

***Shur* For Solo Guitar: A Case Study of Genre Synthesis in Composing**

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Abstract

The use of borrowed musical elements in composition is a well-established historical practice. Although this has often been within a particular genre or historical period, many composers such as Debussy, Bartok, Schnittke and Sculthorpe have sought exotic material from other genres or traditions as part of their compositional modus operandi. One way to gain insights into how such cross genre synthesis is achieved is to examine a composition that is the result of a specific poly-genre practice. *Shur for Solo Guitar* is an experiment in genre synthesis where musical content, processes and concepts from Persian *dastgah* music, Flamenco, Blues, Western concert music practices and classical guitar techniques are all synthesised into a coherent piece of music. This paper scrutinises the work to identify the concepts and strategies used to achieve genre synthesis, and discusses their function within the composition.

Keywords composition, genre synthesis, creative practice, Persian *dastgah*, classical guitar

This paper adopts a practice-led research approach to show how a newly composed work for solo guitar achieves genre synthesis. In addition to identifying the concept and techniques used in the composition, the methodology and the analysis reveal the processes undertaken as part of a composer's personal practice, thereby providing another dimension to understanding how genre synthesis takes place in the work under scrutiny.

There are two areas in this compositional study from where genre content is accessed. The first of these is the use of genre elements from research into musical resources exotic to one's own learning experiences, in this case, my development of understandings of Persian music structure and melodic treatment and the subsequent impact these had on a new composition. The second resource area is the use of the composer's musical genre experiences that form part of his or her inner-world of aesthetics and musical knowledge. Brouwer (1970, p.9) describes this as "an extremely complex array of theoretical worlds of academics, of formative learning, of informations – all this amalgamated in the conscious mind to give way to the imagination". This statement portrays the composer as a confluence of cultural and musical influences, a "locus of hybridity" (Leavy, 2009, p.205), a crucial consideration in genre synthesis. These two sources for material in composing with genres allow both familiar and exotic musical material to co-exist and influence new

compositional strategies. For the purposes of this paper, the internal genre sources are discussed in reflection on matters of musical provenance. As every composer/researcher has their own individual cultural and musical background, the comments here, as to use of familiar material and the act of composing, are meant as a single model offering concepts and reflections that could be adopted by other researchers in a reflexive practice-led investigation. What is concretely transferable here are the technical and conceptual workings of the practice.

In *Shur for Solo Guitar* (Knopf, 2009), my personalised musical skills and experiences with Classical and Flamenco guitar practices, Jazz and Blues performance conventions and Western art music strategies have provided substantial material from which to draw. My earliest music making was in Blues and Rock music where the basis of my guitar knowledge was formed in deep association with Blues guitar idioms and conventions. These influence the composition under review here through, for instance, the inclusion of a Blues melodic ‘riff’ in the second half of the composition at bar 60. My formal studies in Classical and Jazz guitar and composition influence the creative outcome throughout the work, but one instance is where my familiarity with techniques such as the tremolo and guitar arpeggio practices, assist my adaptation of Persian music characteristics into the composition as exemplified at bar 39. The inclusion of Jazz chords that sit well on the guitar is another instance. Also, my long-term interest in Flamenco music allowed the authentic use of a *Soleares* rhythmic pattern and idiomatic guitar techniques such as the use of *ayudado* (the melodic playing of adjacent strings with the thumb in rest-stroke), as presented at bars four through five. Lastly, before undertaking this particular composition, I had been listening to Classical Persian music for some years and had a relationship with a professional Persian instrumentalist with whom I had undertaken a cross-genre performance project. This may have influenced the intuitive approach to the treatment of some material in the work.

At the start of the project, it was decided to combine these influences with classical Persian music features. Familiarity with formal procedures in Persian *dastgah* music, however, was deemed inadequate, so a search was undertaken of the literature for examples of Persian genre elements that would influence the new work. Two primary sources were used: ‘*Persian Classical Music*’ by E. Zonis (1963); and ‘*The Dastgah Concept In Persian Music*’ by H. Farhat (1990).

The intention was not to write a Persian piece but to explore some possibilities inherent in the styles and genres that were chosen for the project. What was adopted from Persian classical music for this particular composition was the scalar modality and aspects of the form of *Shur*, described by Zonis (1963, p.67), as the ‘most popular’ *dastgah*. This included concepts of structure from solo performance approaches in the *dastgah* system. The initial task was to become familiar with such in terms of the musical content and structure of *Shur* so that these could then be compared to the genres that were already a part of personal experience. The complete score is available with this paper and the performance can be viewed on *YouTube* at <https://youtu.be/qSW4xMWMtPU> so that the work can be experienced in its entirety.

