**Supplementing a Typology of Curation: Learning from *George Harrison and Indian Music***

As Baker, Istvandity and Nowak identify in *Curating Pop: Exhibiting Popular Music in the Museum* (2019) there are now many ‘interested parties’ where the exhibition of popular music is concerned. These ‘interested parties’, however, still tend to be museums and galleries rather than other kinds of venues in which the curation of popular music might take place. Given that so many popular music exhibitions are presented within these spaces, it follows that much of the scholarship on curatorial practices of popular music collections emerges from consideration of the institutional logics and requirements experienced by the people who work within them. This reality stimulated Isvandity et al to posit a set of ‘structuring concepts’ which they believe inform the practice of curation. *Curating Pop: Exhibiting Popular Music in the Museum* is the product of an extensive survey into the curatorial practices of a wide range of exhibitions of popular music within museums culminating with ‘an extended typology of curatorial practice’ in which are identified a total of ‘eight components’ that inform and define such practice; these are: celebrating dominant and hidden histories, economies and the museum experience, the influence of place, display of material culture, the narratives of popular music’s past, curator subjectivity and personal bias, memory and nostalgia, and the inclusion of sound’ (2019, 326).

What I attempt in this discussion is not so much a re-evaluation of these ‘eight components’ but a suggested supplement to them, through the addition of variables that derive from a specific order of exhibition. This particular ‘exhibition’ took the form of a live concert, one that was a result of an admixture of what I will refer to as ‘pragmatic curation’, together with ‘unstructured’ co-curation, and all of this within an environment that brought its own expectations to bear on the realisation of this particular curated ‘exhibition’. Even so, in an era in which popular music’s past is celebrated increasingly through ‘themed’ live concerts, perhaps this genre of exhibition needs to be factored in to how popular music curation manifests itself and can be understood.

Together with John Ball, in writing, directing and producing a concert celebrating the influence of Indian music and culture on the song-writing and spiritual journey of George Harrison, much of the creative ‘behind-the-scenes’ work I undertook fits comfortably within Baker et al’s eight dimensions of curation. Even so, still further curatorial considerations became manifest. Identifying what, how and why may prove of general relevance to the core challenges and practices encountered and engaged when exhibiting popular music’s past.

The concert, which was performed under the title *George Harrison The Story of the Beatles and Indian Music* at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on the 9th June, 2017, was the culmination of a lengthy sequence of unexpected and unplanned events. It featured the two surviving musicians from the recording of ‘Within You, Without You’, George Harrisons sole contribution to *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, released 50 years previously. Until this time, the identities of the musicians who recorded with Harrison were generally understood to be unknown (see, for example, Lavezzoli 2007, Macdonald 2008). ‘Discovering’ them, together with their reminiscences and associated artefacts involved orders of curation that, at the very least, stretch the eight components in question. More, the dynamics associated with at least this concert demonstrate that an extra-museum environment brings further considerations to bear on the practice of curation (above and beyond those identified by Baker and Huber, 2013).

It is evident that museum-based curation is highly specialised, undertaken within organisations and by individuals with expertise and experience in motivating and mounting exhibitions. As I will discuss below, in producing the concert in question, work of a curational nature was undertaken by two individuals who lacked professional curation experience and who had, initially, no goal of exhibition. Eventually, when exhibition became a reality, the context of that exhibition contributed a set of constraints that, while unsympathetic to curation, still required response. What Ball and I had was access to multiple, inter-leaved stories and a cache of fascinating artefacts. A series of contingencies proceeded to arise that demanded response and, in making those responses, we found ourselves impelled towards what can only be described as ‘pragmatic curation’. By this admittedly loose term I mean that we had not decided to tell a story we believed important and then went searching for respondents and material culture to corroborate our beliefs; instead, stories and artefacts came to us and we made connections among and between them.

As we drew people towards us who would help us articulate a connected account of a set of recording sessions and their implications for and within the Indian diaspora in the UK and the unrelated personal and musical transformation of a Beatle, co-curation became a dynamic force in its own right. Even so, as indicated previously, this practice was, in contrast to the more conscious acts and experiences of co-curation discussed in unlike in the work of, for example, Mohr, Zehle and Schmitz (2018) or Mutibwa, Hess and Jackson (2020), unformulated and unstructured. It is the combination of the pragmatics of discovery and articulation together with the comparative irresistibility of (poorly managed) co-curation inside a context established by a comparatively inhospitable non-museum space that surfaces variables in curatorial practice that might usefully supplement the Baker et al ‘components’.

