The Power of Practice: How music and yoga transformed the life and work of Yehudi Menuhin

Chapter V. Menuhin’s Yoga Practice and Dissemination of Knowledge (Words: 10, 370)

# Overview: Menuhin and Yoga in the Mind

During Menuhin’s studies of yoga, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s when his work with Iyengar was most intense, he fervently sought to deepen his knowledge of how yoga impacted violin playing. In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter, Menuhin’s yoga practice also influenced his engagement with Indian music. He not only actively performed it, he also studied its musical structure and found ways to disseminate his knowledge and understanding of this music. As a result of these studies in the dimension of the mind, and the enrichments he gained from them, Menuhin would go on to transmit out into the world much of this integrated music-yoga knowledge he gleaned from his yoga practice through founding his own school, teaching in masterclasses and instructional videos, and writing books and articles.

Like his own professional musical performances and organization of festivals can be understood to embrace aspects of *karma yoga*, or the Yoga of Action, Menuhin’s studies of yoga-influenced violin pedagogy and Indian music, and his teaching and writing on the subjects, can be understood as embracing aspects of the path *jñana yoga*, the Yoga of Knowledge, especially in terms of his own *svadhyaya* (study) and training of the mind to understand truth and gain self-realization. Menuhin was an idea man who had the uncanny ability to communicate his educational visions to talented administrators who could help him realize them. With such organizational support, Menuhin found ways to disseminate his yoga-influenced ideas and knowledge about music and violin playing through the creation of The Yehudi Menuhin School; videos and books he published on violin-playing; and other educational music programs and competitions that he founded. A prolific writer, Menuhin also published books and articles targeted for the educated lay reader – what we would call “public scholarship” today – to reach a broader community of people beyond the elite circle of classical musicians like himself. While he wrote on a vast array of topics including western and world music, education, politics, and even the environment.[[1]](#footnote-1) His writings on Indian music particularly tie into this discussion of how Menuhin’s yoga practice impacted the dimension of the mind on a path of knowledge.

# Yoga and Menuhin’s Approach to Violin Playing and Teaching

Yoga intersected most profoundly with Menuhin’s pursuit of musical knowledge as he applied it to violin playing and teaching. During the years he was most actively studying with Iyengar and practicing himself, yoga influenced not only Menuhin’s own violin technique, but also his work as an educator of young musicians in training. In particular, he transferred elements of yoga *asana* (postures) and *pranayama* (breath control) to his teaching methods, as well as elements of the deeper levels of yoga practice like *dharana* (concentration), *dhyani* (one-pointed attention), and *samadhi* (total absorption). Even later in the 1980s Menuhin continued to transmit his yogic approach to violin teaching. For example, in his masterclasses at the Manhattan School of Music in February and March 1983, he delivered many instructions for the violinist that recall yoga philosophy of union, consciousness, and total absorption regarding the “whole body…where the mind belongs….When you play, every level of consciousness is used, and it must all work together.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

### The Yehudi Menuhin School

Menuhin first channeled his musical knowledge and experience, including the influences of his yoga practice, in a systematic way when he created his own school. An early inspiration came from his visit to the Soviet Union’s Central School of Music on his trip to Russia in 1945, which impressed him as “shining like a lone good deed in a war-drained Moscow.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Observing the Russian teaching method there first planted the seed in his mind to start something similar in the West. But not until he acquired his first protégé in the mid-1950s, the teenaged Argentine violinist Alberto Lysy (1935-2009), did Menuhin’s ideas for his own school begin to take root. Over a two-year period, Menuhin laid the ground work for his school by forming an advisory committee and fund raising. He opened his school in the fall of 1963 in London, starting with just eleven string and piano students. The following year, the School moved to a beautiful estate with two buildings in Stoke d’Abernon, Surrey in 1964. Already by that same year, the BBC show “Master Classes” featured students from the School, most notably Menuhin himself coaching the then seven-year old brilliant violinist Nigel Kennedy.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In the formative stages of his school, Menuhin worked closely with two musical pillars, Alberto Lysy, who was then a young adult, and Marcel Gazelle, his long-time collaborative pianist. While Lysy’s budding career prevented him from teaching regularly at the School, Gazelle became its first Musical Director. They had designed the School to function administratively without Menuhin’s hands-on presence, although he regularly taught there.

