

### ***Origins and Development of the Piece (Joey):***

The first version of this work was presented for a gathering for the 23rd Urs of Pandit Pran Nath on June 13th, 2019 at Studio Ma. The piece was titled *Levitation Practice in the High-Order Modal Stasis of Samā*, and composed fully acoustically for viola, tambura, two voices, shruti box, and harmonium lasting about 1 hour and 45 minutes (performed as *Dhikr Allah Ensemble*). The piece used a simple arc with very little instruction other than a few tonal elements and heavy prose descriptions. It was never rehearsed and played for the first time as a performance in dedication to Pandit Pran Nath. The work

was set in the 12-tone version of Raag Bhairavi, a mysterious raga that is often used to end performances, but can be played anytime of day and is deeply colorful and intense in and of itself. The second version, *Selected Drift in Dream Stasis*, performed at Chapel Space in January of 2020 (as *Dhikr al-Fanā Time Communion*), expanded heavily on the instrumentation while keeping a balanced arc divided by instruments coming and going in 15-minute increments. This brought many elements simultaneously to a balanced cacophonous equilibrium lasting almost exactly two hours. The work, also set in Raag Bhairavi, was fully amplified featuring two voices, tambura, viola, double bass, two shengs, two handmade just intoned PVC reed horns, two shruti boxes, and harmonium. The third version, *Levitation Practice for the Sublimation of Time in the Modal System of the Maroon Glacial Cirque*, featured solo voice as a significant component, added dance for the first time, continued a balanced arc system, and had the longest name of them all (also performed as *Dhikr Allah Ensemble*).

The full instrumentation was amplified voice, viola, erhu, tambura, harmonium, three shruti boxes, and improvised, subtle movement. The piece was set in Raag Miyan ki Malhar, a beautiful evening raga often played in the monsoon season to evoke the rains, storms, and thunder. Although I myself am not a part of the sufi tradition, nearly all of my teachers and their teachers are in some capacity, and almost all of my primary musical inspirations derive from traditions of Islamic mysticism in India, Pakistan, Central Asia, and Western Asia. In many of the pieces, I hoped to maintain a connection in various ways to this tradition.

Our current version is the first to be set fully in just intonation with shifting tonal brackets that pull from and reflect the moods of different ragas sprinkled throughout: Raag Darbari (the haunting/beautiful late evening raga), Raag Bhimpalasi (an afternoon raga; I often associate this one with the ocean and nostalgia of the past and pining for future), Raag Komal Rishabh Asavari (a dramatic mid-morning raga), and Raag Bhairavi. The work incorporates this with a more resonant instrumentation, including delicate percussive elements and a coastal field recording which reflects the changing tides as the piece develops, all while connecting the movements of the instruments more directly with the natural world. This is all collaboratively augmented by the expanded addition of Katrina's movement, who offers her own choreographic interpretations and costume design to reflect the natural imagery and the subtle changes of the sound. It also transforms the balanced arc into an organic one, where the beginning is much longer than the decay, as in a khayal performance. Much of this is greatly inspired by the ensemble and solo works of Catherine Christer Hennix; most notably *Blues Alif Lam Mim in the Mode of Rag Infinity / Rag Cosmosis, Blues Dhikr Al-Salam*, her collaborations with Italian dhrupad singer Amelia Cuni and Werner Durand, and of course, her work that inspires so much of what I do from the core, *The Electric Harpsichord*, which I think is one of the great masterpieces in music. This new work is also my first to begin to intentionally place a greater emphasis on the intentionality of the music and the space of our minds and hearts. Even though a little over half of us are trained in Burmese vipassana and most of us have a meditation practice of one form or another, it felt appropriate to name the ensemble *Annapurna Dharma Communion*, both to highlight the importance of the path to eliminate suffering, to embrace our collective offering and gathering, and less romantically because - at the time of conceptualizing this piece - I was listening frequently to Annapurna Devi play Raag Kaunsi Kanada and reading about the Annapurna mountain range in Gandaki Province, Nepal.

