most of the abstract and

introduction explains how Australia developed its' own distinct kind of jazz. Most of it relates to the geographic placement and historical musical roots. Australia's distance from the United States and its isolation from much of the world, caused a unique blend of jazz to come about:

Developing upon Anglo-Celtic and African American traditions, Australian jazz musicians have built upon a transplanted and imagined musical culture. Early Australian musicians developed improvising within a decontextualized environment, acquiring sounds, styles and ways of jazzing via occasional visits by touring bands and early recordings. Musicians temporally and physically distant from direct interaction with mainstream African American or European activity or creative thought opportunistically appropriated styles and voices. (DeBruin, 2016, p. 308)

It is the decontextualization that caused Australia to develop its originality, and as jazz musicians naturally exhibit a high degree of originality (Przysinda et al., 2017), it is staying true to form.

The participants consist of five improvising jazz musicians. For two of them, their learning was partially through enculturation. The term Communities of Musical Practice (CoMP) is also used throughout, first described under the heading of "Communities in Learning Jazz" (De Bruin, 2016, p. 311). Another topic is "Communities in and Beyond the Institution" (p. 311). For all of these musicians, jazz learning took place largely through collaborative experiences, rather than through Institutions. Though two of them did attend University to learn music, they cited difficulties with the structured environment. All of them forged their own music

educational paths. This is an example of the concept of "enculturation" espoused in Lucy Green's, "How Popular Musicians Learn."(2002) Like it is for popular music, it seems that "enculturation" is how jazz musicians learn too. Therefore, the Institution, though it is meant to serve the purpose of education, may actually serve the Community of Musical Practice to a greater extent, causing musicians to be in an environment where they could learn from each other. This is depicted through these statements from de Bruin's conclusion:

Australian improvisers in this study articulate the importance of their interactions within CoMPs that shape and influence their evolving relationships, processes and perspectives to creative musicmaking. CoMP can situate learning beyond the class within non-linear, multimodal and collaborative environments that for inquisitive learners foster vast possibilities implicit in improvised music. The learning by these participants reveals how CoMPs can possess relevance, value and meaning.

Understanding the ways community-oriented music practices culturally and socially facilitate holistic music education outcomes has potential to more effectively shape practices in formal music classrooms (p. 320-321).

In some cases, there could possibly be greater learning from "COMPs", for jazz students than they could learn from their academic courses; or in the least there would be the synergy where they could immediately start experimenting with, implementing, and unpacking what they learn in the classroom.



## *Jazz in Estonia*

While Estonia is largely focused on European classical music traditions, a major step towards jazz education occurred in 2004, when the Academy of Music started offering courses in jazz. While it does seem like a late juncture, Reimann calls it an academically conservative country. Though jazz started being played circa 1944 (Reimann, 2015), it took a good 60 years to make its way into academia, due more to political reasons than anything else (Reimann, 2012).

By using the periphery in the title "Jazz Education and the Jazz Periphery: An Example from Estonia," she implies that Estonian jazz is in the periphery. What she means is that if the United States, is at the center, Estonia is far from the center, more towards the edge or "periphery." She is against defining jazz education in terms of a canon, but supports decanonization. "The academic study of jazz history and performance should not be an isolated pedagogical system transmitting certain immutable aesthetical and stylistic paradigms, and educational practices; rather jazz education is an extension of the jazz performance." Like jazz is spontaneous and improvisatory, she argues that jazz education should also be so. It should be more adaptable to the setting, and she uses the words "flexible" and "changing situations" to make her point (Reimann, 2012). She ends with the following statement:

I would like to conclude my ruminations by turning once again to Scott DeVeaux (1991) By talking about (American) jazz history he warns us against exclusionary tendencies, grand narratives and canonization. Those thoughts are easily conveyed to the global context and to jazz education. Hence, the future of jazz education relies in inclusion rather than in exclusion, in diversity

of methodologies rather than in one orthodox or central approach, and in decanonization rather than in canonization. (p. 185)

Estonia is in the periphery, or in a location not expected to be a hotbed of jazz. Jazz education, and the resultant performances from the artists that it produces, does not have to follow the traditions of the country of its origin. It should form its own path and keep reinventing itself according to the circumstances of the students and their environment and other musical experience and exposure. In other words, she seems to imply, all jazz education, and hence the resultant jazz performance, even that in the "periphery", such as Estonia, does not have to be follow the jazz traditions that came from the country or origin, but it should forge its own path. (Reimann, 2012).

### ***Jazz in the UK***

Tony Whyton's chapter, "Brilliant Corners: The Development of Jazz in Higher Education" in the book "Advanced Musical Performance: Investigations in Higher Education Learning"(2016), asserts that in the UK, jazz education largely follow the trend of classical music in graded exams of specific instruments. Jazz education's growth rate in the UK is explosive and it is represented in over 50 institutions of higher education. He describes European jazz having a sound that is different from North American jazz, with it's distinct qualities. He also describes the conflict between institutional learning and learning through communities and through experimentation. There are also suggestions in the article that jazz education also develops within geographical boundaries, in order for the approaches to be more suited to the country or culture where it takes place (Prouty, 2016).

There is some debate about whether jazz is part of popular music and the conclusion is jazz is separating itself more and more from popular culture due to its unique characteristics, particularly the improvisational aspect. Jazz does seem to be quite a well loved genre in the UK. According to descriptions of the extent of acceptance and availability of jazz, it seems that after the US and Canada, the UK might be the third highest nation where jazz and jazz education is flourishing (Prouty, 2016).

### ***Potential for Growth***

The growth rate of jazz education in both degree programs and non-degree formal and informal teaching institutions that exists in the United States is being replicated in countries around the world. It appears to be highest in English speaking Western countries such as Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand in respective order (Downbeat, 2019). It is also high in Western Europe. Few excerpts such as Greece, Israel, UK, Australia and Estonia indicate that even though Jazz is not today's most popular music, it is alive and well, and jazz education has potential for further growth. There is no doubt that education is a growing field.

Jazz education is certainly growing, and with the above information being established, it does seem that jazz education in India would also have potential.

### **Jazz in the Indian Context**

There is very little literature about jazz Education in India. The following two statements might be the only research on jazz education on India.

The 1970s marked the beginning of jazz education programs in Bombay.

According to Tony Fernandes of the American Center in Bombay, the United

States Information Service in Washington began sending books and other source materials on Jazz to the Center in the early 1970s

(Pinckney, 1990).

In comparison to music education of Indian classical music the topic of jazz education is revisited:

The absence of formal musical instruction in jazz is responsible for the fact that most Indian jazz musicians are self-taught, in complete contrast to the rigorous training with a guru that is characteristic of traditional methods of instruction in Indian classical music (Pinkney, 1990, p. 58).

Due to the dearth of articles on jazz education in India, it would be important to examine the cultural conditions that contributed to this dearth.

In terms of Indian arts and culture, where jazz belongs, or if it belongs at all needs to be established. While India has its own genres of popular and classical music, any relationship in terms of compatibility or adaptability can be evaluated. This can be done through a brief overview of India's jazz history. Also, in examining the music culture of India, whether there is a relationship between jazz and popular music, or between jazz and traditional music can be explored.

It is not a premise that a connection has to be made; jazz could exist in its own niche, and it may well be. In other words, if jazz is an outlier, this is not a problem. To understand a current jazz artist in India, the setting into which they are placed largely determines the experiences they will have in a holistic or phenomenological sense.

### *Early Jazz in India*

Jazz did not take long to reach Indian shores. The earliest documented occurrence of a jazz performance was in 1922, by Dan Hopkins and the Syncopated 5 (Dorin, 2010). As in the United States, the time period when live jazz was at its peak in India was from the mid 1920s to the 1940s (Kalmanovitch, 2005). India was under British rule until 1947; much of the audience, particularly in the beginning were British and from other European countries (Pinkney, 2005; Shope, 2016).

African American musicians played at five-star hotels mostly in the cities of Bombay and Calcutta for North Americans, Europeans and wealthy, elite, Indians (Dorin, 2010; Fernandes, 2012; Kalmanovitch, 2005). Gradually Indian musicians began to assimilate the genre and started playing together with international musicians.

In the earlier years, a few African American musicians lived in India for several years at a stretch. Among these were trumpeter Cricket Smith and pianist Teddy Weatherford. The latter, who at one time was Louis Armstrong's pianist, remained in India all his life.

Three of the greatest Indian musicians deserve mention. Trumpeter Chick Chocolate, born in 1916 was the most well-known musician among the first generation of Indian jazz musicians. Later came Braz Gonsalves the saxophone player and Louis Banks the pianist. They were born in 1934 and 1941 respectively, were most active in the 1960s and 1970s, and are still alive. Braz is not very active musically now and Louis Banks went on to be a film scorer since the 1980s (Pinckney, 1990).

Pinckney argues that "Louis Banks is considered to be one of the most accomplished jazz musicians and studio composers in India(Pickney, 1990, p.40) He was instrumental in participating in and managing the biennial jazz festival known as the Jazz Yatra, which ran from 1978, bringing hundreds of international jazz artists to India (Pinckney, 1990). The Jazz Yatra jazz festival ceased after 2004 and this is indicative of a waning jazz audience. Prior to Banks generation, the greatest pianist was likely Dizzy Sal (1934-1998), from the city of Bangalore. He traveled to the United States to study at Berklee College of Music and also performed and recorded there. There was an unspecified illness that caused him to return abruptly to India, where he remained a recluse at his home in Bangalore (Fernandes, 2012).

Among the next generation following Banks, there seems to have been only one musician to have reached his stature. Eccentric pianist Madhav Chari was known to lash out at his audience, and also was rude and railed at reporters, so therefore nobody published his biography. He studied in the United States and collaborated with jazz artists Max Roach, Kenny Barron and Wynton Marsalis and performed across the US, Europe, and Asia. In 2015, at forty-eight years of age, he died of a heart attack. I did attend a concert of his in the same year. He came forty-five minutes late and, without apologizing, boasted for half an hour about how great he was, and about the impact he had for jazz in India, before starting to play. It was in a trio format with an electric bassist and drummer. There was an interval, after which he boasted about himself and the trio, and criticized other musicians and reporters for another fifteen minutes before continuing. On both sides of the stage, in a megalomaniacal style, were huge banners with his picture and the caption "India's

Greatest Jazz Musician." He sold physical CDs but did not let his material be sold digitally or videos posted on YouTube, and did not allow his concerts to be recorded, so there are severe limitations to researching him apart from hearsay. He is known to have screamed at and embarrass those trying to take videos of him.

The epicenter for live jazz was the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay. The greatest Indian and international jazz musicians played there through the years, and particularly in the 1950s and 1960s there were notable artists who stayed there for a period of time giving daily performances. These include Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck and Paul Desmond, and during their Indian tours spent the majority of their time at the hotel (Fernandez, 2012). The city of Calcutta also had a thriving jazz hotel scenario and audience, with local and international artists doing most of their performing in these two cities (Dorin, 2005; Pinckney, 1990). Among the mass of common folk living around India, few would have even heard of jazz, let alone heard it. It was an elitist genre and still is only among a tiny niche of English speaking, city based, audience.

There does not seem to be much scholarly research on jazz music and musicians in India since the turn of the century. There is some interest in jazz in India during British rule, that is until 1947, with most books and articles describing that time period (Fernandes, 2012; Shope 2016). Some articles may go up to the 1980s (Pinkney, 1990). Even though jazz never stopped, it may be considerably rarer, and hence not a topic for scholarly research.

### ***Bollywood Music***

Indian popular music consists predominantly of songs that are heard in Bollywood films. Like the name 'Bollywood' is an imitation, so is the music from this massive film industry. These film songs are a "ubiquitous presence in urban south Asia"(Morcom, 2001, p. 63). The Indian film Industry, Bollywood, churns out about 1000 movies a year (Hasan & Nika, 2014). Each film contains about six to eight song and dance sequences (Sarrazin, N., 2006). Therefore 6,000 to 8,000 popular songs in Hindi and other regional languages are released a year through the movies.

Anna Morcom has done extensive theoretical analysis on Bollywood music and explains how Indian film music does not fit into the tenets of Indian Music theory in that "stylistically, there is considerable overlap between song and background music. Some sections of songs sound more like background music, breaking markedly from the idiom of the song" (Morcom, 2001, p. 63-64). She also says, "The appearance of Hollywood-style music in Hindi films is easily traceable to a direct influence from Hollywood"(p. 64). From there she goes into detail about Indian rāga and has sections devoted to whole tone scales, chromatic movement, diminished harmony, orchestration, blues elements and ostinato and how they are "alien to the rāga system" (p. 71). This suggests that, popular music in India is largely constructed on the Western system of diatonic harmony.

In the early days of Bollywood, for less than a decade, most recordings were played by jazz musicians as at that point only they could read music (Fernandes et al., 2016). Apart from this, and the fact that both genres use western diatonic harmony, there is not much intersection between jazz and Bollywood. There are no songs that



actually sound like jazz. Listener's ears are more attuned to western music than most would realize, though it would be much simpler forms, and with nothing close to the kind of modulations found in jazz. Bollywood dominates the Indian music scene and is an essential part of Indian culture.

### ***Jazz and Traditional Indian Music***

Indian traditional music has far greater possibilities for compatibilities for jazz and its popular counterpart. The two most famous Indian Classical musicians, Ravi Shankar and Zakir Hussain had a number of jazz collaborations in recordings and performances with western jazz artists and even the Jazzmine album by Ravi Shankar (Simons, 2011). British born guitarist John McLaughlin guitarist also fused the two genres. Essentially a jazz musician, he studied, played and recorded Indian music extensively.