Through the years, Menuhin’s broad educational mission brought many distinguished musicians to conduct special classes and lectures to broaden the students’ own education, including such renowned musicians as Itzhak Perlman and Nadia Boulanger, and other great thinkers like the economist Fritz Schumacher, author of the classic *Small Is Beautiful* (1973).[[5]](#footnote-5) Menuhin also wanted to broaden student performance opportunities outside of his school, both at Festivals in England and on trips abroad. In addition to regular performances at the Gstaad Festival in Switzerland, Menuhin School students traveled to other European countries, the US, China, and Israel.[[6]](#footnote-6)

#### Yoga-influenced ideals and approach

From the very beginnings of his school, Menuhin’s integrated key elements of yoga into his educational mission. A true idealist in search of a kind of physical and spiritual liberation like *samadhi*, Menuhin himself admits his “life has been spent in creating Utopia.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Perhaps the biggest fruit of this constant effort was the creation of his school. Menuhin’s mission was to create a “happy, healthy community of the young,” and his sense of obligation to life and society provided his motivation.[[8]](#footnote-8) Menuhin knew he had something unique to contribute from his own experience, including his lessons from yoga but even going back to his early “collaborative laboratory” of making music with his sister Hephzibah.[[9]](#footnote-9) Having “made his pilgrimage” as an adult to “comprehension of the violin,” which was largely guided by his yoga practice, he wanted to help others and pass on “his findings.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

Shaped by his own musical life growing up, Menuhin took a yoga-like holistic approach to enact his conscious motives for founding his school – his search for Utopia, conviction he had something unique to contribute, and a zeal to pass it on. He never intended it to be a conservatory, but rather to educate musically well-rounded young students. Taking a more flexible approach than the Russian model of training soloists, he prioritized giving students a wider array of musical training. In keeping with his values on cultivating cultural diversity, he exposed students to music beyond the western canon early on, such as the visits by Grappelli and Shankar in the 1960s. He and his faculty “wanted to train musical all-rounders, fitted to moving on into teaching, chamber groups, orchestra, or solo work.”[[11]](#footnote-11) They created an atmosphere less competitive, and more community-oriented. Menuhin believed England itself offered the perfect environment for his vision, since it “is a land where the team is uppermost.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Still he hoped the “Gallic-Viennese-Romanian spirit” of his childhood mentor Enesco presided there, too, not only through himself, but also through Gazelle’s wife Jacqueline, who had also studied with Enesco as a child, and who taught violin at the School.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Menuhin based his pedagogical approach on his own study of the violin and the knowledge he acquired through years of experience, much of it directly influenced by his yoga practice. He never constricted it to anything he would call “the Menuhin Method,” yet he intentionally taught on two levels, which mirrors a yogic approach. First, he taught on the “violinistic” level to enable a student to play adequately, just as *asana* (yoga postures) strengthens the body to function fluidly. Second, he taught on the musical level to reach the student’s deeper creative spirit, just as the yogi moves beyond *asana* to reach deeper spiritual levels in meditation. Menuhin liked to believe he imparted concepts from his revered teacher Enesco in the second phase “not only to do but to understand and be able to defend his position against alternatives.”[[14]](#footnote-14) In short, Menuhin pushed students beyond technical playing to use their interpretative powers and intelligence in making music – two indispensable skills for an aspiring yoga practitioner as well.

Menuhin’s core focus was always on cultivating a flexible and relaxed body. Again, the yoga analogy clearly aligns with his approach, as the discipline focuses on removing obstacles in the path of quieting the consciousness, and calming the body is the first step towards that goal. Menuhin wanted to impart “a sense of fluency, economy, and precision in motion.”[[15]](#footnote-15) He invented exercises to develop coordination, not only between the hands, but between playing the instrument and the breath. His end-goal was to prepare the student to realize their own vision of the music, and to allow their own imagination and intuition to take over.[[16]](#footnote-16) In order to accomplish this flow of creativity, he knew the student must first remove the physical obstacles blocking the ability to play freely, as a yogi must remove obstacles blocking the true self.

#### Incorporation of yoga

While many yogic principles underlaid Menuhin’s educational philosophy, he naturally included actual yoga classes in the students’ holistic course of study from the school’s inception. One student of the first graduating class of the Menuhin School provided this description about Menuhin: “Well, he has worked out this system of exercises which he originally applied to himself. And he’s given them to us. It’s based on relaxation, and the tension that is built up.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Such “exercises” were built into the daily schedule. Menuhin described the routine:

The children get up at 7:30, go through simple exercises based on Yoga, breakfast, and then take a run in the garden before lessons begin. These are divided into two parts. One is scholastic, and the other is musical. One-half of the children start with music first, and then continue with their academic studies and vice versa. Lunch follows according to my dietary principals of organically produced foods. It is cooked by none other than Mrs. Joachim, a descendant of the great violinist himself…”[[18]](#footnote-18)

Menuhin also incorporated an ecumenical practice at his School for students to tap into a broad spiritual energy that permeates all living things. It included communal singing first to cleanse the lungs and to “join us to each other and to the cosmos,” followed by an inspirational reading, and finally a period of silence to find a stillness within.[[19]](#footnote-19)

