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"For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for beholding. It is for the hearing. It is not legible, but audible..."

Attali (3)

I.

1. On a recent trip to London I spent one Sunday afternoon taking a walking tour of parking lots—or at least, that is what it must have looked like to anyone out of earshot. The other tourists my group passed must have wondered what we were doing as we followed our guide from parking lot to parking lot among the closed shops in the Portsoken area. The Tower of London was so near—just what were we looking at?
2. If those observers had joined our group, they would have learned that, rather than taking a tour of physical present-day London, we were touring Medieval London—a London that disappeared in the Great Fire of 1666. Like the character of Marco Polo, who conjured up mythical and strange cities through his stories for Kublai Khan in Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities*, our tour guide's words created a real and palpable city out of the air. We saw through the London of today to an equally real (yet metaphysical) London of the Middle

Ages that our guide's stories unearthed from the Medieval street plan that still marks modern London.

3. My audiovisual experience of London that day is one that I have daily on my morning commutes through Los Angeles. The flat, expansive, and ambiguous face of LA's smoggy panorama that reveals itself during my morning drive southward over the Sepulveda Pass appears completely vacant of meaning, like that of London's parking lots. Yet it is a view that is belied by the sound of the many musics available on Los Angeles radio stations. Acting in place of my London tour guide (and Calvino's Marco Polo) is Yatrika Shah-Rais,¹ one of the five radio hosts of KPFK's *Global Village*,² whose lilting voice floats over the Los Angeles airwaves on 90.7 FM on Wednesday mornings. Conceived and produced by Betto Arcos, Operations Director at KPFK,³ *Global Village* explores local and world music with a different host—and viewpoint—each day of the week: Betto Arcos himself on Mondays,⁴ Simeon Pillich on Tuesdays,⁵ John Schneider on Thursdays,⁶ and Sergio Mielniczenko on Fridays.⁷
4. Though the term "World Music" has been around since the late 1980s (and has been rightly criticized as a catch-all term for everything that doesn't fit neatly into record store categories), "World of Music" would be a better way to describe the wide variety of music that *Global Village's* hosts play every weekday: music from all the classical traditions, jazz, salsa, progressive rock, folk, film music, and an array of traditional and crossover musics from around the globe. Yatrika Shah-Rais's Wednesday *Global Village* program presents music to her listeners with an accent on India, the Middle East, Asia, and women composers and performers.
5. Literary scholar Raymond Williams has written that what we might gain from an understanding of the way the arts work—and I would include music here—is a deeper understanding of a culture's "structures of feeling." (132) The continued political unrest throughout the world makes our understanding of different cultures urgent and more needed, and the music of KPFK's *Global Village* fosters a deeper knowledge of what musicologist Susan McClary has described as the many "ways societies have devised for articulating their most basic beliefs through the medium of sound"—the many "structures of feeling" from around the world as well as those from our own backyard. (31)

6. I had the pleasure of watching Yatrika do her show on April 10, 2002 during the week of *Global Village's* Fifth Anniversary and of listening to some of their "greatest hits" over the past five years.⁸ *Global Village's* anniversary is made all the more amazing when you find out that the hosts and support staff of *Global Village*, as with many of the programs on KPFK, are all volunteers giving freely of their time to play music that they love—music that they think you will love, too. The day before, away from the bustle of the KPFK studio, we sat among the beautiful objects and furniture of the Koan Collection on Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles, and I asked Yatrika about herself and her musical world.

II.

7. **GH:** I am struck and amazed by the many different kinds of music that you play on your show. Last Wednesday [April 3 2002]⁹ you started off your day of *Global Village* with the Paul Hillier Ensemble performing seventeenth-century Russian music, followed by pieces from the Elizabethan composer John Dowland¹⁰ and the contemporary composer John Tavener¹¹—all music that might be termed "classical" music, but probably would not be programmed on a "classical" music station. And then you gave thirty minutes of air time to Polish composer Zbigniew Preisner's *Requiem for My Friend* ...¹²

YS-R: ... A composer who's hardly ever played anywhere ...

GH: ... and certainly would not be played at that length, even on a classical station. Your choices of all those different kinds of "classical" musics covering a span of almost four hundred years on that segment of your program, as well as the wide variety of the music that followed, really piqued my curiosity not only about your background in music, but about you as a person.

8. **YS-R:** First of all, I'm from Iran. I was born there and I lived there until I was about sixteen years old. I grew up in a family that was very supportive of music, a family of music lovers. I have an elder brother, and both of us studied classical piano from an early age. My father had a more eclectic taste, in the sense that he also enjoyed flamenco music, European-style world music, and a lot of classical music. My mother was the "classical" music person. So, I got a classical music appreciation from the both of them.

9. My brother was five years older than me and at that time listening to The Beatles and stuff like that, so there was where the rock and roll element came in. I remember that he used to come home after buying these records—45s—and he'd play these singles, and we'd be singing, "Oh yeah! I want to hold your hand!" [laughs] He was very much my elder brother, my inspiration, in introducing me to rock and roll, and then to alternative rock.
10. Of course there was the classical inspiration that was coming from my parents, and the fact that my brother and I were both playing classical piano. I played piano for quite a while, and stopped when I got too involved with work. I have moved a lot and couldn't take a piano with me. To tell you the truth, my fingers are very rusty right now ... especially my left hand, which trails behind the right!
11. The world music element ... but for us it wasn't "world music" at the time. We were living in Iran, so when we would listen to Persian music, it was just Persian music—it had nothing to do with "world" music.

GH: It probably wasn't even "Persian" music for you, it was probably just "music."

YS-R: Yes, just "music." We wouldn't have identified it with any specific category in the sense that I would have wanted to label it.