The just intonation tuning of the work follows the work of La Monte Young and Michael Harrison by continuing to eliminate the use of the 5:4 (major third) axis, using only two long spines of interrelated Pythagorean (3:2) and septimal (7:4) intervals for deeper harmonic resonance, simplicity, and greater potential depth of spiritual potency. If you'd like to see the tuning lattice for this piece, let me know :)

### *The Wind That Rolls Upon the Water*

“The reach of vibrations is according to the fineness of the plane of their starting-point. To speak more plainly, the word uttered by the lips can only reach the ears of the hearer; but the thought proceeding from the mind reaches far, shooting from mind to mind. The vibrations of mind are much stronger than those of words. The earnest feelings of one heart can pierce the heart of another; they speak in the silence, spreading out into the sphere, so that the very atmosphere of a person's presence proclaims his thoughts and emotions. The vibrations of the soul are the most powerful and far-reaching, they run like an electric current from soul to soul.”

-Hazrat Inayat Khan

from *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*

“Nature is full of teachings for all of us. A wise person learns from the things around him in the forest: the earth, the rocks, the trees, the creepers. It's as if all these things are ready and willing to give us advice and teachings ... When we consider it well, we'll see that forms [sounds, odors, tastes, physical sensations, thoughts, etc.] are only our enemies because we still lack wisdom. In fact, they are excellent teachers.”

-Ajahn Chah

from *Stillness Flowing: The Life & Teachings of Ajahn Chah*

*Performed by*

*Annapurna Dharma Communion*

مشاركة دارما الأناپورنا

December 2nd, 2022  
Chapel Performance Space  
Seattle, Washington

*Annapurna Dharma Communion:*

Jackie An - violin

Michael Shannon - cello, voice

Joey Largent - cello, voice, field recording, composition

Manasvi Patel - 7-limit shruti box, bamboo chimes, copper chimes, bells

Sam Vanderlinda - 7-limit shruti box, steel tongue drum, bells, tibetan bowls

Katrina Wolfe - movement, costumes, choreography

Russell Christenson - 7-limit harmonium, bells

Ian Gwin - Miraj tambura

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**Joey Largent's** work focuses on exploring long-duration compositions and improvisations for acoustic ensembles and solo performance. Beyond generating music alone, his goal is to offer a space for introspection, releasing from attachment, beauty, and connection. Through site-specific work and field recording, he seeks to connect daily experience more profoundly with the impermanent harmony of the natural world. He has collaborated with numerous dancers, musicians, and interdisciplinary artists over the years, and has studied North Indian Classical music with several disciples of Pandit Pran Nath including Michael Harrison and Rose Okada. A growing foundation of his artistic work is rooted in his daily meditation practice and devotion to the path of dhamma— to attempt to observe existence as it is.

**Katrina Wolfe** is an interdisciplinary artist working in the mediums of performance art, costume making, installation, photography, and sculpture. A primary focus of Katrina's work is the practice, teaching and performance of Masukhuma: a dance, movement therapy and performance art technique that has evolved from her experience in butoh, visual arts, and her daily practice of Vipassana meditation. Katrina studied primarily with butoh artists Joan Laage and Atsushi Takenouchi. She also gained great inspiration through studying the films of butoh founder Tatsumi Hijikata and through an intensive workshop with first-generation butoh artist Daisuke Yoshimoto. By creating costumes and installations from organic and recycled materials, and through merging the body with various environments - both natural and created - Katrina's work explores issues of attachment, over-consumption, climate change, waste, and ephemerality.

