



Glow of Benares

Aarhus Jazz Orchestra

The Danish Sinfonietta (Randers Kammerorkester)

Kala Ramnath, violin & vocals

Abhijit Banerjee, tabla & pakhawaj

Lars Møller, composer & conductor

[1]	Glow of Benares (Lars Møller)	11:23
	Solos: Kala Ramnath (violin), Abhijit Banerjee (tabla), Jonas Johansen (drums)	
[2]	Indian Skies (Lars Møller)	6:44
	Solos: Kala Ramnath (vocals), Adam Rapa (trumpet)	
[3]	Funky Jog (Lars Møller)	11:34
	Solos: Abhijit Banerjee (pakhawaj), Kala Ramnath (vocals), Jakob Buchanan (flugelhorn)	
[4]	Indian Train Ride (Lars Møller)	9:22
	Solos: Kala Ramnath (violin), Abhijit Banerjee (tabla), Hans Ulrik (tenor sax)	
[5]	Epilogue: Mumbai Footprints (Lars Møller)	3:41
	Solos: Abhijit Banerjee (vocals, tabla), Thor Madsen (guitar)	
		Total: 42:44

AARHUS JAZZ ORCHESTRA

Saxes & reeds Michael Bladt (lead alto, soprano), Johan Toftegaard Knudsen (alto), Hans Ulrik (tenor), Cesar Joaniquet (tenor), Ole Visby (baritone, bass clarinet)

Trumpets & flugelhorns Adam Rapa (lead), Jan Lynggaard Sørensen, Lars Vissing, Jakob Buchanan **Trombones** Nikolai Bøgelund, Stefan Friis Ringive, Ebbe Ringblom, Henrik Resen (bass trombone) **Rhythm section** Mads Bærentzen (piano), Thor Madsen (guitar), Thomas Ovesen (bass), Jonas Johansen (drums, cajón)

THE DANISH SINFONIETTA (Randers Kammerorkester)

Strings Clara Richter-Bæk, Joaquín Páll Palomares (1st violin), Bjarne Stange Nielsen, Jakob Rosendahl Povlsen (2nd violin), Esben Kjær, Olga Goija (viola), Aksel Nielsen, Janne Fredens (cello), Ole Ulvedal (bass) **Wind instruments** Marianne Leth (flute), Jette Kristensen (oboe), Bue Skov Thomassen (clarinet, bass clarinet), Søs Friberg Kjeldgaard (bassoon), Hans Jørgen Ilum (horn).

Kala Ramnath – violin on [1] and [4], vocals on [2] and [3]

Abhijit Banerjee – tabla on all tracks, the pakhawaj on [1] [3]-[5], the kanjira on [2], vocals on [5]

Jonas Johansen plays Istanbul Agop Cymbals and, on [3], a DG Cajón

Aboard this cruise liner of a record production you experience an unprecedented encounter of the western big band tradition with chamber music and the classical musical culture of northern India. Here musical idioms combine in a colourful world of melodies and rhythms which also plumbs the emotional depths of human life.

The saxophonist, composer and arranger Lars Møller (b. 1966) stands at the head of a dazzling collaboration of Aarhus Jazz Orchestra and The Danish Sinfonietta with the two stars of Indian music, the violinist Kala Ramnath and the tabla player Abhijit Banerjee; a cultural encounter borne up by mutual admiration and empathy which is perhaps best explained with a reference to a video montage made by the photographer Ole Udengaard in connection with a visit to India in 2016 in the company of Lars Møller and several of the Danish musicians.

We travel with the camera aboard a boat on its way down the Ganges as it winds through the ancient, sacred city of Benares, also called Varanasi. As a viewer one is confronted by both the alien and the exotically fascinating: thick smoke drifts across the water, birds flutter against the warm glow of the afternoon sky, which soon becomes twilight, and along the banks people have gathered at blazing bonfires in front of temples and residences. You can almost smell and feel the place (the video can be seen at www.glowofbenares.com).

Lars Møller has tried to capture this quite special atmosphere musically with the title number of the album, 'Glow of Benares', based on a so-called *Raga Shree*, which incarnates the mood of melancholy and spiritual longing. It is the very essence of this glow. The sound of two cultures that meet.

The meeting has been long in coming. It is around 25 years since Lars Møller studied jazz in New York with among others Dave Liebman as teacher, and was granted his 'bebop licence'. But with a yen for new challenges Møller then packed his suitcase and travelled to India to study the ancient, traditional reed instrument the *shenai* with the masters Anant Lal and his son Daya Shankar. Over four years he spent periods in New Delhi and through rigorous training acquired the basic skills of the musical system and expressive register of the ragas. "One of the most

important points is to learn to hear, feel and reproduce the core phrases and microtonal expressions of the ragas, and thus to learn at the personal and universally human level to tune into and master these archetypal feelings," explains Lars Møller.