12. I think, historically, that elements of world music and the concept of "world music" started creeping in with first experiments of some of the classical and rock ensembles. For example, Yehudi Menuhin and Ravi Shankar—*West Meets East* [1967] when they started collaborating, and the *Sitar Concerto* of Ravi Shankar.¹³ In terms of rock and roll, I remember I first heard Mike Oldfield's *Ommadawn* [1975]—there was so much African drumming that was taking place in there.¹⁴ At the time I wasn't even really relating to the fact that this was African drumming or not. I was still young. But it was all extremely appealing in terms of the sounds.
13. My family left Iran in 1975—my brother left earlier—and we went to live in London. Afterwards, I went to live in France where I lived during my university years. In France you get exposed to a lot of world music, because at that time the presence of Africans and North Africans — Moroccans, Algerians, and Tunisians — was very strong. And that was how I was introduced to the music of Africa. And the music of Brazil, because Brazilian music was hot at the

time. There wasn't much happening for middle-eastern music, so any knowledge that I had about middle-eastern music was based on my own background and nationality. My background is in International Relations and Languages — that's what I graduated in. I was first at the University of Nice — I got a Masters there. Then I did postgraduate studies and a doctoral degree at the European Institute for Advanced International Studies. It was called "International Relations," but it had a very European focus and was very much about the Euro and the European Economic Community.

14. When I came to America it was always with the objective of being able to work for an international organization and being able to travel. At first I worked for an environmental organization, and then for the New York City Commission on Human Rights. It was when I moved to New York that all of my musical interests came together because I was exposed to the very cosmopolitan culture there. Living in New York I started exploring lots and lots of different things and I became extremely curious about what the music of all these different cultures sounded like. If I had a Dominican friend, or a Haitian friend, I thought, "What are they listening to?" So, we would all just exchange music.
15. My real dream was to be able to scout talent: I had this dream of helping some of these musicians get better known and broadcast on the radio. Always inside of me there was this pining for the artistic world. I said to myself, "I'm just a consumer of music—I'm not doing anything about it, and I really want to get involved." I also realized that everything that I was involved with at work was policy making and lobbying: when you are in an environmental organization you are lobbying all the time, and when you are working for the Commission on Human Rights you are constantly investigating, fact-finding on cases, writing your summaries, and taking them to another lawyer who takes them before the judge. The whole nature of my job was conflict and conflict resolution. I felt that there must be a better way of bringing people together. I realized that the reason why people had so many conflicts and that there was so much discrimination was that people were scared of one another, or felt threatened. For example, there are people who have all these ideas about gays or lesbians, or people who have AIDS, and have this constant fear, and don't try to understand what that other person is about as a person and not label them by race, religion, color of skin, sexual orientation ...

16. **GH:** ... relating to one person at a time, rather than through stereotypes ...
17. **YS-R:** Exactly, exactly. There is a lot of discrimination against African-Americans, against disabled people, against Hispanics, against people of other origins. I felt, well, it would be so much nicer if we found something that all of these people could enjoy—and one of the easiest things to enjoy is music. It's much easier to enjoy than reading in someone else's language, since there is no language barrier.
18. **GH:** You were mentioning earlier that even as a child that you were responding to all these different kinds of sounds as sounds...
- YS-R:** ... Yes ...
- GH:** ... because music can be experienced as a sort of unmediated sensual experience where you either like it or don't like it on that visceral level. And with that immediate reaction you can easily find something that you like.
19. **YS-R:** Exactly. Music is very broad and there's something there for everyone, so you can really enjoy it. That's what I thought. Well I said, "I love music, and I've always wanted to be immersed in it and explore it. So, let's do something about it."
20. To tell you the truth I changed ... I left my job—left all the benefits, left everything. I decided that I had to take another direction in life, but I didn't know where to start. I didn't have an arts degree to find a job, so I started volunteering.
21. The first place that I volunteered for was WNYC radio, which is a public radio station.¹⁵ I was listening to it a lot because of a program there called "New Sounds" with John Schaefer that's aired every night at 11 o'clock New York time. It is a phenomenal program because it is extremely eclectic and diverse: it was not just world music oriented, it was really new music oriented—things that you don't get to hear on any commercial station or even non-commercial stations. And I said this is a wonderful learning experience, let me see if I can volunteer my help and my services to WNYC. And lo and behold, they just said, "Yes, yes, come on in—we always need help."

22. On the first day I remember, they gave me a lot of envelopes to fill, label, and put stamps on. The next day—actually in the afternoon—they came to me and said, “Maybe you’d like to do something a little ... different?” And I said, “Whatever you need to get done, I’ll do.” And gradually I became more and more involved. I started listening to the CDs. John receives piles of CDs, mountains of CDs that were almost impossible for any one person to go through and to deal with. He was the director of FM music programming, so he would receive all the CDs and he had to filter them to the right shows. But he also had to figure what would work on his own show. So I would listen, and even suggest tracks—“This track or that track might work on your show.” Of course, he would also listen to it first. But he started trusting me and that exposed me to a wider variety of music—no longer just world music, or classical, or jazz, but new music—minimalist music, such as La Monte Young, Steve Reich,¹⁶ and Lou Harrison.
23. John would have guests in studio and I would get to meet them—it was just wonderful. The first time I met Ravi Shankar was at WNYC. I didn’t know that I would be meeting him in other contexts after that, but that was the very first time. He doesn’t even remember—I was just someone serving him tea! It was wonderful. I met Nustat Fateh Ali Khan the first time there; it was his first tour in the United States for Western presenters.
24. Then WNYC asked whether I wanted to do stage management for them for some of their live concerts. They also had a series called “New Sounds Live.” So I became the stage manager for that. Then they got a call from World Music Institute saying they had a position open and asking whether they could recommend someone.¹⁷ WNYC recommended me and I got the job. The World Music Institute is a concert-presenting organization that deals primarily with world music, not much fusion, but traditional folk and classical music, and also dance. The World Music Institute tours a number of the musicians so they can afford to present them in New York. I had this double role of coordinating the concert in New York and booking their tour throughout the United States, a sometimes going on tour and managing the tour ... which was a lot of fun and a lot of stress! It was usually a really good experience. That’s how I really got involved in world music, and that was that.
25. When I came to LA I kept my position with World Music Institute whereby I still organized their tours and coordinated whatever I could. But it was a long distance relationship and it had to fizzle

out, because you can't work for an organization and not be there when they need you. Then I got the job the Skirball Center,¹⁸ and for a while I even had a booking agency where I represented artists of my own.