**George Harrison, The Beatles and Indian Music**

The concert was an attempt to convey the many-sided complexity of the embrace of Indian Classical Music (and its spiritual values) by a member of the Beatles who, thus far, had not enjoyed prominence as a song-writer. From his joining the group in the late-1950s, Harrison’s role was to play lead guitar and to harmonise. His opportunities to sing ‘lead’ were few and were fewer still when it came to make original song contributions to Beatles albums. What transformed the restrictiveness he experienced was a substantially ‘accidental’ but cumulative set of encounters with Indian music and Hindu spirituality, see Farrell (1988), Shapiro (2005), Lavezolli (2007), Greene (2008), Sounes (2011), Tillery (2011), Thomson (2013). These encounters all took place in the Spring of 1965, including Harrison’s exposure to several Indian musical instruments during the shooting of the Beatles’ second feature film, *Help!*. In October 1965, Harrison introduced his fellow group members to the sounds and sensibilities of Indian classical music by playing the sitar on the song ‘Norwegian Wood’ for what would become the Beatles’ *Rubber Soul* album. By the following spring, when recording the group’s *Revolver* album, not only would he play a more developed sitar part for the track ‘Love You To’ but this particular recording would also involve the use of the Indian percussion instrument *tabla*, played by session musician Anil Bhagwat. Harrison also contributed a performance on *tamboura* for John Lennon’s ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’. More than this, in his own composition ‘Taxman’ and in John Lennon’s ‘And Your Bird Can Sing’ (as well as on ‘Rain’ which was recorded in the same period but not included on *Revolver*), the modal influence of Indian classical music is apparent, see Farrell (1988) and Lavezolli (2007).

Through these songs and in this period, Harrison’s ongoing fascination with Indian classical music continued to flourish, culminating in his 1967 recording of ‘Within You, Without You’for the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* album. As part of the concept for the record, it was Paul McCartney’s conceit that all musicians, Beatles and non-Beatles alike, contributing to the album should not be identified because, collectively, they formed ‘Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band’. In the intervening years, assiduous Beatles observers tracked down the names of many of the session musicians involved in the recordings, but the Indian musicians who played ‘dilrubas, svarmandal, tabla, tambura’ on the album (McDonald 2008: 243) were still represented as ‘uncredited’.

My own interest in this oversight was piqued on receipt of the following email:

 …my father was one of the Indian musicians on the track “Within You Without You”. I would love to be able to record the appropriate credit for the three Indian musicians who played on the track - dilruba (x2 including my father) and tabla. The LP or other references (books and internet) do not acknowledge their involvement - I have a the (*sic*) original LP with a label "Not for sale" that my father received (personal communication, 14 May 2015)

I received this mail from Utkarsha Joshi the day after my being interviewed by *The Times* newspaper in 2015 on the occasion of the introduction into the GCSE Music curriculum (the UK secondary school curriculum for 13-16 year olds) of three songs from *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. I found this email intriguing because it raised the question of who else had played on the sessions for ‘‘Within You, Without You’’. It seemed essential to follow up on the inquiry and to verify whether the musician in question, Purushottam Dattatraya Joshi (known as ‘Anna’), had indeed played with George Harrison. To accomplish this aim, I drew on the expertise of tabla player John Ball, who is a respected instrumentalist within the UK network of practising Indian classical musicians. As it transpired, neither Ball nor any of his colleagues knew who the musicians in questions could have been. This revelation raised questions for us, who had played on the album and why had the names of the musicians not passed into the record of the UK’s diasporic Indian classical music community?

**George Harrison and Indian Musicians: Uncovering a ‘hidden history’ through ‘material culture’.**

The bearing here for the question of curation, and for the defining components proposed by Isvandity et al, is that immediately in following this course of action, together with Ball, I had begun to uncover what, in their terminology, was very much a ‘hidden history’. Similarly, their concept of ‘material culture’ was one I was engaged with from the outset: Utkarsha Joshi possessed the dilruba his father played during the session and also owned a pre-release copy of *Sgt. Pepper’s* (marked ‘factory sample, not for sale’) that had been sent to him by EMI Records in 1967. In so engaging with Mr. Joshi’s story, with his artefacts, along with recounted memories of his father’s experience at Abbey Road recording studio, and of being a practising musician in the London of the 1960s, seemed all to be a compelling story and one that demanded fleshing out. Even so, as we delved into these stories, we were not yet involved in ‘curation’ in the sense that there was no mooted end-product: no intention to assemble or give narrative coherence to an exhibition of any of the material artefacts we had seen or stories we had been told. The only curatorial engagement at this point took the unsystematic form of collecting materials we found fascinating and considered ‘important’ (cf Baker & Huber, 2013, 515).

