two things became simultaneously

clear, that there were language and

the past five

years we have

MARIET

barriers were not barriers at all. The group communicated with the wordless familiarity of old bandmates, passing instruments, harmonising vocals and sharing a smile when a four-year-old member of the audience clambered onto the stage. clans go main-

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When the music began — an eclectic collection of beats, raps and Rajasthani folk vocals — the audience, their feet tapping and hands clapping, became part of a collaborative effort that had begun as the Jaipur Virasat Foundation's (JVF) first-ever residency, three years earlier.

JVF is best known for organising the annual Rajasthan International Folk Festival (RIFF) and initiated its residencies, in fact, in an attempt to nurture talent for that fest. Among the performers on stage in 2011 was Jumma Jogi, 45, who attended the first RIFF residency in 2008.

Jogi is a descendant of the Jogi Mewar musicians and a flamboyant singer and composer whose couplets span topics as diverse as unemployment, sexual relations and communal harmony. He has performed in London and sung with English folk musician Laura Marling and folk rock band Mumford & Sons. But he cannot sustain himself on what he earns as a musician, so he also works as a manual labourer, a rickshaw and a tractor driver in his village near Jodhur.

His story is typical of the Indian folk musician — a tale of dwindling patronage and growing invisibility. It is also typical of how the Western model of residencies is now helping such artists find their way back to artistic relevance, helping them network, collaborate and further their careers through a growing number of residential and nonresidential camps for musicians from across the

country and beyond.
Jogi's dependence on his day jobs has
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FROM VILLAGES TO TOURS OF EUROPE

FOLK NATIONS RESIDENCY,

Set up by the British Council in 2012 Collaborates with folk, tribal, Sufi and classical musicians from Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, West Bengal, Delhi and Rajasthan

et up in 2012, these residencies aim to bring together local musicians and international artists in an ambience where they can discuss their music, experiment, network and eventually collaborate on new material.

The idea of the residency, which is funded by the Creative Scotland Agency for the Arts, Wales Art International Organisation and British Council, was conceived in 2009, when the British Council brought down English folk musician Laura Marling to collaborate with Rajasthani folk-musicians.

"We realised then hat there is a real hunger for new music in both the UK and in India, with international audiences increasing and folk are like Raghu Dixit booming," says Tasnem Vahanvaty, head of music and film projects at the British Council in India. "At the same time, the dwindling interest in folk music in rural areas was a cuse for concern. So Folk Nations was born."

The first residency was organised in Nagaland last December and brought together eight folk and tribal musicians from Assam and Nagaland and eight folk musicians from the UK. "We picked Nagaland because young people here are picking up the guitar and learning 'modern' music and leaving behind their folk traditions," says Vahanvaty.

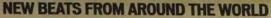
The residencies have subsequently been held once a year bringing together folk and independent artists from the UK and six states across India, in hotels in Nagaland and Kolkata.

In 2013, at a residency in Kolkata, classical artistes from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India spent two weeks with folk musicians from the UK, Wales and Scotland.

This collaboration even evolved into performances overseas, with six participants performing together at venues such as London's Southbank Centre, and touring the UK and Wales.

"There was no agenda at this residency, which was very freeing," says Suhail Yusuf Khan, a sarangi player and vocalist and one of the musicians at this residency.

Khan remembers interacting with a harp player from Wales and feeling "over-whelmed". "We couldn't play each other's instruments, and that was daunting, but we soon realised that culturally we had a lot in common," he says. "Eventually we were able to overcome our apprehensions and play each other's instruments, and even try our own songs on them."



SOUND TRAVELS, London

Set up in 2011

Collaborates with folk, opera and jazz musicians across India, the UK, Germany, France and the USA, with residencies held in Assam, Rajasthan and West Bengal

fler three years of working with the organisers of the Rajasthan International Folk Festival, Georgie Pope had a rolodex overflowing with the contacts of Indian musicians.

"I thought, why not put these to good use?" says Pope, who is now a press officer for the Glastonbury music festival and is based in London. "So I started the residencies, because there is a real hunger on the international music seeme to tap unheard sounds, work with refreshing musicians, and India in particular has garnered a

lot of interest."

Set up in 2011, Sound Travels has already arranged 15 short-term residencies ranging in duration from two days to three months—to bring together musicians, music producers, sound technicians and musicologists.

Sound Travels partners with RIFF Jaipur Virasat Foundation and two travel agencies to put the residencies together. "We had American opera singer this April," says Pope. Smith visited Bikaner and then spent a week touring Assam and meeting and collaborating with local musicians.

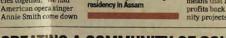
While in some cases the interactions happen in hotels, often local musicians invite the foreign artists into their homes instead. "When American jazz singer Martiol Limon Martinez visited India last July, she stayed at folk musician Kutle Khan's home for three days, says Pope. "He also acted as her local musical guide, introducing her to other folk musicians in the area."

Khan, who plans to participate in more Sound Travels residencies, says he had never experienced the kind of songs that Martinez sings. "Creatively, it was good exposure for me, and a big learning experience. For example, I learnt

that there are many tonal similarities in our singing techniques that I could never have thought of before."

Most foreign
visitors pay their
own way says
Pope. "Martinez
paid via a scholarship," adds
the project head.
"They see it as
an investment in
their future." Pope
is now in the midst
of building a residency space in Golaghat,
Assam, which should be

functional by April 2016.
"Sound Travels is a
social enterprise, which
means that it invests all
profits back in community projects," says Pope.