26. Then—in 1997 was it?—I was at an Iranian classical music concert and Betto Arcos was sitting next to me. I knew Betto because I had taken some of the musicians that I would be touring through the United States and that would come through LA on his show. So he always knew me through that as an artist representative. Betto turns to me and says, "Yatrika, do you want to be on the air? Do you want to host *Global Village*, one of the days of *Global Village*?"

And I said, "Huh? What?"

He said, "Yeah, yeah, I'm really serious."

I said, "You know, I've worked on radio, but I don't have any on-air experience at all: how do you know that I'll be able to cut it? I don't know at all how to do this."

He said, "We'll train you. Just do a demo tape so that I show it to our program director. You have lot of knowledge of music, it's obvious, and we really need someone to fill in."

Betto said that he really needed someone to substitute for him and he would prefer a woman because they had mostly men on the *Global Village*. He was primarily interested in the fact that I had a middle-eastern background and that I would be bringing more of a middle-eastern angle to the *Global Village*. So that's how it all started.

27. I remember the first time I was on air ... believe me, I don't even know how I kept my voice stable—my whole head was shaking! I was so scared because you have to do your own engineering. There I was—I had to remember what I was going to say and I had to remember to play the correct track. Of course, I had my play list in front of me, but I had to make sure that I managed the board right. They did give me some training, but it wasn't extensive training, so I learned all of it "on the job"—on air, actually, and with much trepidation! At some point I started feeling comfortable. Even when I made mistakes I didn't become so flustered about it, and said, "Okay, it's just a mistake—I won't do it next time. Now I've learnt."

28. **GH:** One of the things that appeals to me about your show—the whole *Global Village* line up—is that it’s like a friend saying, “I just bought some new CDs and I’d like to play you some new things.”
29. **YS-R:** Yes, that’s exactly the way that I like it to be. If I have friends at home and somebody asks, “What new things have you bought?” I become the DJ immediately. “Okay, let me play this for you, let me play that for you! Isn’t this really nice? Isn’t that nice? And listen to that!” That’s exactly what I like to do on *Global Village*. I like to create an atmosphere as if you are sitting in a living room and you’re just spending three hours listening to various types of music. I want it to be friendly and I want it to be diverse—I want it to cover a broad gamut. Sometimes the show is very thematic, like three hours of music from Asia or India. I like to do thematic shows.

III.

30. **GH:** Like most of Los Angeles I commute and spend a lot of time in the car listening to the radio. I used to listen exclusively to another public radio station until they changed to an “all talk” format ...

YS-R: ... mostly news?

GH: ... mostly news, especially local news. I enjoy listening to the news and being informed about what is going on in LA and the world, but thought what a shame it was that they had cancelled their music programs. Many National Public Radio shows devote considerable space to stories about music and musicians, and *Fresh Air’s* host Terry Gross¹⁹ consistently devotes shows to music, such as her American Popular Song series. But somehow the absence of music programs seems to replace the kind of meaning that you can only perceive with music with a flow of reportage—a series of facts—and that seems to me to be a great loss. Could you talk about the choice of having music or not on a public radio station?

31. **YS-R:** I think that it’s very important to have music, but it is a choice that the general manager and the board of the station make, whether they want it to be all talk or not. It’s one thing to say that India and Pakistan came close to declaring war on one another, or to say that this event is happening between Israel and the Palestinians, or in Bosnia, or the war in Afghanistan. But if you have no concept about these cultures then you have no sense of a personal connection to what’s going on. You have an experiential

thing when you actually hear the music of these cultures because it really talks to you. You understand more about what that culture creates, how that culture communicates, and what their people listen to. It's almost like sharing a meal. If you don't have that connection, everything remains in a detached format—you listen to the news, you analyze it, you might even become appalled by it, but you have no idea who these people in the news are. But if you have a direct experience—with Aziz Herawi,²⁰ for example a musician who is from Afghanistan—and you start enjoying his music, then the next time that they start talking about Afghanistan on the news and you know that people are getting killed there, you think, "It's people like Herawi who are being killed there and the people who listen to this type of music. I have direct understanding or appreciation of what this is about." I believe that this kind of understanding brings people closer to one another.

32. It's fine to bring us all the news, but to bring music or to bring the literature of a culture—something that speaks more personally to a listener—is just as important as the news. When you feel that you can relate and feel connected to all these cultures then the news takes on a totally new dimension. The reason that I believe that it's important to play music from different parts of the world is to bring forth this spirit of tolerance and harmony. People's compassion and tolerance increases. I think that is very important, and for me it's a mission.
33. I decided that I would do a show after Bush's talk about the "Axis of Evil " and the reason that I did that was that when they talk about these countries that these are just names that they're throwing around.²¹ These countries consist of people, a lot of whose people are now living in the United States. They're people like you and me, people that we encounter in the streets. Some of these people might be our friends. Why does everyone have to equate people with their government? Many people in the world are victims of their government, especially in those countries that don't have democracy. Why don't we listen to what they have to say in music, from their point of view and from their words, and listen to the kind of beauty that they can bring to our lives?
34. **GH:** I'm glad that you brought up your "Music from the Axis of Evil" show,²² because I found the title is very ironic. If you look down your play list without knowing the theme of the show, you would think, "What wonderful interesting music—what a lovely collection

of things to listen to, all this really interesting music from Korea, Iran, and Iraq.” But, put that title in!

35. **YS-R:** You see, when you have that kind of rhetoric and you use it in public, people might not understand—if they haven’t been in touch with any of these cultures—and they might just equate all these people with terrorists. And that’s not the case. Most people in these countries are just trying to scrape out a living and it’s a question of survival. Or they’re people just like you and I, trying to live a life. So, I think this kind of rhetoric is dangerous. I think that we need to try to bring about a kind of balance with something that speaks directly to the soul and to the people. And sensory experience is very important, it’s like eating: you share a meal and break bread with someone and it brings you closer. You enjoy a piece of music from another culture and it brings you closer to the people from that culture. That’s the whole ideal about the *Global Village*, not only that it may introduce people to different kinds of music, but to try and bring people together through the music.
36. **GH:** What do you think about in putting together a set for *Global Village*? Does it evolve, or do you have something in mind before you begin?
37. **YS-R:** You know, I decide first of all what I want to do on a show, and I decide whether I want it to be thematic or whether I just want it to be a free flow thing. It depends on whether I’ve received new releases or not. Sometimes I do a program that’s based just on new releases, because there are so many of them that by the time that you’ve listened to them you’ve filled three hours. On the other hand, if I decide that I want to do a show on the Mediterranean, then the theme is set and I’m going to look for music that fits within this category—music from different parts of that region. If I decide that I just want the program to flow, a lot of times it depends of my mood, in the sense of “What have we not played in a long time?” Sometimes it depends of the feedback from listeners. I had a listener that wrote to me awhile back saying, “You have not played Balinese music in a while.” And I thought, “He’s right. I played it a few months ago, but a few months ago is not enough. Why not have some Balinese music here?” It was not that I didn’t want to play Balinese music; it just happened that the other things took precedence over the Balinese music. So I decide that I will incorporate some Balinese music.

