

King Serfoji II of Thanjavur and European Music

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Introduction: Serfoji II and European music in colonial India

Thanjavur is well known as the principal center of the formation of the canons of Karnatic classical music and Bharata Natyam dance in the 19th century.¹ The performing arts reached new heights of creative excellence during the reign of the polymathic Maratha king Serfoji II, who ruled the vastly reduced Thanjavur (aka Tanjore) principality under British colonial control from 1798 to 1832.² Among the new developments was the advent of European music in South India. In the early nineteenth century, even as compositional forms such as the *kṛti* were being perfected, Karnatic music also absorbed European instruments such as the violin and the clarinet. At his cosmopolitan court, Serfoji nurtured innovation in music and dance that encompassed multiple cultures, languages and heritages in conversation with one another. Hindustani music and north Indian dance were practiced alongside South Indian forms, in Telugu, Tamil and Marathi; folk and elite forms were synthesized; and rare instruments and star musicians were displayed in performance.³ Serfoji was largely responsible for bringing European music into this mix. Educated by German missionaries in Madras city under British supervision, he mastered European knowledge systems and cultivated a deep interest in European arts. In this presentation, drawing on archival research, I wish to illuminate the king's engagement with European music and the pioneering and unique contributions he made to the reception and practice of European music in India.⁴ The lecture-demonstration is based on a detailed account presented in my forthcoming biography of Serfoji.⁵

A variety of sources enable us to reconstruct Serfoji's activities in European music. These are: 1) Serfoji's collection of European sheet music and books, consisting of over 150 printed items and several volumes of handwritten music, archived at the Thanjavur Sarasvati Mahal Library (the Library is one of the king's signal legacies); 2) British administrative records for the Tanjore District; 3) the Thanjavur court's Marathi language records in Modi script; and 4) contemporary visitors' descriptions of performances at the court.⁶ The sources show that Serfoji's command of European music was deep, diverse, and innovative. He was the first Indian ruler to develop a full-fledged European wind band.⁷ Well in advance of Indian contemporaries, the king acquired knowledge of a wide range of European music, including classical chamber works for instruments and voice.⁸ He cultivated all of these kinds of music at his court, and experimented with ensembles of European and Indian instruments. In what follows, I will discuss and illustrate Serfoji's multiple projects in European music, comparing his practice with those of his Indian and British contemporaries.⁹ Serfoji's projects show that he was a leader in the field of European music in India. They also illuminate the social history of European music in the early 19th century, not only in India, but in England itself. They demonstrate that the hallmark of British music at the time was a peculiar mix of popular and classical elements, embodied especially in popular tunes,

termed 'airs'.¹⁰ Ultimately, the story of Serfoji's engagement with European music is a tale of dialogues among violins, *vīṇās* and harps, and of tunes that travelled across national and generic boundaries as well as multiple levels of culture.

Serfoji's Wind Band

The earliest encounters of Indians with European music were with military band music and with the fiddle or violin, played at European army camps.¹¹ By the reign of Serfoji's father, Tulajaji II, Tanjore had become subordinated to the Nawab of Arcot and his ally, the English East India Company. The garrison of British troops established in Thanjavur in 1776 remained in place till Serfoji's accession to the throne as a Company subordinate in 1798, and band and fiddle music became a sustained public presence in the town. By the 1780's, European military band instruments, such as fifes, drums, and trumpets, played by European or Eurasian musicians, had become a part of the Thanjavur court's processions.¹² During his Madras years, Serfoji also heard the Governor's band at Fort St. George. At the beginning of his reign, the king set up a uniformed royal guard corps and developed a wind band, of the sort that had become common in Calcutta --with a full complement of wind instruments, including the clarinet, which had transformed the European wind ensemble.¹³ The king's band played both in processions and the royal darbar. Serfoji's Indian musicians were trained by the bandmaster at the British garrison in Trichinopoly in 1802.¹⁴ They must have been skilled musicians – in spite of falling ill on arrival at Trichy, they learned to play European band music in just two months' time.¹⁵

The 19th century was a period of major innovations in wind instruments; the clarinet, for example, evolved from an instrument with two or three keys to one equipped with thirteen keys. Throughout his reign, Serfoji enlarged and improved his band, ordering away to Madras, Calcutta and London for keyed bugles (some of these are exhibited at the Thanjavur palace), horns, bassoons, trumpets, trombones, oboes, flutes, clarinets in different keys, serpents (at least one with 6 keys), at least one bagpipe, and rarer instruments such as the polphonion, a many-toned trumpet.¹⁶ Serfoji's music collection contains instruction manuals for European instruments, and several volumes of sheet music, in print and manuscript, devoted to "Quick Steps", 'Turkish' marches, and airs written for bands.¹⁷ A Silvestre D' Costa (most likely a Eurasian) and other experts were employed to instruct the king as well as the band musicians in reading and playing music.¹⁸ Serfoji himself composed band tunes, and at least one, a "Slow March", survives in manuscript.¹⁹ European officials in the region (including Madras city) often borrowed instruments and musicians from Serfoji, and the king's bagpiper Angus Bruce (presumably a Scot!) was especially in demand, sometimes on long-term loan.²⁰