Driven as we were by a desire to ‘get to the bottom’ of who played on the recording session, and also to understand how Indian classical music first came to be practised in the UK, a more structured, though entirely pragmatic, curational imperative began to assert itself: we began to set targets and divide our labour (so certainly ‘curator subjectivity and personal bias’ began to assert themselves, Baker et al, 2019, 326). Ball made enquiries through networks of Indian classical musicians, while I pursued connections to Sir Peter Blake, the artist who created the *Sgt. Pepper’s* album cover and who attended several of the album’s the recording sessions, and to Sir George Martin, the record’s producer. I also identified and made contact with Shankara Angadi whose father, Ayana, had founded the Asian Music Circle, the influential organisation that promoted Indian and Asian music and culture in Britain, and through whose own network of contacts the musicians were found for the Beatles’ recording sessions.

In almost all instances, our efforts proved productive: Ball was able to identify that Buddhadev Kansara, the musician intended for the album’s tabla parts, ended up ceding this role to his friend, Natwar Soni. Instead, Kansara played tamboura, accompanying Harrison’s sitar part. Amrit Gajjar was confirmed as perhaps the main dilruba player on the recording sessions. It transpired that he had died in the late 1990s but Ball made contact with his family. My own enquiries led to an important account of the session furnished through a telephone conversation with Blake. On asking him to recollect the layout of the recording studio and who populated it (and anticipating that he would tell me, that there were either three or four Indian musicians involved, the numbers that seemed most likely), his answer was ‘ooh, 18 or so’ (Blake, personal communication 2015). This was a startling and unexpected answer and, as such, it stimulated new lines of inquiry. Sir George Martin pointed out (Sir George Martin, personal communication 2015) that he had named the musicians in a 30th anniversary account of the recording of Sgt. Pepper. This was momentarily disappointing until photographs of the session emerged from one of the families of the musicians we had identified. These clearly showed other Indian musicians in the company of George Harrison. Similarly, there are photographs available on the internet that show Harrison in conversation with Indian musicians during the time of the recording of the album. All of this suggested to us that, regardless of a single published source that indicated that musicians had been identified (and so were no longer technically ‘unknown’), there was still more to be uncovered about George Harrison’s studio interactions with Indian musicians during and outside of the *Sgt. Pepper’s* sessions, and far more to be determined about the diasporic networks of Indian musicians within and beyond the UK.

Following this flurry of interviews, we were in possession of entirely fresh testimony (much of it as filmed interviews) about the ‘Within You, Without You’ sessions together with a remarkable set of documents and photographs. Additionally, we had much of the back story of the Asian Music Circle, and we had begun to generate accounts of the emergence of Indian classical concerts and ensembles in the early years of diaspora to the UK. However pragmatic in its organisation and execution, this effort had become curational at the very least as an engagement with ‘memory and nostalgia’ (Baker et al, 2019, 326), but far more so in its generation of ‘material culture’ and uncovering of ‘hidden history’. But in addition, (or perhaps as an unanticipated outcome of the effort made), the impulse to make these findings public began to make itself felt, the more so because the film-makers we had involved had their own, respective backgrounds in TV documentary making: without our recognising or conceding it, unformulated co-curation had already become a dynamic force where our conceptualisation of how to go public with these findings was concerned.

**Creating a concert, Curating a concert**

Vecco asks: Who decides what a ‘message from the past’ might be saying? Who are the ‘humans’ when deciding ‘human values’? (2010: 322). The email from Utkarsha Joshi seemed just such a message from the past, and George Harrison’s embrace of Indian Classical Music and aspects of Hinduism seemed exactly a case of a ‘human’ asserting ‘values’ that inflected the ‘message’ we had been deciphering. So it was that a chance conversation about these developments with Richard Haswell, Head of Programme for Liverpool Philharmonic led to his inviting us to present our findings at the then newly-opened Music Room of the Philharmonic. Perhaps here, more than at any single point, did the need for informed curation assert itself. And yet, this invitation was also a tipping point for the pragmatic and co-curational character of the enterprise initiated in the wake of the original email from Utkarsha Joshi.

Haswell’s invitation was, essentially, for us to ‘exhibit’ our findings; how that was to be accomplished was entirely our concern. When we began to discuss how to accomplish such a presentation, Ball made a passing observation that in trying to discuss George Harrison’s sitar playing before a general audience, it would be helpful to have sitarist on hand to demonstrate his evolving technique. Accordingly, we agreed to invite a sitarist, Jasdeep Singh Degun, to perform in our event at the Music Room. From that point, events began to snowball: the sitarist would need a tabla player to accompany him. If we had a tabla player, we would also need a dilruba player. At the same time, we would also need a rock band for vocals and to play the guitar, bass and drum parts on ‘Norwegian Wood’ and ‘Love You To’. And we would also need a string section for ‘Within You, Without You’.