38. Primarily what I try to do is to make sure that the music within one set flows, that they are not jarring when they follow one another. It doesn't have to be in the same key, it doesn't have to be the same rhythm. But it's got to give you a feeling that you are actually on a journey. And if you are dreaming with that journey, that you are not jolted rudely out of your dream. That is what I try to observe, sometimes more successfully than others. You know, we all have our days! [laughs]
39. **GH:** Do you go out and search through record stores when you are doing a show like the Mediterranean idea that you just talked about? I assume that people send you things.
40. **YS-R:** I get lots of stuff from labels. I get lots of stuff from the artists themselves—they mail them to me. Some things come to KPFK directly and I borrow them.
41. I do go and research. For example, for the Korean music in the "Axis of Evil" show, I thought, "I don't get any Korean music from anyone. Nobody's sending me anything." So I went and bought some. I even went on the Internet and looked at what was available, whether there was a really long roster. I did not just want to be pop music, because, in my opinion, if you are just playing Western music and putting foreign lyrics on it, it's not really World music anymore. It's somewhere in between. The Western element is so strong, that it's diluted your culture. So when I play world music, if it has Western elements and fusion elements—jazz, classical, hip-hop, whatever—I still want the roots of the originating culture to be very, very present. Sometimes it's very hard to find because either what is being recorded in other parts of the world is not being released in America, or you have to go to specialized records stores. There is some Indian music that I can never find in regular stores: I have go to Pioneer Boulevard in Cerritos and go to Raga Record Store and go through their stuff and see whether I can find it there. At other times I may have to go on the Internet and search. For Turkish music, a lot of times, I order it through the Turkish Music Club because I can't find it here.²³
42. **GH:** It sounds like a very active process.
43. **YS-R:** Yes. You have to be active, or otherwise you just end up playing what's commercially promoted. And that's a danger—we have a lot of unheard voices that deserve to be heard.

44. **GH:** We all have a musical “comfort zone” that we tend to stay in, and we usually end up at the point where you say to yourself, “I want to listen to something new, but I’m not sure what to listen to.” I have a friend who is just turning forty and she told me, “I’ve been listening to 1970s rock for as long as I can remember, and I need something new now.” [laughs] I told her, “You need to listen to some world music.” She liked the suggestion, but it can be a really confusing world to try and enter.
45. **YS-R:** It *can* be very confusing. What’s happening in world music right now is that the boundaries are just completely dissolving. There is so much fusion of not just two cultures together—East and West or African and Western—but of all sorts of cultures coming together. And not only cross-cultural, but cross-genre: so we get crossover classical, crossover jazz, and crossover pop and rock where elements of different cultures are brought into it. Because of this it can become very confusing, especially if you don’t know where to start and you’re a beginner. You ask, “Which one do I buy?” I do get a lot of emails from people who write, “I want to start listening to Indian music. Could you please, at least, give me ten titles that I can start with?” And there are some “musts” that you have to have. You cannot listen to Indian music and ignore Ravi Shankar, because he was the first person—really, the primary person—who brought Indian music to the West. So you have at least to start with the most important basics. If you want to create a library, you have to have with some vintage ...
46. **GH:** ... “classics” ...
- YS-R:** ... “classics,” even if they are very old. You have to have those, and you have to understand those. Then you can start exploring from there and experimenting with other stuff.
47. So, yes, it can be very confusing, especially when you don’t know what to choose. But, really one of the best ways is to tune in to the *Global Village*, and that way you get to sample a little bit of all this music. And not just to tune in once and then go and buy something: try to tune in for a few times, or for two or three months and see what you like. You might find a piece that’s nice on recording, but maybe the rest of the recording is not as good! And we only played that nice piece on the air! [laughs] So it’s good to give yourself a little bit of time until your ears become accustomed.

48. **GH:** I like the play lists that the *Global Village* posts on their website so listeners can look up on the Internet what was played on the show.²⁴ Sometimes the sets flow so beautifully from one song to another, that you've listened to four songs and have had a lovely experience, but you can't quantify it. So it's nice to be able to go look them up and say, "Between 11:30 and 11:50 I listened to these songs, and I think it was the third one that I really liked."
49. **YS-R:** And even sometimes, because you may have heard three pieces between 11:30 and 11:50, I still get emails from people who describe the music to find out what the recording was. You know—"It had a trumpet in it, and had male vocals, and it had a tabla in there: who was that?" And I think, "Okay, I know what you're talking about: it's this." Sometimes I get calls from people saying, "A year ago you played ..." And I say, "You know, I can refer you to the online play lists, but for the life of me I couldn't tell you what I played a year ago or at what time." It could have been a number of things.
50. **GH:** I wonder if you could comment on the fact that *Global Village* is on five days a week, but with five different hosts rather than one person.
51. **YS-R:** Well, you know that *Global Village* was the brainchild of Betto Arcos, who used to be KPFK's music director. He is currently Operations Director at KPFK, but has kept his program as the Monday host of *Global Village*. The reason that he decided that it would be nice to have five different hosts was that it would bring in different musical angles, and that the show would not be biased. And every person has his or her pet peeves—you know? Or they have their own slant on music: they bring in diversity. So, what is nice about having five hosts is that if you want to get a lot of Brazilian music you can listen to Sergio Mielniczenko on Friday, or if you want a lot of Latin music, you can definitely get it from Betto's show on a Monday. If you want classical music, you definitely can get it on John Schneider's show—that's a Thursday show. It was important to create some balance. I may play a lot of Indian and Middle Eastern music, and things like that, and then maybe the next day, the person who tuned in to my show may want to have a break. They may not want to hear that sort of music all the time. It's such a breath of fresh air to have John Schneider come and do his show on Thursdays. And then from John have Sergio bring you a little piece of Brazil and happiness on Fridays.