The Indian musical system goes back thousands of years along with the spiritual traditions. *Ragas* consist of a kind of loosely structured melodies and are recognized from particular turns of phrase that meander ornamentally over a constant drone. There are hundreds of traditional ragas, and an Indian with a trained ear recognizes them as a jazz listener recognizes a *jazz standard*. Associated with the ragas too are particular emotional expressions, *rasas*, for example sorrow, joy, longing, fear and sadness.

To this we can add the rhythmic dimension. The so-called *talas* are rhythmic cyclic patterns built up over a pulse of 7, 12 or 16 beats, for example, and can be played with many different subdivisions. *Tihai* are special rhythmic cadences used to give the piece structure. On the Indian *tala* system Lars Møller comments: "As far as mathematical complexity is concerned the aspirations are as high as in Bach's fugues or in Darmstadt serialism".

Formally, the classical Indian concert follows a fixed pattern. It opens with a slow, meditative section, *Alap*, in rubato. This is succeeded by a clearly pulse-borne section, *Jor/Jalla*, until the tabla player launches into one or more fixed *talas* in various tempi. The raga builds up dynamically to a climax and ends with a *Tihai*.

After his studies in India Lars Møller brought his experiences with him into the Lars Møller Group, which became one of Scandinavia's leading bands in the second half of the 1990s. The group toured in large parts of the world and was able to play at the Blue Note in New York. In recent years Møller has resumed his immersion in the language of the ragas on the saxophone alongside his orchestral work. As always, Møller goes determinedly and seriously to work. He has for example had a saxophone extension made, an extra sounding length on a frame which enables him to lower the fundamental note and thus play ragas with the note G as a drone.

But over the past two decades Lars Møller has also developed a great deal as a composer, arranger and conductor in the modern big band tradition of among others Thad Jones, Bob Brookmeyer and Maria Schneider. He has done commissioned work and recorded albums with

leading Scandinavian and Central European big bands, not least The Orchestra, Aarhus Jazz Orchestra and the Danish National Big Band. Today Lars Møller stands as one of Europe's leading composers in orchestral jazz. The culmination so far has been the release in 2015 of 'ReWrite of Spring', a great, exuberantly sprawling reinterpretation of Stravinsky's iconic 'Le Sacre du printemps' with Aarhus Jazz Orchestra and the soloists Dave Liebman and Marilyn Mazur.

"I am looking for situations that challenge me," Møller said in an interview as far back as 2004, and we can safely take his word for it. For with 'Glow of Benares' we have a genre-crossing work whose ambition and grandeur recall some of Palle Mikkelborg's biggest projects such as 'The Veil of Maya' (1973) and 'Aura' (1984).

'Glow of Benares' in other words began life 25 years ago on a floor in New Delhi where raga phrases were practiced to perfection on the *shenai*. And when Møller was engaged as the leader of Aarhus Jazz Orchestra in 2012, it was not least with the idea of an ambitious exchange project with Indian musicians. On earlier occasions Møller had met Abhijit Banerjee and Kala Ramnath. "I knew Abhijit way back in the 1990s, when we played a little together," Møller remembers. "In fact there was a situation – amusing at least in retrospect – when we played as a duo at what was then the venue Ben Webster Restaurant in Copenhagen and we were fired because the owner thought there was too little beer sale in what we were doing – on an evening when the Danish national soccer team beat Romania 4-3".

In the spring of 2015 AJO organized a workshop with Abhijit, for which Lars Møller composed 'Indian Train Ride'. Later in the year he wrote 'Glow of Benares' with a point of departure in raga phrases he had asked Kala to record. The music became part of the orchestra's project 'Bollywood Beats and Big Band', which with its intercultural character was launched via a number of major concerts and events, for example as part of Aarhus 2017 European Cultural Capital.

Then in January 2016 Møller went to Kolkata (Calcutta) with a group of the project's orchestral musicians and students as well as the drummer Jonas Johansen and the guitarist Thor Madsen. The trip was part of the artistic development project. Ideas were tried out and Møller participated with some of the musicians in atmospheric concerts on the banks of the Ganges and at the Calcutta School of Music.

April and May 2016 saw the culmination, so far, of the project with concerts under the thematic heading 'Bollywood Beats and Big Band' in Randers, Aarhus (SPOT Festival), Viborg and Copenhagen. Some of the concerts were approached as educational communication with children. And in the end the large orchestra of 32 musicians went into the studio on 7-8 May in the Danish Broadcasting Corporation DR's Koncerthuset, Studio 2, and recorded the music in the course of a single day. A few months later Lars Møller established the intercultural Global Jazz Explorer Institute as a united forum for his activities around among other things Indian music.