CREATING A COMMUNITY OF SOUND

American opera singer Annie

Smith dances with Odisha folk

singers during a week-long

INDIA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS (IFA), Bangalore

Set up its residencies programme in 2006 Collaborates with folk musicians in Rajasthan

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These musicians had two very specific problems — dwindling patronage, and opposition from parts of the local Islamic population, which considered music un-islamic. In 2009, IFA responded by setting up musical residencies in three Mir villages, bringing together 15 to 20 varieties; in each village. We identified



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While some of these residencies are organised by formal institutes of learning such as Gandharva Mahavidvalava in Delhi. Chetan Sangeet Natva Academy in Kerala and the Pandit Ravi Shankar Institute of Music and Performing Arts, many are being initiated by non-governmental organisations and cultural foundations such as the British Council the Khoi International Artist's Association, the Virasat Foundation and India Foundation for the Arts (IFA).

"The reason for the recent rise in the number of such residencies lies in the artists themselves," says Tasneem Vahanvaty head of music and film projects at the British Council in India. "Over the past five years, we have seen folk musicians go mainstream and acts such as The Raghu Dixit Project and RIFF get devoted followings. Now, rather than facilitators seeking out local artists for collaborations, the artists have realised the benefits of engaging with each other and are proactively seeking out avenues for such interactions, applying to art and culture foundations for inclusion in residency programmes, and even urging those without such programmes to consider launching them."

There has been a definite increase in the number of residencies over the past two years, adds Sumana Chandrashekhar, programme executive for arts practice at IFA. "The primary reason: Artists realise that they can no longer afford to work in isolation. They have to network and innovate to succeed in a market-driven environment."

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American opera singer Annie Smith dances with Odisha folk singers during a week-long residency in Assam

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 Sarangi player Suhail Yusuf Khan, from Delhi, and British folk singer Hannah James iam in Kolkata during a Sound Nations residency held there in 2013. Six of the 12 participants. including Khan and James, subsequently toured the UK. Scotland and Wales together as a group PHOTO: BRIONY POPE

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NOTES FROM ALL OVER

KHOJ INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS' ASSOCIATION, New Delhi

Set up its residencies programme in 2007, revived it in 2013 Collaborates with musicians across Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Delhi

hoj has been working in the field of sound exploration since 2006. setting up inter-disciplinary spaces for artists to collaborate and experiment in," says Stara Chowfla, a member of the programme team at Khoj. These 'sound explorations' took the form of residencies in 2008 where the artists are given spaces to live and work in.

"We don't discriminate between mediums or genres," says Chowfla. "We have had sound artists who work on cityscapes, music, analog sound, digital sound, found materials and so on."

In 2013, a sound arresidency titled Auditions explored how electro-acoustic and electronic music could be used. "The artists for the residency were chosen not only for their own work, but how well



their work would mesh together," says programme manager and curator of the residency Charu Maithani.

Maithani and 'critic in residence' Robert Millis, an experimental sound artist, worked with the artists, reviewing their work with them from time to time. "We also organised fields trips for the artists to cultural bodies and to meet local musicians," says Maithani.

"Millis helped me redefine a project I was working on by acting as a non-intrusive sounding board," says Abhijeet Tambe (photo above), a 38-year-old rock/post rock musician from Bangalore.

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF SOUND

INDIA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS (IFA), Bangalore

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n 2006, IFA, which then supported the traditional arts through fellowships and internships, began receiving requests for a type of endeavour that did not fit into any of its existing categories.

"An increasing number of grant requests were being made by traditional communities of musicians," says Sumana Chandrashekhar, programme executive for arts practice at IFA.

"Especially from those facing cultural issues, such as adversity from local population or apathy from the younger population. For these, we set up something called Special Grants, which organised artistic residencies for them."

An initial venture began in 2006, with a residency held in Bikaner at the behest of local folk singer Mukhtiyar Ali, who was looking to reconnect with his musical heritage and the younger generations.

"We rented a space in Ali's Pugal village and selected 20 participants, both experienced musicians and children who wanted to learn from Ali," says Chandrashekhar. "The group then met every day in their shared space to discuss their history and shared tradition and to play music together.

Seeing the success of this initiative, which revived interest among youngsters in the local folk music tradition, the region's Mir pastoral singers also decided to approach IFA for help.

These musicians had two very specific problems - dwindling patronage, and opposition from parts of the local Islamic population, which considered music un-Islamic. In 2009, IFA responded by setting up musical residencies in three Mir villages, bringing together 15 to 20 musicians in each village. "We identified two master musicians in each village," says Chandrashekhar. "They taught, held workshops and organised performances."

Erstwhile patrons got involved too. "Each Mir musician family in Rajasthan is attached to a patron family," she says. "These patrons are no longer rich enough to support the musicians, but they attended workshops, requested songs they had heard in childhood, and discussed how they could help sustain the Mir culture."

The residency culminated in the Baba Farid Rang Mir Sammelan (photo below) held in October 2010.

"All the artists performed and the locals loved it," says Mir musician Janab Ali, 56. "The best part was when the local maulyi, who had said music was against the tenets of Islam, came out and played the tabla while we sang."



