

**SALUT L'ARTISTE !**  
**ON MUSICAL TEACHING**  
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Despite changes in modern society, music still occupies a central place in the life of Newar peasants (*Jyāpu*). Reserved for the men in the community, its highly ritualised apprenticeship is a fundamental component of the social and religious organisation of this group. In this very conservative culture, where the modalities of the acquisition of knowledge are veiled to the uninitiated, access to musical apprenticeship was *a priori* out of reach. Willing however to understand its theoretical bases through participating observation, I tried to find a musician who would agree to teach me how to play the *dhimay* drum, which endows an emblematic dimension among the *Jyāpu*.

The photograph I selected was taken in Patan in July 1995. It shows Dev Narayan Maharjan, one of the music masters of Kathmandu city, playing my cello. The photo was taken at the end of a *dhimay* drum recording session. It illustrates the beginning of my musical training among the Newar and I am happy to offer it in homage to Corneille Jest, whose creative energy is at the origin of numerous researchers' calling in Himalayan studies.

To grasp how my pupil-teacher relationship was established, I must first recall that although the various Nepalese musical traditions are easily identified by all the Nepalese, they do not generate a deep aesthetic feeling from one community to another. This situation which I frequently witnessed, seems to have its roots in a profound identity feeling, whose artistic expressions (principally music and dance) constitute fundamental markers. When I remember the aborted tentatives of exchange with classical Indian musicians, the curiosity that Dev Narayan showed for my cello from our first meeting, surprised me. In fact, his interest is probably an indicator of the specific status attached to the musical instruments in Newar tradition. Indeed, for the *Jyāpu*, any musical instrument — whatever its origin- is perceived as a manifestation of Nāśahdyah, the god of music and dance.

To my great surprise, Dev Narayan actually owned two violins in a very bad state, which were presented to me covered with red and black powder. As he asked me, I did worked on them a bit, correctly placing the strings which were rolled upside down as on the Indian Sarangi, and straightening the bridge. Then I returned them to Dev Narayan who began to play. Due to his posture he developed an inimitable style, close to some European village violinists. Then he presented the violin to me and I reciprocated and played with the violin standing between my knees as with a cello! Dev Narayan started an animated discussion on the flexibility of the wrist, which led us to practical exercises. I then found myself in a position where I had to teach him elements of the Western violin technique which were useless for the repertoire he planned to play on his instrument. He asked me to explain the position of the fingers on the archet. Our role were momentary re-

versed. But this apparently useless conversation acquired a new dimension when I begin to learn *dhimay* with him, in particular the way drumstick is used in the different wards of Kathmandu. This anecdotic event appeared more generally as central to our relationship, which was not master-disciple but reciprocal, between two musicians of different traditions. Dev Narayan invited me to accompany him the next day to the temple of Nāśahdyah where he performed a ritual aimed at asking the god's consent for my training in *dhimay* drum. He sacrificed an egg on the altar and told me that the god accepted my request. Then my apprenticeship started, under his attentive and patient direction, but that is another story...