**Michael Shannon** is a sound/recording artist, musician, photographer, and performer of experimental media, based in Seattle. He began performing in the punk clubs of San Francisco in the late 1970's evolving performance and sound designs through various venues and media, specializing in the use of a variety of string instruments from Asia, field recordings, percussion, sound objects, electro-acoustic strings, and electronics. First releases of audio works in the form of cassettes began in 1987, followed by an LP *Laguz* on Anomalous Records and CDs on various labels around the world. Presently a member of Seattle-based performing/recording groups Gyre, Eye Music, Yuan, Echore, Aono Jikken Ensemble, Animist Orchestra, Broken Mask (Seattle-San Francisco). Previous San Francisco bands: Appliances, Kahunas, KuKuKu, Earnerve, Joyo, Lethal Gospel.

**Manasvi Patel** is a software engineer living in Seattle, Washington. She grew up in a small city in Jharkhand, India to Gujarati parents, and went on to live in various cities throughout the country. While living in Jaipur, she received her Bachelor of Technology in Computer Science. Although this has been her vocation, she has an immense love, admiration and curiosity for all things related to art, nature, culture and spirituality. In the winter of 2021, she attended her first 10-Day vipassana meditation course, which had a profound impact on both her personal and spiritual life. Some of her current explorations include knitting, learning naturopathy/ayurveda, studying religious, historical, and philosophical literature, and recently beginning to study North Indian Classical singing.

“A professional flautist began to ask about music: ‘What about Bach? Surely there’s nothing wrong with that – much of his music is very spiritual, not at all worldly.’ Luang Por [Chah] looked at her, and when she had finished, he said quietly, ‘Yes, but the music of the peaceful heart is much, much more beautiful.’ ”

- a question reflected by Ajahn Candasiri, from *Stillness Flowing*

**Reflection (Katrina):**

Many of my most profound experiences in life have been connected to either meditation or Masukhuma. In recent years I have spent more and more time dancing in nature, often in very cold temperatures, and in many situations where the elements of water, wind, earth, wood, etc directly touch and integrate with my body. These moments of deep physical connection to nature have an effect of purifying the mind in a very similar way to that of sitting in silent meditation observing the endlessly changing physical sensations of the body for many hours, days, or weeks. In the snow covered rainforest or on the barnacle covered rocks of the sea, with little to no barrier in form of shoes or clothing, I also observe the sensations of the body, but now this internal observation is happening simultaneously with the observation of the nature outside. In these moments the reality begins to be uncovered— the truth that actually there is no separation between this body and nature. Both are made of the same materials. Both are decaying, regenerating and dying at every passing movement. When the icy ocean waves crash onto my body, my mind is awake, alert, but also empty. This sensation which is so intense and invigorating is ultimately only the contact of colder water coming in contact with the warmer water of the body— the vast majority of the body substance. Such moments dancing in the nature are so precious it often brings tears to my eyes simply to recall them. They are like a strong drug that little else can compare to once they have been tasted. But neither sitting in meditation nor dancing in nature can be done constantly, and it is here that the great problem arises: how can this awareness of reality be maintained, this awareness that we are not ultimately individual beings but rather a part of everything (the stones, glaciers, trees, etc)? All the misery that we are faced with throughout our lives is the result of this clinging to ourselves as individuals, and all that which reinforces who we have come to believe we are. True happiness comes when even small glimpses of reality are experienced. And so ultimately what is necessary is to make a constant effort to maintain this awareness. By putting time aside each day for the practice of both meditation and Masukhuma, the duration of continuous awareness between the practices little by little starts to increase.