GENRE SYNTHESIS METHODOLOGY IN *SHUR FOR SOLO GUITAR*

The work under scrutiny here combines genre elements from several Western musical genres with a primary musical modal form from Iran, also known as Persia. Blues, Classical guitar and Flamenco techniques and conventions and researched Persian musical material are incorporated into a single composition. A methodology was undertaken drawing on practice-led thinking that proceeded through experimentation with genre materials in improvisation as well as through research into formal aspects of one of the genres to review various parameters that could influence the composition.

Several strategies were undertaken in experimenting with the musical materials and ideas garnered for the task:

Firstly, an accounting was made of what was seen as similarities and differences between the Persian *dastgah* of *Shur*, and the Blues and Flamenco to create a list of compositional techniques and conventions used in my studio practice in addressing synthesis issues with the different genres engaged. The resultant terminology is used throughout and will be reviewed in the conclusion.

Secondly, drawing on practice-led reflection and reflexive thinking, the melodic possibilities of the *Shur* scale or mode were experimented with through improvisations in a style of guitar playing that I had been developing over some years based on vocal chants from Persian, Arabic, and Flamenco vocal practices. Each of these musics rely heavily on vocal chant and song for their musical expressions as does Persian traditional classical music. I anticipated that the composition being planned would reflect this in its own expression through similar melodic treatment. The Blues scale and its varied melodic and harmonic conventions were also improvised with alongside the *Shur* modality, and with an altered guitar tuning (C, G, Bb, g, c, eb') to provide a drone effect in the lower strings with the tonic and fifth of the key, similar to that utilised by traditional Persian instruments the *tar* and *setar*.

Thirdly, by researching Persian *dastgah* practice, I identified elements of Persian musical structure that could direct the sequence of musical events in the new composition. This included my adoption and adaptation of the *dastgah* concept of *gusheh* (singular, and plural *gusheh-ha*). Farhat (1990, p.19), defines the *gusheh* as a "set of pieces, traditionally grouped together" that make up a performance of that particular *dastgah*. *Gushehs* are discreet melodies that are traditionally presented in a scheme of rising pitch areas based along the mode, each with its own characteristic tonic and stressed notes. *Shur for Solo Guitar* uses generalised concepts of *gusheh* performance, but with composed melodies substituted for traditional melody-types.

The project began with a comparison of fundamental musical material from the chosen genres to be combined in this work. In reviewing each genre's pitch scale, similarities were noted between *Shur*, the Flamenco Phrygian scale and the Blues scale. Though traditional Persian musicians have no real perception of a scale in their music (Farhat, 1990, p.16), there are a set of tones used in each *dastgah* that, to a Western musician, are the basis of a scale. The *Shur* notes were then adopted and adapted to Western usage as a scale. The relationship of the notes within the

Phrygian and Blues scales are close, whilst the notes used in *Shur* are almost identical with the Phrygian mode, the only difference being a quarter-tone flat on the second degree. This can be seen in the top two staves of Figure 1. Thus the intervallic characters of *Shur* and Flamenco are similar. Additionally, *Shur*'s major 2nd flattened a quarter-tone was regarded as an analogue to the Blues' blue notes, such as the flattened third and fifth degrees.

Dastgah of *Shur* with quarter-tone flattened 2nd, minor third and 7th.

Phrygian Scale used in Flamenco with minor 2nd, minor 7th and added major 3rd

The Blues Scale with a "blue" (i.e. flattened) 3rd, 5th and 7th.

Figure 1 Comparison of scales used in *Shur*, Flamenco and Blues

This is regarded as an instance of 'genre trait commonality'. These three scales possess enough in common to point to a relationship between the disparate genre practices. Such commonalities do not need to be exact. Enough resemblance was seen across the three scales to allow creative relationships to be forged in melodic experimentation.

As stated previously, the initial methodology was to improvise with the above scales. The use of conventions from each of the targeted genres was also used. From these improvisations, several musical phrases were notated to be included in the composition alongside familiar techniques and various harmonic resonances as will be seen in the analysis. One example is a Flamenco guitar right hand technique known as *ayudado*. This technique is executed with the thumb playing two adjacent strings consecutively, followed by the index finger on a higher string as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 The Flamenco guitar technique of *ayudado* as used in bar 4: The letter (p) signifies the thumb doing a downstroke firstly on the third string then the second string, followed by the index finger (i) plucking the first string.