There are two traditions of Indian Classical Music: Carnatic Music and Hindustani Music. Both styles are based largely on aural tradition and improvisation. Also, both genres are in the category of world music in which intricate listening skills and playing by ear is a large part. "Performance skills in other sophisticated music styles - American jazz, Irish Celtic music, Argentinean tango, and Indian raga, among a myriad - traditionally have been aurally developed and maintained" (Woody, 2012, p. 83). Various aspects of jazz improvisation such as motivic development, target notes, reharmonization, and licks contribute to this improvisation tradition. Spontaneity, individuality, creativity, and imagination are what make up the jazz language (Przysinda, E., Zeng, T., Maves, K., Arkin, C., & Loui, P., 2017). Jazz is good genre for exploring playing by ear, as it involves experimentation and working

with chordal harmony. It provides a platform for organized improvising based on the form and chord changes. In this way, jazz improvisation is different from both kinds of Indian Classical improvisation.

Jazz and Indian Classical are not highly compatible as Indian Classical Music has no harmony (Raman & Dowling, 2017)(Sharma 2018), and consists of melody and rhythm only. The prominent Indian artists played jazz because of their skill as improvising. There are a number of indo-jazz fusion bands. Yet, there remains a limited historic discography (Simons, 2011). In the overall scheme and world of jazz, indo-jazz fusion remains very small, and is never likely to reach the enormity of Latin-Jazz.

A case in point of Indo-jazz's drawbacks is John Coltrane. He did take some Hindustani lessons from Ravi Shankar, and released a tune called "India" in his later album "Live at the Village Vanguard." The tune uses a pedal point on G, or a drone like sound known as a tambura (Raman & Downing, 2017). Coltrane is known for his extraordinary harmony and modulations in his former Giant Steps. His forays into the other extreme, with "India", met with very little success as compared with "Giant Steps", which, due to its harmonic symmetry, has been discussed and dissected by music theorists and mathematicians ever since 1960 (Mazzola & Pang, 2016). While he used many complex modulations earlier in his career, with his experiments in Indian music, he almost entirely stopped using modulations.

### *The Small Indian Jazz Audience*

Jazz is now well past its heyday and has yielded popularity to many other genres since, with only about 3% of the music listened to in the US being jazz (Gridley, 2014). There seems to be no statistics on how much jazz is listened to in India, probably because the figures or percentages may be too small to be represented on any list, table, or graph. The latest research of music listened to through digital media (Easwaran & Menon, 2019, p. 133) indicates that 18% of the music listened to in India is “international.” If for the sake of making an estimate, we say that within the 18% that 3% is jazz, that would be 0.54 %. However, it is almost certain that jazz would be considerably lower than 3% of the 18%. India's population is large though, being 1,210,193,422 in the 2011 census (Chandramouli, 2011). Because of this high population, the number of people who enjoy jazz may be higher than an estimation of percentage might indicate.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Jazz, an American artform, is played, learned, listened to, and danced to in many countries. "Though it originated in America, jazz is so compelling that musicians on every continent have played it, and today there is no city without it"(Gridley, 2016, p. 3). While there is successful jazz education around the world, jazz education in India has unique traits and needs a deliberate development of the ideologies according to the setting.

#### **Axiological Assumption**

The philosophical assumption that best fits the study is the axiological assumption where bias has to be acknowledged. "In a qualitative study, the inquirers admit the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field"(Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). The value is the quest for expertise in jazz musicianship for Indian musicians. The proposed participant of the study and I are of Indian nationality and origin. The biases are ideal within the context of the axiological assumption because of partial foreknowledge that the narratives of the selected participants would cover a range of situations. There is comparison with my own learning experience and that of Kirtana's and how different it was. There is also a comparison between the experience of Kirtana and other Indian jazz musicians whom I have known. While usually the comparisons made are deliberate, it is likely that comparisons could have been subconscious at times or there could be considerable opinionating. This is permissible within the axiological assumption as my mind ponders the range of situations among various Indian jazz learners and myself. A range of situations would be a jazz learner

who stayed in India versus a jazz learner who went abroad. Another range of situations would be a jazz learner who had the means for advanced studies versus a jazz learner who had financial barriers.

To make my biases obvious, I have, from the onset, provided information about myself. Based on the axiological assumption, I also develop my narrative in more details, to make my biases obvious. The assumptions are made from my standpoint as the researcher, therefore, my personal experiences provide the associations and connections to the experiences of the participant, and the way the information is disseminated.

### *My narrative*

This autobiographical material will serve as the perspective, or lens, through which I observe the participants. This fits the format of an interpretive biography. As the researcher, my presence is apparent in the text. I do admit that the voiced represents my interpretation, as much as the subject of the study. Therefore, both my ideas, and the participants' ideas are represented, as it should be for an interpretive biography (Denzin, 1989).

I was born in 1973, I grew up in India in the pre-internet age, I did not know what jazz was. In my late teens, I had a cousin from the United States who visited our family for a few days and taught me the blues scale in C, along with the basic 12-bar blues pattern. Using my Classical-style scale background, I just did what I learned to do with major and minor scales, I learned it in all 12 keys.

I had a friend, Samuel, who attended the same school as me and also played piano. We met once in a while and showed each other our latest repertoire and tricks.

I could not wait to show him the blues scale and demonstrate my blues prowess to him. He would often talk about a style of music called jazz and told me that if I wanted to play jazz, I needed to learn the jazz scale. He did not know this scale, but he knew people who did. I then went on a quest to find out the 'jazz scale' by using any possible source including writing to my cousin. I found out that there is not just a single 'jazz scale'. It has led me to the incredible possibilities of the various complex scales used in jazz and there is only more to discover.

Samuel knew a little about jazz from his former teacher Dizzy Sal, to whom he went for beginner pop lessons for about two years. He used to talk about Dizzy a lot, but I had forgotten about this until recently, as he was mentioned in the only book I found of the history of jazz in India. (Fernandes, 2016). A specific memory I had was of riding our bicycles with Samuel in front of Dizzy Sal's house, which had a big treble clef sign in front of his door.

While researching for this thesis, I read Taj Mahal Foxtrot (Fernandes, 2016), and in the opening pages Edward Saldhana, nicknamed Dizzy Sal, was mentioned. The name rang a bell and I could not get it out of my mind. Before reaching the end of the book, I decided to text Samuel, to confirm if Dizzy Sal was indeed his teacher. It was in middle of the night for him, but as soon as he woke up, he did confirm this. He also said that in his prime, Dizzy Sal was India's top jazz pianist, before Louis Banks came on the scene. This is confirmed by the latter part of Taj Mahal Foxtrot (Fernandes, 2012) as an entire chapter "A Damned Good Show", is dedicated to Dizzy, including some photographs. Therefore, it was providence, and a rare chance, that I could be influenced by a student of one of India's early jazz legends.

When I was about eighteen, I had the opportunity to take lessons with a jazz piano teacher, whom Samuel introduced me to. Being the son of a Christian pastor, both of my parents dreaded the possibility of me playing in a bar and so the lessons I had were taken in secret. I had raved about the jazz pianist, who became my teacher, at home, ever since Samuel and I visited him and were left agape with his jamming on the piano. Now I had to be careful to hide any association with him. He was the notorious Victor Martin; the bar pianist. The lessons were early on Saturday morning, at a time when no one would notice me missing from the house. I was also taking classical lessons at the time, and it did make my parents wonder about the other tunes I was practicing. I caught my mother recognizing and humming along to some of the tunes although a little puzzled about how I had learned them. After only a few months of lessons, Victor made the announcement that he was emigrating to Canada. The principles of jazz he taught and the foundation he laid for me were invaluable. The two concepts he emphasized the most were the importance of practicing scales and arpeggios and practicing tunes in all twelve keys.

Another source of jazz learning for me was through listening. The roads from classical music and rock converged for me as I gained exposure to jazz. I was playing in a rock band that literally formed the day I turned eighteen. The singer taught classical guitar at the same music school where I took classical piano lessons. He told me about the other classical guitar teacher Kenny at the same school who had a big collection of jazz and blues recordings. I made friends with him and borrowed many of his cassette tapes and every single VHS tape that he had. As I watched the videos at home, my father sometimes watched along, and even knew many of the big-name

jazz legends that were featured. This exposure provided me with a good understanding of what jazz sounded like and its typical instrumentation. I liked the way the musicians passed on the spotlight to each other when they did their solo improvising. This was in contrast to the rock band that I played in, where the singer and lead guitarist always had the spotlight.

Finally, when I first came to the United States in 1997 and started my undergraduate degree at Grace Christian University, I began taking jazz piano lessons from Professor Steve Talaga at my college. The fascinating world of jazz was accessible from then on. Although it was great at the time, looking back, it seems that what I learned was just a drop in the ocean. Ironically, I played more pop/rock and classical music in these four years mainly because I played for a singing group, making an album with them and touring on a bus. Therefore, I could not focus completely on jazz.

In 2002, three months after I returned to India with my bachelor's degree, my father died of cancer. I took over the family business and my music activities were few and far between. The decade starting in 2010 brought jazz back to me a little by little, more and more each year.

Of the many factors that led to my revival, the strangest was a Spanish girl. She was looking for someone to co-write songs with as she had penned lyrics to several songs. A mutual friend referred her to me, and I agreed to cowrite with her. I moved a digital piano into my office, we worked three times a week, and we had fourteen songs in about four months. She had paid an advance to a studio producer and he had never finished the job. Since we had all these songs we started looking for



venues where we could perform them. I had no idea that there were all these little restaurants and bars in my city Bangalore where live music could be performed. We played only one small gig together and it wasn't successful, particularly due to conflict between her and the drummer.

This fiasco was all the impetus I needed to seek out my own kind. Finding and getting along with local jazz musicians was an arduous process, with a lot of trial and error, but it started coming together. By 2013 I was playing out five nights a week. Simultaneously I also started teaching piano privately and was also writing arrangements for a church every week. I began the process of closing down the business.

At the time of writing this, I am in studying for my Master's in Music Education at the University of Maryland. While in my undergrad, jazz was a minor part of their focus, The University of Maryland has an active jazz department and offers degrees in jazz studies up to the masters level. I have taken jazz piano instruction for three semesters and have been playing both in big bands and smaller jazz combos. I have also taken two courses in jazz theory and arranging and been part of the jazz department's official jam sessions. This interpretive biography (Denzin, 1989) is highly impacted by the recent and current activities at the University in my own jazz education, as it is ongoing. All these experiences form the framework by which I base the axiological assumption of my personal story. It will play a major role in how I perceive the experience of the participant and her quest in gaining jazz education as it in the present and ongoing for me. We are from the same hometown, on the same quest, but on different stages of this journey, and are finding ourselves.

Jazz, after all, is the definitive genre of self-expression (Przysinda et. al., 2017).

## **Epistemology and Methodical Choice**

### *Narrative as an Avenue of Insight*

In this single case-study, there is a large element of the narrative. It is the story that can provide the insights that would shed light on what kind of jazz education exists in India.

"Narrative imagining - story - is the fundamental instrument of thought, Rational capacities depend on it. It is our chief means of looking into the future, or predicting, of planning, and of explaining....Most of our experience, our knowledge and our thinking is organized as stories"(Turner, 1996). A wide range of information is expected be gathered though the story of the participant. In story form, there could be emotions, and expressions of both joy and frustration in the journey of learning jazz. However, even emotions would also be revealing of conditions and situations that jazz learners in India face. This kind of information could not be revealed in mere statements or lists of facts.

Daniel Pink(2012) also believes in the power of stories, he says:

We are our stories. We compress years of experience, thought, and emotion into a few compact narratives that we convey to others and tell to ourselves. That has always been true. But personal narrative has become more prevalent, and perhaps more urgent, in a time of abundance, when many of us are freer to seek a deeper understanding of ourselves and our purpose.

More than a means to sell a house or even to deepen a doctor's compassion, Story represents a pathway to understanding that doesn't run

through the left side of the brain. We can see this yearning for self-knowledge through stories in many places - in the astonishingly popular "scrapbooking" movement, where people assemble the artifacts of their lives into a narrative that tells the world, and maybe themselves, who they are and what they're about, and in the surging popularity of genealogy as millions search the Web to piece together their family histories.

What these efforts reveal is a hunger for what stories can provide - context enriched by emotion, a deeper understanding of how we fit in and why that matters. The Conceptual Age can remind us what has always been true but rarely acted upon - that we must listen to each other's stories and that we are the author of our own lives. (p. 115)

Stories are the key to finding out what each participant experienced and what it learning jazz meant to them.

### ***A Single-Case study Design with Narrative Inquiry***

Two options for case study methods are the single case study and the multiple case study. "A primary distinction in designing case studies is between single- and multiple-case designs. This means the need for a decision, prior to any data collection, on whether single or multiple cases are going to be used to address the research"(Yin, 2018, p. 49). In this case, a single case study was selected. Being a field where there does not seem to be any prior scholarly research, in its limited size and scope, this thesis serves as a primer. Due to my own personal experiences with jazz education, my personal interaction with the subject and having unexpectedly met the very professor that enabled the participant to gain her knowledge of jazz harmony,

triangulation can take place. Therefore, more of a 360-degree view can be made of the participant. Also, based on the research questions, the study goes beyond just the student life of the participant, but also what being a jazz musician in India means for her. Therefore, it is a phenomenological study which takes into consideration, all aspects of her life. Due to delving into the details, and being an in-depth study, a single case study is used to answer the research questions.