52. **GH:** I've been struck by the dialogic qualities that the various shows have with each other. I notice that more than one host has played Yo-Yo Ma's *Silk Road Journeys* album.
53. **YS-R:** The piece that I played ... most of those pieces have been commissioned by Yo-Yo Ma from all these different musicians that are now representatives of the old Silk Road. It went all the way to Italy, so that's why there's even an Italian piece in that album. But that piece that I played [*Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur*] was from Iran by Kayhan Kalhor, who's a kemancheh player—the spike fiddle.²⁵ And Yo-Yo Ma is playing on that piece as well—he was playing the cello. But the music was Iranian, and composed by Kayhan Kalhor.
54. **GH:** It was interesting to me that music from that CD was played on your show, but also on ...
- YS-R:** ... Betto's show. He played it yesterday. He played the Italian piece yesterday. [Renaissance composer Fillippo Azzaiolo's *Chi passa per'sta strada*]²⁶
- GH:** I thought that is was interesting to observe what the different hosts on the *Global Village* were picking and choosing from this one album. It was like a conversation: "This is my favorite track." "No, this is my favorite track!"
55. **YS-R:** Yes! Sometimes we end up having the same favorite track. And sometimes it's very different. I don't mind playing gentle music: I don't mind playing the long *Raag*. Betto will inevitably go to the rhythmic part, because that's the kind of element that he brings to his show—the rhythmic, the more upbeat. For me, it can sometimes be the upbeat element, and at other times, many other times, it can be the more introspective. I like that introspective mood. I also think that it's the morning and a lot of people might be at work, and maybe they can't listen if the music starts disturbing everybody else around them.
56. **GH:** What do you bring to your musical choices on the *Global Village* as the only woman host? You mentioned that Betto Arcos wanted a woman's voice on the air.
57. **YS-R:** I think ... well, the fact that I've done shows on women in world music. I don't think that any of the other hosts have devoted three hours to women in world music, so I think that's one aspect

of it. The other thing is ... I don't know ... maybe a more introspective sensibility. Maybe the *yin* part comes in a little more in the type of music that I choose. I can't really say. It's for the listener to say, "This is a woman programming, and this is a man programming." But I think that my desire to give a voice to female musicians from different parts of world comes from the fact that I myself am a woman and look at it from that perspective. The music scene is still dominated by men, in every aspect, although there are a lot of women in music. When you look at all the albums that are coming out, and the percentage of how many are from male performers and how many are female ... it's still dominated by men. That's fine, as long as women get their voice and are getting it out there. To me, good music is good music. It doesn't have a gender. But a lot of times women bring certain things, certain lyrics that come from a different angle which is really interesting.

IV.

58. **GH:** How does your work on the *Global Village* intersect with your work at the Skirball Center? I've always thought of the Skirball as a Jewish center, but then I heard of all the different musicians—Persian and Afghani musicians—that perform there, and it suddenly struck me that the idea that the Skirball would be hosting these musicians makes sense, but in an unexpected way.
59. **YS-R:** I'm the music programmer at the Skirball, so I organize the concerts. The Skirball is a Jewish cultural center and museum and it tries to focus on the Jewish-American experience. All the exhibits have something to do with Jewish themes: it's either Jewish silversmiths, or the coming at the turn of the century, or needlework. Sometimes it's cross-cultural—something from a Japanese artist, paired with something from a Jewish artist and something from a Native American artist, for example.
60. The mission statement of the Skirball is to interpret the Jewish experience in the United States, and to celebrate the multicultural community of Los Angeles and of the United States. The Skirball has a very broad vision, and it broadens all the time. At first it was primarily Jewish. As we evolved, as we grew, it just redefined itself ... or defined itself. Now it's really, really defined itself. We try to do multicultural programming, and not only in music. We have a lot of lectures and a literature series that bring in lots of authors, not all of whom are Jewish—Walter Mosley and Richard Rodriguez. Various others have appeared. We try to keep to both missions, which

means that we still have to have programming that serves the Jewish community and the mission statement for reinterpreting the Jewish experience in the United States, but it is very broad. The major theme is that we want people to feel good and to have a good experience. And to feel that they're not left outside.

61. In terms of music ... obviously I brought my passion for world music to the Skirball. We decided that we want the Skirball to become a home for everyone. The president of the Skirball says, "I want this place to be an oasis where everyone feels welcome, regardless of their background, culture, and also their class, and age. I want children to be happy here, I want elderly people to be happy here." There is something there for each person—for everyone. That's why there are a lot of different types of music and cultural programs. We've had music from Afghanistan, from Iran. We've had Lebanese musician Ali Jihad Racy from UCLA at the center. We've had classic and traditional folk music: we've had Israeli musicians, musicians from Mexico, Africa, and Turkey. We've had Balinese music from Nyoman Wenten and his Balinese dance ensemble from Cal Arts. And it's continuing on. We're getting musicians from Madagascar in the summer, musicians from Mali, and a French Gypsy/Yiddish ensemble.
62. We try to do programming thematically as well. We've done "Sounds of the Silk Road" where we had Chinese music. We've had a series that was called "American Roots" that brought in blues and gospel music. Next year we're going to have a fiddle series called "The World on a String." [laughs] So it's going to be world music but from the point of view of the fiddle. There's going to be some grassroots American music, but we're thinking also of music from different parts of the world with different types of "violins": Celtic, Klezmer ... maybe Indian if I can afford the person that I have my eye on.
63. **GH:** That's a really interesting lens on something that we never think about—such a broad theme that we might not observe the connections because it's so broad—that of a bowed string instrument.
64. **YS-R:** They're ubiquitous, they're all over. There is the *erhu* in Chinese music, and the *kemancheh* in both Iran and Turkey. It's all over, played in different ways. They have the same roots, even the Indian *sarangi* is a fiddle: it's bowed and it's really a fiddle when you think of it.