On 'Glow of Benares' the joint forces of the orchestral musicians and soloists unite in five ambitious, beautifully presented pieces of music. That the whole album was recorded in just seven hours may be hard to grasp; but it was preceded by able planning, rehearsals and adjustments, so the musicians and the conductor had a strong, shared sense of direction.

1 – Glow of Benares

The opening track is also the centrepiece of the album, an orchestral and soloistic interpretation of the soulful *Raga Shree*. Lars Møller clarifies: "This raga depicts an inner world at a human and spiritual level. In my view it is the essence of what Indian culture can express. It is down-to-earth and strikes to the heart with both overtones and undertones".

The composition process was unconventional. In a session Møller asked Kala Ramnath to improvise over the notes of the raga in a slow 12-beat *tala*. He took the recordings back with him to the workroom, where he orchestrated key phrases in unison with contrapuntal 'shadow effects'. For example the violin group helps to form the flexible melody of the raga. This is an extraordinarily atmospheric piece of music. The unison strings guide the music into a ballad-like feeling that merges with the traditional *villambit ektal*, a slow 12-beat rhythm. And a fantastic conclusion awaits with Ramnath's expressive solo violin and Jonas Johansen's free drumming over the orchestra's ostinato.

"This is something I haven't done before," Lars Møller explains. "In this piece I have composed within the universe of the raga, starting with the question whether one can create a piece of orchestral music whose first part is totally based on unison lines that are displaced ever so slightly.

This is my attempt to describe the quite special reddish afternoon glow and atmosphere on the banks of the Ganges, where the diversity of life unfolds: cremations, beggars, monks, children playing, clothes being washed, ritual bathing, pizza vendors and con-men”.

2 – Indian Skies

This is a new version of an older Møller theme, ‘Blue Skies In Kamchatka’, which he recorded with his group on ‘Colours’ (1997) along with the guitarist John Abercrombie. The theme was also used later on the big band album ‘New Skies’ (2001) with The Orchestra, and with the superteam Geri Allen, Buster Williams and Billy Hart on ‘Jazzpar Concerts 2003’. In the present context the music is orchestrated by the trumpeter Jesper Riis, Møller’s collaborator for many years in The Orchestra. The music has been given a reflective, airy and direct character that combines well with the other pieces. Kala Ramnath plays vocally with the themes of the strings, and Adam Rapa guarantees a lively solo on trumpet.

3 – Funky Jog

Along with the title number, ‘Funky Jog’ is one of the longest pieces on the album, with a playing time of 11:30. Here Møller develops the piece with rich moods and rhythmic layers built over traditional Indian structures. The pulse is slower, and the timbres are denser. Again Kala contributes to a unique, emotionally charged atmosphere, this time vocally, over the pulse of Abhijit’s drums. Jakob Buchanan adds soft melodic playing on the flugelhorn. In this case the distance between Indian and Nordic melancholy does not seem so great. Note how the melody of the raga is also integrated in the orchestral parts – this is beautiful orchestration.

4 – Indian Train Ride

It starts with a simple piano figure over an inciting hi-hat pulse. Throughout, Abhijit’s tablas create a lively rhythmic underlay, and Kala’s intricate violin notes are like a plant stem budding on its way up, soon accompanied by strings and resolute winds that work on the melodic material of the piece. Kala takes the first solo with beauty and vitality. A delta of sound arises

between soloist and orchestra. Here we have charged harmonies and elements of both blues and raga, not least in Hans Ulrik’s expressive solo on tenor saxophone.

5 – Epilogue: Mumbai Footprints

Wayne Shorter’s famous theme ‘Footprints’ has followed Lars Møller for many years. He recorded it with his group on both ‘Cross Current’ (1995) and ‘Kaleidoscope’ (1998). Here it is elegantly suggested in a catchy epilogue. After an intense tempo is initiated which is followed by Thor Madsen’s short edgy guitar solo, strongly backed by the rhythm section and intense orchestral entries, Shorter’s melodic theme is presented in manipulated form in the final rhythmic *Tihai* cadence.

After listening you sit there with a particular glowing sensation in your mind, an energy and a palette of emotional possibilities. This orchestral meeting of cultures has become something quite distinctive in the river of time.

Christian Munch-Hansen (b. 1969). Music critic, writer and teacher. Has contributed to several books on Danish jazz and in 2014 published the poetry collection Musical Dream Machine.