The first up-to-date wind band at an Indian royal court, Serfoji's band rivaled bands in Europe and America. The king of Thanjavur set the fashion for courtly display. The hybrid European band, which played both Indian and European music on European instruments, became an important element in the splendor of the royal darbar and processions, in Travancore, Mysore

and elsewhere. The initiatives of Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, Maharaja of Mysore, not only in the establishment of the famed Mysore Palace Band, but in the training of court musicians in European classical music, were very much like those of Serfoji, but a hundred years later.²¹ Equally importantly, Serfoji's band became the model and foundation for the musicians, set-up and Indian-European repertoire of the later 'Tanjore Bands', private wind bands that became *de rigueur* at weddings and other celebrations, and well into the 20th century, an indispensable part of the wedding procession, in which the bridegroom became king for an evening.²² Gregory Booth has shown that, while the family of T. Balakrishnan, who formed the first private "Tanjore Band" in the late 1860's, after the demise of the Thanjavur Raj, were not descendants of Thanjavur court or band musicians, they were temple *nāgasvaram* players of the *periya mēlam* ensemble, who had learned to play the clarinet.²³ As Booth suggests (p.63), the clarinetists in Serfoji's band must have been *nāgasvaram* double reed players, who could quickly learn to play the European reed instrument. Mahadeva Nattuvanar, a descendant of the celebrated Tanjore Quartet, who were dance masters and musician-composers attached to the Thanjavur court and the Brihadīśvara temple (beginning in Serfoji's rule), is credited with adapting the clarinet to Karnatic music.²⁴ Meanwhile, already in Serfoji's time, the clarinet was used in the *cinna mēlam* ensemble as accompaniment for the devadāsī dance.

European Chamber Music at Serfoji's Court: Corelli and Handel on the Kaveri

Visitors at Serfoji's darbar were entertained with various kinds of musical and dance performance, including performances by devadāsīs, ('nautch', in European parlance).²⁵ The devadāsī repertoire included popular European songs and some European dance styles.²⁶ Serfoji also maintained an ensemble of Eurasians (and Europeans?) who performed European dance at the darbar.²⁷ Most informative, however, are the comments of European visitors on classical chamber performances by the court musicians. The Viscount Valentia, who visited early in the king's reign (1804), wrote: "Hung up against the wall were several native musical instruments, somewhat resembling a guitar, richly ornamented with diamonds and pearls. The Rajah made one of his people play several tunes, and amongst others, God save the King, and Marlbrook. In one corner was an English pedal harp, his favorite instrument... He composes tunes, and is training an English band, having sent to Europe for instruments."²⁸ Just two years later, the Reverend Claudius Buchanan, Vice Provost of Fort William College, Calcutta, was entertained "with the veena and the harp". "In the evening", Buchanan reports, "he (Serfoji) sent his band of music, of twelve men, namely, six performers on the vina, and six singers, to the house of the resident, where I dined. They sang and played 'God save the king', with variations, in just measure, applying the Mahratta words to the Maha Rajah, their own most excellent prince".²⁹ On March 28, 1826 Serfoji's court musicians performed in a chamber concert for Reginald Heber, Bishop of Calcutta, playing difficult classical pieces, and sight-reading an entire overture of a sacred oratorio by the eminent baroque composer George Frideric Handel (1685- 1759): "In the evening we had some

excellent music at the Residency— he (the Bishop) enjoyed it exceedingly, and was particularly struck by the performance of two Bramins who accompanied Mrs. Fyfe in several difficult pieces, and afterwards played the overture in Sampson by *sight*.”³⁰

The above comments, read together with other sources, offer a number of insights. Serfoji had an ensemble of musicians, at least some of whom were Indians, who played European chamber music on violins, pianos, harps and other European instruments, but also on *vīṇās*. Skilled performers of Karnatic and Hindustani vocal and instrumental music, the Indian musicians in the European ensemble had mastered a difficult foreign classical repertoire. They copied music in European staff notation (Serfoji’s European collection includes handwritten sheet music, with musical cues such as ‘slow’, ‘fast’, and ‘allegro’ transcribed in *devanāgarī* script), and they could sight-read scores, a sign of mastery. Moreover, the European works they performed entailed singing and playing in parts and harmony, in contrast to Karnatic music’s focus on the solo voice or instrument, the melodic line, and beat cycles, the core of Indian musical practice. Lastly, in contrast to band tunes and simple airs, European chamber works were ornamented and rhythmically complex, in ways that differed from the complexities of Karnatic art music. The musicians also played classical Indian music for the visitors. Dharmayya Ramasamayya, an eminent brahmin courtier, was a skilled *vīṇā*, violin and piano player, instrumental technician, and a master of the English language.³¹ Ramasamayya’s son Varahappayya was also a skilled violinist, *vīṇā* player and expert in European music. The father and son supervised the court’s performing arts department, and held other important posts as well.³² They were exemplars of Serfoji’s overall project of training his brahmin courtiers in the English language and European arts and sciences.³³