Along with the improvisations with varied genre conventions and material, research into Persian classical musical form was undertaken using existing descriptions by Zonis (1963) and Farhat (1990) as the basis for the development of the form of the new composition. As mentioned above, each *dastgah* uses various note groups in designated ranges named *gusheh* as areas of specific melodic development within the form. The performance of a particular *dastgah* is realised through the execution of these melodic areas in quasi improvisation, each having its own particular pitch scope and traditional melody types. Each *gusheh* region also has its own name, tonic (the *ist* or *finalis*) and stressed note (*shahed*), and occasionally a *moteghayyer*, a “regularly fluctuating tone” (Farhat, 1990, p.24), which may have two versions, for example, a G natural and a G quarter-tone flat.

There are many *gusheh* types for each *dastgah*, and there is much variation in the literature as to what exactly the primary *dastgah* are, and which *gusheh* belongs where. Even the role of these “varies with performance and performer” (Nettl, 1986, p.17). Though each *gusheh* is expanded by elaboration, there is no set order to these in performance per se, save for those exemplified by various masters. Upon completing the *gusheh* in performance, a new *gusheh* is begun at a higher level on the primary *dastgah*'s scale. It was decided to adopt and adapt this structural approach along with a model of the *Shur dastgah* from Zonis' study (1963, p.45), defining the new work's *gusheh* pitch regions in line with her explanation of this classic *dastgah* procedure.

The genre element borrowed from Persian *dastgah* is this formal aspect of the music. The *gusheh* pitch regions were used for the placement of original melodic material without reference to traditional *gusheh* melodies. However, in the development of the score, these pitch regions form smaller sections designated with a *gusheh* title according to traditional practice. This structural scheme provided a trajectory for the unfolding of the work with each section presenting different elements to be included. For example, the area designated as *Salmak* at bar 34 features Blues chords of the fifth. The synthesis that is achieved at each of these points thus includes a formal approach from Persian music combined with varying melodic treatments from other genres.

Each section rises along the points in the *Shur* scale. When the octave is attained with the *gusheh* of *Hosseini* where the opening musical material returns at the octave, the music then begins a melodic descent to the primary tonic of *Shur*. This model served as the structural plan for the work, with the addition of the appearance in the final section of new, but related, musical material. Diagram 1 below shows the structural scheme for *Shur for Solo Guitar* adopted from Zonis.

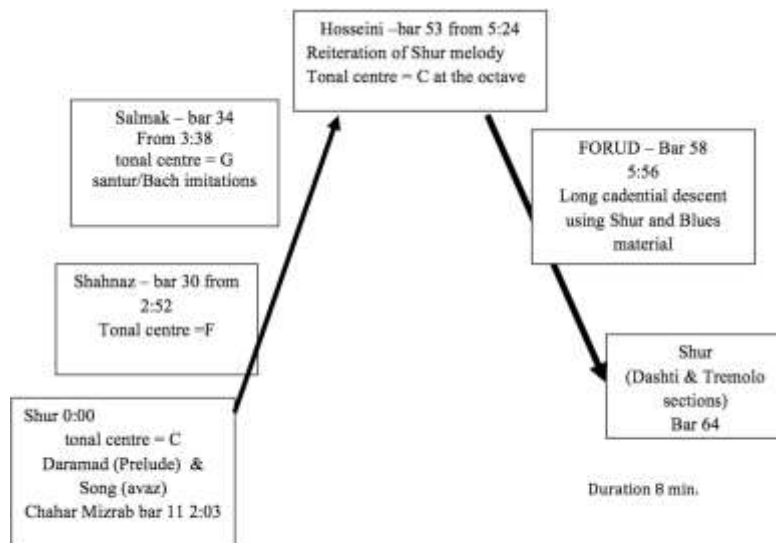


Diagram 1 Diagram after Zonis (1963, p.45) of four 'important gushehs in the dastgah of Shur' used as a model for *Shur* for Solo Guitar. Original melodies were substituted for traditional gusheh-ha melodies.

Diagram 1 Diagram after Zonis (1963, p.45) of four 'important gushehs in the dastgah of *Shur*' used as a model for *Shur* for Solo Guitar. Original melodies were substituted for traditional gusheh-ha melodies.

The choices of *gusheh* ranges in the compositional procedure for *Shur for Solo Guitar* are shown in Figure 3.

