

Parmela Attariwala presents

Scented Skies

The Attar Project Tour

“Traversing from soft, melodic tunes to fast-paced rhythmic flourishes ... Parmela Attariwala turned in a virtuoso performance.”

– THE SOUTH ASIAN OBSERVER

During the last decade, **Parmela Attariwala** has become one of the most original and compelling artists in Canada, creating her own riveting blend of Western and South Asian cultures. 2006 marks the centenary of the arrival of Parmela's family in Canada, and, to celebrate, this remarkable violinist, violist, composer and ethnomusicologist is now embarking on a cross-Canada tour.

Parmela's ensemble **The Attar Project** brings together the talents of Bharata Natyam dancer and choreographer **Gitanjali Kolanad** and tabla player **Shawn Mativetsky**. Together these three acclaimed artists weave a beautiful and intriguing tapestry of music and performance, twining contemporary composition and classical virtuosity with traditional Indian dance and rhythm. From the harmony of Bach, the rhythm that created Bhangra, and the evocative movement of Bharata Natyam, The Attar Project creates a unique and inventive interplay of music and dance. Boldly defying every stereotype of a violinist's performance stance, Parmela twirls, plieés, balances on one leg and lunges, never missing a note. This innovative incorporation of dance into her playing adds new dimension to the purity of her sound, and brings a fresh kinetic energy to Parmela's already vibrant performances.

Bookings are now available.

In addition to performances, the members of The Attar Project are pleased to offer presenters the following opportunities for audience-building and educational enrichment. Parmela Attariwala, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Toronto, will offer **lecture-demonstrations** and **masterclasses in contemporary improvisation**. Parmela is currently exploring the future of Western classical music, the challenges it faces from postcolonialism and multiculturalism, and the roles played by improvisation and style in both Eastern and Western classical forms. Gitanjali Kolanad's recent work as a choreographer and performer of Bharata Natyam draws inspiration from such varied sources as Tantric texts and rituals, the stylised mime techniques of Koodiattam dance, and the Indian martial art form Kalaripayat. Gitanjali will offer **masterclasses in Bharata Natyam**, focusing on either pure dance or the expressional aspect of the form; and **an introduction to Kalaripayat**, a martial art form used as a performance training technique by theatre directors worldwide. Versatile percussionist Shawn Mativetsky will offer **lecture-demonstrations** on New Music for the Tabla of North India: Issues of Composition and Performance Practice, and The Solo Tabla Tradition of the Benares Gharana. Shawn will also offer **masterclasses in tabla, multiple-percussion, and chamber music**.



For bookings contact: Ariel Fielding ariel.fielding@sympatico.ca
For soundclips, video, and more information: www.parmela.com

Critical Acclaim for Parmela's recordings:



Sapphire Skies

"An original voice...Attariwala fuses Eastern/Western – Traditional/Classical styles in a crossover that is both satisfying and extraordinarily beautiful. Attariwala weaves as delicate a sound from her compositions as she does from her violin and viola."
WHOLENOTE (Canada)



Beauty Enthralled

"Attariwala dispenses her technique effortlessly without emphasizing the work's demands or impeding its flow. At its best, ... composer and performer manage to paint their own vision from the combined palette of two traditions."
THE STRAD (UK)

"A cross-cultural handshake to set the mind spinning. *Beauty Enthralled* is an artful mix of culture and genre. The blend of austere new music and stirring South Asian rhythms seems effortless. NNNN"
NOW MAGAZINE (Canada)

"*Beauty Enthralled* is an ambitious project, shunning the most usual or obvious paths of East-West, 'cross-cultural' fusions; but with Parmela staking out a claim to make new and demanding music. As a whole the CD is challenging but tasteful, containing carefully selected pieces, well arranged and superbly performed."
WORLD MUSIC (UK)

"Remarkable...provocative...*Beauty Enthralled* is a fine record by a gifted musician."
RHYTHM (USA)

"This exquisite recording beautifully combines contemporary Western compositional techniques and instruments with traditional Indian instrumentations and compositional influences."
MUSICWORKS (Canada)