When my research assistant, violinist Catherine MacGregor, and I visited the School in March, 2018, we had the good fortune to talk with one distinguished violin teacher on the faculty, Natasha Boyarsky. Menuhin had first met Boyarsky in Moscow, and he personally invited the Russian violin pedagogue to teach at his school in 1991. He trusted she would promote his approach, since she “has a motherly way with very young pupils which ensures that no joints in the child’s anatomy are allowed to be anything other than supple, soft, and eager to cooperate.”[[20]](#footnote-20) Ms. Boyarsky, who had already experienced yoga before training at the Menuhin school, explained the discipline’s importance in training young violin students how to relax. Boyarsky endorsed other benefits of yoga for musicians: “First of all, it helps to develop and keep attention, to develop control, and to feel part of your body it's here (in the mind).”[[21]](#footnote-21)

#### Impact and legacy

By 1972 the Yehudi Menuhin School had thirty-eight students, and the campus added a new third building. That same year, a neighbor restored and donated an old barn as the School’s concert hall.[[22]](#footnote-22) The school has continued to expand and update its facilities through the years, including The Menuhin Hall, a 300-seat concert hall built in 2006. Today, the School accommodates approximately eighty students between ages eight to nineteen, including many international students. Offering instrumental lessons in strings, guitar, piano, and voice, the faculty include regular and distinguished guest teachers. The renowned pianist/conductor Daniel Barenboim currently serves as President.

After his death in 1999, Menuhin was buried on the School grounds. His beloved wife Diana, who died in 2003, is buried next to his grave. Menuhin’s yoga practice and spiritual legacy continue to be visible on the campus today. As a tribute to Menuhin, the School installed a meditation path in 2016, the centenary of his birth, as a “calm and contemplative space that invites reflection on the spiritual and humanitarian values of Yehudi Menuhin.”[[23]](#footnote-23) Located in the center of the campus, the meditation path represents the importance of spiritual well-being at the school and honors Menuhin’s legacy.

Menuhin considered the [Yehudi Menuhin School](https://www.menuhinschool.co.uk/) <Weblink 5.1> to be the crowning achievement in his life,[[24]](#footnote-24) and it remains a vital educational institution for young musicians today. <Images 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4. 5.5, and 5.6> The impact of his work lives on today through such violinists such as Nicola Benedetti. An alumna of the Menuhin School and a former student of Boyarsky, Benedetti is now a violin virtuoso and a rising star in the classical music world. At age ten she began to study at the Yehudi Menuhin School and at age eleven she performed the Bach Double Concerto for Menuhin. Although Menuhin died when she was just eleven years old, Benedetti ’s lasting impressions of the maestro are of his kindness and gentleness. She recognized Menuhin’s strikingly “calm presence” explaining, “When he walked into the room you could tell something changed.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

### Menuhin’s Other Educational Projects

Menuhin’s musical study and pursuit of knowledge yielded fruit beyond The Yehudi Menuhin School that reflects broader yoga-related values. Such outcomes exemplify his commitment to be of selfless service in keeping with his guru’s charge for a yogi, and the dissemination of knowledge in line with the yoga Path of Knowledge. Two such projects still flourishing today include the [European String Teachers Association](https://estastrings.org.uk/) <Weblink 5.2> founded in 1972 at a time when Menuhin was also deeply involved in Indian music, and the biannual [Yehudi Menuhin International Competition for Young Violinists](https://menuhincompetition.org/home/) <Weblink 5.3> established in 1983. Shortly before he died, Menuhin reiterated his holistic educational mission when he wrote of his competition’s excellent record to discover and support young talent, and it’s aim to foster a supportive environment “to encourage cultural exchange and the development of new friendships…[and to] give participants the opportunity to meet and learn from one another.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

Menuhin’s values on unity, holistic training, and cultural diversity influenced by his yoga practice also shaped other projects as he became increasingly absorbed in his educational mission in the 1970s and 1980s. Most notably, Menuhin expanded his important work as a performer to transcend musical boundaries and cultural stereotypes. He accomplished this when he formed the [Gstaad Academy](https://www.gstaadacademy.ch/de/home) <Weblink 5.4> as an educational venture for young string players in transition to becoming full professionals. Founded in 1977 as part of the Gstaad Festival in collaboration with Alberto Lysy, his former student and now colleague, the Gstaad Menuhin Festival Academy followed similar educational principles as in his school by focusing on chamber, orchestral, and contemporary music. Menuhin and Lysy selected sixteen international string players between ages of seventeen and twenty-six to form a camerata, a small chamber orchestra,[[27]](#footnote-27) and the group became a year-round extension of the summer Festival. In keeping with Menuhin’s vision of cultural unity and using music as a means to achieve world peace, the Camerata travelled internationally to hold short residencies in European countries including Germany, Italy, and Spain, and also farther abroad in Argentina, China, Japan, and the US. Perhaps in recognition of his remarkable international efforts, Menuhin was named the first ever Western honorary professor of Beijing Conservatoire in 1979, just seven years after Richard Nixon’s historic trip to China that opened communication with the West after a twenty-five year break. Menuhin’s extraordinary honor opened the door for a cultural exchange between China and the West. Chinese students were permitted to leave their country to study at the Menuhin School and the Menuhin Academy, and the Camerata travelled to China in 1982. Still thriving today, the Gstaad Academy remains true to Menuhin’s holistic educational vision, as it continues offer a complete range of master courses addressed to young professionals as well as a youth orchestra and courses aimed at amateur players of all ages.