**About the Costumes (Katrina):**

The costumes I create are an extension of my great appreciation for nature. In the aesthetic sense I am also vastly inspired by nature, and in all my visual work I strive to create pieces that appear to have grown organically from the earth rather than being created by human hands. To return to the ultimate reality that we are also nature, in many cases and I think increasingly, human creations often go against this reality. With so much ideology being centered around separateness from nature and the need to conquer, control, and take from it, it is no surprise that the aesthetics of human creations would bear less and less resemblance to the natural world. But attempting to create works as intricate and beautiful as nature is an extremely slow and tedious process. Several of the costumes in this piece have been in progress for years, and others only for a few days, but all of them will be worked on for years to come. All my costumes are made from recycled or found materials, and altered existing, used garments. The second large white costume in this piece is made from synthetic curtain material cut into tiny pieces and melted over a candle flame—to create the bubbly texture—then hand stitched back together (these pieces were integrated with a deconstructed used prom dress). The full costume was sewn by hand. The other three costumes of the piece are all made from used silk, and in one case with added rayon from a skirt I have had for nearly half my life. On these pieces my mother Kawtee Wolfe has been working tirelessly for the past two days to assemble many fabric scraps I had recently pinned together to expand the older white silk costume and create the two new rust colored costumes. Thankfully she could use the sewing machine for this stage, and in the future I will continue adding hand stitching over the machine work to increase the organic quality I am constantly striving for.

**Jackie An** (they/them) was born and raised on the unceded land of the Pueblos (Albuquerque, New Mexico). Now residing on the ancestral lands of the Duwamish (Seattle, Washington), Jackie accompanies their audience through the themes of life, death, horror and delight through the lyrical voice of the violin. Textures created through a collection of guitar pedals are used to evoke subconscious imagery and create an interlocking auditory narrative. IG: @circadies

**Russell Christenson** was born in Kansas and raised in a small farming town. He served on the local Arts Council as a teenager, where he was involved in planning, executing, and commemorating artistic performances and shows. Small towns foster and function on tight-knit networks, and having a good heart and accepting others was not only desirable but necessary. His actively inquisitive nature led him to travel and live in multiple countries, where he made efforts to rid himself of ethnocentric ideas. Later, settling in Seattle, he continues to use his good heart, beat by beat, to collaborate with friends from diverse backgrounds and creative fields. Russell does not consider himself to be a Creative but rather a conduit through which creative information can flow through and act upon.

**Ian Gwin** is a writer, translator, and musician from Seattle, Washington. A graduate of the University of Washington, he researches and translates Baltic literature. As part of the local collective Wordo he makes music and audio-visual poetry, and is currently writing a book on William Basinski's *Disintegration Loops* and the architecture of Minoru Yamasaki as subtle impermanence.

**Sam Vanderlinda** is a PNW native, born and raised down south in Renton. He completed his first retreat in the Vipassana Goenka tradition in June of this year and became smitten with the practice. Other than being thrown in the wheel of samsara, he enjoys sitting with swell people and chatting about Dhamma. Sam has performed music occasionally through the years but is very grateful for the opportunity to play in this unique setting! May you be well!

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### **Reflection (Joey):**

For these last months, I've been reflecting on what would be most honest and meaningful to share for this program. And in the spirit of the Thai Forest tradition of Ajahn Chah (whose biography I just finished today), I've come to feel that sharing what comes to my mind now, in this moment, will be the most useful for this time. In the last two months or so, my meditation practice has experienced a revival of sorts, which occurs every now and then. This usually takes the form of deeper insight, devotion, commitment, and inspiration— seeing the benefits take shape in my mind and life and heart, and feeling a connection to continuing along the path with a full heart. And such are the qualities we possess for all things that we must put work into to maintain healthily in our lives— our relationships with family, friends, romantic partners; our work that is laid out before us; our responsibilities to keep ourselves healthy in mind and body. These qualities, this effort, this witnessing (to draw a parallel between Gotama's similes of the five hindrances) is like seeing one's face again in a bowl of water after clearing it briefly from the mud, dye, and debris that fill it continuously time and again. This moment of clarity can afford us the motivation to begin to see a path forward of less suffering, more connection, a greater emphasis of giving more of our heart to ourselves and others, to find and build a refuge from within to be able to give to and be in service of others with only generosity and warmth inside, and to give without the expectation of anything in return— all things that certainly sound beautiful in aspiration and concept, and return again and again to be the most difficult in their ability to be experienced holistically and continuously. When they are experienced as such, even just for a moment, it is like a brief light of atonement for the heart, giving life and energy into one's tasks and purpose.