"Where she plays solo to the backdrop of emptiness, Attariwala's sound is free and dark, but her touch is always sensitive. New music, but also a new perspective on the subcontinent."
EXCLAIM (Canada)

"Parmela Attariwala sounds like she's singing through her strings."
GEORGIA STRAIGHT (Canada)

The Attar Project



Violinist Parmela Attariwala's playing has been described as "effortless" and her technical command "dazzling." Originally from Calgary, Parmela received her formal musical training at Indiana University and the Conservatory in Bern, Switzerland. She also holds a Master's degree in Ethnomusicology from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (UK), and is currently pursuing Ph.D studies at the University of Toronto. An active player and pedagogue in the classical and contemporary music world, Parmela's passion is non-traditional performance – as an improviser, performance artist, composer and modern dance collaborator. Parmela has released two solo recordings: the critically acclaimed *Beauty Enthralled*; and *Sapphire Skies*, which features her own compositions and has been described as "a recording to treasure."

Parmela's work as performer, composer and recording artist has been acknowledged by all levels of Canadian arts agencies, as well as by the Government of Switzerland, and her current academic studies are being supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Parmela has also been recognized by the Sikh Centennial Foundation for the unique perspective her compositions and performances have contributed to Canadian art.



Gitanjali Kolanad has been involved in the practice, performance and teaching of Bharata Natyam for more than 30 years. Her contemporary choreography arises out of her own conscious exploration of the form, her interest in folk and ritual dance and theatre, and out of collaborations with other artists - among them, painter M. Natesh, poet Judith Kroll, theatre director Phillip Zarrilli, violinist and composer Parmela Attariwala and video and installation artist Ray Langenbach. Gitanjali has performed in major cities across Europe, North America and Asia. She has been awarded grants and support for her choreographic work by the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council, the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, the Goethe Institute, the Singapore Arts Council and the Japan Foundation. Gitanjali has also written a book, *Culture Shock: India*. She is married to a journalist and has two children. "Gitanjali's dance freed me to watch, hear and feel the sensuous movements and the sounds of music in a joyous release of all senses." *The Hindu (INDIA)*



A versatile percussionist, **Shawn Mativetsky** performs regularly in a variety of settings, including Western classical and contemporary/new music, Indian classical music, and world music. He also composes and performs music for dance and theatre. He is active in the promotion of the tabla and North Indian classical music through lectures, workshops, and performances across Canada, the United States, and England. Based in Montreal, Shawn teaches tabla and percussion, both privately and at McGill University.

Shawn is a genda-band disciple of Pandit Sharda Sahai of the Benares tabla gharana and has also studied tabla with Bob Becker. Shawn holds a Master's degree in music from McGill University and has received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec.

Repertoire List:

Piercing Embrace by Parmela Attariwala (1998)

for violin and tape
duration: 10'43"

Piercing Embrace was the first work that represented my long-held desire to combine music with movement. As a result of my first collaboration with Gitanjali Kolanad, I was plunged into the world of classical South Indian dance tradition, and some of the rhythms that define it. Unlike many dance pieces, *The Piercing Embrace* began not with the music, but with the choreography that Gitanjali created for me. My movements influenced the music that I played – and, in certain postures – that I was able to play. The music, in turn, influenced Gitanjali's own movements. Both the music and the dance evolved as a combination of Indian and contemporary Western gestures. Musically, one scale represents Gitanjali's character, while a subset of it distinguishes my own; like the relationship of a parent to a child - one comes from the other, but each learns to stand alone.

Sylphe by Parmela Attariwala (2000)

for obligato violin and tape
duration: 10'30" – 12'30"

Sylphe was commissioned by Bharata Natyam dancer/choreographer Gitanjali Kolanad for Toronto's fringe Festival of Independent Dance Artists (ffIDA) in 2000. Unlike our earlier collaborations, the music for *Sylphe* preceded the dance. Gitanjali's suggestion was that I use the Fibonacci Series (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144) to generate a structural framework for a dancescape, originally entitled "Beauty as a Form of Knowledge." Each number of the Series is represented by an equal number of beats of music ("3" has 3 beats; "55" has 55 beats, etc.) and is separated by the next number by an additional four silent or sustained beats. Each of the larger sections (1-34, 55, 89, 144) explores a different compositional technique that reacts with or against the internal choreographic beats: 1-34, staggered entries and syncopation; 55, a modal melody; 89, different layers of rhythm. The section of music equal to 144 beats is based upon a South Indian metric composition by Babu Parameshwaran of Chennai. I am indebted to Ed Hanley for translating Gitanjali's metric needs into tabla strokes.