The violin, which most South Indian musicians first encountered as an army instrument for playing popular tunes, eventually became the principal Karnatic concert accompaniment, a role that it retains to this day.³⁴ Several musicians associated with Thanjavur are credited with adapting the violin to Karnatic music in the early 19th century: Varahappayya of the Thanjavur court; Baluswami Dikshitar, a younger brother of the eminent composer Muthuswami Dikshitar; and Vadivelu, the youngest of the brothers among the ‘Tanjore Quartet’ dance masters.³⁵ Yet another pioneer of the violin was the Christian poet Vedanayaka Sastri, who used violin accompaniment for his Karnatic *kīrttaṇai* Tamil hymns at the Thanjavur church, and for his musical discourses.³⁶ These musicians moulded the violin to the needs of Karnatic music, finding in it a pliant instrument, capable of echoing the human voice, and producing the *gamaka* ornamentation of *rāga* melodic types, definitive qualifications for vocal accompaniment in South Indian classical music.

The European mode of reading staff notation, which Serfoji required for the learning and performance of European music at court, stood in contrast with the oral-aural pedagogies and performance practices of the Karnatic music of the time, as well as with later debates that centered on the question of whether European notation was a transparent, immediately legible, and therefore a universal system that could be applied to the representation of Karnatic music.³⁷ The

systematic practice of classical European violin music at the Thanjavur court by experts such as Varahappayya must have influenced the other Karnatic violin pioneers mentioned above. Vadivelu and Vedanayaka Sastri served at the Thanjavur court at various times; Vadivelu was a disciple of Muthuswami Dikshitar, and may have studied with Varahappayya as well. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether any of these musicians, outside of the court ensemble, read European staff notation, or played European classical music. At the beginning of the 19th century, Serfoji was unique in his focus on European music on its own terms, in all its aspects, including staff notation, harmony, and a full classical repertoire. Even A. M. Chinnaswamy Mudaliyar, who published *Oriental Music in European staff notation* in the late 19th century, was interested in applying European modalities of reading music to Karnatic music, rather than in European music itself.³⁸

The repertoire and practice at Serfoji’s court rivalled those of European circles in centers such as Calcutta, which in turn reflected musical activity in provincial England.³⁹ Music-making in European communities in India primarily took the form of amateur chamber performance, usually in domestic settings. Performance was constrained by a number of factors, including the availability of skilled musicians, good instruments and the latest music, the high cost and bulk of essential European keyboard instruments, and the constant difficulty of maintaining instruments in tune.⁴⁰ In the 1800’s the chamber repertoire consisted of vocal and instrumental music written for soloists and small ensembles: sonatas, trios and quartets, calling for keyboard, violins, cellos and other strings, and sometimes flutes.⁴¹ Serfoji’s music collection was dominated by violin and keyboard sonatas, and chamber works for instruments and voice by baroque composers such as Arcangelo Corelli, and classical composers such as Haydn and Mozart. Also plentiful was music for arias, airs and overtures from operas and sacred oratorios (e.g., Handel’s *Samson*, mentioned above), which were routinely transcribed for chamber ensembles. By the early 19th century, the pianoforte had replaced the harpsichord as the main keyboard instrument.⁴² This development is reflected in the king’s impressive collection of (expensive) pianofortes, and the presence in his library of many works by Muzio Clementi and Ignaz Pleyel, major authors of textbooks and music written expressly for the piano.⁴³

Serfoji’s influence on the practice of European music extended beyond the court, into European circles in Thanjavur, Trichy, Kumbakonam and other towns in the region. Everyone, from the British Resident to local officials, borrowed violins, pianos, sheet music, and musicians from the king.⁴⁴ The most valued loan of all was that of Dharmayya Ramasamayya, who was famed as the king’s brahmin piano-tuner.⁴⁵ In the chamber practice of the time, pianos and harps were essentially women’s instruments, whereas men played strings.⁴⁶ The wives of the British Residents who served at Thanjavur had the use of Serfoji’s pianos on long-term loan. These are the dynamics that are reflected in the chamber concert performed at the British Residency for Bishop Heber in 1826. The Resident’s wife, Mrs. Fyfe, played the piano; the instrument had been lent to her by the king two years earlier.⁴⁷ Serfoji’s musicians accompanied Mrs. Fyfe on the

violin and other instruments, and then performed a Handel oratorio overture by sight. In short, Serfoji became the chief patron and enabler of the performance of European chamber music in provincial South India.

Serfoji's European visitors were struck by the king's love of the harp, and mention hearing it being played alongside the Indian *vīṇā*. The guitar-like instruments Lord Valentia saw on the walls of the king's chamber were *vīṇās*, and Serfoji's musicians played the English tunes "Marlbrook" and "God Save the King" for him—did they play these tunes on the *vīṇās*? The Revd. Buchanan reports a performance on the *vīṇā* and the harp, but it is not clear whether the instruments were played together, or separately, nor is it clear whether they played Indian or European music on the *vīṇā*. In a letter written from Thanjavur in 1806, however, Buchanan mentions a *vīṇā*-voice ensemble (six *vīṇās* and six singers) performance at the Resident's house in the evening.⁴⁸ In this case, the ensemble played "God Save the King". How did the harp, the quintessential "ladies'" instrument, and the Indian *vīṇā* figure in Serfoji's practice of European music?