A personal note from the composer and conductor

Since 2012 I have had the great musical experience of working closely with Aarhus Jazz Orchestra (AJO), which has its origins in the legendary bandleader Jens Klüver’s unique life’s work, Klüver’s Big Band. In 2012 when Jens – after 34 years as bandleader – bowed out and went into retirement, I was given the unique opportunity to head up what came to be known as Aarhus Jazz Orchestra. My vision was that AJO, as one of Denmark’s major jazz institutions, would be a cultural lighthouse where the improvisation and expression of jazz in the present moment meets the score-based dramatic expression of the large ensemble format. My angle of approach has

been a global perspective on how we discover what we can learn from other musical cultures; how we can cooperate and at the same time reach a deeper understanding of our own tradition and identity.

After the release of 'ReWrite of Spring' (Dacapo 2015) I have, as composer-in-residence with Aarhus Jazz Orchestra since 2016, been able to continue this vision with the works 'To a New World' (performed at the opening of the Aarhus and Paphos (Cyprus) European Cultural Capitals), and 'Glow of Benares'.

My deepest thanks and appreciation go to: the musicians and soloists of Aarhus Jazz Orchestra and The Danish Sinfonietta for their patience and excellent musicianship; Kala Ramnath, Thor Madsen, Abhijit Banerjee and Jonas Johansen for our ongoing creative collaboration in RagaJazz; Ole Udengaard for his inspiring videos; Morten Büchert and Thor Madsen for the design and production on this recording; orchestral manager Peder Udengaard and programming manager Rasmus Bøgelund for our inspiring teamwork in recent years; Leif Lønsmann, Dorte Bennike and the staff of DR Musikariet at DR Koncerthuset, and last but not least Dacapo Records, the Danish Arts Foundation and Aarhus 2017 for their contributions to this project.

Lars Møller, 2017



Grammy nominated for her album 'Miles from India', **Kala Ramnath** was recognized as one of the fifty best instrumentalists in the world by the prestigious 'Songlines' Magazine. She has revolutionized the technique of violin playing and produced a unique evocative sound akin to classical Indian vocal music, that today her violin is called 'The Singing Violin'. Kala has performed all over India, as well as on the most prestigious stages throughout the world, including the Sydney Opera House, London's Queen Elizabeth Hall and New York's Carnegie Hall. In 2017 she received India's finest music award, given to performing artists, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award..

kalaramnath.com



Abhijit Banerjee is considered among the top tabla players from India and one of the most popular creative artists in the realm of Indian classical music. Abhijit's unique style and profound musicality have earned him praise throughout the world. While contributing greatly to Indian music, he has also delved into a variety of world music crossovers as a performer and composer. This includes collaborations with Ry Cooder, Larry Coryell and Trilok Gurtu. Abhijit has toured all over the world with performances at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall.

abhijitbanerjee.com

Aarhus Jazz Orchestra (AJO) is one of Scandinavia's leading big bands with more than 70 concerts a year. AJO started out in 1977 as Klüver's Big Band, under Jens Klüver, and is today supported by the Danish Arts Foundation. The orchestra has toured throughout Europe and in the USA with Grammy Winner Kurt Elling. In addition, concerts with John Scofield, the drummer Bill Stewart and the pianist Mulgrew Miller, as well as drummer Jeff Ballard. In recent years AJO collaborated with Dave Liebman and Marilyn Mazur who both featured on Lars Møller's *ReWrite of Spring* (Dacapo, 2016). Since one of the band's most important objectives is to enhance the knowledge and enjoyment of jazz, an important part of Aarhus Jazz Orchestra activities is aimed at elementary and high schools.

aarhusjazzorchestra.dk

The Danish Sinfonietta was founded in 1945 and is supported by the Danish Arts Foundation as 'basis ensemble' since 1986. Led by artistic director and manager David Riddell since 1993, the ensemble plays around 110 concerts, school and children concerts and in opera performances during a season. The Danish Sinfonietta has among others released a premiere recording of Gustav Helsted's Decet as well as Handel's complete organ concertos. The Danish Sinfonietta tours extensively at home and abroad and has cooperated with a number of prominent musicians such as José Carreras, Sir James Galway, Barbara Hendricks, Bo Skovhus and Nikolaj Znaider.

randers-kammerorkester.dk

Om bord på denne *cruise liner* af en pladeproduktion oplever man et møde mellem vestlig bigbandtradition, kammermusik og klassisk nordindisk musikkultur, som det aldrig er hørt før. Her forenes musikalske udtryk i en farverig verden af melodier og rytmer, som også er en fordybelse i menneskelivets følelsesmæssige dybder.