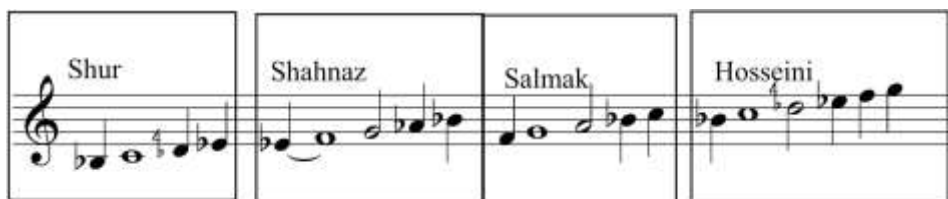


Figure 3 The *gusheh* ranges used in *Shur* for Solo Guitar (ist, the tonic or finalis is shown as a semibreve; *shahed*, the stressed note is shown as minim. Other notes are shown as crotchets).

The performance of a Persian solo *dastgah* through its various *gusheh* would normally be well developed and varyingly long in duration. *Shur for Solo Guitar* compresses these concepts into a much shorter work for purposes of presenting

gusheh-styled elements with other material as an experiment in compositional genre synthesis. As *Shur for Solo Guitar* develops through its *gusheh*, genre signals and stylistic traits from Flamenco, Blues and Classical guitar conventions are used to diversify the content through such devices as juxtaposition, layering and merging genre signifiers as will be seen in the analysis below.

ANALYSIS OF *SHUR FOR SOLO GUITAR*

The following analysis follows the development of the composition from start to end, listing the occurrences of genre-based inclusions and discussing matters of provenance and the techniques used.

In the opening sounds of the piece, *Shur*'s characteristic quarter-tone flattened second is heard. As the classical guitar is not equipped with half-frets to accommodate quarter-tones, an approximation of these notes is achieved by bending the altered note up from the semitone below before it is sounded. It is often necessary to accept a less-than-true interval due to the difficulty in bending the note whilst playing adjacent strings.

The opening bars of *Shur for Solo Guitar* begin with harmonics and open strings combined with the fingered D quarter-tone flat played in the cluster chord. *Shur*'s first *gusheh* traditionally embraces the tonic (*ist*) its neighbour tones, the minor third and the perfect fourth. The first sound is of the Bb seen in Figure 4 below, one of the stressed notes in *Shur* leading to the tonic.



Figure 4 Opening chord of *Shur for Solo Guitar*.

This quarter-tone flat D is a genre trait or element and is used to establish the characteristic sound of the dastgah of *Shur* in this new work. Figure 5 below shows the initial melodic presentation in *Shur for Solo Guitar* of *Shur*'s primary *gusheh* note group, with its traditionally restricted melodic area as described previously.

A piacere - reflective and spacious
(Daramad & Avaz)



Figure 5 Bar 2 of *Shur* for Solo Guitar using the traditional first three notes of the mode to emphasise the *Shur* sound and Persian style of the instrumental solos.

As is characteristic of much monody, the harmonic accompaniment in this piece is often confined to a pedal note of the tonic and/or fifth. The re-tuned 6th and 2nd strings on the guitar, C and G respectively, allow the tonic to be sounded easily, as shown in Figure 5.

The title of this opening section uses two terms from Persian practice. *Daramad*, loosely akin to the Western prelude, is the section in the composition where the *dastgah* sound identity is clearly established (Farhat, 1990, p.22), using its conventional constraints. *Avaz* is a lyrical song-like treatment without meter chosen to follow the basic melodic presentation of the initial *Shur gusheh* in a chant-like melody. These Persian formal concepts act as structural orientation in the composition through which interpretation of the formal content is expressed, as mentioned previously, with original material instead of traditional melody types. Also, the sectional treatment is compressed, as in traditional performances each section takes at least several minutes to develop. Within the constraints of this composition the use of Persian structural concepts were thus abbreviated.

In accordance with Persian solo performance practice, the piece begins simply, elaborating melodic material in an incremental way, using ornamental approaches, as seen in Figure 6.



Figure 6 Bars 4 and 5 of *Shur* for Solo Guitar showing the varied use of the *Shur gusheh* note group of c, d quarter tone flat, and e flat

Ornamentation is a fundamental aspect of Persian melody as it is with other vocal-chant based forms. One of the novel characteristics of Persian *avaz* is the vocal imitation of the warbling nightingale called *chah-chah* (literally bird chirping, a reference to the ‘*bulbul*’ style of imitating the nightingale). I imitate this warbling technique with the guitar playing groups of three notes, one note repeated, followed by the lower neighbour tone, as seen in Figure 7 below.

