

Kavita Shah: VISIONS TRACK BY TRACK LISTING

(All songs arranged by Kavita Shah, except “Deluge,” arranged by Kavita Shah & Stephen Newcomb.)

1. SODADE (Amandio Cabral & Luis Morais) – ft. Lionel Loueke

This *morna* from Cape Verde speaks about a *sodade*, or feeling of longing, for one's homeland. One heart-wrenching line states, almost casually: “If you write me, I will write you / if you forget me, I will forget you.” This arrangement revolves around a percussive guitar ostinato, played by **Lionel Loueke**, adding in tablas, voice, kora, rhythm section, string quartet, and multiple vocal layers as the song progresses, thus magnifying and complicating the sentiment of *sodade*.

Soloists: Yacouba Sissoko (kora), Lionel Loueke (guitar), Kavita Shah (voice), Language: Cape Verdean Creole

2. VISIONS (Stevie Wonder)

This was the first song I arranged for tablas, and hence the “Visions” project was born. The word “visions” itself represents the musical concept of the album: to create a panorama of diverse musical and personal experiences, and to share that with others, hopefully inspiring new ways of seeing. The original melody and lyrics of the song were so powerful that I wanted to keep them intact, reframing them in my own “words”, so to speak. This arrangement is characterized by: a drum-and-bass, tabla-driven groove; a dissonant minor 2nd between the bass line and verse's melody; a unconventionally re-harmonized bridge; modulating time signatures; a piano solo repeated over 8 bars (as if the song were stuck there in time), and a form that concludes the song on its bridge (intentionally on the words “all things have an ending.”)

Soloist: Stephen Newcomb (piano)

3. LITTLE GREEN (Joni Mitchell)

This beautiful ballad is supposedly about Joni Mitchell's giving up her daughter for adoption. Despite the despair present, there is a lot of hope in this song. I actually wrote this arrangement in less than 30 minutes, while on deadline for a concert (it's amazing how sometimes, in those moments, we are able to conjure up inspiration from deep wells that we otherwise don't have access to). The piano ostinato at the beginning is intended to be like a toy box, a bit muted and clumsy, and the kora here brings out that sense of childlike wonder and exploration (in contrast to the bluesy, less delicate chorus).

Soloists: Yacouba Sissoko (kora), Stephen Newcomb (piano)

4. TABLA INTERLUDE

This interlude was a spontaneous improvisation in the studio by Stephen Cellucci, playing off the concept of a tihai (or pattern of threes).

5. PAPER PLANES (Thomas Wesley Pentz, M.I.A., et. al.) – ft. Steve Wilson

The tablas begin in a meter of 15 with a pitched ostinato that hints at the melody line. The simple melody and outrageous lyrics (speaking about counterfeiting and murder) lend themselves to this tongue-in-cheek arrangement. Instead of trying to imitate M.I.A.'s cavalier vocals, I wanted to ironically sing sweetly in a three-part harmony. The solo section unleashes the virtuosic power of young French guitarist Michael Veleanu and veteran alto saxophonist Steve Wilson, both of whom use fast, even chaotic, Eastern-sounding lines, going further and further “out” as the solo section progresses.

Soloists: Michael Veleanu (guitar), Steve Wilson (soprano sax)

6. TRISTE (Antônio Carlos Jobim) – ft. Steve Wilson

This arrangement is a complete reharmonization of the Jobim classic “Triste,” which I arrived at by sitting at the piano with the melody and organically seeing where my ear would lead me. The modern, laid back groove harkens an R&B flavor, and features Steve Wilson on alto flute.

Soloists: Kavita Shah (voice), Steve Wilson (alto flute); Language: Portuguese

7. MORAY (Kavita Shah)

**Recipient of the ASCAP Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composers Award, 2012*

This song was named after Moray, an Incan ruin in Peru's Sacred Valley made up of terraced, concentric circles. I first visited it in 2004 while studying Incan architecture in Peru, and it immediately struck me as a magical site. While visiting it in 2011, I sat in its center and began composing this melody. I then explored the idea of concentric circles in the composition, stretching the melody simultaneously in two directions, while complicating the harmony through the development of the tune. This track shows off two soloists for the first time on *Visions*: bassist Linda Oh and drummer Guilhem Flouzat, who plays over a challenging passage of displaced hits by the rhythm section.