Harp were expensive, notoriously unwieldy to transport, and even harder to keep in tune than the piano; only very well-to-do women could afford to own a harp in India. Henrietta, Lady Clive, was one of these women. In 1798 she sailed to India with her two daughters, a governess, a pianoforte, and a harp on board, along with her husband, Edward Clive, who was about to take up the post of governor of Madras.⁴⁹ Touring South India after the end of the Mysore Wars, in 1800 Lady Clive became the first official European visitor to Serfoji's court; included in her equipment and hauled by elephant, were her piano and massive harp.⁵⁰ Did Serfoji already own harps, or was he inspired by Lady Clive's example? We do not know.

Ramasamayya and the other Thanjavur musicians were experts in Karnatic music. Serfoji's primary aim in entertaining Europeans with performances on the *vīṇā* was surely to display refined Indian music on the instrument regarded as the quintessential instrument of classical Indian music, in Indian as well as European circles.⁵¹ Not only was the art of the *vīṇā* highly developed at the Thanjavur court, it was also the centerpiece of the great Sanskrit treatises in music theory produced at the court in the 17th and 18th centuries, the *Saṅgītasudhā* of Govinda Dīkṣita and King Raghunātha Nāyaka (the Raghunātha-*vīṇā* is named for him), Veṅkaṭamakṣin's *Caturdaṇḍīprakāśikā* and the Maratha king Tulajaji I's *Saṅgītasārāmṛta*.⁵² At the same time, the *vīṇā* had been upheld as the iconic Indian instrument by Sir William Jones, the illustrious Orientalist scholar whose work Serfoji knew well, in his celebrated essay "On the Musical Modes of the Hindus" (1792). Also widely circulated was Francis Fowke's essay "On the Vina or Indian Lyre" (1788).⁵³ We have seen, however, that Serfoji featured *vīṇās* in the performance of European music as well. By pairing *vīṇās* with harps, employing them for performing European tunes and classical music, and by placing them in a European-style ensemble, Serfoji demonstrated the capability of the *vīṇā*, the archetypal classical 'Indian' instrument -- played by Sarasvatī, goddess of learning and the arts, but also admired by European Orientalist scholars -- to articulate authentic European music.

Popular Tunes and National Songs: "God Save the King" in England and Thanjavur

A major result of the ubiquity of band and fiddle music in Thanjavur, Trichy and Madras was the wide dissemination of the popular tunes that formed the bulk of the band and fiddle repertoire. These tunes -- military marches, Irish and Scots songs, folksongs and ballads, and dance tunes such as strathspeys, jigs and reels -- were marked by structural simplicity, catchy rhythms, and 'folk' contexts and resonances. The Nōṭṭusvara Sāhityas of Muthuswami Dikshitar, 39 short, charming Karnatic songs composed according to the notes (translated into Tamil as '*nōṭṭusvaram*') of the European major scale, are perhaps the best known of the East-West experiments in Karnatic music of the time. Muthuswami Dikshitar was clearly inspired by his experience with band and fiddle tunes in Madras and Thanjavur.⁵⁴ Retaining the purity of the straight 'notes' and eschewing the characteristic melismatic flourishes of Karnatic music, in his Nōṭṭusvara pieces the composer transformed jaunty Irish and Scots airs and dance tunes, such as "Limerick" and "Lord McDonald's Reel" into sparkling Sanskrit hymns (*stotras*) to Hindu gods and goddesses.⁵⁵ Well known among these pieces is Dikshitar's version of 'God Save the King', '*Santatam pāhi mām*', a hymn to Devī, the Goddess.

The Thanjavur court musicians, on the other hand, would have encountered popular British songs not only as band tunes, but as often in the context of classical chamber music. In the late 18th century, airs such as 'Marlbrook' (a popular English song, adapted from a French original, and later turned into the song 'For He's a jolly Good Fellow'), performed by Serfoji's ensemble, had already entered the chamber repertoire, embedded in operas, oratorios and other classical genres. Indeed, popular tunes had permeated nearly every genre and kind of English music of the time, instrumental and vocal, and they ruled the English music landscape. The phenomenon is vividly illustrated in the history of 'God Save the King' (GSK), a tune that developed a life of its own, as Britain's national anthem, but also embedded in classical, even symphonic works, and in colonial incarnations such as Dikshitar's '*Santatam pāhi mām*' and Serfoji's Marathi version. In America it was transformed into the nationalist song "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty".⁵⁶

"God Save the King" (GSK) rose to popularity among English audiences in the mid-18th century, a time of rising nationalism. But it was the great composer Handel who cemented GSK's status as the song of British identity, expressed in a peculiar nexus of the sacred, the national, the classical, and the popular. Handel gained fame as the foremost composer of sacred music. His 29 massive oratorios --opera-like works with large orchestras and choruses, spectacular solos, and lyrics based on Bible narratives and texts -- became the most popular works performed in public theaters in London.⁵⁷ An important reason for their popularity was the composer's practice of using biblical themes to express nationalistic ideas, and embedding nationalistic songs in his works. The standard setting of GSK is the one authored and popularized in 1745 by Thomas Arne (1710-1778), composer of popular English operas. But already in 1727 Handel had used an older setting of GSK