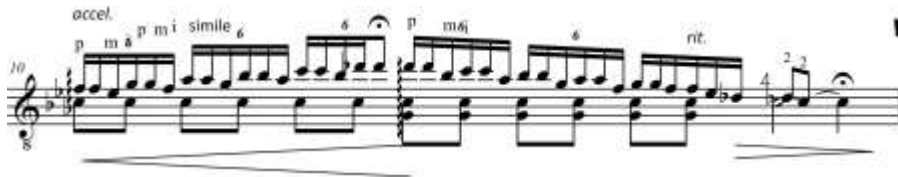


Figure 7 The technique of warbling (*chah-chah* or *bulbul*) in Persian song as approximated on the guitar in *Shur for Solo Guitar* at bar 10.

Following this allusion to a Persian vocal technique, a genre signifier in its own right, another Persian signifier, the rhythm known as *chahar mizrab*, is introduced. This is a section of traditional performance used for virtuosic playing and often characterised by an ostinato pattern, a pedal tone, and a wide melodic compass (Zonis, 1963, p.131). This forms the basis for a new sub-section of the work, performed here with the rhythm of two quavers followed by two crotchets characteristic of *chahar mizrab*. This version was played to me by a traditional *kamancheh* (spiked lap violin) player. The rhythm was used as a starting point for the section that also presents a juxtaposed group of melodies using a Flamenco *Soleares* rhythm and phrasing. *Soleares* is a common form in Flamenco music and had been performed by the present author, so it was a natural choice to coincide with the triple metre of *chahar mizrab*. In this case, the layering of the two genre signals provided an integrated genre sound that was hard to categorise. Such instances may be termed merging genre signals. This occurs when two distinct genre elements fuse in such a way as to blur any specific genre message, contributing to genre ambiguity. Figure 8 below shows the Flamenco phrase preceded by and ending with the rhythm of *chahar mizrab*. Figure 9 shows the traditional rhythmic structure of the *Soleares* phrase for comparison.



Figure 8 Bars 12-15 of *Shur* for Solo Guitar showing the coinciding of *Shur* characteristics (the *dastgah*'s scale and the triple meter of *chahar mizrab*) with Flamenco *Soleares* phrasing resulting in an example of merging genre signifiers.

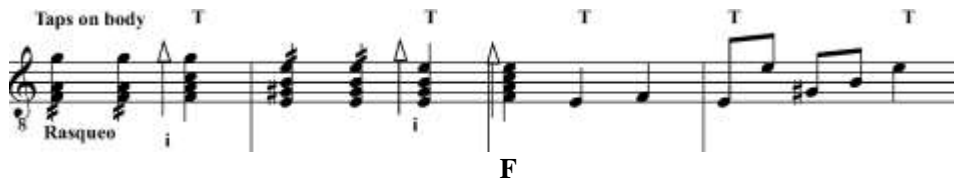


Figure 9 A typical Flamenco *Soleares* falseta on guitar for comparison with the phrase shown in Example 7. The 12-beat pattern (3, 3, 3, 3) has accents sounded through taps (T) on the guitar with the right hand ring finger on the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th beats of the phrase.

Would anyone notice two genres of music being presented here? A listener familiar with Flamenco might hear only *Soleares* where a Persian musician might hear an array of arpeggiated notes in a rhythm of *chahar mizrab*. Whatever the reception, merging genre signifiers provide an effective way for traits from one genre to influence another and can be used to combine genre elements for purposes of enrichment of the musical content or to intentionally create a genre ambiguity.

From the opening of the piece with its use of traditional melodic material, the genre identity of *Shur for Solo Guitar* could be described as Persian classical music, albeit performed on a Western instrument. The combination of traditional music on a non-traditional instrument is another tool to achieve synthesis in combining genres in a composition.

In the next section, starting at bar 28, two distinct genre signals are presented that develop the synthesis of the work further. This is illustrated in Figure 10, showing the combination of the new *gushah* area of *Shahnaz* (with its new tonal area on f, the fourth degree of *Shur*, along with its *motegayyer* or changed note, here, the G quarter-tone flat), with the sounding of an American Blues convention. Parallel fifths in the lower voice approach the new tonic in this section from its 5th and 7th degrees below, a common occurrence in the Blues. The work now possesses qualities that are not only Persian, but also Afro-American, giving the hearer two sources of recognisable genre meaning whilst relieving the former monody's static harmony.