Sylphe also finds its inspiration from time spent on and near water watching: layers of differently paced currents, muddy shallows, Pacific doldrums, stormy seas, a sunlight-dappled lake.

Satyā I by Violeta Dinescu (1984)

for solo violin
duration: 8'40"

I discovered *Satyā I* while searching through the University of Toronto's Music Library for works with a connection to India. I was initially attracted to the piece by its name, which translates from Sanskrit as "truth" and refers, in this case, to a ritualized practice of seeking spiritual enlightenment. I was further intrigued after a cursory glance at the score: there was something very alap-like in the exploration of pitch relationships and relative dynamics – something that appealed to both my Eastern and Western ears. The composer places a great emphasis on the performer's participation in creating a fully realized piece, and so leaves a great latitude for interpretation. She provides some specifics – pitches, relative pitch durations, dynamics, and even amount of vibrato – yet leaves the performer to determine fundamental flow and character. Since there are no tempo markings, the performer is allowed to discover – uniquely – the notes as they occur, in much the same way as an Indian musician explores each pitch in a raga. "Each stage of the spiritual journey lifts one higher," Dinescu states. "In the ritual of 'Satya' - as in all other rituals – the rules are strict, but they leave one free for different interpretations." *Satyā I* is the first of five 'Satyas' in a cycle comprising solo pieces for violin, bassoon, double bass and clarinet, and a finale for the entire quartet. PA

Violeta Dinescu was born in Bucharest, Romania in 1953 and currently resides in Germany where she teaches and lectures.

Responsorium by Hans Huyssen (1996)

for violin and tape (African birdcalls)
duration: 6'35"

The Responsorium merges 'artificial' and 'natural' music, 'composed' and 'found' sounds and also, on a different level, 'technological' and 'natural' sound production. The birdcalls have been sampled and have thereby become controllable. They can be reproduced at specific times, in certain tempi and at determined pitches. They have not been changed or manipulated though (which of course would also have been possible). The aim was rather to use them in their naturalness, as though they were conventional musical elements – motives, melodies, ostinato figures. In these functions they then obviously obtain structural importance as opposed to merely being some colourful interjections. However, always in a very playful manner.

The soloists:
Redchested Cuckoo – Piet my vrou
Cape Turtle Dove – Gewone Tortelduif
Redeyed Dove – Grootringduif
Wood Owl – Bosuil

The Arm of Dionysus by Diana McIntosh (1993)

for violin and tape
duration: 15'37"

The Arm of Dionysus portrays the magical power of the Greek god Dionysus, during a mysterious and dramatic voyage. On a ship bound for Naxos, Dionysus discovers he has been kidnapped by evil sailors, who in fact are pirates. He invokes his power and green vines come twisting up from the sea. The mast, oars and sails are entwined in ivy, and the ship is immobilized. The shrill, eerie sounds of a flute are then heard. Finding the evil crew still determined to sell him as a slave, Dionysus covers the deck with wild beasts. He himself becomes a lion, and seizes the pirates' leader. Terrified, the crew throw themselves into the sea and are transformed into dolphins. The ship begins to move again with Dionysus, the Olympian god of the vine, victorious on the deck. In the music, the violinist portrays Dionysus - the huge bearded figure who represents the force of life in all growing things. DM

La by Robert Rosen (1996)

for violin, tabla, and drones
duration: 15'10"

La was commissioned by Parmela Attariwala in 1996 three years after first meeting Robert Rosen during a Banff Centre residency. Their shared interest in Ravi Shankar's *Concerto No.1* for sitar and orchestra inspired the commission, and the resulting work has become one of the most popular and oft-performed contemporary Canadian works of the past decade.