65. Also, I have to make sure that people listening on the radio know that when I am promoting something at the Skirball that I am also involved in it. When you are on the public radio, whenever there is a conflict of interest, you definitely have to declare that. I always have to mention that. Some people don't know that it is by the law that I have to do that. So, some people think that I'm being egotistical [laughs] ... that I'm saying, "I am this! And I am that!" Believe me, I'd rather not mention that I'm involved in them, because I always think, "Oh shoot, I have to again say that this is the third concert that I'm promoting at the Skirball, and I have to say that I work at the Skirball." But I have to, I have no choice. If I play the music of someone that I'm closely associated with I have to divulge that.
66. **GH:** That's funny that some people might get that idea. I get the impression that you are just so excited by the fact that not only are you going to play some lovely piece of music for us on the radio, but that you're going to bring this musician Skirball to perform for us live.
67. **YS-R:** That's it, too! I want to say, "Not only are you going to hear them on the radio, but believe it or not, they're coming to town!" They could be coming to play somewhere else in LA and I would be just as excited. That I will get to work with them and get to know them on a different level makes it doubly exciting. The fact that I am instrumental in bringing this person to town gives me a different level of satisfaction. But I would be just as excited if I couldn't bring them to the Skirball and that there still was the opportunity to hear them in LA I definitely have to divulge if there is any conflict of interest.
68. **GH:** It's interesting that the Skirball is up on a hill off the 405 freeway, and on another hill just south is the Getty Museum, which promotes a different kind of community experience for Los Angeles.
69. **YS-R:** It's a different angle. I think that the Getty is mostly a museum, so it's much more exhibit-oriented. There are public programs, but I don't think that they do as much public programming as we do. We really carry a lot of the Skirball on the public programming. A lot of people, after they've seen an exhibit that's been there for six months, they don't come back just for the exhibit. They come for other experiences at the Skirball, and those programs carry the Skirball.

70. **GH:** It seems that it is a “community center” in the best sense of the word.
71. **YS-R:** We try to bring the arts and the community together so that it’s a forum for both—community activity in an artistic way. It’s been extremely gratifying and I am very grateful to them for trusting me. It did take trust. I was a newcomer when I went to the Skirball and the Skirball itself was new. In a way, that newness was its strength. If it had been very established I may not have had this freedom. They were open to experimentation, but it had to come with trust. And I do appreciate that fact they put that trust in me.
72. **GH:** Did they have a vision of what they wanted you to do specifically, or did they say, “This is what we want to be: what do you think that you can do to make it happen?”
73. **YS-R:** They had a position called Program Associate when they hired me. The position was a whole gamut of things: coordinate this and that, fundraising, publicity—everything was lumped into it. And I said, “You know, I have a passion—my passion is music.” Gradually they said, “That’s great. You have this great background in music; do all the concert programs.” As I became established there, I started doing the series and the concert programs there and became their music expert. I went to the program director and said, “I want to be called Music Programmer. I want to add that to my title because everybody knows me in the field of music and they don’t understand what Program Associate means. I really want that to be established.” And he accepted, no problem.
74. Now I’ve changed my position at the Skirball: I used to be full-time staff and I asked them if I could work part-time only on music events from home. I’m extremely grateful to them because they have accommodated me in every sense of the word. It gives me a little bit of time to do other things, because the Skirball is a demanding place. It’s non-stop. The program department is only five or six people, that’s it. We rotate and take turns so we don’t burn out.
75. With KPFK it takes me three hours to air a program and six hours to program it. Plus I have to listen to things all throughout the week. Plus the Skirball. Plus I have other interests in life. I realized that I was beginning to burn out. That’s why I said, “Relieve me of some of the responsibility.” I took a pay cut as a result, but it was a give

and take. I get to do the things that I really like—I get to be creative. I get to book the concerts, program them, envision them, and create themes for future years. I still listen to every package that is sent—I still review those and make an evaluation of whether they would be a good fit with the Skirball. Sometimes we don't have the availability of space and budget to do everything that we would like to do. Otherwise, we would have music everyday. We have other programs, so it's not a performing arts center—this is a cultural center with a performing arts component. We have music; we have lectures, films, exhibits, and a literary series. There has to be something for everyone.

76. **GH:** What do you see in the future for yourself?
77. **YS-R:** I'm still organizing things at the Skirball. Probably for another few years I will still be doing that. Let's see if the *Global Village* is still on KPFK and if I'm still there. I still think that probably in the immediate future this is what's going to happen. But as I've said, I have other interests in life and one of them is Hindu Vedic astrology and I am transitioning into becoming an astrologer. It will probably be in segments. [laughs] There's the *Global Village*, there's the Skirball, and there's this other aspect of me that has nothing to do ... that will be in the stars that will be in the astral plane looking into the stars. [laughs]
78. **GH:** They sound very different, but I have a feeling that they all cross over for you.
79. **YS-R:** I'm a Gemini ascendant and they say that Geminis have this curious mind and want to learn everything. Sometimes I don't think that I have enough time in one day: if I could become an expert in the many things that I am interested in, I'd be a happy person. But, I just have to make choices ... make choices to just have a mediocre knowledge of certain things and make the choice of getting more profound knowledge in just a few fields for lack of time. If I could live three lives in this one life, I would do it. I'm happy for what I have.