So it was that, in order to contextualise, animate and exemplify our findings, we added not just live music to our anticipated event, we added musicians and we added performance. It then became apparent that the Music Room was too small for what we intended. Consequently, we suggested to Haswell that the event be moved from the Music Room, with a capacity of 125, to the Philharmonic’s main hall, with a capacity of 1,700. Unnoticed by us at the time, but implicit in Haswell’s agreement to this request, was a conceptual shift: by taking place in the main hall, our (equally implicit) ‘exhibition’ now became a ‘concert’ and as a concert it would need not just to obey the logic of a concert, but meet the standard expected by a hall of the scale and stature of the Liverpool Philharmonic: we were now not ‘just’ in the curation business, we were in the music business.

Haswell invitation meant that we had been given the opportunity to mount an ‘exhibition’ but not simply in a non-gallery-space (as in the concept of the ‘pop-up exhibition’, discussed, among others, by Kwandars 2019, Overdiek 2017, Grant 2015, Iannaggi & Latham 2014, Giordano 2013) but in a concert hall, an environment that comes with its own practices and its own, complex set of expectations. In turn this meant not only that it would need to meet two exacting sets of standards: publicly focused curation and entertainment, but it meant that the audience would need to be satisfied in both regards. Further, while the audience at an exhibition usually makes its own way around the exhibitry and at its own pace, in our case, the audience would be seated and the ‘exhibitry’ would be contextualised by an on-stage narrator. By creating a narrative script we were then deep in the territory of one of the ‘eight components’; we had pragmatically generated a ‘narrative of popular music’s past’ but we had done so amid co-curational contributions we were in no position to manage, and in an environment whose standards and expectations we could not fail to meet.

**The lessons of pragmatism**

The questions of which genre’s protocols to obey, with what priority and in what ways meant that what was experienced by the audience on the night as a cohesive and convincing account of George Harrison and Indian Music was, backstage enormously pressurised. If we unpack this ‘pressure’ we can see that curational pragmatism together with unmanaged co-creation inside an environment that was structurally inhospitable to an ‘exhibition’ were source of stress and strain, but ones that can perhaps be unpicked in ways that inform the ‘eight components’ of Baker et al.

There were (coincidentally) eight key dimensions to the production of the concert. These can be grouped, usefully, into four sets of comparable and connected dimensions. By considering each of these in turn the lessons of pragmatism can be drawn:

**1. Theatre and Film**

The concert was formed by and around a core narrative in that it explored a version of George Harrison’s ‘coming’ to Indian Classical Music. He was impelled in its direction not because of the happenstance of events in the Spring of 1965, but more so by his increasingly evident frustration with ‘Beatlemania’. This was a phenomenon that took many forms, but with the most galling (from the perspective of Harrison as a playing musician) being the unwavering habit of audiences to scream at the Beatles in live performance from the moment they came into view to the moment they left the stage. Because of this, he had come to refer to this phenomenon as ‘the Mania’. In Indian Classical Music he found a connection to meditative ‘truths’ that helped him make sense of himself as an individual caught up in such ‘mania’.

To proffer this version of Harrison’s embrace of Indian Classical Music is already to tell the story of the ‘uncredited’ Indian musicians not as their story but as George Harrison’s story *in which they play a small part*. The ‘bias’ is self-evident and inescapable and this was reflected in the staging of the concert in which the music was contextualised visually in two main ways: the presence of an onstage narrator (stage right at a lectern) and a cinema screen backdrop running ‘featured’ and ‘incidental’ audio-visual materials in support of the scripted narration. In this way, what was combined in spoken and audio-visual presentation was a version of the compressed ‘history’ of George Harrison as a Beatle. It was then one of several climactic, and essentially theatrical moments, that, following screening of a ten minute explanatory film created from the filmed interviewees, Kansara and Soni were led onto the stage, presented to the audience and garlanded. They then delivered a short set of devotional music. All of this is a theatre more than it is a performance, but howsoever we consider it, it exceeds Baker et al’s ‘inclusion of sound’ in exhibition. Further, where museums have long involved dramatic recreation of historic events, this, in and of itself was an historic event, which intensified the curatorial dimension of the concert even as it heightened the concert experience for the audience.

