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ਭਾਵਦਭ ਰੀ ਲਾਂਦੇ

HARPREET BANSAL

HARPREET BANSAL'S ਭਾਵੇਂ ਓਰ ਮਿੰਦੇ

Yohan Shanmugaratnam

Before I met Harpreet Bansal, her music met me. I'm ashamed to say that I didn't even know it was her violin I was listening to, the first time I heard "BARAF/FAIRUZ" by Karpe back in 2022. Her melody was melancholic and majestic, yearning and at the same time so assuring. It felt like the sound circumvented my ears and brain; it had found a shortcut, a direct line, to a place somewhere beneath my chest. There, it stirred emotions that have stayed with me ever since.

To me, Harpreet's contribution to that song was a powerful sonic expression of the complexities of our diasporic experiences: Celebrating the richness of our cultures, while also using parts of this heritage as a remedy, a way to ease the inter-generational phantom pains caused by uprooting and loss.

Since my first encounter with her music, I've had the pleasure of getting to know Harpreet in person and seen her performances, with various constellations, in different cities; from the ten sold out Oslo Spektrum shows and the European tour with Karpe, to her own concerts together with other talented and trusted musicians. On every occasion I've been mesmerised by Harpreet's playing and her interactions with the co-artists and their instruments – be it Ibou Cissokho's kora, Mira

Thiruchelvam's flute, Sidiki Camara's djembe, Andreas Bratlie's tabla, Vojtech Prochazka's piano keys or Cikada's strings.

These have all been experiences that made a deep impact on me, with moments ranging from the massive and spectacular to the mellow and sensitive. Still, to me there has always been a mystery there, some unanswered questions, about the inner landscapes of Harpreet Bansal.

In this album, *States of Mind*, we get some of the answers. According to Harpreet, these are songs made in different phases but also with "different mindsets". "I never know how these things will turn out before I make them, they follow their own logic and all I can do is to lead them to some sort of conclusion", she told me. "What they have in common is that they have originated from a state of mind, even though I often do not know which state that is before I hear the music."

As I sat down and listened to the songs, I soon realised what she meant. The foundation of Harpreet's music is decades of schooling and training within the Indian raga tradition, with its scales and frameworks, from which she ventures into various directions. The result is an album characterised by its mix of sounds, unpredictable structures and seamless transitions within and between each track.

Like in the case of "Otherwise", which Harpreet describes as "a journey from clarity to uncertainty and chaos". It starts out cautiously, in a settled state of mind, spending the first half of its more than twenty minutes building up to something, with strings and tabla, but without revealing to the listener which way the song is heading. The earlier parts carry elements that might promise an hopeful trajectory, but then an eeriness creeps in and bends the arc towards a darker place. When the tabla intervenes one last time, each touch feels like a drop of rain – light and sporadic to begin with, then turning into a small monsoon – before "Otherwise" retreats and leaves us unresolved.

"Light" brings, as the name suggests, a different atmosphere. The song is gentle but brighter, at times a playful dance where the violin, piano and tabla are seeking and approaching each other. Gradually they initiate a percussive escalation, with the tabla and piano soon chasing the other, as if they are butterflies charging up a hill together. "Light" culminates as the violin re-enters and takes the song to its blissful closure.

The third and final track, "Lotus", is a delicate and condensed composition. The melody carrying the song, working its way from the very beginning to the end, resembles an uninterrupted monologue – a story told through the

vibrations of the violin strings, maybe about some of the things that the lotus flower symbolises; pureness, growth, enlightenment and overcoming the obstacles of life through resilience.

That last word, resilience, takes me back to the diaspora context and the time I discovered Harpreet Bansal's work. It makes me think of our parent generation, the mothers and fathers who put their feet in the snow in a new country and continent, not knowing where their next steps would take them. On their way, often improvising from day to day, they hid a lot of their hardships from us; the piles of rejected or unanswered job applications, the careful calculations of the household economy, the money transfers to struggling relatives in the old country. And as we have become adults ourselves, we realise how little we know about the longings and sentiments of our aging parents.

Maybe because our lives have been so affected by borders, which defined our status, rights and belonging – or rather lack thereof – the borderless landscapes of Harpreet's music feel like spaces where we can finally feel at ease. This way, the title *States of Mind* can carry a double meaning: One is signifying, as earlier mentioned, the various emotional and imaginative impulses behind the creation of the songs. The other way of looking at the

album title, is this: To many of us in the diasporas, the lands that our parents once left behind remain places that mainly exist in our ideas and memories. In other words, they've become states in our minds.

With this album Harpreet Bansal is once again crossing musical and geographic boundaries and, in her characteristic way, breaking the rules and confinements of our world. It is a way of affirming the roots we have, but at the same time expanding the idea of who we are. Together, these three songs provide a very special soundscape where some listeners will experience the discovery of new territory, while others will feel something close to a homecoming.

The plurality in the title, *States of Mind*, is thus a reminder telling us that the disordered inner lives we sometimes have, also can be understood as the mirror image of the diverse realities in which we live, with all its haphazardness and harmony, turbulence as well as tranquillity – just like Harpreet Bansal's music.

Afterword by Harpreet Bansal

The music on this album was composed in different stages, between 2019 (*Otherwise*) and *Lotus* (2024). *Light* was premiered in 2021 during the pandemic. I don't want to guide the listener in any direction, as the

music is often surprising to me, and reveals states of mind I maybe haven't been aware of myself.