### ***Exploratory Study***

As it is probable that no research of this kind is done before, trying to fulfill a theoretical basis might not be suitable. Prior expectations do not exist, it is unknown territory. Overall, it would be an exploratory study, as this is the guiding principle of an exploratory study:

Exploratory studies may have a legitimate reason for not having any propositions. Every exploration, however, should still have some purpose. Instead of propositions, the design for an exploratory study should state this purpose, as well as the criteria by which an explanation will be judged successful (or not). (Yin, 2018, p. 28)

The purpose is to understand the status of jazz education in India.

It also does partially cover an aspect of phenomenological research as it is "the study of the lived experiences of persons, the view that these experiences are conscious ones"(Cresswell, 2018, p. 75). The lived experience of the participant is what needs to be disseminated. As she lives in India right now, and due to her recent studies at Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music (SAM) and the community of musicians she is with, her experience and knowledge about current practice of jazz education in

India is up to date. This information can serve as a starting point to investigate the status of jazz education in India.

### ***Case Selection***

To restate what I mentioned in the introduction, my surprise at the participant's knowledge of jazz theory is what primarily sparked my curiosity of how someone in India did learn her jazz and knew it so well. I knew some outstanding musicians who were the best in the country, and also some who studied jazz but gave it up altogether. Since it was a single case study, I wanted someone in the middle, as representation at either extreme might not have painted a picture of how what an average jazz musician would struggle with and have a worthwhile story to share. It needed to be someone with a lifelong commitment to being a jazz musician, who was serious in their jazz education. The decision was made after narrowing down six possible participants and making initial contact with three. Kirtana, the participant, was interviewed twice, and Steve Zerlin, a faculty member at SAM was interviewed once, in order to corroborate the information given by Kirtana. The case study is about Kirtana Krishna with my perspective, and that of her faculty Steve Zerlin being taken into consideration.

### ***Member Check***

The first interview of Kirtana's was on October 17th, 2019 and the second on November 18th, 2019. The interview with Steve Zerlin was on February 26th, 2020. The time lapse between the interview and Kirtana and Steve were due to the fact the I did not originally intend to interview Steve, however it turned out to be greatly beneficial.

On April 17th, 2020, I conducted a member check with both of them by emailing them the part of my manuscript where I respectively retold their stories. Kirtana was happy with what I had written. Steve wanted some misperceptions to be rectified and I made the changes accordingly.

## **Chapter 4: The Narratives**

This chapter contains a brief story of Kirtana Krishna and how she came to be a jazz artist. Following this is a brief story Steve Zerlin and his teaching and playing experiences in India. Kirtana was a student at SAM at the same time that Steve was faculty there. The next section contains a combined story largely revolving around their experiences at SAM and their information about jazz education in India. The combined story begins with the background of my relationship with Kirtana including the incident that became the biggest factor for choosing her as the participant for the case study. The chapter culminates with the answers to the research questions being provided through the experiences and perspectives of Kirtana, Steve, and me.

### **A Synopsis of Kirtana Krishna's Story**

Kirtana Krishna, grew up in Bangalore, India, and her father used to play jazz records at home, which influenced her musical taste. As a child, she received instruction in traditional south Indian carnatic singing. She also learned some basic guitar.

When she was about twenty-one years old, circa 2011, she was part of a rock band as a singer, and Abhishek Prakash was the bass player. During conversations, they discovered their mutual love for jazz. He revealed to her that he was essentially a jazz guitarist and asked her if she would sing with him. When Kirtana agreed, they formed a duo called "Blue Rhythm."

Blue Rhythm quickly put a jazz set together and started playing gigs across Bangalore city. They performed both paid and unpaid gigs for about seven to eight months. Abhishek told Kirtana about a jazz institution called Swarnabhoomi

Academy of Music (SAM) near the city of Pondicherry in India. She was incredulous at first, saying that something like this could not exist in India. However, she discovered it did, applied there, and was accepted.

When she was twenty-two, in circa 2012, Kirtana began her jazz studies in SAM as a singer, attending for one year. Prior to this, she could not read music. She covered a good amount of ground in her jazz theory knowledge and understood harmonic concepts and form better than most of her fellow students. One significant highlight was that, through the private vocal instruction she received there, she began scatting. She said that though she struggled to scat in the beginning, she has improved over the years and has become good at it.

After a year at SAM, Kirtana returned to her hometown, Bangalore, where she spent her time doing jazz gigs, and also taught private voice lessons at a music school. Further, she had a brief stint in the nation of Bangladesh, where she was also involved in a jazz group. Currently, she has permanently returned to the vicinity of SAM and is building a house in Pondicherry. She is highly involved in the activities of the town of Auroville, which is a sub-section of Pondicherry, and is an artistic community.

Since 2015, she has been accompanying herself on the guitar and states that she has been constantly improving. She is currently receiving private jazz guitar lessons. She teaches private voice lessons, mostly to children. She also continues playing gigs in Pondicherry, Bangalore and other cities, preferring to sing with small combos like duos and trios, which she says is better suited to her voice. She plans on



continuing to pursue a jazz career, has dedicated her life to it, and hopes to keep attaining higher levels of expertise.

### **A Synopsis of Steve Zerlin's Story**

Steve Zerlin is an accomplished jazz bass player from Berwyn Heights, Maryland, who has had a significant performing and recording career in the United States and overseas. He has been visiting India since 1980 and has traversed across the whole country, except for the Northwest region. His initial trips to India were to learn transcendental meditation.

Ramaswamy Prasanna, the famous carnatic-jazz fusion guitarist was also the founder of SAM. In order to recruit and inspire the students, his strategy was to recruit faculty who were exceptional musicians. While Prasanna had difficulty in convincing another bass player to move to India to teach, that bass player recommended Steve due to the fact that Steve had been to India before and would very likely be willing to travel there.

Steve taught at SAM for about six years from 2010 to 2016. He began just a few months after it was founded. There were twelve students when he began. Towards the end of his time there, there were about 53 or 54 students. He taught ensembles, ear training, jazz harmony, the history of jazz fusion and private bass lessons.

Steve played in many of the top jazz venues in all major cities in India, and also played in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He performed on weekends and after the trimesters ended. During the breaks between trimesters, he would stay on for a while before returning to the US. During this time, he performed, traveled extensively

around India, and taught specialized lessons. He has now returned to Maryland and is continuing his performing career, is building a studio, and is open to the possibility of going back to India to teach.

### **A Combined Story**

It was circa 2015; I remember the singer Kirtana, a bass player, and I being present. There were probably other musicians present. It was a rehearsal for an upcoming gig. The bass player asked the group what scale could be used over a minor seven flat five chord. Without batting an eyelid, Kirtana answer that the Locrian scale could be used. I was impressed and expressed my amazement at her knowledge of jazz theory. It was an unforgettable moment and we even reminisced about this when I interviewed her. It was mainly because of this incident that I wanted to know how she received her jazz education.

The first time I saw Kirtana was about three years before this, circa 2012. I was at a restaurant in Bangalore named "Herbs and Spice" and she was performing along with a guitarist in their duo named "Blue Rhythm." I got into a conversation with the guitarist, who introduced himself as Abhishek Prakash. I said I would like to jam with him sometime. We exchanged numbers. I did not meet Kirtana at this point.

After several months, Abhishek called me to set up a jam. He was prompted to do this after seeing a video I had posted of myself on the "Jazz in Bangalore" Facebook page. He and I ended up jamming many times and performing together a few times. It was about two years later, through our mutual friendship with Abhishek, that Kirtana and I got in contact. Somewhere around this time Abhishek moved out of Bangalore. Like Abhishek had done about two years before, she called me to ask if

we could jam. Therefore, she and I started jamming and I have a memory of at least four performances together. For the last of these performances, Abhishek happened to be in town and joined us. It was ironic that both members of Blue Rhythm had become part of my band for that gig.

"Blue Rhythm" had been an initiation for Kirtana and jazz came naturally to her. She says:

All my contemporaries were doing pop, I somehow sought to distinguish myself, and went back to the memory of what I had already listened to.

Abhishek suggested these tunes and when I started singing them. I found that it came to me very easily, very naturally, I didn't have to make as much of an effort, which is funny, because for most people, it's the other way around.

She loved it and wanted to explore it some more.

Abhishek told her about SAM and she quickly enrolled there. The cost for a year at SAM was about Indian Rupees 900,000, which according to the historic exchange rate is about US Dollars 16,500. This included tuition, boarding and food. The diploma program they had was for two years, but due to the expense, Kirtana could only attend for one year. She did however, make good use of that one year and worked hard.

All the jazz faculty at SAM were from overseas, and Kirtana considered this to be a great benefit. She had an opportunity to learn from highly skilled professionals from around the world without needing to leave the country. Steve Zerlin was also one of her faculty. He shared the following about Prasanna's recruitment philosophy:

I was talking about Prasanna, and that was Prasanna's genius with the school, as if he said, let me bring faculty from the West, so that the students here in India, who will probably never have the opportunity to leave India and go to the West have a chance to study with Westerners. The ones who, you know, grew up with this music, it's like if I wanted to study Indian music, I don't really want to study it from some guy here, who went over to India and studied with somebody. I want to go to the guy that he went to, in India, you know. So there is a difference, you know, that's I guess the best you can hope when you come from another culture is, is you're never gonna be the same as the people who grew up with that music and who've been listening to it since they were listening to their parents talk, and they learned how to talk; The vocabulary of it, the feeling of the culture and everything, it's in your blood, it's in your, you know it's in your physiological makeup. So that's what Prasanna brought to India was, those of us from the West who weren't just - he said I don't want just teachers, I want people who are players; Who've been out actually doing it, who understand this music, and do this music, so I think that that was really what gave SAM the spark that it had.

During her year at SAM, Kirtana had three vocal instructors who were women from Mexico, Jordan, and France.

A big breakthrough in her learning was when, inspired by her instructor, Kirtana began scatting. As Kirtana told it, she was in a room with the teacher from Mexico and as she played the piano and started scatting over John Coltrane's Equinox. This is how she animatedly describes it:

I will never forget it, it was during one of our, one of the classes and I had my voice teacher ... and she was teaching us minor blues. We were doing John Coltrane's Equinox actually; we were doing that tune. She was sitting at the piano and she said ok, so now if I had to improvise over this, this is how I would go about it, and it was the first time that I was hearing it happening in front of me - live, I think. I fell in love with it immediately, because it sounded so..., I mean maybe it was the note choice of what she was using, or the chords, or I don't know what it was. It just like, drew me in and from then from then I want to know, ok, I need to know how the hell to do that.

It was an epiphany, a life-changing, inspirational moment for her. When I asked her if it was difficult to scat, she explained, using jazz terms and concepts pertaining to improvisation, that it was difficult, particularly in the early stages. She said that she is much better at it now.

Most of the students at SAM started with limited knowledge and ability, but there were a few who worked really hard and covered a lot of ground. Kirtana was one of them, she went from being unable to read music, to have quite a remarkable understanding of theory in just a year. She said, "That's me though, that's just my efforts, I mean, they taught that to everyone, but not everyone got that you know." Steve did attest that many could not read music, or even chord charts, and depended highly on their ear; some did need convincing of the value of being able to read. However, he had copious praise for the few hardworking students who made excellent progress, both his bass students, and those in his harmony class. He said that some of his former bass students are currently the best jazz bassists in the

metropolitan cities of Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata. He also explains about his harmony class, "Jazz is a very advanced style of playing music. To understand the vocabulary involves a fairly complex music theoretical background. So, in my harmony class, I started steering everybody towards it, and those who could get there - got there." Kirtana was one of those who "got there."

Steve had to cater his teaching for the Indian environment and notes some differences. SAM was a college-level academy and it was for those who had at least finished high school. He said that the Indian students were very talented, less experienced, and that some applied themselves. He used the word "competitive" frequently, when describing the West versus India. As he explains it:

If you come over here to learn jazz, you're gonna to really get thrown in the thick of it, because you're in a class with students who kind of grew up and the culture and you really got to cover lot of ground fast. Over there, I couldn't really do that to the students because I had to work with what they were able to get, you have to get them there, and get them step by step to a place where there's understanding. This is what Prasanna confessed, he said when he first came to Berklee, Berklee kicked his ass, he really had to get up to speed, and he did, he did the work, he really - and it shows in his playing.

He also explained how India was more laidback as it was more "cooperative" than "competitive:"

So, the Western influence, I mean it's kind of a butt kicker when you come over here, you know, there's a big contrast between the general mood of learning and pace of living in India, as opposed to when you come over here,

it very like, you know, ruthlessly competitive over here. So, the whole mode of behavior, it's got this real competition vibe about it. In India I felt, it was much more of a cooperative feeling thing. Everybody would let each other use everybody's instruments. Everybody shared everything very, very, willingly in India. It's not like that here.

Due to the students at SAM not having grown up in the culture, and therefore having less exposure to jazz and less experience playing it, Steve had to tailor his lesson modules according to the circumstances.