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Endnotes

¹ <http://www.gvillage.net/contactyatrikashahraie/>

² <http://www.gvillage.net/door/>

³ <http://www.kpfb.org/>

⁴ <http://www.gvillage.net/contactinformation/>

⁵ <http://www.gvillage.net/simeonsemail/>

⁶ <http://www.gvillage.net/contactjohnschneider/>

⁷ <http://www.gvillage.net/contactsergiomielniczenko/>

⁸ Yatrika's playlist for Wednesday April 10, 2002 "Celebrating Five Years of The Global Village: A Retrospective and Voices of Women:"

Armenia-Djivan Gasparyan: "A Cool Wind Is Blowing," *I Will Not Be Sad In This World*, Opal (Warner Bros); **Spain**-Radio Tarifa: "Oye China," *Rumba Argelina*, World Circuit; **Cape Verde**-Teofilo Chantre: "Tonte Vontade," *Di Alma*, Lusafrica; **Cuba**-Buena Vista Social Club: "Chan Chan," *Buena Vista Social Club*, World Circuit; **Iran**-Hossein Alizadeh: "Overture," *Ney Nava*, Kereshmeh Records; **Turkey**-Omar Faruk Tekbilek: "Sultan of the Hearts," *Whirling*, Celestial Harmonies; **Israel**-Guy Kark & Between Times: "For Iris," *Canaan*, MCI; **Algeria**-Alla: "Debadeb," *Tanakoul*, Al Sur; **Tanzania**-Hukwe Zawose: "Twendeni Sote Na Mwanga Wa Amani," *Chibite*, Real World; **Pakistan and Canada**-Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Michael Brook: "My Heart, My Life," *Night Song*, Real World; **USA**-Quetzal: "Desahogate," *Sing the Real*, Vanguard Records; **Spain**-Paco El Lobo: "Sevillanas," *Cante Flamenco: Grito*, Buda Records; **Yemen**: "Illa Leh Ya Hajeri," *The Music of Islam Volume Eleven: Music of Yemen*, Celestial Harmonies;

Tunisia-Anouar Brahem Trio: "Astrakan Café 1," *Astrakan Café*, ECM Records; **China**-Yu Long: "Song For My Father," *China: Time To Listen* (3-CD Box set compilation), Ellipsis Arts; **Japan**: "Sakura: Cherry Blossoms," *Lullaby for the Moon: Japanese Music for Koto and Shakuhachi* (compilation), Hemisphere; **Indonesia**-Suara Parahiangan: "Baramaen," *Sangkala*, SP Records; **India**-L. Subramaniam: "Jai Hanuman," *Global Fusion*, Detour; **India and the UK**-Remember Shakti: "Luki," *Saturday Night In Bombay*, Verve; **Turkey**-Kardes Turkuler: "Kerwane," *Dogu*, Kalan; **Turkey**-Omar Faruk Tekbilek: "Ya Bouy," *Alif: Love Supreme*, Narada World; **Italy**-Gianmaria Testa: "Citta Lunga," *Montgolfieres*, Label Bleu; **Germany**-Eberhard Weber: "Nuit Blanche," *Endless Days*, ECM Records; **USA**-Brazzaville: "Late Night Lullaby," *Rouge on Pockmarked Cheeks*, South China Sea Records; **Cuba**-Omar Sosa: "Sentir," *Sentir*, Otá Records; **Arab Israeli**-Amal Murkus: "La Ahada Yalam," *Amal*, Highlights Music; **Hungary**-Marta Sebestyen: "Hindi Lullabye," *Kismet*, Hannibal; **Anglo-Indian**-Sheila Chandra: "Abone Crone Drone 3," *Moonsung*, Real World; **Anglo-Indian**-Sheila Chandra: "Ever So Lonely/ Eyes/ Ocean," *Weaving My Ancestors Voices*, Real World; **India**-Shweta Jhaveri: "To A Beloved," *Anahita*, Intuition Music.

⁹ Yatrika's playlist for Wednesday April 3, 2002 "New, and Not So New But Noteworthy"

USA-Paul Hillier and the Theater of Voices: "Blazhen Muzh," "Vozbrannoy Voyevode," *Fragments*, Harmonia Mundi; **England**-John Dowland: "Lacrimae Tristes," *Seaven Teares* performed by The King's Noyse, Harmonia Mundi; **United Kingdom**-John Tavener: "Look Upon Me and Have Mercy," "Resurrection in Hades," *Lamentations and Praises* performed by Chanticleer, Teldek Classics; **France**-Louis Sclavis: "Dia Dia," "Le Travail," *Dans La Nuit* (Music for the silent movie by Charles Vanel), ECM Records; **Poland**-Tomasz Stanko Quartet: "Variation IV," *Soul of Things*, ECM Records; **Switzerland**-Susanne Abbuehl: "Round Midnight," *April*, ECM Records; **Iran and USA**-Kayhan Kalhor: "Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur" performed by Yo-Yo Ma & The Silk Road Ensemble, *Silk Road Journeys: When Strangers Meet*, Sony Classical; **Germany**-Hanne Darboven: "Opus 17A," *Opus 17A*, DIA; **Poland**-Zbigniew Preisner: "Part Two: Life: The Beginning, Meeting, Discovering the World, Love," "Part Two: Apocalypse, Ascende Huc, Veni et Vidi," "Qui Etat et Qui Est, Lacrymosa: Day of Tears," "Part Two: Postscriptum, Prayer," *Requiem for My Friend*, Erato; **Indonesia/Java**-Yogyakarta, Gamelan of the Kraton: "Ladrang Semingin," JVC World Sounds; **Indonesia/Java**-Suara Parahiangan Group: "Sabilulungan," *Degung*

Sabilulungan, SP Records; **Australia**-John Williams: "Malinke Guitars," "The Magic Box," *The Magic Box*, Sony Classical; **Spain**-Estrella Morente: "The Night," "Bulerias of the Bola," *My Songs and a Poem*, Real World; **USA/Native American**-John Trudell: "Ever Get The Blues," *Bone Days*, Daemon Records; **USA/Hispanic American**-Quetzal: "Vagabundo," *Sing the Real*, Vanguard Records; **Canada**-Mychael Danna: "Aaj Mera Jee Kardaa," *Monsoon Wedding* (original film soundtrack) Milan; **Spain**-Estrella Morente: "At the Top of the Cerro de Palomares," *My Songs and a Poem*, Real World; **Cuba**-Omar Sosa: "Tres Notas en Amarillo," *Sentir*, Otá Records; **France**-Air: "Lucky and Unhappy," *10,000 Hz Legend*, Astralwerks; **UK and Germany**-Brian Eno & J. Peter Schwalm: "Like Pictures Part 2," *Drawn From Life*, Astralwerks; **USA**-Brazzaville: "Late Night Lullaby," *Rouge on Pockmarked Cheeks*, South China Sea Records; **Turkey**-Omar Faruk Tekbilek: "Ya Bouy," *Alif: Love Supreme*, Narada World.