Robert Rosen writes of this composition: Once every ten years, in the middle of winter, just before dawn's first light, the full moon shines exactly between the two angular mountain peaks outside the front of my house. It is in full glory, amplified by the refracted angle through the earth's atmosphere. In 1996, I had the experience of seeing this phenomenon.

Sometimes I feel it is an artist's responsibility not to miss these types of events and to have the necessary patience to wait for them. Our works of art are our commentaries upon what we observe, reiterated and interpreted through the aesthetics that have shaped our creative language in the cultural climate of our upbringing. The 'newness' that can result in a work is a byproduct of confluence and conjecture based on observation. That is what makes a work 'of' and 'for' contemporary time. If that process happens to touch upon one of the many invisible threads of human cultural history, then a work stands a chance to be understood and respected outside its own contemporary environment.

So what does that have to do with *La*? This work is a product of the confluence of ideas and conjectures about possibilities that I have had from working with some wonderful musicians: people who don't look at me in strange ways when I tell them about the moon.

Robert J. Rosen, born in Melfort, Saskatchewan in 1956, works in a variety of compositional media, from chamber music

continued...

...continued

through to environmental performance art. Between 1987 and 1995, he was closely associated with the Banff Centre for the Arts, finishing his period there as Associate Director of Projects and Technologies in Music & Sound. While there, he worked with a veritable who's who of distinguished Canadian and international visiting artists including John Cage, Witold Lutoslawski, R. Murray Schafer, Morton Feldman, Heinz Holliger, and Jean-Pierre Drouet. Subsequent to that he has served as Composer-in-Residence at the Conservatory of Music at Calgary's Mount Royal College. Robert makes his home in Canmore, in the Canadian Rockies, where he and Debbie, his talented partner, have raised three admirable children while counting the passage of deer, bears and ravens through their yard.

Music for Solo Violin by Harry Somers (1974)
duration: 23'33"

Harry Somers composed the highly virtuosic *Music for Solo Violin* for Yehudi Menuhin, following an extended stay in Kashmir. The Muezzin's call to prayer, which Somers heard early each morning from his rented houseboat on Dal Lake, is evoked, as are vocal inflections particular to Karnatic singing. Yet, the work remains rigorously modern and vigorously impressionistic, a marvel of sublimation and artistic vision, capturing the musical soul of India by inference rather than by example.

Parmela was first introduced to *Music for Solo Violin* and to Harry Somers through a mutual family friend in New Delhi, India. *Music for Solo Violin* is not only the centrepiece of her first album, *Beauty Enthralled*, it was also the impetus behind her endeavour to weave the eclectic threads of her musical and social backgrounds together.

Harry Somers (1925-1999) has long been considered amongst the foremost Canadian composers. He studied composition at the Royal Conservatory of Music with John Weinzweig during the 1940's; and while pursuing further studies in Europe in 1960, he discovered and was significantly influenced by Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Luciano Berio. Somers wrote orchestral and chamber music, ballet scores, concerti, and several operas. Harry Somers was a founding member of the Canadian League of Composers, and was named a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1971.

Incantation pour que l'image devienne by André Jolivet (1937)
for solo violin
duration: 3'

French composer André Jolivet (1905- 1974) though not a religious person, believed deeply in principles of universalism and humanism. He felt it important "to give back to music its original ancient meaning, when it was the magical, incantatory expression of the religious beliefs of human groups." Jolivet wrote three solo Incantations in 1937 for violin, flute and ondes martenots, respectively.

Beauty Enthralled (version 4): Eight Partitions of Tonal Space by Rick Bidlack (1994)
for viola and tape
duration: 10'16"

This piece is a collaboration between myself and the performer, and is structured on the concept of figure and ground. I had created the ground (computer part) for other pieces of mine, and was inspired to notate its pitch structure and present it to Parmela as a series of 'ragas' (partitions of tonal space) that she could use as a framework for improvisation. These are not really ragas in the classical Indian sense, nor is the ground a proper drone - it is much too complex and shifting - but these concepts form useful departure points nonetheless. The computer part was created from a very large collection of my own viola samples, and every aspect of it - pitch, rhythm, dynamics - is structured according to the dictates of a set of chaotic equations. As the pitch structure of each 'raga' is extremely microtonal, Parmela has devised a unique tuning system for the viola. RB

Rick Bidlack (b. 1958) studied composition and computer music at the University of California, San Diego. He writes music for solo instruments and small ensembles, with and without computer processing and interaction, as well as interactive soundtracks for immersive virtual reality installations. He is the founder and violist of the OK Quartet, and he lives in Seattle with his wife and two cats.