in a biblical piece titled “Zadok the Priest”, as part of four Coronation Anthems that he wrote in 1727 for George II.⁵⁸ Again, in 1746, in the music for the soprano solo “Prophetic visions strike mine eye” in his *Occasional Oratorio*, Handel embedded ‘Rule Britannia’, another British national air, composed by Arne for his opera *Alfred* (1740).⁵⁹ Closely identified with wars and national pride, Handel’s oratorios quickly became the music of the British nation.⁶⁰ The composer was celebrated in a commemorative festival in England in 1784, and in Calcutta in 1797.⁶¹ In January 1794, as a young prince, Serfoji heard music from Handel’s oratorios at a charity benefit concert organized by Lady Helena Oakeley, wife of the Governor of Madras, at St. Mary’s Church at Fort St. George, Madras.⁶² The concert featured selections from Handel’s *Messiah*, *Judas Maccabeus*, *Esther*, and the *Occasional Oratorio*. Lady Oakeley, the principal soprano soloist, sang “Prophetic visions strike my eye”, with its “Rule Britannia” inset. The concert concluded, of course, with Handel’s *Coronation Anthem* and GSK. Ironically, captivated as they were by GSK, both Dikshitar and Serfoji put “God Save the King” to subversive use: Dikshitar, by converting it into a Sanskrit prayer to the Goddess, and Serfoji, by translating the lyrics into Marathi and substituting himself, as ruler of Thanjavur, for his overlord, George III, King of England.

Dialogues between European and Indian songs: ‘Hindustani’ Airs, Opera Tunes and *Kuṛavañci Darus*

Both Serfoji and Dikshitar were acquainted with some ‘European’ tunes that were in fact transformations of popular Hindustani songs in European musical terms, some of which were published by William Hamilton Bird, an English musician in late 18th-century Calcutta.⁶³ Sophia Plowden and Margaret Fowke, two Englishwomen who encountered Indian music in north India at the same time as Bird, also made such translations. The ‘Hindustani Airs’ were versions of Hindustani and Persian love songs in genres such as *rekhtī* and *tappā*, sung by courtesans in the Hindustani musical style. Bird, Plowden and Fowke transcribed the songs for harpsichord and voice, in European staff notation, and in a European style that eliminated or modified the *rāga*-contours and time patterns of the original. Bird published his collection of Hindustani Airs in a book titled *An Oriental Miscellany* in Calcutta in 1789.⁶⁴ Some of the ‘nautch’ song tunes included in Bird’s book also circulated independently as fiddle and band tunes. It is in such a version that Dikshitar must have heard the tune of the Persian song “Tāzā ba tāzā nau ba nau”, which he converted into the *nōṭṭusvaram* “Pītavarnam bhaje’ham”. Browsing through the typed list of Serfoji’s collection of European printed music in 2011, I came across an item (no.57) intriguingly titled “Rekhtas”. Upon examining the book, I was delighted to find that it was a copy of the (now rare) 1789 edition of Bird’s *Oriental Miscellany*! The Thanjavur court musicians appear to have met, and very likely performed, “Taza ba taza” and other Hindustani airs, as *English* tunes, as pieces of *European* music, but as music encountered in print as well as in performance. In the reception of Hindustani Airs in Thanjavur, the travels of English and Indian tunes came full circle.

A last channel through which Serfoji received English popular tunes was the music of English operas of the ‘pastoral’ and ‘ballad’ type that were performed at London theaters in the early 19th century. The king’s collection includes several examples of these light operas, notably *Rosina: A Comic Opera* by William Shield (premiered in 1782).⁶⁵ Set in a bucolic English landscape, Shield’s *Rosina* depicts a successful love affair between a rustic maiden (Rosina) and a noble gentleman (Squire Belville), in quick dialogues and ‘light’ songs.⁶⁶ The overture to *Rosina* was composed entirely of English and Scots folksongs and ballad tunes, most famous of which was the Scottish poet Robert Burns’ “Auld Lang Syne”, in its now familiar setting, which is said to have made its debut in this opera.⁶⁷ *Rosina*’s pastoral theme, its popular airs and Shield’s light-textured love songs, accounted for the opera’s popularity in England. The theme, spirit and musical features *Rosina* and other operas of the type paralleled their counterparts in the *kuṛavañci* and other hugely popular musical and dance dramas in Telugu, Tamil and Marathi, sponsored by Serfoji and enacted at the court and in temples.⁶⁸ In Thanjavur’s *kuṛavañci* dance dramas, a *kuṛavañci* tribal fortune-teller predicts the successful union of a highborn woman with a noble or divine hero; the fortune-teller, an archetypal folk figure, is herself paired with a rustic birdcatcher.⁶⁹ The *Carapēntira pūpāla kuṛavañci*, featuring Serfoji as its hero and enacted in public at the Brihadīśvara temple’s annual festival, was the source of Thanjavur’s most popular tunes.⁷⁰ Like the use of folk musical styles in the *kuṛavañci* dramas, contemporary European operas emphasized ‘folk’ and pastoral musical associations; the instruments in *Rosina* often imitated the warbling of birds, and Shield frequently adopts a ‘folk’ song style in the arias.⁷¹ Whether in England or in India, it was as catchy tunes with recognizable melodies (the Karnatic ‘*metṭu*’) with strong ‘folk’ features that ballad opera airs and *kuṛavañci darus* garnered popular appeal. It seems fitting to end this essay with a reference to birdsong. Serfoji II deeply appreciated European music, and did much to nurture dialogue between Indian and European music in South India. Thanks to Serfoji and his fellow-innovators in the early 19th century, at least in Thanjavur, European music did not remain, as E.M.Forster put it in *A Passage to India*, “the song of an unknown bird”, uncomprehended and unappreciated.