Kirtana shared information about two other jazz institutions that have since opened in India. They were the Global music Institute (GMI) in Delhi and the True School of Music in Mumbai. Steve did not know of the existence of the True School of Music, but had visited GMI once. In response to my questions of whether these were exclusively jazz schools, she responded:

I think as more and more people go to music school I think they're recognizing that jazz is kind of a mother ship of theory, of you know, of experimental possibilities, so, I think more people will take it up, and even if, even if it is not in its purest form, uh, I think songwriters and all the young blood, they are looking for, you com..., I wouldn't say complicated but looking for more sophisticated changes and sophisticated harmony when it comes their songs, so, you know, it, they might, it might still be rock, but then the rock will have some, you know, flat seven, flat nine, you know, which is unusual.

Implementing jazz concepts into rock is a start towards jazz, and it does indicate some theoretical knowledge has been acquired.

Her statement about these two other jazz schools appears to be reflective of her experience at SAM. These schools were a steppingstone to playing or singing jazz. The ensembles there did not actually perform jazz. In response to my question asking whether the students were able to “get jazz” in two years, my understanding is that he implied that they did not. This is because he said that they played rock, pop, and funk tunes that were specifically selected to stretch them and help them bridge the gap to help them understand more advanced harmonic progressions.

Another common factor of the three music schools, and for India in general, is the instrument choice. The overwhelming popular choice of instrument is the guitar and Kirtana was impressed with the guitarists at SAM who had been there for at least a year. In the first interview she said "guitar" or "guitarist" 25 times and only twice in direct response to a question. Steve even mentioned that heavy metal was popular in India, and that many of those trying to learn jazz guitar at SAM came from the heavy metal background.

Double basses are rare. Steve saw one double bass, when he went to the state of Mizoram for a week to give private lessons to someone who had bought one. Kirtana has seldom seen double basses or performed with double bass players. She said that most don't even know what it is. I played a double bass player in India only once, the rest of the time it was with electric bassists. On the other hand, when playing in the jazz ensembles at UMD, double basses were used frequently, and electric basses were rare.



Referring to trumpets or saxophones, which are important to the jazz tradition, both Kirtana and Steve said that SAM did not have a horn teacher, and the websites of the other Indian schools showed that they did not have horn instruction either (Professional Courses, n.d.; Program Structure, n.d.). Both of them hardly encountered horns in India at all. Every ensemble I played in at UMD had trumpets and saxophones and the big bands also had trombones. India does present some unique instrument preferences.

### ***Continued Learning***

Steve did not know of any other instructors or institutions for learning jazz in India once a student had finished their two years at SAM. However, he did mention some of the alumni who were in Delhi, who regularly met together to play. He said,

Those guys have good understanding of the jazz idiom, and the jazz players in the city, the guys who get together and do this stuff, they are their own school cause they understand the fundamentals. Did I give the example - a starving person, if you feed him a meal, you feed him once, if you teach him how to fish, you feed him for life? So, these guys know how to fish.

By meeting together, playing together, and exchanging ideas "they are their own school" and can keep learning from each other and improving jazz performance and understanding.

Kirtana's act of moving to the city of Pondicherry helped her to keep learning jazz. Though there are jazz musicians in her hometown of Bangalore and other cities, these large cities would not have the kind of concentration of jazz musicians in one area that she had. Pondicherry is close to SAM, and it is even closer to the artistic

community of Auroville. She is receiving jazz guitar lessons from a teacher whom she met in Auroville. She met him when he was a part of the Auroville Jazz Quartet which and they played at a bar in Auroville, where she was a programmer. Her continued involvement in a jazz community has helped her grow and mature as a jazz artist.

Steve did speak about some of the wealthier SAM alumni who are presently continuing their jazz education in the US. There is a contingent of them at Berklee College of Music, and other schools across the US. He has been in touch with most of them and he had recently been to Los Angeles where he met with three of them. One of them, a drummer, at Musicians Institute in Hollywood, knew his harmony so well he did not have to take the harmony classes and was able to go directly to the next level of classes. Most of the time, the SAM alumni came to their respective US institutions in groups of twos, threes, or more. This may imply that they were not only learning from their schools, but also that they were learning from each other.

I gained all this knowledge through interviews with Kirtana and Steve. There was a time lapse for over three months between my interviews with Kirtana and Steve. By this time, I learned they must have known each other since their time at SAM overlapped. Steve knew Kirtana but could not remember if she was in his harmony class, though he thought that she probably was. After my interview with Steve, on the same day, I texted Kirtana to ask her if she was in Steve's harmony class. She replied affirmatively. It is an incredible coincidence that I could actually meet the very teacher who imparted the theory knowledge, that helped Kirtana to be

able to know that the Locrian mode could be used to solo over a minor-seven-flat-five chord.

### **Answering the Research Questions**

Here is a restatement of the research questions:

1. What are the circumstances that might cause an Indian to choose jazz as a genre to perform?
2. How does someone interested in jazz develop their musical skill in India?
3. In what ways do jazz artists build professional careers in India?

Through the case study of Kirtana Krishna, and through the perspectives of both Steve Zerlin and myself, the answers to the research questions are reported here. Due to overlapping points in the answers the questions are addressed as a whole, rather than one at a time.

As rare as it is, it is quite possible for people in India to never be exposed to jazz, or for musicians to rarely encounter the genre. There were two factors that influenced Kirtana to become a jazz musician. Firstly, her father had jazz records and she listened to them growing up. Secondly, her duo partner Abhishek Prakash influenced her to play jazz gigs with him and to eventually study at SAM..

I was influenced by my friend Samuel, who was influenced by Dizzy Sal, who was influenced by Dave Brubeck. The influence Samuel had on me was not only creating the curiosity for this supposed final frontier of music call jazz, but also to taking me to Victor Matins' house and asking him to play for us. He got me to listen to jazz firsthand and introduced me to first jazz teacher. This opened doors for me

that led to additional circumstances allowing me to meet individuals who helped open other doors and the cycle has continued.

The big first influencer appears to serve as an ambassador for jazz and may be the most important factor causing another to choose learn jazz and for some to even choose to become a professional jazz musician.

I have been a private jazz piano teacher in Bangalore. There were probably no more than two other private jazz piano teachers in that city of over ten million people and to my knowledge, none of them taught as many students than I did. There was guilt in leaving Bangalore, where there was a dearth of jazz teachers. Through writing and presenting about jazz education in India, I believe, it would eventually do far more for jazz education in India. Additionally, there also is information for future researchers. The main point is, though few and far between, the private instructors in India do play a small role in helping budding jazz musicians develop their skill.

A surprising and positive revelation during the first interview with Kirtana was that there were two other institutions in India whose main focus was jazz. Both of these are in the two main cities of India. The True School of Music is in Mumbai, and GMI is in Delhi. She said that GMI was started by two brothers who were Berklee Graduates. GMI mentions itself as a partner with Berklee on their website(Berklee Global Partnership, n.d.), and Berklee's website confirms that six ensemble credits can be transferred from GMI(Global Partners, n.d.).

There seems to be a consistency between Kirtana's experience, my experience, Steve's descriptions of the Indian students, and even the literature: Community should be built first, and then the career will follow. Kirtana's choice of settling and building

a house in an artistic community helps her to have musician friends and she appears to have frequent gigs with barely any dry spells. She never did have trouble finding musicians to play with. I had trouble finding musicians and gigs as I did not have the community, due to have studied jazz in the US. During my four years of study, I did not have any interaction with Indian jazz musicians. It was only after I started jamming with local Indian jazz musicians in 2010 that I was able to slowly build that community for myself.

Steve made three trips to India before he went as a faculty member for SAM. During these trips he did not have any jazz performances, and nobody knew about him as a musician. However, once he began teaching at SAM he was in demand as a high-profile jazz bassist, traveling all over India to perform. Due to his interaction with the students and the jazz community, and his renown as a SAM faculty member, many gigging opportunities opened up for him.

For me, it was through friendly jams, that my first jazz gigs started opening up. The musicians I jammed with would suggest places to play, and these musicians and I would sometimes visit these places to hear others play live jazz. I was introduced to restaurant and bar managers through the musicians I jammed with, and thus started calling them to schedule gigs for us to play there. Some managers had never heard us play or even seen videos of us on YouTube. This suggests that as much as musical skill, or even at times more than musical skill, networking is important for a career as a jazz musician in India. Jazz musicians learning from each other, building a musical community, jamming, and networking would all be part of the jazz enculturation experience.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Comparing Results

The growth of formal jazz education is a trend first seen in the US and replicated in other parts of the world, and this has now come to India shores, with three institutions opening since 2010. There could possibly be still newer institutions of which neither Kirtana, Steve, nor I are aware.

If the trend continues in India, perhaps at some point in the future there may be a jazz degree offered. Most likely, this would have to be through a partnership such with an international college or university such as the Nakas Conservatory in Athens had or the Rimon School of Jazz in Israel (Caplan, 2017) both had with the Berklee College of Music (Tsioulakis, 2011). It doesn't have to necessarily be through Berklee though. However, a jazz degree in India could be years or even decades away.

### *Economics*

In 2012, SAM was the only option that Kirtana knew about. Because it was too expensive for her, she could only attend one year of the two-year program. In spite of this she did acknowledge that she was economically privileged enough to be able to be a jazz musician.

When Steve told me about the SAM alumni who had come to the US to study jazz, he referred to them as "those who had the means" and "the lucky ones." For the majority of Indians, due to the unaffordability, studying jazz abroad is not an option. For some, even studying in one of the Indian academies may be out of their reach. Potential students and their parents will likely consider the return on investment, and it does not seem to be currently viable.

Berklee also has strategically teamed up with a number of jazz colleges and universities around the world (Toulakis, 2011; Caplan 2017) and even have their auditions across the globe. Their marketing for international students has been brilliant. I did email asking them if they could provide me with data regarding how many students are of Indian nationality and how many students are of Indian ethnicity. However, they did not respond.

I did have a piano student in India who asked me to prepare him for a Berklee audition. When I asked him how he would be able to afford it, he replied that his parents intended to sell the plot of land that was to be his inheritance. In the end he dropped out of lessons with me as I insisted he pick a later audition date. In another instance, a former bandmate passed the Berklee audition that was held in Malaysia, was accepted, and made it to Boston. However, he could not gather the funding before the payment deadline and ended up attending New England Conservatory. From interactions such as those mentioned, it seemed to me that in India the only US jazz school people knew about and applied to was Berklee. This view was corrected by Steve's information that some SAM alumni had chosen other colleges including the Manhattan School of Music and Musicians Institute in Los Angeles.

Both Prasanna and Steve went to Berklee and it was their benchmark to measure competitiveness. It is not the 1970s anymore, and there are hundreds of options all over the world and especially in the US where there are at least 231 universities offering jazz programs (Downbeat, 2019), most of which tuition would be considerably less expensive than Berklee, and also the cost of living would be lower than Boston.

Berklee does not possess a magic formula that makes someone who goes there a great jazz musician. I do know some Berklee graduates and have witnessed the playing of many. In my opinion, some are phenomenal yet not all are impressive. From my interaction with the students at UMD who were getting jazz degrees, there was a clear delineation between those who practiced hard, and those who didn't. In my assessment, there are two or three diligent UMD jazz students whose skill level would be on par with an above average Berklee graduate. It is not entirely what a program offers a student, but what a student can extract out of the program, and if they can do so for a considerably lower cost, it does seem to be more viable.

### ***Enculturation***

While it is generally understood that practice is what makes a musician good (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Roemer, 1993; Ozmentes, 2012), it is easier said than done (Harnum, 2014). It is the community that inspires jazz musicians to put in the practice hours and make progress (Renick, 2012). Having to play or show your progress, whether it is at a jam session, or to your friends or bandmates, or to a professor; this is what might push one to practice.

The effectiveness of communities of musical practice (COMPs) is depicted by De Bruin (2016) in an article about jazz in Australia. He defines COMPs as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly"(p. 311). As in Australia, it would be difficult for a jazz musician in India to develop in complete isolation, something I can personally attest to during my years that were musically inactive. De Bruin, also cites Lucy Green's groundbreaking book "How Popular Musicians Learn"(2002). This book



contains a multiple case study of 14 popular musicians in London, England. She presents the concept of "enculturation" throughout the book, as the way popular musicians learn. To take the concept a little further, enculturation does not necessarily need to be exclusive to popular music. Popular music may only be different as it may not require "institutional" learning. Every genre including jazz might depend to some extent on enculturation for the musicians to grow, and this can greatly complement formal learning because "iron sharpens iron"(Proverbs 27:17).

Social media could also play a large role in forming community in rare music genres (Cawley, 2018). Some cities in India do have Facebook groups for those who like jazz, and I am part of jazz Facebooks groups of three different cities. These have been immensely helpful in connecting me with many jazz musicians. Social media is a vital part of networking and enculturation.

### **Implications for Music Education**

As is seen in the literature review, jazz education is growing at a fast rate in schools, colleges and universities in the US and round the world. In the US, the introduction of jazz studies is breaking centuries old purist classical traditions (Calkins, 2012). Conservatories and music departments in colleges and universities are noticing this trend as more and more of them are introducing jazz studies or adding graduate jazz degrees. Therefore, for music educators with knowledge and skills in jazz, the employment opportunities are increasing. Therefore, it would be advantageous for jazz musicians to study to be school music teachers or college professors.

Due to the presences of alumni from the three music schools, there appears to be an increase in young jazz musicians in India and Kirtana, too, believes this to be the case. These alumni can raise the bar. Steve mentioned that some of his bass students were the "go to guys" in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata. If they do indeed have professional performing careers, they may need to supplement their income through teaching. Kirtana did say she could not make a living by only playing gigs but had to also teach private voice lessons. All through my gigging career I also taught private piano lessons. Therefore, it is likely that some of the alumni of the three institutions are now teaching private lessons.

