

VIVEK VIRANI
Vivek.Virani@UNT.edu

EDUCATION

- 2016 Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology, UCLA
Dissertation: “Find the True Country: Devotional Music and the Self in India’s National Culture”
Committee: Professors Aamir Mufti, Daniel Neuman (chair), A. J. Racy, and Timothy Taylor
- 2012 M.A. in Ethnomusicology, UCLA
M.A. paper: “Tabla Education in Maharashtra: Suresh Talwalkar’s 21st Century Music Ashram”
Advisor: Professor Daniel Neuman
- 2008 B.A. in Music, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

University of North Texas College of Music, Denton, TX (2016-Present)

- 2024-Present Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology and Music Theory
2023-2024 Interim Coordinator of BA in Critical Studies of Music and Society
2016-2024 Assistant Professor of Ethnomusicology and Music Theory

PUBLICATIONS

- 2025 “Speaking to the *Rāga*: Synthesizing Theory and Practice in Hindustani Music.” In *Rethinking Musical Mode: Beyond the Continuum from Scale to Melody*, edited by Sarah Weiss and Babak Nizkat. Graz Studies in Ethnomusicology, 31. Graz, Austria: Institute of Ethnomusicology, University of Music and Performing Arts.
- 2022 “From *Satsaṅg* to Stage: Negotiating Aesthetic Theologies and Aspirational Subjectivities in a North Indian *Bhajan* Competition.” *Ethnomusicology* 66 (1): 106-137.
- 2021 “An Inside Look: Vivek Virani.” In *World Music: A Global Journey, Fifth Edition* by Terry E. Miller and Andrew Shahriari. New York: Routledge.
- 2019 “Dual Consciousness and Unconsciousness: The Structure and Spirituality of Poly-Metric Tabla Compositions.” Chapter in *Music and Consciousness 2*, edited by David Clarke, Eric Clarke, and Ruth Herbert, 286-305. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2018 “Casteism and Cultural Capital: Social and Spiritual Reform through Kabir-Singing in North India.” Chapter in *Songs of Social Protest: International Perspectives*, edited by Aileen Dillane, Eoin Devereux, Amanda Haynes, and Martin J. Power, 152-67. London: Rowman and Littlefield International.

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Songs of the Unknowable Country: Authoring Self and Community through Kabir Bhajans in India. (Under Contract, Oxford University Press).

“Thus is an Artist Made: Reflections on Pedagogical Values in the Gurukul and the Classroom.” In *Voices of Decoloniality: Music Pedagogues and Pedagogies in a Transformative Era*, edited by Leon F. Garcia Corona. New York, Oxford University Press (Undergoing final Revisions).

INVITED LECTURES, PRESENTATIONS, AND LECTURE-DEMONSTRATIONS

- 2025 “Where Algorithm Meets Poetry: A Schematic Approach to Improvisation in Tabla Solo Performance.” Presented at 9th International Conference on Analytical Approaches to World Music. Hosted by Cornell University, Ithaca, NY October 11-14.
- 2024 Participant in interdisciplinary working group on “Music and Rituals: A Complexity Science Perspective.” Hosted by Santa Fe Institute, Santa Fe, NM, June 10-13.
- 2024 “Feeling the World’s Music in 15 Weeks? Lessons from Teaching World Music Analysis at UNT.” Presented (virtually) and discussed in panel “Creating a Pipeline: Introducing Students to World Music Analysis” at 8th International Conference on Analytical Approaches to World Music, Bologna, Italy, June 10-14.
- 2024 “A Pluralistic Approach to the Yoga of Sound: Bridging Textual and Ethnographic Perspectives.” Presented as part of the Symposium “Performing Healing: Yoga and the Body Politic” at Swarthmore College, March 28, 2024.
- 2023 Participant in interdisciplinary working group on “Complexity and the Structure of Music: Universal Features and Evolutionary Perspectives across Cultures.” Hosted by Santa Fe Institute, Santa Fe, NM, May 29-June 2.
- 2022 Guest Lecturer for Global Music Experience at DePauw University School of Music. Total of twelve presentations (lectures, lecture-demonstrations, workshops, and performances). Greencastle, IN, October 24-27.
- 2022 Participant in interdisciplinary working group on “Complexity and the Structure of Music: Universal Features and Evolutionary Perspectives Across Cultures.” Hosted by Santa Fe Institute. Convened in Santa Fe, NM, May 17-20
- 2020 “Pierced by the Arrow of the Bhajan: The Epistemology of Musical Experience in South Asian Spiritual Communities.” Paper presented at workshop From Sacred Hymns to Devotional Songs: A Diachronic and Transcultural Study of Religious Singing in India, Tübingen University, Tübingen, Germany, January 17-18.
- 2017 Presentation “This World Has Gone Mad: Singing Kabir for Social and Spiritual Transformation in India” and discussion as part of panel on “Sufism: Counter-Culture Narratives and Religious Extremism in South Asia” held at University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan. November 22, 2017.
- 2017 “The Who, What, When, Where and Why of Sindh Studies as a Global Discipline.” Conference closing remarks presented at 1st International Conference on Sindh Studies, Jamshoro, Pakistan, November 20-21.
- 2017 Presented “A *Vīnā* Resounds in the Palace of Emptiness: Theologizing Performance and Performer Identity in Malvi *Nirgun Bhajans*” during Symposium on Singing Religious Poetry in North India, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, April 15, 2017.
- 2017 Presenter and discussant at Third International Workshop on Cross-Disciplinary and Multi-Cultural Perspectives on Musical Rhythm and Improvisation, New