Abbreviations

GSK	“God save the king”
TDR	Tanjore District Records
TMMR	Subramaniam, P., ed., <i>Tañcai marāṭṭiya manṇar mōṭi āvaṇat tamilaṅkamum kuṛippuraiyum</i> , Notes by K.M.Venkataramaia. vols. 1 -3, Thanjavur: Tamil University, 1984.
TNSA	Tamil Nadu State Archives

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- 1 This is the revised text of the lecture-demonstration I presented at The Music Academy of Madras, in the December Festival Academic session, Saturday, December 29, 2012, 8 a.m. - 8.50 a.m. My thanks to the Academy's selection committee for inviting me to present the talk. I also thank James Gehrt and Daryl Weber, of Mount Holyoke College's Digital Preservation Center and Language Resource Center, respectively, for helping me with my image powerpoint presentation and sound recordings; Davesh Soneji, for help with the powerpoint; and Jon Solins, for consultations regarding 19th-century performance. The talk, and this essay, are dedicated to Timothy M. Warren (1923 -2012), who illuminated European music for me.
- 2 On Serfoji II, see C.K. Srinivasan, *Maratha Rule in the Carnatic*, Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University, 1944, 294-392. On Serfoji's patronage of music, see S.Seetha, *Tanjore as a Seat of Music*, Madras: University of Madras, 1981, 107-121, and V.S. Radhika, *Development of Sadir in the Court of Raja Serfoji-II (1798-1832) of Tanjore*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Hyderabad, 1996, 81-100.
- 3 Seetha, *Tanjore*; and Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadāsīs, Memory, and Modernity in South India*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, 47-61.
- 4 For brief reports, see Seetha, *Tanjore*, p. 11-13, and C.S.Ayyar, "Raja Serfojee of Tanjore and Music". *Journal of the Madras Music Academy*. Vol. XV, 1944, 35-36.
- 5 Indira V. Peterson, forthcoming: *Scholar-king of Tanjore: Serfoji II and the shaping of Indian modernity*.
- 6 1) "Musical Books Printed." Typed list of 157 items in King Serfoji's II's collection of printed European music, prepared by P.Perumal, Conservator, Sarasvati Mahal Library, Thanjavur. There are also many volumes of handwritten music; P.Sambamurthy published one of these, a collection of band tunes and marches: *Melodies in Staff Notation Played by the Tanjore Band in the time of Maharajah Serfojee*. Tirupathi: Tirumalai Tirupathi Devasthanam, 1962. 2) Tanjore District Records (TDR), Tamil Nadu State Archives (TNSA), Chennai (For a list of records, see *Guide to the Records of the Tanjore District*, 1749-1835, volumes 1-8. Madras. Record Office: Government Press, 1935). 4-digit numbers refer to 'bundles' of documents. Out of many items consulted in TDR, in this essay I provide only a few sample references. 3) P. Subramanian, ed., *Taṇṇai marāṭṭiya maṅṅar mōṭi āvaṇat tamiḷakkamum kuṟippuraiyum*, Notes by K.M.Venkataramaiya. vols. 1 -3, Thanjavur: Tamil University (TMMR), 1989, provides Tamil summaries of selections from the Thanjavur Raj Marathi records in Modi script.
- 7 Some other contemporary Indian rulers (e.g., the Nawabs of Arcot and Awadh) maintained European bands as well, but Serfoji's band was unique as a long-term personal project.
- 8 Serfoji was exposed to classical and popular European music in Madras. See TNSA: TDR 4448, January 22 1794, p.13, and the discussion below.
- 9 I have not provided references to the recorded examples used in the lecture demonstration.
- 10 In the 18th century the term 'air' denoted songs or tunes in a wide range of European music, from popular songs to opera arias.
- 11 Amanda Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, 29.
- 12 See, for example, a "Company" style painting, reproduced in Mildred Archer, *Company Paintings: Indian Paintings of the British Period*, London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1992, No.18, "Grand Processional Scene with Amar Singh, Ruler of Tanjore (1787-1798) and Sarabhoji (1798-1832)", pp.52-53.
- 13 Nineteenth-century wind bands developed from a core ensemble of oboes, bassoons, horns and clarinets (*Musical Instruments of the World: An Illustrated Encyclopedia by the Diagram Group*, New York: Bantam, 1978, 296-299). On bands in Calcutta, see Ian Woodfield, *Music of the Raj: A Social and Economic History of Music in Late Eighteenth-Century Anglo-Indian Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 58-60.
- 14 TNSA: TDR 3473-4, 29 May 1802, p. 355-6.
- 15 They stayed in Trichy from May to mid-July, 1802. TNSA: TDR 3473-4, 19 July 1802.