Saxofonisten, komponisten og arrangøren Lars Møller (f. 1966) står i spidsen for et overvældende samarbejde mellem Aarhus Jazz Orchestra, Randers Kammerorkester og de to indiske stjernemusikere, violinisten Kala Ramnath og tablaspilleren Abhijit Banerjee. Et kulturmøde, båret af en gensidig beundring og indlevelse, der måske bedst forklares med en reference til en video-montage, lavet af fotografen Ole Udengaard i forbindelse med et besøg i Indien i 2016 sammen med Lars Møller og flere af de danske musikere.

Man er med kameraet om bord på en båd på vej ned ad floden Ganges, der bugter sig gennem den gamle, hellige by Benares, også kaldet Varanasi. Som beskuer bliver man mødt af det både fremmede og eksotisk fascinerende: En tyk røg driver hen over vandet, fugle flakser på den varmt glødende eftermiddagshimmel, der snart bliver til aftenskurving, og langs bredderne er mennesker forsamlede ved blussende bål foran templer og beboelser. Det er lige før, man kan lugte og mærke stedet (videoen kan ses på www.glowofbenares.com).

Denne ganske særlige atmosfære har Lars Møller forsøgt at ramme musikalsk med pladens titelstykke, 'Glow of Benares', bygget over en såkaldt *Rage Shree*, der inkarnerer stemningen af vemod og spirituel længsel. Det er gløden i sin essens. Lyden af to kulturer, der mødes.

Dette møde har været længe undervejs. Det er omtrent 25 år siden, at Lars Møller studerede jazz i New York bl.a. med Dave Liebman som lærer og fik sin 'bebop-licens'. Men med lysten til nye udfordringer pakkede Møller derefter kufferten og rejste til Indien for at studere det gamle, traditionelle rørbladsinstrument *shenai* hos mestrene Anant Lal og sønnen Daya Shankar. Hen over fire år var han i perioder i New Delhi og tilegnede sig gennem hård træning de basale færdigheder inden for ragaernes musikalske system og udtryksregister. "Et af de vigtigste punkter

er at lære at høre, føle og gengive ragaernes kernefraser og mikrotonale udtryk og derved på det personlige og almenmenneskelige plan lære at intonere til og beherske disse arketypiske følelser", forklarer Lars Møller.

Det indiske musiksystem går tusinder af år tilbage sammen med de spirituelle traditioner. *Ragaer* udgør en slags løst strukturerede melodier, og de kendes på bestemte vendinger og fraseringer, der bugter sig forsirede over en konstant drone. Der findes i hundredvis af traditionelle ragaer, og en inder med trænede ører genkender dem, som en jazzlytter genkender en standardmelodi. Til ragaerne knytter sig desuden bestemte følelsesmæssige udtryk, *rasaer*, f.eks. sorg, glæde, længsel, frygt og vemod.

Dertil kommer den rytmiske dimension. De såkaldte *talaer* er rytmemønstre, bygget op om en puls på f.eks. 7, 12 eller 16 slag, og som kan spilles med mange forskellige inddelinger. *Tihai* betegner særlige rytmiske kadencer, der benyttes til at give struktur. Om det indiske *tala*-system bemærker Lars Møller: "Hvad matematisk kompleksitet angår, er der lige så højt til loftet som i Bachs fugaer eller i Darmstadtserialismen".

Formmæssigt følger den klassiske indiske koncert et fast mønster. Der åbnes typisk med en langsom, fordybende sektion, *Alap*, i rubato. Den afløses af en tydeligere pulsbåret afdeling, *Jor/Jalla*, før tablaspilleren igangsætter en eller flere faste *talaer* i forskellige tempi. Ragaen bygger dynamisk op imod et klimaks og afsluttes med en *Tihai*.

Efter sine studier i Indien tog Lars Møller sine erfaringer med sig ind i Lars Møller Group, der blev et af Skandinavien's førende bands i anden halvdel af 1990'erne. Gruppen turnerede i store dele af verden og nåede at spille på Blue Note i New York. I de seneste år har Møller genoptaget fordybelsen i ragaernes sprog på saxofonen sideløbende med det orkestrale arbejde. Som altid går Møller målrettet og seriøst til værks. Han har bl.a. fået fremstillet en saxofon-forlænger, et ekstra klangstykke på stativ, der gør det muligt at sænke saxofonens bundtone og dermed spille ragaer med tonen G som drone.