The lyrics here were inspired by Pablo Neruda's epic poem “Las Alturas de Macchu Picchu,” and they say: “Where are the Indians of the valley? / Where are the Indians of the sea? / Where are they and where have they gone? / Where are they and where could they be?”

Soloists: Linda Oh (bass), Guilhem Flouzat (drums), Language: Spanish

8. DELUGE (Wayne Shorter & Kavita Shah) – ft. Steve Wilson

Wayne Shorter is perhaps my biggest musical and compositional influence. The lyrics to “Deluge” came to me naturally one day (while I was actually trying to write lyrics to another Shorter tune!), and are very personal for me, as they deal with finding out about my father's death while

I was on tour in Spain (e.g., “A call from 'cross the ocean”). At the time, I was unaware that Wayne's wife Ana Maria had died in a plane crash across the Atlantic.

This arrangement, which I co-wrote with Australian pianist/composer Steve Newcomb, diverts from the original swing feel, driven instead by a 12/8 African pulse and a play on its subdivisions. The sounds at the end of the track – of seagulls and the ocean – invite the listener to be submerged into the deluge step by step.

Soloists: Steve Wilson (alto saxophone), Kavita Shah (voice)

9. OJU OBA (Edil Pacheco & Paulo César Pinheiro) – ft. Lionel Loueke

This song makes references to Afro-Brazilian culture, especially to the religion *candomblé*, in which ceremonies are conducted in Yorùbá and each divinity, or *orixá*, is called to life through its own distinct drumming pattern. This track features Brazilian percussionist Rogério Boccato, as well as Lionel Loueke on guitar and his signature vocals. “Oju Oba,” or “the eyes of the ruler” in Yorùbá, describes a feeling of submission to the beauty, light, and strength offered by the divine king.

Language: Portuguese

10. MY TIME IS WHEN (Kavita Shah)

Inspired by the great kora masters from Mali like Ali Farka Touré and Toumani Diabaté, I had in mind here a simple drone pattern that could create a trance-like state. The melody and lyrics were inspired by Brazilian poet Vinícius de Moraes, and the words speak about the cycle of life.

11. RAG DESH: ALAAP

An “alaap” is a typical introduction to a *rag*, or scale, in Hindustani classical music, tracing the notes of the scale in ascending and descending order, depicting as well the typical motifs common to that rag. Rag Desh is a rag of the monsoon season, typically played in the late evening.

12. RAG DESH: TEENTAAL GAT (Samir Chatterjee)

“Teentaal” is a typical 16-beat cycle, and “Gat” denotes that this is an instrumental composition. Tabla virtuoso Samir Chatterjee taught me this song, which I then orchestrated for strings, rhythm section, and kora (who at times unexpectedly alters the inherent color of the rag, foreshadowing the next movement).

Soloists: Michael Valeanu (guitar), Tomoko Omura (violin 2), Stephen Newcomb (piano), Curtis Stewart (violin 1), *Language:* Sargam (Indian equivalent of solfège).

13. RAG DESH: MELTDOWN (Kavita Shah)

This movement was my statement/epilogue on the theme, introducing a minor 3rd not inherent to the rag, which essentially leads to a meltdown of the rules obeyed in the previous two movements.

Soloist: Stephen Cellucci (tablas), Guilhem Flouzat (drums)

14. SODADE POSTLUDE (see track 1)

This postlude to “Sodade” was an alternate ending recorded spontaneously in the studio with **Lionel Loueke** and **Rogério Boccato**.

15. WHEN... (BONUS TRACK) (see track 10)

This bonus track was recorded spontaneously in the studio as an outro to “My Time is When,” using the last two chords of that song as the basis for a hip-hop inspired, groove-based jam.