York University, Abu Dhabi, March 19-21, 2017. Presented “Variation and Improvisatory Processes in North Indian Tabla Solo Performance.”

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2025 “The Yoga of Sound: Listening to a Unifying Spiritual Framework through Global Networks.” Presented at 70th Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Atlanta, Georgia, October 23-26.
- 2025 “*Antakshari*, Individualism, and Aspiration: Competition in North Indian Music Cultures.” Presented with Anaar Desai-Stephens (CUNY) at Conference: Competition(s) in Music – Interdisciplinary Research Perspectives. Berlin University of the Arts, Berlin. September 1-3.
- 2023 “Diversifying Music Pedagogy: A Discussion of Values, Positionalities, and Strategies.” Organizer and Co-chair of Roundtable held at 68th Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Ottawa, Canada, October 19-22.
- 2022 “The Yoga of Sound: Shared Experience in Pluralistic Expression.” Paper presented at 67th Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, New Orleans, LA, November 10-13.
- 2022 “Mixing *Bols*: Analysis of a Cross-Genre Vocal Percussion Solo.” Paper presented at Seventh International Conference on Analytical Approaches to World Music, University of Sheffield, UK, June 14-17, 2022. (Presented virtually).
- 2021 “Speaking to the Raga, Speaking through the Raga: Experiential and Theoretical Conceptualization of Raga in Dagar Gharana Dhrupad Pedagogy.” Paper presented at Rethinking Musical Mode Symposium, Institute for Ethnomusicology at KunstUniversität, Graz, November 11-12. (Presented virtually).
- 2021 “*Solkattu* Meets *Parhant*: The Creative Possibilities and Cultural Politics of Cross-Genre Applications of Indian Rhythmic Syllables.” Paper presented at 66th Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, October 28-31. (Conference held online).
- 2020 “Sharing an Incomprehensible Language: Interpreting Transnational Communities and Cultural Narratives on an American Bhajan Tour.” Paper presented at 65th Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Ottawa, Canada, October 22-31. (Conference held online).
- 2020 “Playing in the Space Between: Cultural and Religious Pluralism in India's Spiritual Music Festivals.” Paper presented at conference Music Festival Studies: Current Perspectives, Future Directions, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, July 27-29. (Conference held online).
- 2019 “‘Boundless Waves Arise in My Body’: Diverse Spiritual Interpretations through Diverse Musical Experiences.” Paper presented at conference Gurū Nānaks *Ek-Anek* Vision: Beyond Relativist and Plural Diversities of the Musical World, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY, October 10-12.
- 2019 “‘A Bird from a Foreign Land’: Global Searches for Meaning through Indian Mystical Folk Songs.” Paper presented at conference Global Musics and Musical Communities, University of California, Los Angeles, May 10-11.
- 2018 “Improvisational Models from North Indian Tabla Solo Performance.” Interactive Workshop presented at 63rd Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Albuquerque, NM, November 15-18.