Alap, Jor, and Jhala by Payton MacDonald (2003 & 2005)

For solo tabla; *Alap* may be played alone or with *Jor* and *Jhala*.
Durations 7', 5', and 7'

Alap (2003), *Jor* (2005) and *Jhala* (2005) are for solo tabla and may also be realized as solo multiple percussion pieces. The titles come from the first, second and third parts of the first half of a classical North Indian Hindustani raga. All three pieces were commissioned by Shawn Mativetsky.

The alap traditionally has no percussive accompaniment and is performed solely by the voice or melodic instrument. It proceeds in three phases: alap, jor, jhala, with each subsequent phase becoming more rhythmically regular, faster, and utilizing an extended range. The first two of these ideas translates naturally to the drums or multiple percussion instruments.

During the jor section, a steady pulse is gradually established and the melodic phrases associated with the given raga are gradually revealed. This idea has been translated to solo percussion by focusing on the left hand drum (baya) and exploring the beautiful pitch changes that are possible by sliding the hand across the drum and pressing into the head. The rhythms are precisely written out but the feeling is one of rubato and freedom.

A jhala is a section in which the notes of a fast melodic passage alternate with a drone note. In this work, an analogue is drawn to a melodic jhala by using alternating, or hand to hand, strokes on the drums. *Jhala* should be played with abandon, the end barely controlled. Refinement becomes less important as the work progresses. The tension between what is comfortable and what is possible should be maximized.

Zigzagjig by Parmela Attariwala (2003)
duration: 3'24"

Drummer Gary Craig and I had known each other socially for many years, and for almost as long we talked about playing together, trying something outside of the usual for each of us. By chance, while recording my second album, *Sapphire Skies*, Gary and I found a few extra hours of studio time to experiment. So, with a pair of seven note fragments, some of my favourite fiddle styles from my childhood days with the Calgary Fiddlers, and Gary's exquisite craftsmanship, we created *Zigzagjig*. PA

An Improvisation

A contemporary improvisation based upon years of improvising across genres (jazz, fiddle, rock, avant-garde, South Asian) yet firmly rooted in contemporary classical vocabulary.

Recitation II by Georges Aperghis (1978)
for violin and voice
duration: 5'

Georges Aperghis was born in Athens in 1945 and settled in Paris in 1963. He divides his time between contemporary classical composition and music theatre. In 1976, he founded the music theatre workshop, the Atelier Théâtre et Musique (ATEM), in which he makes use of musicians as well as actors. Aperghis' works transform events in society into a world of poetry.

Aperghis' music celebrates the attempt to speak, as well as the joy, humour and frustration that surround that attempt. Drawing from literary and mathematical models, he creates an intricate grammar of pitch, rhythm and sound/word. He then plays with this structure as a child plays with building blocks, delighting in the simple processes of repetition, accumulation and permutation. (M.Witvoet)

In this personalized version of Aperghis' *Recitation II*, first performed with Toca Loca in 2002, Parmela considers her two voices: her human voice and her voice as a violinist.

Forthcoming piece for solo violin by Bongani Ndodana-Breen of Toronto's Musicanoir/Ensemble Noir

Intercontinental by Parmela Attariwala (1997)
for violin and tabla
duration: 8'

Intercontinental is an ode to my grandfather, who came to Canada in 1907 to work on the railroad. It's a musical journey whose tabla rhythm comes from bhangra, whose violin rhythm comes from old-time fiddle, and whose melodic material comes from traditional Sikh monody.

Technical Specifications:

For performances by The Attar Project, a black box theatre or performance space with a capacity of 300 seats is ideal, with a maximum capacity of 500 seats. A dance floor is not essential, however the floor must not be carpeted. Please contact Ariel Fielding (ariel.fielding@sympatico.ca) for lighting and sound requirements.