When the SAM alumni who are studying in the US return to India, they can greatly contribute to jazz education in India. They can inspire fledgling jazz musicians and impart their newly gained knowledge. There could also be GMI and True School of Music alumni who are studying in the US. If they have a US student visa in a non-STEM field such as music, currently policy dictates they can remain in the US for up to a year after graduating. Among those that do return, it is very likely that many of them would teach. Since they would be well networked, they have a lot of influence and could also have a lot of recording and output.

Some implications for jazz education in India through these musicians returning from the US would be are that there would be many more competent jazz musicians who can spread their influence. These musicians would probably draw bigger crowds when they play at jazz clubs and increase the popularity of the genre. Through their pedagogy, jazz might get introduced into music schools that typically have western classical lessons, and jazz may be even grow in k-12 schools where jazz

ensembles could even be formed. The future certainly seems to have greater possibilities for jazz education through them.

### **Directions for Future Research**

For future research on jazz education in India, there are a wide range of topics in need of exploration as it still is a very open, unexplored territory for research. Additional case studies examining the lives of professional jazz musicians and teachers in India will be helpful in examining the current state of affairs and beliefs about jazz in India.

Case studies from the other two institutions in India might be an option. This could be done to find out more experiences of jazz learners and to compare and contrast the jazz education between the three schools. It would also be interesting to perform case studies of US returned alumni of the Indian schools, particular if they engage in pedagogy upon their return.

Other possibilities for research that might indirectly be useful for jazz education in India is cost comparisons between different jazz degree programs in the US, including the cost of living in the particular university towns. Also, perhaps a cost to quality analysis could be made to find out affordable schools that have good programs. For prospective Indian jazz students, this is something that would be helpful in light of the GDP per capita of India. Some financial analysis could be done in terms of return of investment, for returning to India and performing jazz gigs and teaching. Since enculturation is also important, jazz department demographics on ethnicity and nationality would be helpful.

## Conclusion

Like Kirtana, there are some in India who are influenced by western culture, and who prefer to study and perform jazz. There could be a combination of reasons why the genre has appeal. It could be the improvisational element, the rhythm, the feel, the harmony, etc., or a combination of factors. The internet provides unlimited ways to listen to and savor the music.

Accessibility in 2020 is not like it was when I had four instructional jazz piano VHS tapes, and a few books in the 1980s and 1990s. There are many audio and video streaming services available on the Internet along with a plentiful amount of free, downloadable instructional material. Technology provides unlimited listening opportunities to make informed taste defining choices.

For some, learning a score note for note, or playing pop covers exactly like the original may be their preferred artform. However, others might follow in the footsteps of Kirtana and pursue jazz. As for jazz musician and instructor like Steve, he believes hearing musicians playing pop or rock covers is uninspiring and that jazz musicians are an entirely different breed of artists.

At this point in time, as I come towards the conclusion of this thesis, it is during the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID 19) pandemic. Life does not follow a script, nor does improvisational jazz. There is a very human and existential expressivity in musical improvisation. Of all western music genres, jazz is the best-known platform for this kind spontaneity.

For Kirtana, singing and playing jazz means everything. She said, "I can't do anything else, that I would be depressed and annoyed and defeated ... at life." It was

great that an opportunity like SAM came her way. Her experience at studying and performing jazz provides some valuable insights about jazz educational in India; the perspectives of Steve and I validate her story.

# Appendices

## Internal Review Board Certificate



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www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: October 15, 2019  
TO: Marcus Daniel  
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB  
PROJECT TITLE: [1450773-2] Jazz Education in India  
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification  
ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: October 15, 2019  
EXPIRATION DATE: July 1, 2020  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review  
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category #7

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of July 1, 2020.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of seven years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or [irb@umd.edu](mailto:irb@umd.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

## The First Interview with Kirtana

Kirtana: Ok, sure it's saying recording. Do I have to do anything? It's saying recording, so.

Marcus: Oh really! I thought it will ask you for permission or something, just one sec, ah

Kirtana: Well let me just get my headphones because I can't hear you very well

Marcus: Ok, sure

Kirtana: two minutes

Marcus: I'm using the computer's mic so

Kirtana: Yeah, I am too, but I mean somehow you're not loud enough, just hang on

Marcus: Ok, sure

PAUSE

Marcus: Great, is it better, great

Kirtana: Yes, better, Can you see me? shall I position myself better

Marcus: Yes, sure, whatever you like, I mean, Nobody's go - I'm not going to show this video to anyone, it's just for me to like do my transcribing, I mean, I'm going to transcribe the entire interview and

Kirtana: Ok, alright, then this is ... there's no problem as such

Marcus: yeah, ok, great, um, ok sure, so where are you right now

Kirtana: I'm in Pondicherry

Marcus: Cool, nice, decided to - did you decide to move there permanently, or

Kirtana: Yeah, I decide to move here permanently, I'm building my own house here, this is roots now

Marcus: wow, great, great, what prompted you to do that, to move here

Kirtana: Um, interesting, after SAM I got connected with the Adhishakti theatre company, that you know theatre company that is based out of Auroville, and I kept kind of doing work for them I would come here and teach them, and then I was also part of some of their productions, ok, so I found that its, you know it's a good environment in terms of having a kind of an artists community that's backing you. And also its a really nice place to live, you know, it's not polluted it's \*\*\* city, so I thought it would be best to move and kind of study in peace without too much outside influence I suppose.

Marcus: Nice, nice, ok cool, so tell me about Cheap Delerium.

Kirtana: It's just my Instagram handle, there's nothing more to it

Marcus: ok, is it you band or something

Kirtana: No, no, no, I had, I have a band Sage For The Ages, but at the moment we're not doing anything, as in I recorded an EP with them and I haven't released yet, so I you know, didn't get two of the tracks mastered and then I'm going to see maybe next year I'll put it out

Marcus: Ok, cool, alright, great, um I have a good friend in Chennai if you want, if you needed, you probably already have the contacts, but, uh, he does mixing and mastering and stuff, if you're interested I can send you his contact details.

Kirtana: Sure, because, I'm having a little, the thing is I recorded, uh, this entire album at, this place called Eb, which was run \*\*\* for [REDACTED], for some reason he majorly messed up the recording process and then, you know,



whatever, there was a lot of noise coming in and then he decided that he didn't want \*\*\* do the mixing after, I had to find someone else who was not the engineer on the process to do the mixing and mastering so there is a little bit of uh, tsk, just bad luck I don't know.

Marcus: ok, ok, sure, I'll send you his details, I'm very satisfied with his work, and he's really patient with me, I always come back with tons of feedback and changes, and he was always been happy to work with me. He's actually a former student also so

Kirtana: What's his name?

Marcus: His name is [REDACTED]

Kirtana: Ok, alright. Please send me his contact.

Marcus: He lives somewhere in Chennai, I don't know where exactly, but, he's moved so I don't know where he is right now, but I went to his old former studio.

Kirtana: ok

Marcus: That's a good three or four years ago. Yeah, cool, ok, let's just get to the actual questions, but it doesn't have to be the actual questions, but

Kirtana: Sure However, you feel

Marcus: Ok, sure, what were your first experiences learning music

Kirtana: Uh, first experiences learning music would be going for Carnatic classes when I was young but I somehow never followed through. I mean I went to various people in, you know, at, in different ages from six onwards and I never really progressed beyond the basics, in Carnatic, so

Marcus: Is it singing?

Kirtana: It was singing, yes,

Marcus: ok

Kirtana: Carnatic singing

Marcus: ok

Kirtana: It didn't appeal to me as much

Marcus: ok, I see

Kirtana: Then, when I was twelve, I started learning guitar

Marcus: ok, oh really

Kirtana: But again, I, maybe I learned for a year, and the knowledge of what I learned for a year I continued till I was twenty four, you know with the open chords, like, you realize that you don't need much to write music, so I learned, you know, just the basics, and I took it till I was twenty four and then I decided ok I'm going to study guitar now properly.

Marcus: I see, I see, wow, ok, so, when did you start guitar then

Kirtana: So, like I said, I started when I was twelve

Marcus: I mean properly

Kirtana: Properly would be in 2014 after I did SAM, I finished SAM in 2013, and then, uh, around that time was when I \*\*\* that ok I'll try and get into studying guitar more seriously.

Marcus: Ok, started in 2013 you said

Kirtana: 2013 I went to SAM

Marcus: ok

Kirtana: For, you know, voice educa, for, you know, to study jazz, and just as a vocalist

Marcus: ok, was that straight out of school, or was, did you have some other time in between, or I mean how...

Kirtana: yeah, I had some time in between, so at 21 I graduated from management school.

Marcus: oh ok, ok

Kirtana: I worked uh corporate till I was 23,

Marcus: ok

Kirtana: it was around that time that Abhishek and I started blue rhythm, so,

Marcus: ok

Kirtana: (laugh) I called it \*\*\* to performing jazz and then I realized that actually I did not know \*\*\*, so ... that's when I said ok fine, this is something that really appeals to me, the performance, I might as well go and, you know, educate myself.

Marcus: Ok, so how old were you when you started at SAM

Kirtana: 23

Marcus: 23, ok

Kirtana: 22 and a half, 22 and a half and I was out of it at 23 and a half

Marcus: Ok, great, yeah, cool, so, I mean, what made you jazz

K : Ha, that's a really difficult, um, I had the memory of listening to jazz, my Dad had records and he would play them

Marcus: ok

Kirtana: So, I remember listening to quite a bit of

Marcus: ok

Kirtana: But, it was also, you know, mixed with, I mean, when you're teenagers, \*\*\* years you're also listening to rock and, you know, it was mixed with a lot of other things, so at uh, I think, when I wanted to chose a repertoire for me to sing, I found that, uh, and especially because all my contemporaries were doing pop, I somehow sought to distinguish myself, you know, and went back to this the memory of what I had already listened to. And when Abhishek and I, when he suggested, you know these tunes, and we, when I started singing them I found that it came to me very easily, very naturally, I didn't have to make as much of an effort, which is funny, because for most people, it's the other way around, you know.

Marcus: I see

Kirtana: Other things come naturally to them and they have just really get into jazz, but, for me somehow it is something that I, felt comfortable with like, I knew, and it knew me kind of situation.

Marcus: Oh Wow, cool, how did you and Abhishek decided to, decide to form Blue Rhythm, how did that happen

Kirtana: (laughs) um, when I was, um, I think, 19 or something, I had a crush on this boy who used to play at this band, a, he was the guitarist, and Abhishek was the bassist, so I would go to watch \*\*\* and that how Abhishek and I formed a friendship, and of course, I would sing with them once, and then, he, uh, came up to he afterwards, in a couple of months later and said I have an idea for a duo, and you know, I'll play guitar, I've been studying jazz, why don't you sing. I said ok, we just

started jamming, and he came up with everything else, with the name and with the tag line and the brand concept and everything, he did all of that

Marcus: I see, what kind of music that that band play

Kirtana: Oh they played uh classic rock like \*\*\*, boyd, like krytos and you know the \*\*\*

Marcus: Ok, so you guys took a different turn, with \*\*\*

Kirtana: of course, yeah, and I had no idea.. he was a bass player right, I had no idea that he could play guitar and in fact he was studying Joe Pass and you know like doing his work, I had no idea

Marcus: uh ha, yeah go ahead

Kirtana: no so suddenly he had all of this done, like, in terms of technique and he just wanted someone to, you know, share it with and have someone else, a bandmate, I suppose, so.

Marcus: I see, did you guys do a lot of gigs and stuff or

Kirtana: uh, yeah, it was actually going pretty well before I decided to, I mean, we probably had 7 or 8 months before I decided to go SAM and those time, I mean, in those months, you know we quickly put together a set and we would just perform as much as we wanted, not all of them were paid at that time, we were just happy to, you know, sing and play, and it seemed like we were getting somewhere, which is when I thought that, ok, now that this is getting somewhere, I might as well, you know, really get my basics, and foundation, understand what the hell it is that I have to be, so I kind of left the band midway, and went to study music, and he hasn't forgiven me for it (laugh).

Marcus: I actually remember hearing you guys at Herbs and Spice

Kirtana: Yeah, that's right, we did have one, I think, one or two shows there.

Marcus: Yeah, I actually met Abhishek, I took his number, and forgot, I said I want to jam with you sometime, and I forgot all about it, and then he called and texted like some months later.

Kirtana: Right

Marcus: Because, I (laugh)

Kirtana: no, yeah, I guess, I mean, I guess he was looking for you know, other people to play with, so (laugh)

Marcus: But, sadly I'm not in touch with him anymore, I think once he left to Delhi or something, I just lost touch with him

Kirtana: Well he recently got married

Marcus: Oh he did,

Kirtana: He did (big laugh)

Marcus: Wow, oh wow

Kirtana: I know (still laughing).

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: He's married a lovely girl (\*\*\*)couldn't pick up the name) here in \*\*\* perfect for each other.

Marcus: ok, yeah, wow, ok, so that

Kirtana: So that's, how did you hear about SAM, uh, funnily enough it was through Abhishek itself like, like, he's been such an influence in my life, my god, yeah, it was through him, and I even remember having this conversation him, telling him that it's

not possible for India to have such a school, I do, I don't believe, you know, to have such a school. And he'd say no no it's true there is such a place, and you can go it, there are some amazing that have come down and if you really want to get into it then this is the place

Marcus: aha, I see, I don't know, oddly, in whatever conversation I had with Abhishek about SAM he never seemed too impressed, I don't know why.