- 2017 “This Body is a *Tambura* String’: Remapping Cultural Zones through Musical Instruments.” Presented at 1st International Conference on Sindh Studies, Jamshoro, Pakistan, November 20-21.
- 2017 “Instruments Resound in the Palace of Emptiness’: Mysticism, Activism, and Entertainment in North Indian *Nirgun* Performance.” Presented at 62nd Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Denver, CO, October 26-29.
- 2017 “Saints and Sufis: Religious Harmony, Exclusion, and Ambiguity in Indian Popular Music Labels.” Presented at 3rd International Conference on Sufi Heritage: A Transcultural Dialogue with Critical and Alternative Cultural Traditions, organized by Government of Sindh in Karachi, Pakistan, May 5-6.
- 2016 “Saints and Sufis: The Cultural Politics of Labels in Indian Popular Religious Music.” Presented at 61st Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Washington, DC, November 10-13.
- 2016 “Rethinking the Tabla Solo.” Presented at 4th International Conference on Analytical Approaches to World Music, The New School, New York, NY, June 8-11.
- 2016 “A Voice without Singer: *Sant* Bhajan Musical Structure and Adaptability in Malwa, North India.” Presented at Conference on the Music of South, Central, and West Asia, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, March 4-6.
- 2015 “Folk Musicians on Tour: Regional Devotional Music Emerges into India’s National Culture.” Presented at 60th Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Austin, TX, December 3-6.
- 2015 “Casteism and Capitalism: Social and Spiritual Change through Kabir Singing in Central India.” Presented at conference Songs of Social Protest, University of Limerick, Ireland, April 30-May 1.
- 2015 “Dual Consciousness and Unconsciousness: The Structure and Spirituality of Poly-Metric Tabla Compositions.” Presented at 2nd Conference on Music and Consciousness, Oxford University, April 14-17.
- 2014 “Where Do We Find Kabir? The Impact of Popular Recordings on a Spiritual Tradition.” Presented at 49th Annual Meeting of the Southern California and Hawai’i Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology, University of California, Santa Barbara, February 22-23.
- 2013 “Om Shanti Om: Diasporic Dialogue in Popular Music of India and Trinidad.” Paper presented at 58th Annual Meeting of Society for Ethnomusicology, University of Indiana, Indianapolis, November 14-17.
- 2011 “Innovation and Unconsciousness: Poly-Metric Tabla Compositions of Suresh Talwalkar.” Presented at 46th Annual Meeting of Southern California and Hawai’i Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA, February 19-20.

REVIEWS

- 2014 Review. Anna C. Schultz. *Singing a Hindu Nation: Marathi Devotional Performance and Nationalism*. (Oxford University Press, 2012). In *Ethnomusicology Review*, December 2014.
- 2013 Review. Zoe C. Sherinian. *Tamil Folk Music as Dalit Liberation Theology*. (Indiana University Press, 2014). *Ethnomusicology Review*, September 2013.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

External

- 2016 Martin Hatch Award, Society of Asian Music, for Best Student Paper presented at 60th Annual Meeting of the Society of Ethnomusicology, 2015
- 2012 FLAS fellowship from UC Berkeley for Marathi Summer Language program
- 2012 American Institute of Indian Studies Fellowship for Marathi Summer Language Program (declined in favor of FLAS)

Internal

- 2022 UNT Washington DC Fellowship
- 2020 Global Venture Fund (Co-sponsorship with Sadaf Munshi and Haj Ross) for Symposium on Endangered Musical Traditions of South and Central Asia
- 2017 Junior Faculty Summer Research Support Award, UNT College of Music
- 2015-16 Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division
- 2014-2015 Dissertation Fieldwork Grant, UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology
- 2013-14 Graduate Research Mentorship, UCLA Graduate Division
- 2011 Graduate Summer Research Fellowship, UCLA
- 2010 Graduate Division Fellowship, UCLA

PUBLIC LECTURES AND LECTURE-PERFORMANCES

- 2024-2025 “Music and Spirituality” series of musical talks (performance and lecture) at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of North Texas, Irving, TX.
- June 2024: “Bhakti: Experiencing Divinity through Songs of Love.”
 - September 2024: “Experiencing Divinity across Diverse Traditions.”
 - October 2024: “The Sants: Experiencing Formless Divinity.”
 - March 2025: “Naad-Yoga: Experiencing Inner Sound”
- 2023 “Pierced by the Arrow of Song: Constructing Meaning, Self, and Community through Musical Experience.” Public Lecture-performance delivered at Sante Fe Institute in Santa Fe, NM, in conjunction with working group on Complexity and the Structure of Music.
- 2020 “Bhakti Music, Consciousness, and Bhakti as Social Reform.” In 1st International Bhakti Yoga Summit, facilitated by Mirabelle D’Cunha.
- 2019 “Kabir in Music and Poetry.” Panel discussion with Purushottam Agrawal and Shruthi Vishwanath at Jaipur Literature Festival Houston. Houston, TX, 2019.
- 2018 “*Dhāī Ākhar Prem Kī* – Kabir in a Time of Extremism,” a musical presentation and dialog with Chintan Girish Modi, hosted by Comet Media Foundation, Mumbai, India. January 9, 2018.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE**University of North Texas**

