

## Interview mit Aneesh

U: Du läufst? Stefan told me already quite a lot. But I think I have forgotten everything. So all the sudden – boff ... It's gone. So I don't know nothing about the concert. What was the main challenge for you to enter into this project. And what was the reason for your curiosity?

A: Shall I now?

U: Yes.

A: So as a student of music and as a performer and composer I have always been curious about all forms of music. And when I say all forms of music, I mean the diversity, the plurality that is in India, but also the diversity that exists all over the world. And over the past several decades I have had the good fortune of coming in contact with musicians of across musical cultures and I have been able to make music with them interact with them musically and loan and enrich myself due to that interaction. In the case of the vistar project this was of course a brain child of Stefan Keller, the composer, who has been learning tabla from me for the past 10 years or so. I had always known, that Stefan has been composing for tabla and orchestra in the past. And all this compositions he had been playing. He also does work with electronic music, so I was very fascinated by the work he was doing. And I think because he is so my interest in forms of music other than my own, which is primarily traditional Hindustani music which is nordindian classical music, he asked me whether I would consider of being a part of a concert which would feature one of his compositions created specifically for tabla and orchestra. And I did that I accepted his invitation. I must confess that I didn't know that there would be ... of course I did know that there would be big challenges, but I didn't know the number of challenges that would be present in this collaborate adventure. For instance just to name a few: I am not trained as a performer to read music while performing. Of course we have notation systems in India. But that notation we do primarily as reference material when we want to look back or revise

some compositions. We look at our notebooks or diaries. But here was a composition where there was a score for tabla – and I had to read and I had to read – not just read, but read at great speed. And then there were also metrical changes, tempo changes, and these things don't occur naturally in the music that I am trained in. I mean I have been playing Hindustani music for the past 51 years or so. Since the age of six. So you can imagine that this was quite an uphill task for me. But I have always been positive, and inquisitive about processes, different kinds of processes, and I thought that I must try and you know extend myself to such a project. Once we started working on this project, I said that the partnership is only half way. That is Stefan has composed the music, and he has asked me to play for it. But I requested him, that maybe he can incorporate passages in the composition, in which he can also play. And there I find that the partnership is drawn much closer. Because we are also performing together. Similarly I also said that of course we have also compositions in Hindustani music but the idea of composition there is very different from the idea of composition in western art music. And of course of other musical cultures too. So in the case of Hindustani music we used the composition as a seed idea. And from then on we use it to do all kinds of elaboration and improvisation, are using a multitude of embellishments. So in this particular composition in the first incarnation of this composition, that was not existing. So I asked whether he could include some amount of improvisation also in that for me. Because that was kind of my comfort zone. So we have a few bars occurring in the composition where I improvise as well. It has been a very very enriching experience for me. And I really have learnt a lot from Stefan, from the Zafraan Ensemble, such wonderful musicians and I will always be thankful to them for having invited me to be a part of this project. And I hope that the listeners will enjoy this composition as much as have we in the experimenting with it, and now presenting it on stage.

U: Could you please describe a bit more in detail what the composition method of Stefan can achieve as his advantage what Hindustani music could not achieve and maybe vice versa what Stefan could not achieve as a disadvantage of his composition style so that maybe you could marry one day the advantages of both traditions.

A: I have to say that there have been experiments in the past where projects have included musicians from let's say Hindustani music or carnatic music that is Southindian music system, and western orchestras. And different people have composed for these projects very celebrated musicians very celebrated composers. But in this particular case the Bistar project where Stefan has composed this piece called Entangled Strands, here he has brought to this composition his learning his knowledge of the tabla language the tabla vocabulary and that has been an added qualification to this. He has not just left it to me to play anything and everything – so it is very specific, he has given me the notation of what I exactly need to play. And because he has been schooled in different styles of tabla playing he able to incorporate many different kinds of syllables from the vocabulary of the tabla language. So there is a great diversity in the texture the timber that is being used. Also his knowledge of western orchestra naturally is a great pluspoint. I mean as a tabla player I can compose for tabla. But I can not compose for orchestra. So here I think the fact that he was really the bridge between the two. That was very important. He likes to say that he and I being a teacher and a student. We are a kind of a bridge. Yes of course we are. But in this particular composition he is the important connection between the two. And of course like I said that the Zafraan Ensemble musicians are such superlative musicians and they have so openly agreed to collaborate on this project. I think that is very important, that both parties need to be good listeners first before being performers. Because, what is a musician that is not listening to the other musician? (lacht)

U: You mentioned that it took ten years time for him to ...

A: ... to learn ...

U: ... to learn and to be able to compose something like that. What took that much time to come to this point where you are now? Why did it take so long? Why is so much time necessary to be taken?

A: Stefan has been learning tabla from me for the past ten years but he has been composing in the interim. But like I said that he has been composing for himself, play in that for him to play in those compositions. But here it was a composition that he had composed where I could play. So I think there is a difference, the fact remains that he has been composing all the long. Some of his compositions are available on Youtube as well. But here it was a composition that was made that another tabla player could play it.

U: But why did it take so much a lot of time – so this is for me it is – I am not a musician – could you explain why ten years are necessary to come up to this level?

A: I think Stefan could be best suited to answer that question but I imagine that for any serious collaboration that takes place everyone needs to internalize the music – so I believe that Stefan has been doing that too. Of course he is at home with western art music, but to internalize music specifically made by the tabla it must have taken him a long time ... and perhaps he has been working with ideas which he has been revising constantly and coming up with new ideas as a result so and I imagine that this has been a very challenging task for him as well.

U: Thank you so much.

A: Thank you. I hope I gave you all the ...

U: Yeah, thank you ...