Kirtana: He never seemed too impressed with SAM

Marcus: Yeah, yeah he said, wha, he said he went there and jammed a couple of times and everyone and everyone seems to be a beginner or something. That's what he's told me, way back.

Kirtana: Maybe, I don't know what experiences he had there, but, uh, when I went there, there were some really phenomenal guitar players, at least in the guitar department, everyone was a real cat, uh, those who had at spent a couple of semesters there. There weren't too many bass players, the vocalists were ok, uh, there were some good drummers as well. Uh, and, I mean it was a, I feel like now it's really fallen in terms of the pool that catch, because I think they just accept everyone, earlier when Prassana was'n, had a say, it was a, you know a more vibrant environment. But all the same, uh I, the teachers that come down, if you know how to make use of them, you can go from zero to like a really good space you know in good time,

Marcus: ok, I see, I see

Kirtana: In my experience of course,

Marcus: So you have, like guitar, bass, drums, you have piano there, or were there piano teachers?

Kirtana: yeah, piano as well, piano, and voice

Marcus: and voice, did they have any other instruments? or do they

Kirtana: No, no ,no, there was no horn section, no violin, none of that.

Marcus: Ok. I see, yeah cool, so just talk about SAM and your teachers there if you could , you experience there

Kirtana: Sure, SAM, what would you like to know, ok so, I had three vocal teachers, I did one year there

Marcus: ok

Kirtana: and in my first semester the system was that we would have two bits, and then the faculty would change after seven weeks, so we had two sets of faculty,

M : ok

Kirtana: uh, I had this Mexican super-star by the name of [REDACTED], she's quite something in Mexico \*\*\*

Marcus: Oh ok

Kirtana: uh, she was my first teacher, then I had uh, someone called [REDACTED] who was Jordanian, she was my second teacher, so in terms of what they taught me it was kind of I mean, I was put into the beginner section because I did not know how to read music, so, but again, I have a good sense of pitch, so I could pick up things very easily, but, in terms of what they taught me, it my beginnings towards vocal improvisation over changes, which is I think, you know the biggest thing when it come to jazz ex, of course you know you can learn \*\*\* and you can learn to sing, and you can learn the head, etc, but then understanding changes, like what is happening,

how to maneuver yourself through all that both of them taught all that, not so much in terms of technique, which was great, which was exactly what I needed.

Marcus: Yeah

Kirtana: And, ah, then of course you had all of the other, common classes and you had, you know, your introduction to harmony and how to, you know, what, what the hell is going on and ensembles, so that's about it.

Marcus: And I know, I mean I told I was really impressed with your jazz theory knowledge, and haha ...

Kirtana: hahahaha That's me though, that's just my efforts, I mean, they taught that to everyone, but not everyone got that you know.

Marcus: Ok, yeah, i was, I'll never forget that, that time

Kirtana: The Locrian bit

Marcus: Yeah, I will never forget that, yeah, wow, cool, yeah and also , I've hardly seen any, uh, anyone scat in Bangalore or India at all.

Kirtana: Oh really, ok

Marcus: Oh, but, I mean, you used to scat and you understood the changes and stuff, so that was, yeah

Kirtana: But that, that is what attracted me most, you know, to, I mean, when you hear Ella you're like, wow I want to be able to do that, but I also want to be able to do it as authentically as possible. Which I, which I still have not got there, I don't know, I don't know, heh, you know

Marcus: Ok, ok, I see, so you went there for one year only

Kirtana: for one year, yeah, just for one year

Marcus: Ok, ok, I see, um, is there a reason you decided not to do the two-year program

Kirtana: Yeah, because it was expensive, again I think the only reason, I mean I did of course want to go abroad and study, but I think the, the financial, you know, I didn't want to loan and all of that, because that's, I didn't want to get into a mess of it, so one year was good

Marcus: so , you kind of had it on your mind that you might possible like to go abroad.

Kirtana: Yeah , yeah, for sure

Marcus: Is that, are you still open to that, if you can, if money was not an issue, you'd do it right.

Kirtana: Yeah, if money was not an issue, I would definitely \*\*\* abroad, definitely

Marcus: Ok, um, so um, apart from SAM, did you do any other learning with other teachers, or

Kirtana: Yes, so um and after I left SAM I think, um, I wanted to get into you know, uh, basically supporting myself as a vocalist, I wanted to study guitar more seriously, like I mentioned earlier, so I looked for, uh, guitar teachers, and that's when I started, I mean I was teaching as well, I was teaching voice, but I was also studying guitar with various different teachers and somehow like, I just could not make, connect with any of them

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: Except to, you know, uh till a couple of months when I finally found my guitar teacher and now we have a duo,

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: uh haho, ah, so till then of course I've also been studying, ah, of learning videos and I have a you know a large collection books and just material that I sift through now and then see how I can get better.

Marcus: Uh, ok

Kirtana: But now the focus is entirely guitar, focus on just, is just on you know improvising on the guitar

Marcus: I see, I see, ok, um, did you learn anything online at all

Kirtana: Ah, yeah, I mean, when I wouldn't get some things I would look it up online, I would look up how to play certain rhythms and you know, uh, when I can't hear the changes properly I always looked for things online, but not, it's not like I went on a course or anything like

Marcus: Ah, ok, ok, uh, did you pick up stuff from other musicians around

Kirtana: Um,

Marcus: Like you jammed with or performed with

Kirtana: uh, not in terms of technique, I think the musician community has been most helpful to me in, in kind of crafting my taste, you know, on what to listen to, who to listen to, ah, what, but I, I don't think I ever picked up anything from them in terms or technique, so

Marcus: Ok, ok I see, just general advice or something like that

Kirtana: Yeah, just general advice, yeah, I mean like ah, yeah

Marcus: Neither did Abhishek show you anything, or did he

Kirtana: Not on the guitar, somehow nobody ever took me seriously on the guitar, I don't know why, haha, you know, it's like they never bothered to tell me that you can do this, this way or you can do it that way

Marcus: Ok, so to him you were just a singer

Kirtana: Yeah, it's insulting, but yeah

Marcus: Ok, that's sad, yeah, was all of your jazz learning done in India

Kirtana: Yes all of it

Marcus: Yes all of it was done in India

Marcus: All of it, ok, wow

Kirtana: I was lucky enough to have been exposed to people who have played, you know, in different scenes around the world, mostly from SAM, so the information that I got was first hand authentic from, you know, American jazz players, and Latin jazz players. But I did not have to go outside of my environment to receive it.

Marcus: Ok, I see, wow, um, how, how do your family members respond you becoming a jazz musician

Kirtana: Ah ha, they don't understand it, but they support it all the same

Marcus: They support it?

Kirtana: yeah they do, because they know that I, you know I'm an absolute \*\*\*, they know that I can't do anything else, that I would be depressed and annoyed and defeated, yeah ha, at life I had to do anything apart from what I'm doing, so they understand that

Marcus: That's absolutely true about us jazz guys we just can't just do anything else and be happy in life

Kirtana: Exactly

Marcus: yeah, so that's the only thing we can do, are you a natural improviser, can you say that?  
Kirtana: Ah  
Marcus: uh, singing or guitar, either or both  
Kirtana: On voice, I'm definitely more comfortable, I would say yes, uh, I am natural at it.  
Marcus: Aha  
Kirtana: uh, uh, but at the same time, um, I think form taught to me, so, I can at least, I know when to stop and when to start I'm not completely lost,  
Marcus: ok  
Kirtana: So that much has been given to me and then within that I think I just, yeah,  
Marcus: uh ok  
Kirtana: I think it's seen \*\*\*  
Marcus: Ok  
Kirtana: It also depends on, you know, who you listen to, so I've been lucky enough to have listened to a lot people who do this stuff right, so I do pick up from that  
Marcus: I see, wow, ok, how are the venues where you play jazz  
Kirtana: um, well there used to more in Bangalore, but day by day they are all shutting down, um you know  
Marcus: \*\*\*  
Kirtana: Sorry  
Marcus: Is that, is that, because they are less people interested in listening to live jazz, or  
Kirtana: No, no, I think's it's a, um in Bangalore, I think it's at, at, at the moment it's political climate  
Marcus: ok  
Kirtana: uh, because there have always been certain Institution and certain people, who might not have able to pay as much, but at least, the passion for keeping the music alive. But now, you know, with the current climate, that's become difficult  
Marcus: But, ah, you know when I call, lot of people say that people are not interested in jazz, actually that's not true, cause in my experience, every time I've, I've played, they were, there has been a quality crowd that has appreciated and you know, listen to, listen to jazz  
Marcus: Ok, I see  
Kirtana: So \*\*\*  
Marcus: There's always people ready to listen to it  
Kirtana: Yeah, more and more ready, I think there's more awareness now,  
Marcus: ok  
Kirtana: uh, not a lot people understand it, but they want to make the effort to, you know, listen to it, and they've learned to the etiquette of shutting up, haha  
Marcus: Haha  
Kirtana: And you're gonna have people talk, but they're becoming a little bit more aware.  
Marcus: Yeah, yeah, do you think SAM has made a big in many, uh guys and girls going out there and learning and learning jazz and then performing it

Kirtana: For sure, for sure, bit's it's a, I also feel like it's brought about a kind of, you know, a difference in class of musicians, because there are a lot of people who haven't gone to music school, and who haven't been to a SAM and who aren't necessarily aware of theory, uh, but still, and then there are some of us who, or I mean, I wouldn't want to say us, but then there are some, ah, you know, some people who go to music school, who are not so technically able, but are aware of the theory, so there's a little bit of a, you this kind of, I've been to music school, I've not been to music school, kind of, you know

Marcus: ah, ok

Kirtana: but then I hear some bigger pictures that you all come in, you know come together and say that you're playing music and get out of it

Marcus: Uh, are there other jazz institutions in India apart from SAM

Kirtana: Yeah, there are two others, there's this, the True School of Music in Bombay and uh, the Global \*\*\* Music Institute in Delhi.

Marcus: Oh the, say that again, the global

Kirtana: Music Institute, GMI

Marcus: ok, ok

Kirtana: Uh, and GMI was started by, uh, two Berklee uh, you graduates, uh, they're brothers

Marcus: Um,

Kirtana: [REDACTED], and they, they've, you know, they've been to Berklee and they want to bring the Berklee vibe here and True school of Music is, I know [REDACTED] on the trustees, uh board, and I, but I'm not sure who has started it, but yeah.

Marcus: Are they both exclusively, jazz schools, jazz institutions, or

Kirtana: uh, you know what, I'm not sure but I know that the focus is definitely on jazz, I mean, they might churn out a, you other musician, might churn out how to make pop songs, but then I know for a fact that the harmony that they study is all jazz harmony.

Marcus: Ok great, so then they're probably a lot, lot of young people learning jazz India now because of the three

Kirtana: yes, yeah, there are a lot of, yeah, I mean, yeah, there are a lot of people learning jazz in India.

OKirtana:

Kirtana: At the moment, I don't know how good they are or how, how far they're gonna go but then, the study material what you, what you're expected to learn is all jazz \*\*\* (as all changes)

Marcus: ok, I see, I've actually downloaded uh the syllabus or curriculum, Don't know what, I think the syllabus, uh of SAM, and

Kirtana: ok

Marcus: \*\*\* it looks good to me

Kirtana: Looks like they're ok haha, good to know

Marcus: Haha, but mean I mean I you don't know the specific, details, I once called on the phone cause one of my students wanted to go there, I once called on the phone to ask some questions, but anyway, yeah

Kirtana: Right



Marcus: Is it hard to find jazz musicians to jam with or even perform with?  
Kirtana: Um  
Marcus: In India or in, from where you're at, in Pondicherry or wherever  
Kirtana: You know, I wasn't actively looking for a, jazz musicians to jam with, somehow they always just came my way  
Marcus: ok  
Kirtana: And I made best of the situation  
Marcus: I see  
Kirtana: Uh, I also feel that, uh, considering the nature of my voice, um, a big band doesn't work for me, so I always like to limit my, you know, my performance situations to two or three people, and that has never been hard so far, \*\*\* (like they're always good)  
Marcus: So you never have trouble getting musicians  
Kirtana: No, not really  
Marcus: ok, I see  
Kirtana: I've been lucky that way I think  
Marcus: Ok, because I sometimes had a hard time, but  
Kirtana: Haha, yeah, sure  
Marcus: Yeah, but, I mean, uh  
Kirtana: I think, because I went to school, right, then there was a network which formed right, so  
Marcus: Yeah, I didn't have that  
Kirtana: \*\*\* a call away, haha, you  
Marcus: ok, yeah, yeah, yeah, cause I was like, trying to convert, like, rock guys into jazz, just to play jazz and stuff like that, that never worked  
Kirtana: No but, so much has changed in the past like twenty years I suppose, or nearer ten years \*\*\*, so yeah  
Marcus: Cause I, I mean I'm 45 and I actually 20 years, 22 years ago I think, I was about 23, same age as when you went to SAM, I did my Bachelor of Music in the US. At that age, but then I had absolutely no contacts in Bangalore.  
Kirtana: Yeah because you did it abroad right,  
Marcus: yeah, yeah  
Kirtana: If you have \*\*\* wanted to continue there then it would have been possible for you \*\*\*  
Marcus: Maybe, I don't know, you know, I also did it in a very small town, with, with very few jazz musicians, so, yeah, that also didn't help me network \*\*\* and I actually ended up playing pop than jazz.  
Kirtana: Right, which is not a bad thing, because pop music back then I suppose had a little bit more value than pop music right now. \*\*\* unbearable haha  
Marcus: But like, I toured with pop band, and, nobody asked me, like did you learn pop in India or anything like, did you learn to play in India, but whenever I play here, I mean, maybe a hundred people have asked me, did you learn in India.  
Kirtana: oh nice, ok  
M; And I've always found, why is it, when I play jazz, you ask that question, I just, may, I just, anyway it just is interesting to them  
Kirtana: yeah - it's interesting, I think it's more cultural, to them no, more than pop