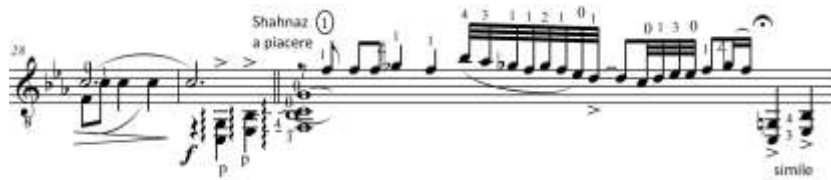


Figure 10 The composer's *gusheh* of Shahnaz as an ornamented chant centering on 'f'. Each chant is preceded and punctuated by parallel 5th chords from American Blues.

This is an instance of the juxtaposition of genre traits, with the Blues genre signal bridging the end of the *chahar mizrab/Soleares* section at bars 28 and 29, into the next section, *Shahnaz*, at bar 30. The Blues fifths punctuate the Persian inspired chant-like phrases.

Following this, a new key area is established once again for the *gusheh* area of *Salmak* at bar 34, again, a chant-like melody. The tonal centre is G, the fifth degree of the mode of *Shur*. This section begins a thickening of texture and motion shown in Figure 11 at bar 35, that provides momentum and direction towards the highest pitch level area in the succeeding section.



Figure 11. The new tonal centre of G in the *gusheh* of Salmak is punctuated by the Blues genre signal of parallel 5ths on the Blues scale.

The process of intensifying the music through texture, genre signal contrasts and rhythmic density includes other sounds here not foreseen at the commencement of the composition. In the process of composing, a familiarity with the various instruments of classical Persian music reminded the present author of the sound of the *santur*, Iran's hammered dulcimer. Using two felt hammers, the *santur* player sustains single notes with multiple strikes (tremolando) on the same pitch. I decided to include a passage where the guitar approximated the *santur*'s sound by using notes that are struck twice, imitating the effect achieved by using two hammers, one in each hand.

The guitarist strikes the open second string tuned to C with two consecutive fingers (the middle and index) in a pattern where the melody is placed on the first string. This is further accompanied by the fifth on the third string, as illustrated in Figure 12. The use of this technique is an instance of approximation or imitation.



Figure 12 *Shur for Solo Guitar*, bar 39 showing the approximation of the sound of the *santur* by double-striking the C open string.

In composing this section of *santur*-like sounds, it was noticed that the passage technically resembled music from the prelude to J.S. Bach's third cello suite from the classical guitar repertoire. Being familiar with this particular piece allowed for the similarity to be noticed and acted upon. This led to the use of an imitation of one of the passages from the Bach piece as a stylistic experimentation following on from the *santur* treatment. A comparison of the Bach suite and the section following the *santur* imitation is shown in Figures 13 and 14 below.



Figure 13 Excerpt from Bach's prelude from the Cello Suite no. 3 transcribed for guitar by Duarte (1965) that served as a model for a passage in *Shur for Solo Guitar*.

Figure 14. Sequence imitating Bach’s solo suite phrasing in *Shur for Solo Guitar*, showing bars 43-44.

The use of the genre trait imitation of Bach’s writing style may not provide a genre signal for the audience, as its content may not be substantial enough to reveal its origin. But the imitation was seen to develop as a logical extension of the previous material. This is an instance of stylistic synthesis blending an exotic style with a guitar technique used in period performance. This was a choice obviously dependent on the individual practitioner’s experience and knowledge, contributing directly to genre synthesis in this section.

What occurs in the music following the close of the above busy section is a clear re-statement as shown in Figure 15, of the opening *Shur* material but now in the *gusheh* of *Hosseini* at the octave. This is a common procedure in instrumental playing in Persian classical music.

Figure 15 The *gusheh* of *Hosseini* at bar 53 in *Shur for Solo Guitar* using melodic treatment and material similar to that in the exposition, but at the octave.

The embellishment of the melody is achieved with the use of chromaticism and the bending of the note at the end of the phrase. Bending notes in this manner on the guitar are indicative of the influence of Blues guitar practice. The presence of this tiny genre element can then be said to anticipate the Jazz and Blues material that follows in the section marked *Forud in Blue*.

This is a crucial formal part of the composition, where the original melody is partially restated before the final brief sections of the work. Following *Hosseini* in traditional *Shur* performance is a cadential passage or group of passages known as *forud*. I use this section to emphasise the presence of Persian and Blues genre signifiers to substitute for the traditional material. Figure 16 below shows the start of this section with the *Shur* melodic notes followed by parallel Jazz seventh chords and subsequent blues melodic conventions at bar 58 known as ‘riffs’. The latter represent a stylistic interruption, juxtaposed with and immediately following the restatement of the opening *Shur* melody at bar 54.