For some time, I have been reflecting on the purposes of the music that I've been writing for nearly half of my life (for the last 14 years). And the reason for this reflection being that something about the process of sharing this work has felt incomplete somewhere inside, as if there is something missing

about the exchange, the connection, the relationship, the feeling between myself and others. And I've witnessed the many variations, forms, and genres that it has taken, and although the details have always been unique and changing, there are aspects that are ever-present. Knowing fully well that there are never any firm conclusions to any chapter, only changing shapes within time, the most present *inspirations* for my work have come most significantly from the suffering within myself that originates in two forms: that of loss and that of longing. About six years ago, at a time where I was listening to a lot of Turkish ashik music (Neşet Ertaş, Ali Ekber Çiçek), I remember describing a dream I had to a friend where I was in a large room and everyone, very slowly, began to say the word *özlem*. I had no idea what this meant, though I recognized it as Turkish. I translated it, and its meaning came to be revealed as *longing, yearning, missing*.

The experience of suffering from loss and longing naturally has its foundations in craving and desire, attachments to dreams, to experiencing, their manifestations and excitement of their unfoldings in reality, our imagined views of who we could be. We want something to happen or to be some way, we develop attachment to it, and it is not this way, and so we feel a loss inside, we hurt inside. We have something we never want to change, we love someone we never want to leave us, we feel bliss and we don't want it to end, we develop attachment to it; and we experience a change, a loss, and we hurt inside from this. In my own life, I've observed the fears, anxieties, doubts, sadnesses, and vivid imaginations and hopes – whether it be something social, something artistic, something romantic, something about identity, something about communication - weave themselves into intricate patterns that have created situations ripe for building stockpiles of material that, if not observed and addressed, finds its way out to generate greater harm for myself, which can so too hurt others or my ability to support or love others as they deserve to be loved and supported. For years in my most desperate moments, my most vulnerable moments, writing music was my way of communicating what could not be put into words— desires, disappointments, fears, dreams that this mind/body phenomenon would generate. And in this turn, I've asked myself again how the music finds a remedy for all of this. Does it actually release these feelings, or just transform them temporarily? Is it a distraction? Does it articulate these feelings? Does it help others to hear the sounds of my own suffering? Is the music even the sound of my own suffering?

These questions will never know true answers, as any semblance of them is in constant flux— maybe true sometimes, maybe partially true other times, maybe not true sometimes. Meditation has revealed new paths for me, new ways of releasing, new ways of seeing, new ways of healing, and through this, the music has begun to take a new shape. On the path of my attachment to capture the most ideal field recording for this piece, I found myself in many different places— near the end of the long jetty in Westport, watching the waves crash against the rocks, caught singing to myself by a curious seal, seeing a surfer in peril; at a beach at sunrise a few miles south of there, meditating peacefully with the gentle ocean and morning birds singing; at Rialto Beach at high tide, watching the logs crush against the shore amidst unforgiving waves up to 15 feet, feeling the rain come and go and meditating on death and the substancelessness of the mind and body. And nature keeps reminding me through all of this, just as everything is in flux, just like how we are borrowing these bodies temporarily, just like how we will all die, just like how the Earth, our sun, the universe will all eventually pass away, so too will new beginnings arise, always different, always new, always unknown. And so too, I realize, as I change, so does everything else. As my heart becomes more at ease, more open, more clear, as does the music, as do the feelings, the sentiments, the reflections that are expressed. And as time moves, I hope again and again with each piece to strive for greater awareness of my own motivations, greater honesty with them, a deeper willingness to be vulnerable, a greater attempt to create a space for myself and others to observe our minds and bodies, their impermanent nature, and knowing that this music, this time we share, this experience will always pass away. And this is what makes this moment, this moment right now, beautiful. We cannot create something more organic than that— the now that has already left us. And so, although not exhaustive of my thoughts on all of this, I offer this as a reflection for now.