Marcus: Ok, yeah, I see, um, is jazz your career  
Kirtana: Ah, I'd have to say at 29 I think it's becoming my career, haha and uh  
Marcus: Ok, um, can you make a living gigging  
Kirtana: Gigging alone, no, but gigging and teaching, yes.  
Marcus: Ok, is teaching pretty good?  
Kirtana: Yes,  
Marcus: Are you teaching right now  
Kirtana: Yes, of course,  
Marcus: Ok, how many students do you have  
Kirtana: 7  
Marcus: 7, ok, do you teach singing? or guitar?  
Kirtana: yeah, I don't teach guitar  
Marcus: ok, I see  
Kirtana: I think I, I'd like consider myself a student of guitar and a teacher of voice. I think that's ok.  
Marcus: ok, ok, how's the, how's the practice environment, do you find the musicians around you practice hard or ...  
Kirtana: Absolutely, it's amazing in main Auroville and in Pondicherry, uh, it's a small circle, there aren't too many people, but the people who are here are very serious about what they are doing, which is again one of the reasons why I want to be here. Um, it's a place for the arts to thrive and everyone practices really hard, or constantly you know, updating repertoire and listening to the current trends in the jazz world, it's, it's it's great, it's really great.  
Marcus: Ok yeah, how's your practice like?  
Kirtana: It's very serious at the moment, oh, with guitar especially, uh, voice, voice, ah, I practice kind of a, you of kind of \*\*\* gigs, I think \*\*\* most \*\*\* my practice \*\*\*.  
Marcus: Really?  
Kirtana: I have given myself till 35 to be able to, you know, some more teaching and learn on guitar improvisations for another six years. So, in 6 years I better get there.  
Marcus: Haha. I don't know. It's something you can never stop I guess in jazz, you can never stop learning  
Kirtana: Sure, sure  
Marcus: 'Cause I'm 45 and I'm, I'm still learning.  
Kirtana: No but that's great. I mean I don't ever want the study to stop, I, I think the more you can discover about the music everyday and \*\*\* the more combinations you can try that's great, but I think uh, you know, there's got to be a stage where you can stay that ok I, I'm at least competent on this, and I still can't say that.  
Marcus: Ok, I see, so um, how do you say, how's the gig environment in India, I mean overall, not just Bangalore.  
Kirtana: Um you know I'm so confused about it because in some ways. I think it's good, and on some other days I think it's bad, I think, uh, so far, uh musicians have been a little bit entitled in the sense that they expect the venues to do everything, you know, for you in terms of payment and promotion and everything but I think I've understood the mindset now that you've got to do your own leg work, and you've got to bring the crowd to you, you know that means pitching your word out there and

trying to, you make sure your \*\*\* and kind of build a following for what your trying to do and then the gigs you'll get is good for you. If you have a name for every city that you go to with your own efforts, that's great. But you're ex, if you're relying on someone else to do that for you it doesn't work out.

Marcus: Ok, ok, yeah, actually while you mentioned that, there's an interesting e-book I came across, I'll send it to you.

Kirtana: Sure, sure, is it \*\*\* (published)

Marcus: It's called the the uh, 6 Figure Musician.

Kirtana: ok, haha, monetizing, haha

Marcus: yeah, yeah, so, I mean, if you literally do everything that's in it, I think you'll make money anywhere.

Kirtana: Oh, yeah

Marcus: Uh, I never literally did everything that's in it, so, yeah, it includes lot of social, social media and all that stuff.

Kirtana: Right

M : I only facebook and I don't even look at it everyday so,

Kirtana: Haha

Marcus: Yeah, um, do you feel you're properly paid when you do gigs?

Kirtana: Again, um, when I'm relying on the venues, no, not really, but when we go on a gate share, then yes,

Marcus: Say that again, when you go on a

Kirtana: When we go on gate share \*\*\* we have like say, we make a good deal with the venue saying we'll give you 25 or 30% and then you know, sell tickets, then we made, we make actually quite a lot \*\*\* these 2 shows that we did with Shanks, that's that we went with that model, just this weekend, and we actually ended up making quite a bit, much more than what we expected.

Marcus: Oh really

Kirtana: Which \*\*\* you know in a traditional setup if you've gone to B Flat \*\*\* ok we'll pay you five thousand rupees. Er, you know, per person, right ok they'll give you ten grand in total but then that's that's not much. so, in terms of the tickets, we did do a lot in turn to promote and to invite people and you know, all of those efforts were made, so we made money.

Marcus: Ok, I see

Kirtana: So yeah, gotta be a little savvy, hehe, but venues don't pay, they don't pay much.

Marcus: I see, ok, have you done anything in Chennai, cause you're lot closer \*\*\*

Kirtana: Chennai, no, no actually no, Chennai is such a dead scene

Marcus: yeah?

Kirtana: Nothing happening there.

Marcus: Ok, ok

Kirtana: Pondi has got better scene than Chennai, unless a singing a \*\*\* or Carnatic Margari Basan, that style, haha, otherwise, no.

Marcus: Uh, do you see a future for yourself as a jazz musician in India

Kirtana: I hope so, haha

Marcus: ok, haha, I see, I see

Kirtana: Uh, I mean, you know, um, I think as long as I can just continue to study and I have a few bunch of people who are around, I think um, I think it's it's a viable thing. I don't ever expect to be famous or you know, or even make a name for my... pure jazz is very selfish, cause it's just for me, me and my head like, my jazz, I'd, I'm not really interested in, in you know I don't know if I will ever make it to stage where, you know where Blue Note will come and tell you can I \*\*\*, not gonna happen, I've made my peace over that, haha.

Marcus: It's weird because I've had the, like very opposite thing happen like, I've done like, like three restaurant gigs with a singer, and the in Bangalore, and then she thinks she's like a superstar, that prima donna syndrome, it's interesting that you have none of that.

Kirtana: yeah, well you know, I mean, it's reality right, and it's the, I don't think anyone should do music to be famous or to even earn money on what you can make, pay your bills I think that's ok. But I think for much more Spiritual and, more, uh, you know a vast intention, it's a part of expanding and knowing more

Marcus: ok, I see, uh, so you're building the house with with what you earned with jazz.

Kirtana: Oh my god I wish I could say yes but no.

Marcus: Ok, ok

Kirtana: \*\*\* I mean I don't want to put this thing, I don't want to come across, you know, in the wrong way, but in a sense I am privileged to be able to do this because if I didn't come from a certain family and if I didn't have a certain backing, I don't think I would be able to follow, pursue jazz, I didn't think someone who is you know, from another kind of an economical background would be able to do this. You know, be able to afford a guitar or be able to \*\*\* so I have my mom who's helping me out, you know, building this thing for me so that I don't have to, you she can say, ok, do your jazz in peace you know, it's really, I'm really grateful to her.

Marcus: That's nice of her

Kirtana: yeah, it's very nice of her

Marcus: Would you, has it ever crossed your mind, I'm trying to say, I'm trying to frame these questions right, but you could possibly be performing jazz somewhere else and would you like that or prefer that to India or you're content or what, what's you

Kirtana: Uh, I think the kind of person that I am I don't \*\*\* I mean, uh, I'm not going to say that I haven't had these thoughts, I did want to go abroad, and I did want to study music elsewhere,

I mean of course, you know \*\*\* to you know having finished studying there maybe stay back and explore a scene and see if I could fit there. But, at the moment I think, uh, I want it to be that, I get to a level where I can be assessed on a world stage, and then maybe you know, try and maybe get gigs and tour elsewhere. But, I don't think I ever want to live abroad, I think I love India too much, it's a great country and uh you know I'd rather do something, that is maybe not culturally mine, but do it here, \*\*\* do this somewhere else.

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: Yeah

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Marcus: Um, Do you see a future for jazz in India?

Kirtana: Yes, yes, of course I do, I think uh, I think as more and more people go to music school I think they're recognizing that jazz is kind of a mother ship of theory, of you know, of experimental possibilities, so , uh, I think more people will take it up, and even if, even if it is not in it's purest form, uh, I think songwriters and all the young blood, they are looking for, you com..., I wouldn't say complicated but looking for more sophisticated changes and sophisticated harmony when it comes their songs, so, you know, it, they might, it might still be rock, but then the rock will have some, you know, flat seven, flat nine, you know, which is unusual, so, haha, yeah

Marcus: I hate to this in the middle of the interview, but I need a bathroom break, if you don't mind,

Kirtana: Oh, ya ya, of course, of course

Marcus: I, I, I worked out in the gym then I drank like 2 liters of water, so if you don't mind, sorry about that,

Kirtana: No problem, of course,

Marcus: I'll be right back

Kirtana: not, at all, ok I'll get some water myself

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Kirtana: Hi

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: Hi

Marcus: Hi again, Um, tell me about any, tell me about any recording in the works or past recordings or what you're working

Kirtana: so uh, in June, um, I had, uh, you know formed a, ok wait, so, uh in 2016 I had moved to Bangladesh, to work with a, some people, um, somebody that I was in a relationship with but not anymore, so, haha, \*\*\* we had a band that's when \*\*\* you know we started doing uh, recordings uh, of uh, Tagore, so we did jazz arrangements somewhat of Tagore, it was interesting, I know that time \*\*\*

Marcus: Talk about fusion, ok, anyway

Kirtana: Yeah, I'll about fusion yeah, that's in, I mean that was ok, uh and then um, uh, earlier this year I'd formed this band with again a couple of SAM musicians itself, and we kind of a arranged my songs and uh, I recorded this EP, and you know \*\*\* like I mentioned earlier in the beginning of this interview, I'm waiting to release them. Then uh, with my guitar teach and we've formed this duo, so, with him we are going to be recording three songs in December.

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: So, one is an original and two of them are rearrangements, so

Marcus: Ok, I believe I saw a video of, I think it was a Bossanova tune,

Kirtana: Aha

Marcus: On facebook, a couple of days ago

Kirtana: just \*\*\*. yeah yeah yeah yeah

Marcus: Ok \*\*\*

Kirtana: So our, our set is very largely Latin jazz, we do a lot of Bossa and Samba, and you know a couple of \*\*\*

Marcus: Were you singing in Portuguese by any chance?

Kirtana: Yes, yes, yes

Marcus: Wow!

Kirtana: So I'm stu..., I studying Portuguese at the moment.

Marcus: You are?

Kirtana: Yeah, haha.

Marcus: To sing it, or you just like the language

Kirtana: No, to understand what the hell I'm singing

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: \*\*\* imitate the web, well enough but then I want to know what, what the meaning of it is, there I can be \*\*\* better

Marcus: Ok, ok, yeah, yeah, yeah, wow, yeah I remember you're singing Girl For, Girl From Ipanema (in Portuguese) haha, yeah, but that's interesting. Um, tell me about composing, do you compose a lot and what's the process like for you and...

Kirtana: Uh, so I think could say I write songs more than, you know, actually compose music, so uh, the process has always been that you sit with the guitar and uh, and look for changes that sound appealing ...

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: And then find a melody over it and then write the words to it. So, it's always the case and that hasn't changed, haha

Marcus: Ok, Uh have you wri... How how many songs a year would you write

Kirtana: uh, god, so, I mean, I think as an exercise I started writing songs when I was twelve or thirteen

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: so, if I were to really count all of that I don't know how many songs I have, maybe like, I really don't know, but \*\*\* what I can perform today would maybe be twelve or fifteen

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: That I'm happy with

Marcus: I see, I see, you had some shows in Bangalore right?

Kirtana: Yeah, yeah

Marcus: Who were the band members, uh, who were the band members you played with and tell me about those shows and so that, the project that is, uh, that I'm currently, uh, you know, pushing out of everything is uh, this git... \*\*\* what I'd like to call a teacher student duo, uh, wherin I'm, I'm, you know, I'm the student and my guitar teacher so him and I we perform uh, Its two guitars and both of us sing, and uh we, we do jazz, latin jazz mostly and some swing standards thrown in. so that was the video clip that you watched.