Forud in Blue

Figure 16 The section Forud in Blue showing the juxtaposed Persian chant melody in the upper staff and the use of the Blues conventions of parallel dominant chords and blues scale melodic riffs in the lower staff. These genre signifiers are intended as substitutes for traditional material in the long cadential area known as Forud.

The use of the Blues genre signals to enact the *forud* is an incidence of genre trait substitution. In this instance, the traditional *gusheh* material is substituted with genre traits from Blues music, allowing a radical reinterpretation or replacement of the original genre’s characteristics. The sectional concept of traditional music provides a context within which genre material can be placed so to enhance the genre synthesis and character of the piece. The prevalence of the Blues conventions in this section provides an instance of a secondary genre focus.

The final section from bar 64 is inspired by *Dashti*, a mode of *Shur*’s third degree often used as a basis for song. Despite having Eb and G as stressed notes and being a song form distinct from, yet complimentary to *Shur*, this mode cadences on the finalis or tonic C. The scalar over-lap of *Shur* and *Dashti* is shown in Figure 17.



Figure 17 The pitch group used in the *dastgah* of Dashti after Farhat (1990, p.39) showing the melodic range of the mode and its parent mode *Shur*

The use of this material in the composition is an attempt to approximate the sound of *Dashti*. The music is again treated vocally like a chant, accompanied by parallel fifth chords as seen in Figure 18. This section is a simple A-B-A form with the *Dashti* chant from bar 64, followed by a tremolo section from bar 68 shown in Figure 19 a style trait from classical guitar practice.



Figure 18 The composer's melody of Dashti with its emphasis on the 3rd (G) (from *Shur for Solo Guitar*).



Figure 19 A passage from bars 68-71 in the tremolo section between Dashti song segments in *Shur for Solo Guitar*.

Tremolo on melodic notes is common on both the Persian *santur* and the plucked instruments such as *tar*, *setar*, and *barbat* (the Persian *oud*), though executed differently. It is also a common technique in classical guitar repertoire. The above then, might be considered a very mild occurrence of merging genre signifiers based on commonality of practice between the two genres.

The tremolo gives way to the reiteration of the *Dashti* theme from bar 88. The last bar sees a Jazz Db7b5 chord (on the lowered 2nd degree) accompanying the melodic trill that slows and resolves to the *Shur* finalis of C. This chord and its resolution to C is a common cadence in Jazz practice and thus makes a final reference to the Jazz and Blues influence in this work.

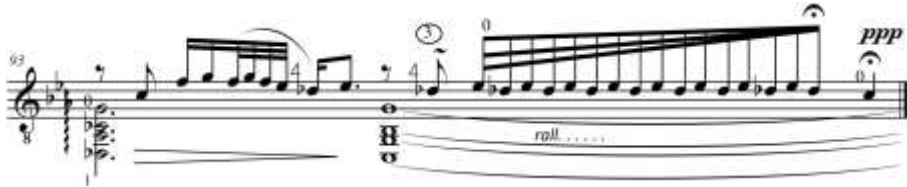


Figure 20 A Db7b5 chord resolving to the tonic C in the final cadence of *Shur for Solo Guitar*.

CONCLUSION

Shur for Solo Guitar was composed using an adopted structural model from Persian performance practice as an outline of musical events, each of which had its own genre content or focus adapted to the form. The work provides an example of a poly-genre approach where diverse musical material is synthesised into a coherent musical piece.

The work achieves a coalescence of genre and style through the manipulation of diverse musical content and the adoption and adaptation of performance and compositional traits and processes from Persian classical music and the Western musical conventions of classical guitar, Flamenco, and American Blues and Jazz. Various concepts and techniques have been identified in the development of the new work. These have included: the use of recognised genre trait commonalities; the adoption of a musical system's processes of music development (e.g. the procedure of consecutive rising gusheh areas); the juxtapositioning and layering of style and genre traits; the approximation of a musical system's stylisms such as the use of quarter-tones, and the imitation, on the guitar, of that system's vocal and instrumental techniques; the use of a Western instrument playing in an exotic genre form; and the use of genre ambiguity through merging genre signals. With these, and through the particular inner resources and associations of the composer, a new work was constructed as a single model of how genre and style elements can be synthesised in composing. Below is a brief outline, in alphabetical order, of the concepts and strategies used to synthesise the various genre elements in the composition reviewed above as terminology inherent in the compositional practice reviewed above.

Adaptation – The process of altering a musical genre or style element (trait, idea, or process) to suit the composer’s technical restraints in the composition, or to fit a particular framework foreign to the element’s original context. In this work, the use of *Shur*’s scale as a Western equivalent, the manipulation of guitar techniques to imitate the sound of the santur and the altered use of the concept of melodic regions characterised in Persian *gusheh*.