I want to thank all the brilliant people involved in this album: the musicians, the staff at Lawo Classics, and my family. And a special thank you, as always, to my dear father and first guru Harbhajan Singh Bansal.

Harpreet





HARPREET BANSAL

Deep Indian heritage and modern Western culture flow together in the music of award-winning violinist-composer Harpreet Bansal. Born in Oslo to Indian parents, she embarked on her musical journey from the age of two with her father, himself a guru of Indian classical music, as her teacher.

Today her artistic signature reflects the duality of her background, with a musical identity shaped in the interplay between the present and the past, the Western and the Indian. She has received several prestigious awards and nominations for her work. Her music has been praised by critics internationally for its “radical approach” to Indian raga music, fusing the traditional court music of the Mughals with jazz, classical contemporary music, and folk traditions. Besides composing, she is in high demand as a soloist, festival musician and artistic collaborator.

Harpreet has composed a substantial body of music for the stage and for the movies. Her first full-feature movie as composer ‘Listen up!’ premiered in theatres 2023 and was a huge success with critics and audiences alike.

Harpreet plays a violin made by Giovanni Battista Rogeri (Brescia) in 1690, generously on loan from the Dextra Foundation.

HARPREET BANSAL TRIO

Harpreet Bansal
violin

Vojtech Prochazka
piano

Andreas Bratlie
tabla

Harpreet Bansal Trio was formed in 2008 in Oslo, born out of the musicians' wish to explore the possibilities of the classical Indian *raga*, blending elements of jazz, modern European classical music and various folk styles with the deep North Indian tradition.

The trio has performed extensively in Norway, Europe, and India both independently and as part of the extended group Harpreet Bansal Band. Their first album *Chandra* was released on Jazzland Recordings in 2015 and was hailed by critics as «a perfect marriage of tradition and modernity».

Vojtech Prochazka

Vojtěch Procházka (1981) - Prague-based multi-genre pianist, composer, improviser and teacher. He studied piano, composition and North Indian classical music in Oslo, Paris and Prague. His Czech/Slovak band Vertigo (founded 2002) has toured all of Europe, released 8 albums and received 3 Czech Jazz Grammy awards. Vojtech works with prominent personalities such as Harpreet

Bansal, Sisa Feher (KHI), Michaela Antalová (Mikoo), Luboš Soukup (Freetown Quartet), Monika Načeva and Lucie Páchová (Talaqpo). He composes film and theatre music (Handa Gote, Josef Tuka, Naivní divadlo Liberec, Divadlo Alfa Plzeň etc.) and has been improvising accompaniments for silent films for over twenty years. In addition, he is active in the field of improvised music (Krekso, PIO, Bergljot) and plays harmonium in the traditional “dechovka” (Czech brass music) band FSKC Drancy. He is engaged in teaching activities at the jazz department of The Academy of Performing Arts (HAMU) Prague.

Andreas Bratlie

Andreas Bratlie is a Norwegian percussionist and vocalist with an impressive ability to move seamlessly between genres, ranging from contemporary jazz and pop to traditional music. Over the years he has quietly established himself as one of Norway's most versatile and innovative musicians. He has performed regularly with Harpreet Bansal since the late 90s, immersing himself in the North Indian *talas* and *ragas*. In addition to a busy performing schedule Andreas also arranges for orchestra, and his arrangements have been performed by The Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, The Norwegian Radio Orchestra and The Norwegian World Orchestra. Since 2022 he is musical director for the foundation Fargespill, a multi-award winning youth initiative celebrating diversity in music and culture.

CIKADA STRING QUARTET

For more than 30 years, Cikada String Quartet has sought to expand the boundaries of the conventional string quartet format. Several high-profile collaborations with leading composers of our time, as well as their considerable artistic versatility has made the quartet one of the mainstays on the Nordic contemporary scene.

The quartet has been an integrated part of the 9-piece Cikada Ensemble since its inception in 1989 and has made a considerable number of recordings both as a quartet and as a part of the larger ensemble. They gained early recognition when their album *Black Angels* on the Cala label, with music by George Crumb, Witold Lutoslawski, and Anton Webern, won the Norwegian Grammy Spellemannprisen for 1995. They were awarded the Edison award in 2006 for their album *In due tempi* on ECM, featuring music by John Cage, Bruno Madena, og Kaija Saariaho.

An important aspect of the quartet's work has been the commissioning and promotion of new Norwegian music for string quartet. Over the years, Cikada String Quartet has premiered a great number of works by composers such as Cecilie Ore, Henrik Hellstenius, Jon Øivind Ness, Eivind Buene, Håkon Thelin, and Harpreet Bansal.

Cikada String Quartet has toured extensively in Norway and Europe, and has also visited Australia, Mexico, and the USA, and the quartet is a sought-after collaboration partner in Norwegian and international music life and appears on a number of recordings.

Musicians in Cikada String Quartet on this recording:

Sara Övinge—violin

Johanne Haugland—violin

Bendik Bjørnstad Foss—viola

Torun Sæter Stavseng—cello

HARPREET BANSAL
(1980)

States of Mind

1. Otherwise_22:30

Harpreet Bansal, Cikada String Quartet, Andreas Bratlie

2. Light_____13:29

Harpreet Bansal Trio

3. Lotus_____02:50

Harpreet Bansal Trio

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