Marcus: Ok, I see, wha... what attracts you to latin jazz

Kirtana: oh my god, I, you know, it was this emotional opening, I did not, I'd never un, I never, I didn't realize how, at... uh attached I could become to that, that form of music but uh, sometime around, last year, 2018, uh I started listening to George

Roberto, and I had heard him before, but for some reason, I, you know, I, I, I just started listening really hard to him and then, uh, I, I felt really connected and then after that it's just artists just kept coming, you know, my way one after the other, and now, I don't know, I think I have a, I think I'm most invested in that Music at the moment, like I have very vast collection of artists and I keep learning Portuguese songs of artists and songs all the time, so haha

Marcus: Wow, that's cool, you should probably go to Brazil and \*\*\*(just learn jazz)

Kirtana: I do, I want to go, I'm planning a trip, yeah, I'm planning a trip maybe for two thousand and twenty two, not twenty one, twenty two maybe,

Marcus: ok, if you, if you ever want to come visit here you're welcome to some stay with us,

Kirtana: Oh, that would be lovely,

Marcus: on your way to Brazil or whatever, so, yeah

Kirtana: On my way to Brazil ... getting a Visa to the States though, I don't know how \*\*\* that's going to be like

Marcus: I actually got rejected my first time, I got rejected like three times

Kirtana: Right, but you're persistent, so I don't think I have the money to spend on haha, Visas, they don't return that money to you, they don't return rejection money to you

Marcus: yeah, yeah, Wow

Kirtana: cough, cough, excuse me

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Marcus: So, uh, so your Bangalore gigs were with just the guitar teacher and you?

Kirtana: Yeah, with just my guitar teacher, yeah

Marcus: How many did you have?

Kirtana: We had two gigs, for one Friday, one Saturday, we just, we actually debuted this set, uh, last Sunday, over here at \*\*\* theatre.

Marcus: Oh you did?

Kirtana: Yeah, so, that was like, I mean it's, it's very new actually, it's just, it's been a couple since we started jamming\*\*\* 6th of October, and then we got two gigs in Bangalore, so that's Friday - Saturday

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: And then, I think our next gig is in November, so I'm trying to see if I can get some in the meanwhile.

Marcus: Where is that, the next gig

Kirtana: Uh, it's at the storytellers bar in Pondicherry.

Marcus: Oh, it's over there. Is Pondicherry a good place for gigs.

Kirtana: Uh, shh, it's funny, uh, it used to be an absolutely amazing place, for for gigs, uh, there was this space called Kashakiasha that was run by an American woman, uh, for about 10 odd years she ran really happening scene and then last year she got deported. So ... you know...

Marcus: Oh no, that's terrible

Kirtana: That's terrible, it was great but she had some really fantastic musicians come play and she herself is a violist and, you know, she really supported the scene, uh, I mean and then there are a couple of other places and within Auroville there are

always, you know, there's always something of the other happening, in terms of Music and also interestingly enough, I'm also part of this, uh um, four-part, uh, vocal ensemble, uh

Marcus: Oh

Kirtana: that are doing, you know, jazz harmony

Marcus: Wow

Kirtana: Yeah it's really interesting

Marcus: Oh wow!

Kirtana: Yeah, haha

Marcus: Tell me more about that - sounds exciting

Kirtana: Uh, so there's this pianist lady by the name of [REDACTED], who's Ukranian, uh, cause in Auroville there are \*\*\*. And we're doing, we're doing some Latin standards, we're doing \*\*\*, \*\*\* and Triste, and there are four girls who are, you know, who's singing, jazz harmony and I, I've got alto, \*\*\*

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: So, yeah, its, its fun

Marcus: Who writes the arrangements

Kirtana: She does, the pianist

Marcus: Wow, wow

Kirtana: Yeah

Marcus: Writing jazz arrangement is I think way harder than classical ever is

Kirtana: Yeah, absolutely

Marcus: I think jazz itself is definitely much harder than Western Classical

Kirtana: Yeah I mean, because you have the whole improvisational bit to it and then if you are, yeah I don't know, if you're writing arrangements for, for four-part harmony, it's not easy cause you've the bass, you've got the drums you got the piano and then you got these like, you've got to fill up the chords, right, it's really like superb really difficult work. Most challenging thing I mean, most challenged affair of the long term.

Marcus: Aha, cause I have a lot of friends who are classical pianists, and if I just ask them, you know, I, like they are, they are, like we just talk about what we have to do for our, you know university work and I said you know I gotto, I gotto go transcribe this tune, by the way do you guys transcribe, and like they've never transcribed in their life,

Kirtana: my gosh

Marcus: And if they had to, they know how to do, they could not do

Kirtana: Right, it's it's like their ear is really weak no, you need to give them sheet music all the time.

Y: Yeah, and like, to play a tune in another key would be like, they would have to rewrite the entire thing

Kirtana: Right

Marcus: Or something like that

Kirtana: And here it's like you're expected to know, you know, so many tunes in so many different keys and to be able do all of the changes, it's like, aw, love it

Marcus: Especially when you work singers you know you're gonna get a different key

Kirtana: Haha, Yeah, hahah, I think it's fair, I think it's fair



Marcus: I think, I think it's a necessary skill cause learning different keys does so much for your ear  
Kirtana: Exactly, absolutely  
Marcus: I mean, I've taken several, several tunes and practiced them in twelve keys including Girl For, Girl from Ipanema, I've practiced that in twelve, yeah  
Kirtana: Right, and that's the practice that is expected, I mean at least what is drilled all in you, whatever you learn, you learn it is twelve keys, you try attempt to learn it in all twelve keys, yeah  
Marcus: Yeah  
Kirtana: I also feel like you don't improvise the same way in the same key, like, or different keys, you know you try different things each time so  
Marcus: Yeah, and you bring ideas from other keys into other keys  
Kirtana: Exactly love  
Marcus: I'm also curious to know about women in jazz in India, how, how is the scene  
Kirtana: While most of them are vocalists, there are, I mean, \*\*\* I wouldn't wouldn't way many but there are quite a few who are attempting, um, I came across this bass player, uh, female, uh, her name is [REDACTED], she's getting into, you know, playing jazz bass  
Marcus: Ok, is she from Bangalore or something  
Kirtana: She's from Bangalore yes,  
Marcus: Cause I just saw her somewhere in some video or something, and I send her a friend request just two days ago and she accepted so  
Kirtana: Ok ,yeah  
Marcus: Yeah, yeah  
Kirtana: So she's pretty good  
Marcus: There's, there's Mohini, you know, [REDACTED] who gotten a lot of fame but then I, I, I think does more fusion, jazz fusion  
Marcus: Ok  
Kirtana: And traditional jazz, but uh, I mean I feel like a lot of people who come out of SAM feel like they need to do jazz, even though it might not exactly be their calling  
Marcus: aha  
Kirtana: So I think, uh, some of them end up, you know, spending couple of years kind of just maneuvering themselves through that before they decide maybe they should get to something else, and they use the skill for something else  
Marcus: Aha,  
Kirtana: But uh, well honestly I haven't seen too many, uh, uh, yeah, I haven't seen too many female musicians  
Marcus: Do you wish there was more, or is there a reason for that  
Kirtana: No, I don't really care  
Marcus: Ok, haha, ok, also, I mean I know know you like to have small ba., uh small uh, playing with small bands, like duo or trio or whatever, do you do any work with horn players, saxophone trumpet players at all or  
Kirtana: I feel like there's a severe lacking of horn players in, in India  
Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: Uh, So I haven't uh, I mean have come across some saxophone players, trumpet hardly,

Marcus: Ok

K; Some saxophone I have come across but then, I, I feel like they're just about getting into, you know understanding, ho to, you know, how to play and what to play, and

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: And really irritates me when I have to work with people who don't know, you know,

Marcus: Haha, yeah

Kirtana: Haha, I mean, you, you know, you know how it is, so yeah

Marcus: Yeah, if there were more horn players around would you work with them, or...

Kirtana: Of course, yes, absolutely

Marcus: Yeah

Kirtana: Oh Yes, yeah (completely)



Marcus: ok, I see, what else did I want to ask you I completely forgot

Marcus: Yeah, so, anything else you want to say, about yourself, about jazz, about learning jazz, teaching

Kirtana: Uh, I don't know, I mean, no, not really, I think it's a very comprehensive interview and \*\*\*, it's some really great questions and it's been so nice talking about myself. So, haha, I don't don't get to do that a lot

Marcus: Uh, of your students are, uh, um, do you teach them to scat, or what do you teach them

Kirtana: At the moment, nobody is ready is ready to, you know, take that on, um, I kind of just focus on some technique and how and you know, how to sing, I mean, helping them build a repertoire,

Marcus: Aha, aha

Kirtana: Uh, but when i was in Bangalore, I used to teach for a thermal school, at that time they were a couple of students, that, you know, who, who were very promising, and who wanted to get into \*\*\*

[REDACTED]

Kirtana: It was killing me because I had no time for myself at all, but uh, I made, I made, uh, I made money, uh, but I don't think I ever want to be in that kind of environment, teaching that way, like, ok that's not teaching, that's some kind of, I don't know what it is, It's impossible to be alert, you know, give yourself like that, my god, no

Marcus: They called me at some point, way back

Kirtana: Right, right

Marcus: Might be 2015 or even earlier that than, maybe 2013 they called me then

Kirtana: Right

Marcus: But I didn't go, uh so

Kirtana: Yeah that's good, no that's good, it's not fair, err, it's not a fair system

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: Cause, uh, you know, yeah, yeah, you get 25% and then they keep 75 but...

Marcus: 25 percent?

Kirtana: yeah 25% yeah

Marcus: My goodness, wow

Kirtana: Yeah, that's not good, yeah, you can, you keep

Marcus: the highest percentage anyone kept in, I mean I taught in like three music schools and the highest anyone kept was fifty percent, so that, that's really unfair

Kirtana: Yeah, it's really unfair, yeah, I mean you ki.. you kind of understood by the end of it that they didn't really care what you were teaching, they didn't, they didn't care what the content was

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: I could have taught them anything, you know, I could've taught them shit and it would have been ok, but huh

[REDACTED]

Kirtana: No,

Marcus: Rock, ok, ok

Kirtana: I tried to get my students interested in jazz but they were, you know, also not, again, the kind of students that I get were mostly people who were interested in singing pop songs \*\*\* they just just wanted to do it because they taught it was cool thing to do, but amongst all of that, like, amongst all of the students, they were maybe, two or three, three girls, who I had to initiate, so speak, into the genre, and by

the end of my time with them they were getting into, you wanting to understand how to scat, or getting into listening some old school jazz, so I think I did my job well, haha

Marcus: Did you start scatting af..., only after going to SAM or,

Kirtana: yeah, yeah, I started scatting \*\*\* after going to SAM

Marcus: What was that process like? You starting to scat

Kirtana: Oh uh, I will never forget it, um, haha, um, it was during one of our, one of the classes and I had my vo... My voice teacher [REDACTED] and she was teaching us minor blues

Marcus: ok

Kirtana: We were doing John Coltrane's Equinox actually, we were doing that tune

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: and, and she was sitting at the piano and she said ok, so now if I had to improvise over this this is how I would go about it, and it was the first time that I was hearing it happening in front of me live, I think I just, I, I fell in love with it immediately, because it sounded so, I mean maybe it was the note choice of what she was using, or the chords, or I don't know what it was it just like, drew me in and from then from then I want to know, ok, I need to know how the hell to do that, haha

Marcus: Oh really,

Kirtana: Yeah, haha

Marcus: Is that the first you ever heard scatting

Kirtana: Non, no, I had course, I'd, I'd heard it before, I'd heard, I'd heard Ella and \*\*\* you know, whatever \*\*\* records, \*\*\* in like whoever, you know, \*\*\*

Marcus: I mean in real life

Kirtana: Yeah but

Marcus: ok, ok

Kirtana: uh, it's such, I mean again, in real life I had heard it before yes, \*\*\* I have been familiar with the concept itself, I mean scatting, but then I think at that moment when she did it, and maybe, I don't know, from when she did it I just wanted to know how to go ahead and do it.

Marcus: Was it difficult to get to scat to

Kirtana: yeah, yeah, because, um, uh, yeah it was very difficult

Marcus: Was it hard to go along with the changes, or did it

Kirtana: Uh, it wasn't so much the changes, uh, that bothered me as much as you know, I mean it's the same as with improvising on any instrument like the rules are that, you know, you got..., you gotta breathe, you gotta take space, you have to have ideas that make sense, you know, like start slowly, build up, all of those things the how to make uh, a solid uh solo, because of your solo right,

Marcus: Yeah

Kirtana: So how, how to have in terms of dynamics, in terms of rhythm, all of those things, to really understand it, to get into it, that took a while, cause initially you just, you know, you went with it and you, you saw... you hoped it would take you somewhere, but uh, that's not, it's not appealing

Marcus: Ok

Kirtana: I think today, I would, I would be able to do a good job of it, but I when I was just started off, obviously not

Marcus: I see, wow, great, yeah, wow, ok great, uh, appreciate you, uh, being willing to be interviewed,

Kirtana: Thank you so much, it's been so much fun

Marcus: Ok, I look forward to writing

Kirtana: I look forward to your results, haha

Marcus: Ok, sure

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Kirtana: Thank you so much, it's been an absolute pleasure

Marcus: Thank you, same here

Kirtana: And I wish you all the best, I wish you all the best

Marcus: Thank you wish you all the best too, I have a lot of work ahead of me right now

Kirtana: Haha

Marcus: I gotta be done by December if I wanna graduate, but, yeah

Kirtana: Well, I'm sure you'll get to it

Marcus: Ok sure, ok yeah, ok, thanks so much and

Kirtana: No problem

Marcus: \*\*\* it's pretty late out there too right

Kirtana: Yeah, it's 11:20

Marcus: Ok, yeah, ok, thanks for staying up \*\*\*

Kirtana: No problem, no problem

Marcus: Yeah

Kirtana: good night then,

Marcus: Alright, thanks yeah, alright, have a good night, alright, bye, bye bye

Kirtana: Bye, bye

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