Allusion – An inexact excerpt or approximation of a well-known work, style or genre characteristic which references the borrowed entity.

Approximation – The use of imitation by the composer to approximate a musical trait from another work, composer or culture. This means that the composer imitates the sound or technique perhaps without any inside knowledge of the musical system or discipline or even the actual mechanisms behind the entity being approximated, or with such knowledge but approximating the musical trait due to contextual constraints, such as instrumentation.

Genre Ambiguity – The situation in music when, as a result of the use of either a combination of genre specific material or none, the music does not convey a clear genre context. See Example 8 showing the use of Persian and Flamenco genre signals.

Genre Element – A trait or technique identified as belong to a particular genre or genres. Depending on its usage in a new work, such may impart genre meaning and thus become a genre signifier. For example, the use of the quarter tone flat D from the Persian mode of *Shur*.

Genre Focus – A set or subset of genre sounds, imitations, allusions or representations of genre used in a piece or section of a piece of music. For example, bars 58 through 62 present a Blues genre focus due to the prevalence of the guitar Blues riffs.

Genre Signal or Signifier – A trait or element of a particular genre or genres that is intended to convey a calculated genre meaning in a new composition. For example, the use of a *Soleares* rhythm and guitar techniques to signify the presence of Flamenco in Figure 8.

Genre Synthesis – The fusion of elements from different genres in a composition.

Genre/Style Trait Imitation – The imitation of a trait of a genre or style. See Figure 14.

Genre Trait Substitution – The substitution of a genre trait for one that is foreign to that specific genre. In Figure 16, the falling melodic characteristic of the *forud* section in *Shur* is achieved using Blues melodies.

Imitation – The composer’s approach to the use of perceived characteristics of a musical work or style or genre. Imitation may contribute to approximation and allusion. For example, the use of a multi-struck string on the guitar to imitate the vocal technique of *chah-chah*. See Figure 7.

Juxtaposition – A time-constrained technique used to combine genre or style elements or genre/style signifiers. Juxtaposition is the horizontal positioning of such elements in the score so that they sound in sequence, i.e.

following one another. In Figure 10, Persian melody is juxtaposed with Blues chords.

Layering – Layering represents the vertical positioning of such elements in the score so that they sound simultaneously. In Figure 16, chords of the scalar note group underlay the Persian styled *Shur* melody.

Stylistic Interruption – The insertion of contrasting style techniques to interrupt the flow of the established style. This is used as a section marker, a punctuation of sorts, or as a bridge to another section. The use of parallel jazz chords in the middle of bar 58 is one example.

Research into genre synthesis in composition and performance offers an immediacy of opportunity in exploring and defining compositional techniques, concepts and other strategies in the creation of new music using genre as targeted content for inclusion. Further reflective compositional studies by other creative practice researchers will provide new transferable techniques and new models of how other composers' approach creative work using inherent genre associations and understandings.

One of the resources for this sub-field of composition is the development of a taxonomy ¹ of the practice that is an ongoing pursuit of the present author as exemplified in part above. It is hoped that other composer-researchers will add to and develop this taxonomy through projects aiming to discover what goes on in the clash of genres within individual composers' experimentation with genre.

Such studies may offer new concepts about music making where new hybridities emerge by combining strategic elements, the use of traditional and new processes and the revealing of personalised attitudes towards the use of genre material. This, in turn, may furnish the literature with novel systems of music making that rely on the fusion of disparate, and sometimes non-complementary sets of rules that are bridged in some manner, all of which potentially lead to fundamentally new sounds.

ENDNOTES

¹ An initial taxonomy for concepts and techniques used in genre and style synthesis is the subject of another paper yet to be published.

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BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Michael Knopf is an American/Australian composer and concert guitarist. He has performance and compositional expertise in Contemporary Art music and Jazz and has used his various music projects to experiment with different genres and styles. This includes his development of a new sub-field of classical guitar playing inspired by vocal chants from European, Persian, Arab and Indian influences along with Flamenco and Classical guitar conventions. Michael was founder and music director for three cross-genre ensembles including *Zafron Road*, an ensemble of Jazz piano trio, a cellist and two traditional Persian musicians with Michael on guitars. Michael performs on a variety of guitars. His compositions range from solo cello and guitar pieces to large choral works, Jazz ensemble pieces, and works for chamber ensembles and orchestra. His works have been performed in Australia, USA, Canada, Europe, China and Japan.

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