The use of audio-visual material to support the narrative introduced and involved a host of elements that were co-curational in their effect. For example, the audio-visual designer was given perhaps too much autonomy in deciding the backdrop. This is was an example of the ‘stress and strain’ referred to previously. This is not to suggest that these particular A/V elements detracted from the concert as a whole (in fact, they enhanced it) but it does suggest that what Ball and I initiated was a ‘team performance’ whose players were insufficiently managed. The same might be said of the 10 minute ‘mini-documentary’ culled from the Kansara/Anagadi/Joshi/Soni interviews and shown as the beginning to the concert’s second half. The involvement of a film making team was ad hoc and even more unmanaged than that of the A/V design. Again, the film was absolutely integral to the whole – the involvement of Ayana Angadi and the Asian Music Circle to the ‘‘Within You, Without You’’ recording session is both central and abstruse – but the making and editing of this film was co-curation stretched to its extreme and a further source of stress. In both instances, ‘pragmatic curation’ is shown up for what it is, a lack of forethought and planning on the part of the ‘curators’, but it also shows that, if an exhibition proceeds reactively to opportunity, risk requires to be managed and perhaps this recognition needs to supplement the ‘eight components’.

**2. Music and Artefacts**

That Kansara and Soni played at the concert made them one of four featured ensembles, the others were the Indian ensemble led by Degun (consisting of sitar, tabla, dilruba/tar shenhai, mridangam, tamboura/swarmandal), the Liverpool rock band led by Thomas McConnell, and a 15 piece string section led by Tony Shorrocks. What was ‘curatorial’ (above and beyond the inclusion of the Kansara-Soni performance) was that the creation of a set-list that ‘led the way’ to an interpretation of ‘Within You, Without You’, the track on which the ‘uncredited’ musicians had played and, therefore, necessarily the climactic performance of the concert.

Arriving at the set-list (and then rehearsing it) was a matter of much time and debate: the concert needed to begin from George Harrison compositions before he registered the impact of Indian Classical Music on his thought and practice. There needed to be a sitar solo because it was the work of Ravi Shankar which consolidated Harrison’s commitment not just to the sitar but to the values in which Hindustani music is rooted. There then needed to be examples of how his own compositions and recordings, and those of the Beatles, were impacted by this new engagement. What needs to be appreciated here is the degree to which the music performance carried the narrative. In this, the music performance displayed its own degree of theatricality – for example, Indian-influenced Beatles music was played as two medleys, one in each half of the concert. The second medley (consisting of ‘It’s Only a Northern Song’, ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’ and ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’) featured a lengthy and enthralling ‘percussion battle’ between the mridangam and tabla. This was neither scripted nor rehearsed but decided upon and directed by the players, a semi-spontaneous assertion of the centrality of Indian Classical music to the ‘story’ as a whole. My point here is that this was an act of unmanaged co-curation and could most productively be understood as an example of the ‘exhibits’ making their own design decisions, a phenomenon that supplements rather than contradicts the Baker et al ‘components’ (the same point might also be made with regard to the Kanasara-Soni set over which we had no control).

Further, It has already been indicated that our enquiries located a cache of unseen Beatles photographs from the *Sgt. Pepper’s* sessions. Along with these, and in addition by the new materials supplied by Natwar Soni, Buddhadev Kansara and Shankara Angadi, further ‘finds’ materialized from unlikely sources. One of these was Pathé News archival footage consisting of two remarkable sequences featuring Ravi Shankar, both shot in Britain but, in one case, thirty years before *Sgt. Pepper* (a fact of significance in its own right). It is impossible to say whether either or both sequences had been shown in cinemas, but it seems unlikely, certainly in the second instance, as there was no accompanying voice-over.

The first piece, with the title ‘Sinuous Sidelight’, was footage of Uday Shankar’s dance troupe in Europe in 1931 (see Craske 2020, Khokar 1983). The significance here is that an 11 year old Ravi Shankar appears in the ensemble playing for his older brother’s dancers. The second piece of footage showed Ravi Shankar playing at the Commonwealth Arts and Dancing Festival of 1965 (see Low, 2013). What was remarkable about this second piece was that, quite by accident, a member of staff of the University of Liverpool’s Music Department found in a drawer a set of materials relating to that Commonwealth festival. As Low puts it,

The Festival was staged between 16 September and 2 October, 1965, in the cities of Liverpool, Glasgow, Cardiff, and London, places designated as “national centres”. (2013: 98)

As it transpired, Shankar gave two performances in Liverpool on the 26th September, the first at 3 p.m. at the student union’s Mountford Hall and the second at 8 p.m. at the Anglican Cathedral, (in the latter instance with Yehudi Menhuin (whom Ayana Angadi had persuaded to be President of the Asian Music Circle). The dates here are interesting: just over two weeks before George Harrison contributed a sitar part to *Norwegian Wood*, Ravi Shankar performed in Liverpool. This clutch of new material supplemented the concert narrative in powerful ways and was distributed among the A/V backdrop and the programme (discussed below) as facsimiles of the original Shankar concert programmes, respectively. Such serendipity is not novel in curation (or in Beatles curation for that matter – see Leonard 2014) but that a concert narrative should make such connections between known and forgotten materials speaks positively to its claim to be a work of curation. Even so, the use of Pathé footage as well as of personal photographs brought their own challenges.