- 16 In May 8, 1802, Serfoji ordered several instruments, including a serpent and a bagpipe (TNSA: TDR 3473-4). TNSA: TDR 4456 contains records of Serfoji's correspondence with Arbuthnot and Company, Madras, from 10 October, 1830 to 4 December, 1830, with commissions for various instruments to be acquired from Madras, Calcutta or England, as necessary (For the polphonion, see letter dated 23 December, 1830, p.134-5).
- 17 One of the instruction manuals is: William Gutteridge, *Introduction to the Art of Playing on Gutteridge's New Patent Clarinet*, London: Clementi, 1824. For tunes played by Serfoji's band, see Sambamurthy, *Melodies in Staff Notation*.
- 18 Silvestre D'Costa was sent to Madras in 1802-'03 to buy instruments and sheet music. In several letters to Serfoji, D'Costa mentions searching for German flutes, bassoons and music books; finding four clarinets and a 'capital organ', better than the one already owned by Serfoji; and composing tunes for the king (TNSA: TDR 3475, 26 December 1802, p.203; and Bundle 3476, letters dated 2 and 20 January, 1803 and 12 February, 1803). A new bandmaster was hired in 1808 (TNSA: TDR 3494, 10 and 19 February, 1808, p.57 and p.89) and a trumpet instructor in 1828 (Letter from Resident, Tanjore, 25 October 1828, TNSA: TDR 4357, p. 24).
- 19 "Slow March, Composed by His Majesty the Maharajah of Tanjore." Sambamurthy, *Melodies in Staff Notation*, No.53, p.82.
- 20 E.g., TNSA: TDR 4432, 22 April 1824, pp.81-2.
- 21 On Krishnaraja Wodeyar (r.1895-1940), and Ananda Gajapati, ruler of Vizianagaram (r. 1879-97) and European music, see Weidman, *Singing the Classical*, pp.65-6.
- 22 Gregory D. Booth, 'The Madras Corporation Band: A Story of Social Change and Indigenization', *Asian Music*, Vol. 28. No. 1, 1996-97, 61-86. On Balakrishnan's band, see p.64-68. The British annexation of Thanjavur state in 1855 resulted in the dispersal of the Thanjavur band musicians to Madras, Bangalore and other places. Meanwhile, private bands such as the Nathamuni Band developed independently in Madras.
- 23 Booth, *Madras Corporation Band*, p.61-70.
- 24 Seetha, *Tanjore*, p.15, and oral history of the Tanjore Quartet family. On the clarinet in South Indian classical music and dance, see Sriram Venkatakrishnan, "The Carnaticisation of the Clarinet", *Madras Heritage and Carnatic Music* (Articles on Chennai, its heritage, history and culture), <http://sriramv.wordpress.com/2008/09/09/the-carnaticisation-of-the-clarinet/>
- 25 E.g., TMMR, volume 2, record of 30 June 1818, p.143.
- 26 Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, pp. 53-54, 74, and 184-87.
- 27 An 1855 Marathi Modi record lists European and Eurasian performing artists and teachers, contract dates (several from the reign of Serfoji), specialties and salaries. Seetha, *Tanjore*, p.120.
- 28 George Annesley, Viscount Valentia, *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon and the Red Sea*, London: F. and C. Rivington, 1811, Volume I, p. 312.
- 29 'Tanjore in 1806.' Letter written by the Revd. C. Buchanan to the Revd. John Newton, Sept. 1, 1806, *The Visitor, or monthly instructor* for 1841, London Religious Tract Society, 1841, p.396. Buchanan visited the king on August 30, 1806.
- 30 Thomas Robinson, *The Last Days of Bishop Heber*, New York: T. and J. Swords, 1831, p.120. "Sampson" is *Samson*, a Handel oratorio completed in 1741 and revised in 1743.
- 31 Seetha, *Tanjore*, pp.260-261.
- 32 Seetha, *Tanjore*, pp. 256-261, and Radhika, *Development of Sadir*, pp. 81 - 83, 97-99. Varahappayya's tenure was mainly during the reign of Serfoji's son Shivaji II (1832-1855).
- 33 Indira V. Peterson, "The Schools of Serfoji II of Tanjore: Education and Princely Modernity in Early 19th -Century