Men i de seneste to årtier har Lars Møller i høj grad også udviklet sig som komponist, arrangør og dirigent i den moderne bigbandtradition fra bl.a. Thad Jones, Bob Brookmeyer og Maria Schneider. Han har løst en lang række opgaver og indspillet plader med førende skandinaviske

og mellemeuropæiske bigbands, ikke mindst The Orchestra, Aarhus Jazz Orchestra og DR Big Band. I dag figurerer Lars Møller som en af Europas ledende komponister inden for orkestral jazz. Den foreløbige kulmination var udgivelsen i 2015 af 'ReWrite of Spring', en stor og vildtvoksende nytolkning af Stravinskys ikoniske 'Le Sacre du printemps' med Aarhus Jazz Orchestra og solisterne Dave Liebman og Marilyn Mazur.

"Jeg søger efter situationer, som presser mig", udtalte Møller i et interview helt tilbage i 2004, og man kan roligt tage ham på ordet. For med 'Glow of Benares' foreligger et genrekrydsende værk, der i ambition og storhed kan minde om nogle af Palle Mikkelborgs største projekter som 'Mayas slør' (1973) og 'Aura' (1984).

'Glow of Benares' tog altså på en måde sin begyndelse for 25 år siden på et gulv i New Delhi, hvor der blev terpet ragafraser på *shenai*. Og da Møller blev ansat som leder af Aarhus Jazz Orchestra i 2012, var det ikke mindst med ideen om et ambitiøst udvekslingsprojekt med indiske musikere. Møller havde ved tidligere lejligheder mødt Abhijit Banerjee og Kala Ramnath. "Jeg kendte Abhijit helt tilbage fra 1990'erne, hvor vi spillede lidt sammen", erindrer Møller. "Faktisk var der en morsom situation i hvert fald i tilbageblik, hvor vi spillede duo på det daværende spillested Ben Webster Restaurant i København og blev fyret, fordi ejeren mente, der var for lidt ølsalg i det vi lavede på en aften, hvor det danske fodboldlandshold besejrede Rumænien 4-3".

I foråret 2015 arrangerede AJO en workshop med Abhijit, hvor til Lars Møller komponerede 'Indian Train Ride'. Senere på året skrev han 'Glow of Benares' med udgangspunkt i ragafraser, han havde bedt Kala om at indspille. Musikken blev en del af orkestrets projekt 'Bollywood Beats and Big Band', der med sit interkulturelle præg blev lanceret via en række større koncerter og begivenheder bl.a. Aarhus 2017 Europæisk Kulturbry.

I januar 2016 rejste Møller så til Kolkata (Calcutta) med en række af projektets orkestermusikere, en række studerende samt trommeslager Jonas Johansen og guitarist Thor Madsen. Turen var en del af et kunstneriske udviklingsprojekt. Der blev prøvet ideer af, og Møller deltog med nogle af musikerne i stemningsfulde koncerter ved Ganges-flodens bred og på Calcutta School of Music.

April og maj 2016 var en foreløbig kulmination på projektet med koncerter under temaet 'Bollywood Beats and Big Band' i Randers, Aarhus (SPOT Festival), Viborg og København.



Lars Møller, Aarhus Jazz Orchestra and The Danish Sinfonietta (Randers Kammerorkester) during the recording sessions at DR Koncerthuset, May 2016.

Nogle af koncerterne var lagt an som pædagogisk formidling til børn. Og omsider gik det store orkester på 32 musikere i studiet 7.-8. maj i DR Koncerthuset, Studie 2, og indspillede musikken på en enkelt dag. Nogle måneder senere stiftede Lars Møller det interkulturelle Global Jazz Explorer Institute som et samlende forum for sine aktiviteter omkring bl.a. indisk musik.

På 'Glow of Benares' samles orkestermusikere og solisters fælles kræfter i fem ambitiøse og smukt formidlede stykker musik. At hele pladen er indspillet på blot 7 timer, kan være svært at fatte, men forud er gået dygtig planlægning, prøveforløb og justeringer, så musikere og dirigent har haft en stærk, fælles retningssans.

1 – Glow of Benares

Åbningsskæringen er også pladens centrale stykke, en orkestral og solistisk fortolkning af den sjælfulde *Raga Shree*. Lars Møller uddyber: 'Den raga beskriver en indre verden på menneskeligt og spirituelt plan. Det er efter min mening essensen af, hvad den indiske kultur kan udtrykke. Det er jordnært og rammer én i hjertet med både overtoner og undertoner'.

Kompositionsprocessen var utraditionel. Ved en session bad Møller Kala Ramnath om at improvisere over ragaens toner i en langsom 12-slags *tala*. Optagelserne tog han med tilbage i arbejdsværelset, hvor han orkestrerede nøglefraser unisont med kontrapunktiske 'skygge-virkninger'. Således er violingruppen med til at tegne ragaens elastiske melodik. Det er et usædvanlig stemningsfuldt stykke musik. De unisone strygere leder frem til en balladeagtig fornemmelse, der smelter sammen med den traditionelle *villambit ektal*, en langsom 12-slags-rytme. Og en fantastisk afslutning venter med Ramnaths ekspressive soloviolin og Jonas Johansens frie trommer over orkestrets ostinat.