**3. Legalities and Finance**

The A/V backdrop foregrounded the issue of contracts and licences and how these bear on curation, generally, as well as the concert, specifically. Along with securing permissions for the interviews to be conducted and extracts used in the film, there were three other key legal agreements that were vital to the performance: licences from Pathé to use Beatles and Ravi Shankar-related footage; a contract with the owners of the unseen Beatles photographs for a single usage; and a contract with the A/V designer that he comply with the wishes of the owners of the photographs and delete his copies from the A/V presentation (on his computer) at the conclusion of the performance.

While licences to use the Pathé footage were straightforward to secure, it does raise a particular issue that was very much underscored by the need to generate contracts of single-use and mandatory deletion in regard to the photographs. This ‘issue’ is that of repeatability. Such was the success of the concert that Ball and I were offered the opportunity to tour it nationally in the Autumn of 2020. In negotiating with Pathé the opportunity existed to take out an extended licence. At the time of this negotiation the opportunity was declined because the concert was envisaged as, simply, a ‘one-off’ event. At the very least, this vignette suggests not simply that the use of copyrighted material in curation comes at a cost, but that this is one of many costs that produce ‘judgement calls’ that can be called wrongly – in this instance, it would have been more prudent of me to pay for the extended licence *just in case* an offer was made to repeat the performance. All commercial undertakings come with risk. In a sense, even a subsidised museum exhibition is a risk – should the exhibition fail to meet anticipated visitor numbers, further funding might be jeopardised. In this case, the commercial logic of staging the concert (costs of production) took precedence over envisaging it as a curated event that might be reproduced on multiple sites.

In the case of the use of the unseen Beatles photographs, the threat of legal entanglement was quite daunting. To have uncovered a cache of unseen Beatles photographs is quite extraordinary, but to manage access to them was an intimidating experience. It is not so much that the owners themselves were difficult to deal with but, in an age in which digital photography and digital distribution is a ubiquitous and casual characteristic of public spaces and events, then maximising the use of the photographs while minimising the risk that they would pass into instantaneous general circulation was nerve-racking. From a curational perspective, it was ‘added value’ to have these photographs as part of the concert, but it is unlikely that any repeat performance could (or would be allowed to) include them. Aside from this being a sad deficit, it raises a question of temporality: if we understand a concert as a kind of pop-up exhibition, how long must an exhibition ‘pop-up’ to be considered an exhibition? Is it genuinely an act of curation to present artefacts on the terms and conditions of the curators, especially in the form of a concert in a concert hall which, quintessentially, expects passivity on the part of the audience?

**4. Marketing and Programme**

If the concert as a ‘product’ involved the previously discussed elements, then how it was marketed again speaks to a lack of cohesion in it as that product. Where the concert’s marketing was concerned, the decision taken by Richard Haswell to permit transfer from the Music Room to the main hall of the Philharmonic multiplied costs and risks, exponentially. A public lecture would have been mounted at almost no cost and negligible risk, a concert (as but one in a programme of concerts) was always going to be vastly more expensive and vastly riskier to realise. This transformation in status was not managed as effectively as it might have been, but, as the evening of the concert neared, the Philharmonic initiated its ‘concert advancing’ procedures as it would for any concert in its programme. One dimension of this was the marketing and promotion of the event.

Here, the very specific nature of the concert – as one that would appeal not just to Beatles fans and to lovers of Indian Classical Music but perhaps to the Indian community more widely – tended to be ignored by the Philharmonic’s marketing team who, for the most part, marketed to their database of concert goers. In this, save for Facebook advertising, no use was made of other social media to reach beyond that database. Similarly, no tailored campaign was aimed at British-Indian communities in the Northwest whether through the Liverpool-based Indian arts organisation Milapfest or through outreach marketing to large, nearby UK-Indian concentrations such as nearby Preston with its estimated UK-Indian population of 14,500 people. Here our alliance with a non-museum partner saw their imperatives over-ride our best interests. This is not to accuse the Philharmonic of dereliction but just to suggest that the concert’s producers required input into the marketing of their product when the product was not just a concert. Considered in this way, perhaps ‘partnership management’ might be added to the ‘typology’ under discussion.