- India," Michael S. Dodson and Brian A. Hatcher, eds., *Transcolonial Modernities in South Asia*. London: Routledge 2012, pp. 15-44.
- 34 A Company style painting, circa 1825-1830, depicts violin accompaniment in a *devadāsī* processional dance performance. Archer, *Company Paintings*, p. 64, No.26 (25), "Nautch party."
- 35 Weidman, *Singing the Classical*, pp.25-58, discusses the acculturation of the violin in Karnatic music.
- 36 Indira V. Peterson, "Between Print and Performance: The Tamil Christian Poems of Vedanayaka Sastri and the Literary Cultures of 19th-century South India," in S. Blackburn and V. Dalmia, eds., *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 25-59.
- 37 Weidman, *Singing the Classical*, pp.192-232, discusses these debates.
- 38 A.M. Chinnaswamy Mudaliyar, *Oriental Music in European Notation*, Gowri Kuppuswamy and M. Hariharan eds, Delhi: Cosmo, 1982 (originally published 1893).
- 39 See Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, for a comprehensive history of European music in India in the late 18th century.
- 40 Ibid., pp.3-35, 76-82, and 103-109.
- 41 Ibid., pp.33-48, 103-109.
- 42 Ibid., p.27.
- 43 Serfoji owned at least one harpsichord. TNSA: TDR 3490, 10 October 1807. pp.469-71.
- 44 The Resident asks Serfoji for the loan of his violin and violoncello musicians, on 17 August 1810, TNSA: TDR 3500, p.201.
- 45 E.g., TNSA: TDR 3554, 17 September, 1817, pp.10-11.
- 46 Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, p.121.
- 47 TNSA: TDR 4432, 29 August 1824, pp.144-5.
- 48 In a later account, he speaks of having heard "eight or more veenas and other instruments". C. Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, London: T. Cadell, 10th ed., 1814, p. 68.
- 49 Nancy K. Shields, *Birds of Passage: Henrietta Clive in South India 1798-1801*, London: Eland, 2009, p.31 and 47. Edward Clive, a son of Robert Clive, was governor of Madras from 1798 to 1803.
- 50 M. Archer, C. Rowell and R. Skelton, *Treasures from India: The Clive Collection at Powis Castle, New York*: Meredith Press, 1987, p.29, 124-25 and 133.
- 51 Sir Alexander Johnston was entertained by a *vīṇā* soloist, most likely Ramasamayya (playing Karnatic music?). TNSA: TDR 3518, 29 November 1816, pp.361-3.
- 52 Seetha, *Tanjore*, pp. 31-49, 367-402, 457, and 467-486.
- 53 William Jones, "On the Musical Modes of the Hindus" (1792), and Francis Fowke, "On the Vina or Indian Lyre" (1788), reprinted in S.M. Tagore, *Hindu music from Various Authors, Compiled by Sourindro Mohun Tagore*, Part I, Calcutta: Babu Panchanan Mukerjee, 1875, pp.123-160 and 191-98. Jones discusses the *vīṇā* in pp.137-43.
- 54 The composer's brother Baluswami is said to have learned the violin during his stay at the home of Manali Muthukrishna Mudaliyar, a Dubash agent of the East India Company in Madras.
- 55 M.R. Shankaramurthy, *The European Airs of Muthuswamy Dikshitar*. Bangalore: Gurugaha Gana Nilaya, 2000. A fitting tribute to the enduring appeal of Dikshitar's response to western music are Kanniks Kannikeswaran's recordings of these songs in 'Indo-Celtic' settings composed by him for voice and instruments, in an album aptly titled "Vismaya (Wonder): An Indo-Celtic Musical Journey", and aimed at an audience of children. http://www.kanniks.com/vismaya_page.htm
- 56 For a detailed history of GSK, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_Save_the_King

- 57 Robert King, Companion notes to the 2-CD set, for Handel, *The Occasional Oratorio*, Susan Gritton et al., and the Choirs of New College, Oxford and the King's Consort, 1995, London: Hyperion CDA6696.
- 58 Handel's *Coronation Anthems* are still played at the British royal coronation.
- 59 Companion notes to *The Occasional Oratorio*.
- 60 In the early 1800's, the context was the British antagonism with the French in the Napoleonic wars.
- 61 Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, pp. 136-39 and 145-46, describes nationalist music and Handel-mania in Calcutta.
- 62 Charles Lawson, *Memories of Madras*, London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1905, pp. 117-23. The short-lived *Madras Hircarrah* newspaper reported that the sons of Tipu Sultan, held hostage by the British in Madras, were also in the audience.
- 63 On the Hindustani Airs, see Gerry Farrell, *Indian Music and the West*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 15-44.
- 64 William Hamilton Bird, *The Oriental Miscellany: being a collection of the most favourite Airs of Hindoostan*, Calcutta: J. Cooper, 1789. The work was dedicated to Warren Hastings, then Governor-General in Bengal.
- 65 *Rosina, a Comic Opera as Performed at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden*, Composed and Selected by William Shield, London: G. Walker, n.d. (N.B. : In this edition most of the songs are arranged for flute). Item no. 157 in "Musical Books Printed", Sarasvati Mahal Library, Thanjavur.
- 66 Alyson McLamore, "Rosina: A comic Opera (1782), Review" *Notes: Oxford Journal of the Music Library Association*, Volume 57, no. 4, 2001, pp. 993-997.
- 67 Ibid., p.995.
- 68 On the Maratha court's *kuravañci* dramas, see Indira V. Peterson, "Multilingual Dramas at the Thanjavur Maratha Court and Literary Cultures in Early Modern India", *Medieval History Journal*, 14, 2 (2011): 285-321.
- 69 See Jnana Kulendran and K.P. Kittappa, eds., *Nāṭṭiyap pāṭṭicai: tañcai carapēntira pūpāla kuravañci*, Thanjavur: Tamil University, Music Department, 1994, pp. v-xx.
- 70 Ibid., pp. xi-xiii.
- 71 McLamore, *Rosina*, p.995 - 6.