- MUCS 3000: Sounded Divinity: Music in the World’s Religions (Seminar)
- MUET 2000: Global Pop: Music, Media, and Society
- MUET 5230: World Music Analysis
- MUET 4500/5500: Introduction to Ethnomusicology
- MUET 3090/5090: Music of India and Pakistan
- MUET 3070/5070: Asian Popular Music

MUET 5210/6010: Improvisation Within and Beyond Music Cultures (Seminar)
 MUET 5210/6010: Music and Meditation (Seminar)
 MUET 5210/6010: Sacred Sound: Religion, Ritual, and Spirituality in Music (Seminar)
 MUET 5210/6010: Sacred Music of South Asia (Seminar)

SELECTED PERFORMANCES / RECORDINGS

- 2025 Featured tabla artist in Maihair Melodies concert, organized by Sangeet Millenium Ensemble in Dallas TX. Accompanied sarod artist Shiraz Ali Khan.
- 2024 Guest vocalist for “Together We Wing” concert featuring Dallas Unity Choir and Dallas Symphony Orchestra at Meyerson Symphony Hall.
- 2024 Vocal and *bansuri* accompanist for Prahlad Singh Tipanya’s USA tour.
- 2023-2024 Tabla at 25th and 26th Denton Blues Festival with Prajan Divakar, Hindustani violin.
- 2023 Solo devotional singing program for DePauw University Dharma org. Diwali gala.
- 2022 Tabla tracking for “Good Morning America” by Grammy-winning artist Bobby Sparks (Snarky Puppy, Kirk Franklin), on album *Paranoia*.
- 2022 Tabla solo at UNT Africa Festival featuring original composition “Atsiapeshkar,” a synthesis of North Indian and West African rhythmic concepts.
- 2021 Tabla, pakhawaj, and Arab percussion for “Sacred Earth Stories,” multimedia performance on intersectional environmentalism by Austin Dance India.
- 2021 Tabla, bansuri, oud, and vocals for “Clear Light of the Void,” cross-cultural multimedia program directed by Art Nomadic and Sangeet Millennium Ensemble.
- 2020 Presented spiritual music *satsang* (music and discussion) featuring spiritual songs from diverse bhakti and Sufi traditions in folk and classical styles for the Kabir Festival Mumbai. Performed via online livestream.
- 2020 Provided tabla accompaniment for Kashmiri vocalist Qaiser Nizami in presentation of Kashmiri Musical Poetry.
- 2018 Produced new jazz arrangement of traditional Hindu bhajan “*Vaishnava Jana To*” in collaboration with Rosana Eckhart in honor of Mahatma Gandhi’s 150th birth celebration. Trained UNT jazz singers to perform arrangement for recording and played tabla on recording.
- 2018 Toured the US for five weeks with Indian folk singer Prahlad Tipanya as part of “Kahat Kabir Tour,” serving as translator, scholar of spiritual poetry, and accompanying musician.
- 2018 Performed tabla solo part in Bob Becker’s “Palta,” a concerto for tabla and Western percussion ensemble, accompanied by UNT Percussion Players Ensemble, led by Christopher Dean.
- 2017 Sung traditional and contemporary Hindu devotional music for 99th Birthday Celebration of Dada J. P. Vaswani at Sadhu Vaswani Mission, Pune, India.
- 2017 Solo concert singing Indian mystical and devotional poetry at Hast-o-Neest Institute of Traditional Studies & Arts in Lahore, Pakistan.
- 2017 Performed classical tabla solo and global rhythmic improvisation at Musical Diversity in Concert program at NYU Institute of Abu Dhabi.

- 2016 Contributed to soundtrack of *The Cinema Travellers*, winner of L'Œil d'or Special Mention: Le Prix du Documentaire Award at 2016 Cannes Film Festival. Played eight instruments in addition to providing vocals.
- 2015 Accompanied diverse performers including Parvathi Baul, Mooralala Marwada, Prahlad Singh Tipanya, Vedanth Bharadwaj and Bindhumalini Narayanaswamy on instruments including *bansuri* (bamboo flute), *dholak* (barrel-shaped drum), harmonium, and vocals during 19th Annual Malwa Kabir Yatra (a five-day concert tour in cities and villages throughout Madhya Pradesh, India).
- 2013 Tabla with Eternal Soul Orchestra, jazz-fusion ensemble led by Radha Botafasina and conducted by Geoff Gallegos, at California African American Museum, Los Angeles.
- 2012 Performed as part of Tabla Kirtan ensemble in Guru Purnima celebration honoring Suresh Talwalkar in Pune, India. First foreign tabla student to play in Guru Purnima program.
- 2012 Played as part of Skin and Strings global folk music trio, representing UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology at Shanghai Jiao Tong University World Music and Arts festival in Shanghai, China.
- 2011 Tabla and vocal accompaniment for South African contemporary dancer Gregory Maqoma at UCLA World Arts and Cultures department.