The programme was commissioned by the University of Liverpool’s Marketing Communications team and produced by a local design company. It is of relevance because it not only allowed the narrative to be condensed and abstracted into a further, accessible (and permanent form) but it, too, contained related artefacts. The larger issues here are that, firstly, the involvement of Marketing Communications and of an external design firm further problematised the curation of the event in the same way as had the A/V designer and the film team (and, in their way, the musicians). Essentially, all were sub-contractors working to a brief, except that Ball and I were de facto rather than de jure ‘producers’ and lacked that brief as an operational document. Further, as de facto producers we had not clarified what was our ‘core business’ – was it as curators or as concert producers? Again, it is not that one cannot also be the other, but to be neither in any clear way was a nagging instability for the exercise. The programme emerged as a first-class production in terms of design, content and realisation. The problem is that this was a fortuitous rather than a truly planned and controlled outcome and this, too, draws attention to, if not ‘missing’ components’ of the Baker et al taxonomy, then at least to dimensions that need to be surfaced: in addition to how co-curation is managed; and to how the relationship with working partners is formulated and managed; we can add the challenges that come when curational genres are mixed (in this case exhibitions and concerts). The success of the concert on the night showed that Ball and I rose to the challenge of being in the music business, but the logics of music business did not sit comfortably with those of curation. Significant differences in genres of public presentation of curated materials position the audience in markedly different ways and in this instance in ways with which museum curators might be deeply uncomfortable.

**Who Speaks? What is Heard?**

In and throughout all of the actions taken towards and on the night of the concert, some considerations, although they loomed large, went unaddressed. The largest of these was how to present George Harrison’s immersion in Indian Classical Music. For example, involving UK-Indian musicians in the concert revisited the tensions buried in George Harrison’s original employment of UK-Indian musicians as session players.

It was John Ball’s decision to involve Jasdeep Singh Degun. Degun is a ‘rising star’ in UK Indian Classical Music circles, a recipient of a Sky Arts Academy scholarship in 2016. He has featured with Hamburg Symphony Orchestra and been commissioned by Opera North. It transpired that his decision to play sitar stemmed from a school-teacher playing ‘Within You, Without You’ to his school class in Leeds when he was six years old. In this way, he had a strong emotional investment in the work, but an investment read through his subsequent experience of learning sitar as an Anglo-Indian. At the very least this impelled him to want any exposition of George Harrison’s immersion in Indian Music to be as much about Indian Classical Music as it was a celebration of a decision by a Beatle. At the very least, this problematises the Baker et al identification of ‘celebrating dominant and hidden histories’ – who is celebrating what history? Although this is too large a subject to deal with satisfactorily in this context, the vast literature on the Beatles (over 3000 works are identified by Brocken and Davis, 2012) tends to shy away from considering their less palatable sides as individuals. In the case of George Harrison, his immersion in Indian Classical Music and aspects of Hinduism could easily be construed in the terms deployed by Ramachandran & Vertinsky (2019):

Edward Said famously named this convention of turning Asian people into the inverted image of their Western counterpoints “Orientalism,” focusing upon colonialist and imperial agendas in which the West constructed the “East” as different, inferior, and in need of Western intervention or rescue (“Orientalism” 79). Sometimes, as was the case in the 1960s, these assumptions seemed to have been based on sympathy and identity but were nevertheless as equally constitutive of Orientalist discourse as hostility and alterity, often going hand in hand. (2019, 3).

It is quite easy to see George Harrison as a figure who reproduced ‘Orientalism’ albeit from the perspective of ‘sympathy and identity’ which, however heartfelt this was, remained, as these two theorists argue, redolent of that malign practice. To then ‘celebrate’ *George Harrison: The Story of the Beatles and Indian Music* is to court strongly that same charge. In observing this, it is not to argue that Ball and I overrode Degun’s feelings or wishes (far from it) but it remains the case that a young Anglo-Indian, given access to the same resources, may well have constructed and so curated the concert differently. Clearly, in a more orthodox curational episode, these larger concerns could have been addressed and alternative readings presented for debate, but a concert needs to cohere as a performance and the demands of performance could be argued to have over-ridden more thoroughgoing engagement with the big and important questions raised in what, in effect, we celebrated: that George Harrison came to take Indian Classical Music seriously, and that we had found the surviving musicians from a recording session of his.

**Conclusion**

In presenting this account and analysis of a concert that was informed, at the very least, by a curational drive, much self-criticism has been generated, yet what guided all actions and over-rode all concert-making constraints was a shared determination that Ball and I communicate what we had learned, understood and unearthed along the way in our pursuit of the identities of the uncredited musicians. The transfer from the Music Room to the Main Hall of the Philharmonic was a huge undertaking and it was not approached with the greatest efficiency - for example, and above and beyond comments already made - the decision to employ a string section was not taken until the week of the concert (after being rejected six months previously); the script was not finished until noon on the day of the event; no dress rehearsal was held; Utkarsha Joshi failed to bring his father’s dilruba, the very instrument that had precipitated the entire process; actions taken by the Philharmonic, post hoc (in terms of the raising of charges previously undiscussed) created a large extra burden of costs to be met. No museum or gallery could survive this level of disorganisation, and the limits of ‘pragmatic curation’ and unmanaged co-curation are easy to see.