¹⁰ John Dowland, "Lacrimae Tristes" performed by The King's Noyse, *Seaven Teares: Music of John Dowland* © 2002 Harmonia Mundi USA HMU 9007275. John Dowland (1563-1626) is the Tudor and Jacobean English composer and lutenist remembered today for his melancholy lute songs and for his *Lacrimae or Seaven Teares* (1604), a set of seven pavan variations for lute and five viols on his song "Flow my tears."

¹¹ John Tavener, "Resurrection in Hadës" performed by Chanticleer on *John Tavener: Lamentations and Praises* © 2001 Warner Classics International 0927-41342-2. John Tavener (1944-) is an English composer with a fascination for religious subject matter as well as works with funereal themes. Musicologist Stephen Walsh characterizes Tavener's musical style as "transcendental, associative and nostalgic" (598) with a compositional technique based on collage.

¹² Zbigniew Preisner, "Ascende huc" from Preisner's *Requiem for My Friend* © 1998 Erato Disques S. A. 3984-24146-2. Polish composer Zbigniew Preisner (1955-) is well-known for his scores for the films of Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colours* trilogy — *Blue* (1994), *White* (1994), and *Red* (1994) — which have brought him international acclaim. Preisner's *Requiem for My Friend* [*Requiem Dla Mojego Przyjaciela*] is his first large-scale work and was written in memory of Kieslowski, who died in March of 1996.

¹³ Ravi Shankar (1920-) is perhaps the world's best-known Indian musician and composer through his introduction of Indian classical music to the West during tours of the Soviet Union of 1954, Europe and the United States in 1956, and his series of three *West Meets East* albums (1967, 1968, and 1977) with concert violinist Yehudi Menuhin.

¹⁴ *Ommadawn* (1975) is the third of a trilogy of albums, which includes *Tubular Bells* (1973) and *Hergest Ridge* (1974), by British electronic rock composer Mike Oldfield (1953–).

¹⁵ <http://www.wnyc.org/>

¹⁶ American minimalist composer Steve Reich (1936–) studied music composition at Julliard School of Music and Mills College, as well as African percussion at the Institute of African Studies in Ghana. Many of his compositions are based on sampling, canon, and the phasing of short musical phrases.

¹⁷ <http://www.heartheworld.org/>

¹⁸ <http://www.skirball.org/>

¹⁹ <http://freshair.npr.org/>

²⁰ Aziz Herawi, “Naghma-Ye Klasik in Rag Pilu” on *Aziz Herawi, Master of the Afghani Lutes* © 1992 Arhoolie Productions, Inc. CD 387. Aziz Herawi, from the Herat valley in Western Afghanistan, currently resides in California. Herawi is a self-taught player of the *rebab*, a short-necked lute, and the *dutar*, a 14-string long-necked lute. He plays in the Herat style which mixes Persian and Hindustani elements. See Richard Gehr’s November 2001 story about Afghani musicians under the Taliban in *The Village Voice* at: <http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0147/gehr.php>

²¹ In his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002 President George W. Bush described three nations—North Korea, Iran, and Iraq—as an “axis of evil” through their creation of weapons of mass destruction and state sponsorship of terrorism.

“Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September the 11th. But we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens.

Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people’s hope for freedom.

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens—leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections—then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an **axis of evil**, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.”

For President Bush’s complete 2002 State of the Union Address visit:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>

²² From Yatrika’s Playlist For March 6, 2002
“Part III: Music From The Axis of Evil: Iraq, Iran, Korea”

Iraq-Fawzy Al-Aiedy: “Ultime Prière,” *Le Paris Bagdad*, Buda Musique; **Iran**-Ali Akbar Moradi: “The Caravan,” *Fire of Passion*, 7/8 Music Productions; **Iran**-Ostad Shir Mohammad Espandar “Liku Dalgani,” *Music of Baluchistan*, Mahoor Institute of Culture and Art; **Iran**-Sussan Deyhim: “Navai,” *Madman of God*, Crammed Discs; **Korea**-Korean Traditional Performing Arts Association: “Sanjo Kayageum,” *New York City: Global Beats of the Boroughs*, Smithsonian Folkways; **Korea**: “Kangwon Province Arirang,” “Orang T’aryng Kungch’o Taenggi,” *Four Thousand Years of Korean Folk Music*, Legacy International; **Korea**-Seoul Ensemble of Traditional Music: “Yuch’osinjigok,” *Seoul Ensemble of Traditional Music*, World Network; **Persia** Axiom of Choice: “Valeh,” *Beyond Denial*, X Dot 25; **Iran**-Mohammad Reza Shajarian and Kayhan Kalhor: “Silence of the Night,” “Desert Night,” *Night Silence Desert*, Traditional Crossroads; **Iraq**-Munir Bashir: “Taqsim in maqâm Hijaz kâr kurd,” *The Art of the 'Ud*, Ocora Radio France; **Iraq**-Fawzy Al-Aiedy: “Nissa,” *Le Paris Bagdad*, Buda Musique

²³ <http://www.turkishmusic.com/scripts/home/default.asp>

²⁴ <http://www.gvillage.net/yatrikasplaylist/>

²⁵ Kayhan Kalhor, "Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur" performed by Yo-Yo Ma & The Silk Road Ensemble, *Silk Road Journeys: When Strangers Meet* © 2001 Sony Music Entertainment Inc. SK 89782. Iranian-born Kayhan Kalhor (1963–) is the world's leading virtuoso of the *kemancheh*, or spike fiddle. In addition to his recordings with the crossover Persian/Indian group Ghazal, he has also composed *Gallop of a Thousand Horses* for the Kronos Quartet.

²⁶ Filippo Azzaiolo, "Chi passa per 'sta strada" performed by Yo-Yo Ma & The Silk Road Ensemble, *Silk Road Journeys: When Strangers Meet* © 2001 Sony Music Entertainment Inc. SK 89782. Filippo Azzaiolo (fl 1557-69) is an Italian Renaissance composer whose anonymously published collections of *villotas*, a kind of dance song, are important for preserving popular sixteenth-century melodies and texts.