FIELDWORK

- 2018 Joined Prahlad Tipanya and troupe, bhajan singers from Malwa, on tour of USA over 2 months. Served as on-stage translator of poetry and accompanying musician in 29 events.
- 2017 Participant observation at Dhrupad Sansthan for traditional North Indian vocal music in Bhopal, India. Participated in Annual Workshop for Singing and Understanding Kabir in Luniyakhedi village, Madhya Pradesh, India.
- 2017 Interviewed and recorded Sindhi traditional musicians, *qawwālī* singers, Hindustani classical musicians, and Shah jo Fakir Sufi singers in Karachi, Lahore, and Bhit Shah, Pakistan.
- 2014-2015 Dissertation fieldwork in India, 12 months. Conducted research with lower-caste non-professional devotional musicians in rural Madhya Pradesh and professional classical and popular musicians in Pune, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Raipur.
- 2014 Pune, Mumbai, and Aurangabad, India, one month. Attended 2014 Mumbai Kabir Festival in Mumbai and continued classical tabla training.
- 2013 Attended gatherings of Turkish Halveti-Jerrahi Sufi order in Long Beach, CA, over two months. Participated in *zikir* and *devran* musical trance rituals.
- 2012 Pune, India, 2 months. Training in Marathi through American Institute of Indian Studies with support of FLAS from UC Berkeley. Research in Maharashtrian regional folk music and religious music. Continued training in classical tabla with Suresh Talwalkar.
- 2011 Pune, India, 3 months. Research on traditional tabla teaching with support of Graduate Summer Research Mentorship from UCLA.
- 2008-2010 Pune, India, 20 months. Full-time training in classical tabla performance and rhythmic theory under Suresh Talwalkar.

MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

North Indian classical music: Tabla, 1999-present: full-time apprenticeship with Suresh Talwalkar in Pune, India, 2008-2010; further training during India visits, 2011-2015;

training with Swapan Chaudhury at CalArts and the Ali Akbar College of Music, 2010-2013, 2016-2017; online training with Yogesh Samsi 2021. Teaching tabla privately, 2009-present.

Bansuri (bamboo flute) training with Radha Prasad in Torrance, CA, 2011-2015; online training with Rajat Prasanna 2024-present.

Vocal and melodic theory training in *khayāl* idiom with Arun Dravid in Tustin, CA, 2014-2015, in *dhrupad* idiom with Umakant and Ramakant Gundecha, 2016-2019 and with Uday Bhawalkar from 2020-present.

South Asian folk and devotional music: Vocals, harmonium, tabla and other percussion in *bhajan*, *qawwālī*, *kīrtan*, and related genres since 2000. Learned *nirgunī bhajan* singing from Malwi performers and accompanied Prahlad Singh Tipanya's troupe in concerts throughout India and US on *bansuri*, harmonium, and vocals, 2014-2018. Led interfaith devotion youth music group in Southern California, 2010-2016.

Western European music: Classical piano, 1994-2004. Violin, 1997-2000.

Music theory, analysis, and composition at UVA for BA in music.

UCLA Early Music Ensemble (vocals), 2013.

Chinese music: *Dizi* (bamboo flute) with UNT Chinese Music Ensemble for traditional Jiangnan Silk-and-Bamboo and contemporary compositions, 2016-2017.

Middle Eastern music: Percussion (*riq*, *tār*, and *doumbek*) with UCLA Near Eastern Ensemble led by A. J. Racy, and student-run group UCLA Takht, 2010-12; Arabic *oud* with Omar Abbad in Dallas, TX 2023-present.

American folk music: UCLA Old-Time Ensemble (guitar and vocals), 2012-2013

West African drumming: UNT West African Music and Dance Ensemble led by Gideon Alorwoyie, Fall 2016.

Balinese gamelan: UCLA Music of Bali Ensemble, led by I Nyoman Wenten, 2013.

Jazz: Jazz piano with John D'Earth and Bob Halahan at UVA, 2005-2007.

LANGUAGES

Hindi Advanced speaking, reading, and writing

Marathi Conversational speaking, basic reading and writing

Sanskrit Reading and translation proficient for Classical Sanskrit, basic for Vedic Sanskrit

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Society for Ethnomusicology

2018-2021: Co-Chair of SEM South Asian Performing Arts Section (SAPA)

Society for Asian Music

2024 – Present: Secretary

2021-Present: Board of Directors

Dhrupad Music Institute of America

2023-Present: Board of Directors

2017-2022: Honorary Member