This ‘mea culpa’ made, identification of components of museum curation identified by Baker et al can still be augmented usefully from this extra-museum experience:

* Ball and I proceeded reactively to an initial opportunity and, in so doing, generated further opportunities to explore and discuss Indian Classical Music in diaspora. Identifying the two surviving musicians was a ‘hook’ to hang the concert on. This does not mean that the narrative direction of the concert was pre-determined, but it does suggest that the combination of aretfacts and untold stories was subject not just to curator ‘bias’ but to the demands of narrative, itself. By this I mean that a concert requires not just a beginning, middle and end, but cohesiveness, contrast and climax: the emphasis given to the animated elements is inflected by ‘hidden’ considerations of these kinds.
* In mounting an elaborate concert with many ‘moving parts’, ‘co-curation’ and partner relations both demanded to be managed. It is likely that appropriate management strategies would be built in to the planning of an exhibition in a conventional space, but an awareness of the need to manage partners and contributors could usefully be perceived as an element of all curation work.
* Similarly, the question of risk and risk management could play a more prominent role in the thinking of curators. In many fundamental ways, Ball and I were ignorant of the risks we took as we moved in our ad hoc way from objective to objective; the George Harrison concert was ‘reactive curation’ as much as it was ‘pragmatic curation’. Again, in more conventional experiences of extensively planned exhibitions, risks may well be identified and either eliminated or made subject to contingency plans. Even so, as the past is engaged, opportunities arise and judgement calls need to be made about whether and how to involve newly-uncovered materials and testimony. Given this, curators require procedures to maximise windfalls and minimise risks they may present, and sometimes (as in the case of the cache of photographs we accessed) the attendant risks can be greater than they first appear. Luckily, ‘nothing happened’ with regard to our use of these photographs on the night, but had something untoward happened neither of us would have been able to meet the consequences; risk management is a key curational issue and needs to be prominent when ‘structuring concepts’ of the practice are identified.

In reflecting on this experience, it appears that the nearest curational ‘neighbour’ to it is the pop-up museum. This notion and this practice are comparatively recent ones enabled by the rise to ubiquity of social media in the past decade. Grant explores the significance of social media for curation, noting, “Our primary goal for pop-up museums is to bring people together in conversation through stories, art, history, and objects” (2015: 15), She describes the phenomenon as:

Part exhibition, part program, part story-potluck, our pop-up museums offer a hybrid experience that allow us to facilitate conversations around community issues and personal stories. (2015: 14)

If we add the pop-up exhibition to a museum exhibition and a (curated) concert to give us three points of reference, their principal difference is registered in terms of angle of engagement with a potential audience. A museum relies on attracting visitors over time, a concert seeks to attract an audience on a single night, a pop-up exhibition reverses the notion of visiting – in the sense that the museum ‘visits’ a place where people do not expect to encounter articulated heritage. Villeneuve, in a study of competing values in museum exhibition curation makes the following observation,

 In 1999, Stephen Weil, then the leading US museum theorist, famously argued that ‘museums must go from being about something (the object) to being for someone (the visitor)’ (2019, 1).

In the very notion of making accessible a ‘hidden history’, Baker et al’s criteria seem very much to agree with Villeneuve’s quotation of Weil: a popular music exhibition is ‘for’ those people whose cultural interests (and culture making) has been so hidden. Where the George Harrison concert was concerned, perhaps the biggest curational weakness was to take the narrativized material culture primarily to Beatles fans rather than also to the Anglo-Indian community. So much could be learned from the latter and learned in ways that only a celebratory concert might stimulate. This was how the proposed tour was envisaged, but the tour fell not on curatorial grounds but on music-industrial ones, it was deemed ‘too expensive’ by the consortium of theatres who had expressed an interest in hosting the concert at their venues.

The loss of the tour was difficult to deal with. From the perspective of this study it seems likely that it might well have produced further supplementary additions to the ‘typology of curatorial practice’ established by Baker, Istvandity and Nowak if only for the reason that music events generate contingencies that need to be met in the moment. If we fail to encounter the flux of mounting an exhibition then we fail to see curation as an active process, one informed by compromise and serendipity as much as by strong principle. The question then is whether meeting contingencies produce further consistencies in curatorial practice that can be usefully reported and generalised.

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**Interviews**

Utkarsha Joshi 22/08/15

Sir Peter Blake 27/09/15

Shirley Burns (P.A. to Sir George Martin) 6/10/15