"Her er noget, jeg ikke har gjort før", uddyber Lars Møller. "I denne sats har jeg komponeret inden for ragaens univers ud fra spørgsmålet, om man kan lave et stykke orkestermusik, hvis første del er helt baseret på unisone linjer, der blot forskydes en smule. Det er mit forsøg på at beskrive den helt specielle rødlig eftermiddagsglød og stemning, der er ved Ganges-flodens bred, hvor livets mangfoldighed udfolder sig, ligbrændinger, tiggere, munke, legende børn, vaske-tøj, rituelle badende, pizzasælgere og plattenslagere".

2 – Indian Skies

Dette er en ny version af et ældre Møller-tema, 'Blue Skies In Kamchatka', som han indspillede med sin gruppe på 'Colours' (1997) sammen med guitaristen John Abercrombie. Temaet blev også senere anvendt på bigbandpladen 'New Skies' (2001) med The Orchestra, og med superholdet Geri Allen, Buster Williams og Billy Hart på 'Jazzpar Concerts 2003'. I den aktuelle sammenhæng er musikken orkestreret af trompetisten Jesper Riis, Møllers mangeårige samarbejdspartner i The Orchestra. Musikken har fået en eftertænksom, luftig og umiddelbar karakter, som står flot sammen med de øvrige stykker. Kala Ramnath leger vokalt med strygernes tema, og Adam Rapa er garant for en livfuld solo på trompet.

3 – Funky Jog

Sammen med titelnummeret er 'Funky Jog' er pladens længste med en spilletid på 11:30. Her udvikler Møller med rige stemninger og rytmiske lag, bygget på traditionelle indiske strukturer. Pulsen er langsommere, og klangfarverne mere fortættede. Igen bidrager Kala til en unik, følelsesfuld atmosfære, denne gang på vokal, over Abhijits trommepuls. Jakob Buchanan yder blødt melodisk spil på flygelhornet. Her synes afstanden mellem indisk og nordisk vemod ikke at være lang. Man bør lægge mærke til, hvordan ragaens melodi også er integreret i workestrets stemmer, det er smuk orkestrering.

4 – Indian Train Ride

Der sættes i gang med en simpel klaverfigur over en lokkende puls af hi-hat. Abhijits tablas danner hele vejen et levende rytmisk underlag, og Kalas slyngede violintoner er som en spirende plantestængel på vej op, snart akkompagneret af strygere og beslutsomme blæsere, der bearbejder stykkets melodiske stof. Kala er første solist med skønhed og vitalitet. Et delta af lyd opstår mellem solist og orkester. Her er spændingsladet harmonik og elementer af både blues og raga ikke mindst i Hans Ulriks ekspressive solo på tenorsaxofon.

5 – Epilogue: Mumbai Footprints

Wayne Shorters berømte tema 'Footprints' har fulgt Lars Møller i mange år. Han indspillede det med sin gruppe på både 'Cross Current' (1995) og 'Kaleidoscope' (1998). Her er det elegant antydet i en fængende epilog. Efter et heftigt indledende tempo og Thor Madsens korte, kantede guitarsolo som så stærkt bakkes op af rytmegruppe og intense orkesterindsatser, præsenteres Shorters melodiske tema i bearbejdet form i den afsluttende, rytmiske *Tihai*-kadence.

Efter endt lytning sidder man tilbage med en særlig glød i sindet, en energi og en palet af emotionelle muligheder. Dette orkestrale kulturmøde er blevet noget ganske specielt i tidens flod.

Christian Munch-Hansen (f. 1969). Musikkritiker, forfatter og underviser. Har bidraget til flere bøger om dansk jazz og udgav i 2014 digtsamlingen Musical Dream Machine.

Komponisten og dirigenten skriver:

Siden 2012 har jeg haft den store musikalske oplevelse at arbejde tæt sammen med Aarhus Jazz Orchestra (AJO), som har sit udspring i den legendariske orkesterleder Jens Klüver's enestående livsværk, Klüvers Big Band. Da Jens i 2012 – efter 34 år som leder – takkede af og gik på pension, fik jeg den enestående mulighed at stå i spidsen for det, der kom til at hedde Aarhus Jazz Orchestra. Min vision var, at AJO som en Danmarks største jazz-institutioner skulle være et kulturelt fyrtårn, hvor jazzens improvisation og udtryk i nuet møder det store orkesterformats partiturbaserede dramatiske udtryksmuligheder. Min tilgangsvinkel har været et globalt perspektiv for, hvordan vi undersøger, hvad vi kan lære af andre musikkulturer, hvordan vi kan samarbejde og samtidig få en dybere forståelse af vores egen tradition og identitet.

Efter udgivelsen 'ReWrite of Spring' (Dacapo 2015) har jeg siden 2016, som composer-in-residence hos Aarhus Jazz Orchestra, kunnet følge op på denne vision med værkerne 'To a New

World' (opført ved åbningen af Aarhus og Pafos (Cypern) som Europæiske Kulturhovedstæder) og 'Glow of Benares'.

Min varmeste tak og påskønnelse går til: musikerne og solisterne i Aarhus Jazz Orchestra og Randers Kammerorkester for deres tålmodighed og fremragende musikerskab; Kala Ramnath, Thor Madsen, Abhijit Banerjee og Jonas Johansen for vores kreative samarbejde i RagaJazz; Ole Udengaard for de inspirerende videoer; Morten Büchert og Thor Madsen for design og produktion af optagelserne til indspilningen; orkesterchef Peder Udengaard og programchef Rasmus Bøgelund for de seneste års inspirerende samarbejde. Leif Lønsmann, Dorte Bennike samt medarbejdere i DR Musikariet i DR Koncerthuset, og ikke mindst til Dacapo Records, Statens Kunstfond og Aarhus 2017 for samarbejdet om og bidrag til dette projekt.

Lars Møller, 2017

Som Grammy-nomineret for albummet 'Miles from India' blev **Kala Ramnath** udråbt af det ansete 'Songlines' Magazine som en af de 50 bedste instrumentalister i verden. Hun har revolutioneret måden af at spille violin på og har udviklet en unik stemningsfuld sound, som i dag har givet hendes violin tilnavnet 'Den syngende violin'. Kala har optrådt overalt i Indien samt ude i verden på prestigefyldte scener som Sydney Opera House, Londons Queen Elizabeth Hall og Carnegie Hall i New York. I 2017 modtog hun Indiens fineste musikpris til udøvende kunstnere, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award.

kalaramnath.com

Abhijit Banerjee anses som en af Indiens bedste tabla-musikere og som en af de mest populære kunstnere inden for den indiske klassiske musik. Abhijits unikke stil og gennemførte musikalitet har givet ham et imponerende ry verden over. Sideløbende med sit store arbejde

for indisk musik dyrker Abhijit også andre sider af verdensmusikken som både performer og komponist i samarbejder med bl.a. Ry Cooder, Larry Coryell og Trilok Gurtu. Han har turneret verden rundt og givet koncerter i Lincoln Center og Carnegie Hall.

abhijitbanerjee.com

Aarhus Jazz Orchestra (AJO) er et Skandinaviens førende big bands og giver over 70 koncerter om året. AJO startede i 1977 som Klüver's Big Band, under ledelse af Jens Klüver, og bliver i dag støttet af Statens Kunstfond. Orkestret har optrådt rundt om i Europa og i USA, bl.a. på en turné med Grammy-vinderen Kurt Elling. Derudover koncerter med John Scofield, trommeslageren Bill Stewart samt pianisten Mulgrew Miller og trommeslageren Jeff Ballard. I de seneste år har bandet lavet projekter med Dave Liebman og Marilyn Mazur, der begge medvirkede i Lars Møllers 'ReWrite of Spring' (Dacapo, 2016). Eftersom et af bandets centrale formål er at forstærke viden om og glæden ved jazz, er en væsentlig del af Aarhus Jazz Orchestras aktiviteter derfor rettet mod folkeskolen og gymnasier.

aarhusjazzorchestra.dk

Randers Kammerorkester blev grundlagt i 1945 og har haft status som basisensemble under Statens Kunstfond siden 1986. Ensemblet, som har haft skotskfødte David Riddell som kunstnerisk og administrativ leder siden 1993, spiller årligt omkring 110 koncerter, skolekoncerter, børnekoncerter og operaforestillinger. På CD har orkestret bl.a. udgivet en førsteindspilning af Gustav Helstedes Decet samt Handels samlede orgelkoncerter. Randers Kammerorkester har en omfattende turnévirksomhed i ind- og udland og har desuden samarbejdet med en lang række fremtrædende musikere som José Carreras, Sir James Galway, Barbara Hendricks, Bo Skovhus og Nikolaj Znaider.

randers-kammerorkester.dk

DDD

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Dacapo Records, Denmark's national record label, was founded in 1986 with the purpose of releasing the best of Danish music past and present. The majority of our recordings are world premieres, and we are dedicated to producing music of the highest international standards.