Two violinists from the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) had the good fortune to work directly with Menuhin through the Gstaad Academy in the 1980s. One of them, Lisa Yancich, went on the China tour with the group in 1982. Yancich recalled how Menuhin exposed the young western musicians to world music and instruments. A highlight of the trip for her was when they went on a boat ride on the beautiful Yangtze River and listened to the “phenomenal” Chinese music students play their traditional instruments.[[28]](#footnote-28) <Images 5.7> and 5.8> Another ASO violinist, Christopher Pulgram, enrolled at the Academy from 1985 to 1987, and he recorded and toured with Menuhin. Pulgram’s memories of those two years show how deeply Menuhin had assimilated his yoga practice into his life and work. Pulgram recounted seeing Menuhin practice yoga, how the maestro recommended it to all of the students, and how he discussed its concepts and application. Pulgram also recalled how Menuhin taught the Academy residents not only how to play music but also how to be thoughtful and compassionate musicians:

“What was amazing about Menuhin was that the music was so personal to him. He really wanted us all to know what being an artist was; what a privilege it was and what our responsibilities were; that we were all ambassadors when we would be going from one country to the next; that we would not be playing just notes but expressing this thing that we all shared as human beings. He thought it was our duty to work toward greater understanding and compassion.”[[29]](#footnote-29)

### Menuhin’s Books and Videos on Violin-Playing

As Menuhin integrated yoga into his study and practice of violin playing and teaching, he captured his approach in two important books, *Violin: Six Lessons with Yehudi Menuhin* (1971) and *Life Class* (*The Compleat Violinist*): *Thoughts, exercises, reflections of an itinerant violinist* (1986). Discussed in detail below, both books explicitly display the strong influence of Menuhin’s yoga practice in all three realms of body, mind, and spirit. They perhaps most clearly exemplify how yoga impacted Menuhin’s approach to violin technique and pedagogy, and even his musical life more broadly.

Like his yoga guru B.K.S. Iyengar developed a teaching method that instructs the student with clear actions to achieve body alignment and mastery of *asana* (yoga posture), Menuhin emphasized exact and detailed instructions for the “exercises” in his pedagogy to prepare the student’s body to master a solid violin technique. Aside from their likeness in creative temperament, both men also took a similar approach to understanding and teaching the physical mechanics of the body, and it is really no wonder Menuhin felt so drawn to Iyengar’s teachings when they first met in 1952. Yet, Menuhin’s method was not rigid as he sought to capture a fine level of subtlety in the actions of the body. His holistic approach allowed for the characteristics of each individual violinist, where “the teacher…must know how to temper and adjust these exercises according to the physical, psychological and emotional attributes of the pupil in front of him.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

Menuhin’s approach to violin playing and teaching embraced many yogic principles. The first benefits of his study and practice of *asana* and *pranayama* (breath control), the two outer physical limbs of yoga, helped him understand the mechanics of violin playing. While Menuhin incorporated this knowledge of body and breath into his pedagogy, his teaching also integrated the inner yoga limbs of *dharana* (concentration), *dhyani* (one-pointed attention), and *samadhi* (total absorption). As a true yogi, Menuhin understood how harnessing the power of concentration was the first stage of absorption to rid the mind of distractions while practicing the violin. Even as a young child, he caught himself slipping into rote practice while letting his mind wander, and he became worried enough to pull himself out of acquiring such dangerous habits. He carried this lesson-learned into his teaching that each student is responsible for their own concentrated practice, and how concentration is a kind of meditation: “A violinist, whether eight years old or fifty-eight, leads a solitary, meditative, ruminative life, and only he is accountable for the direction of his meditations.”[[31]](#footnote-31) Menuhin understood the great benefit of bringing these deeper levels of consciousness back to the conscious level of the body. He knew how “concentrated observation and practice of minuteness are gradually absorbed; the conscious brain is short-circuited,” and he would “make a point every so often of retrieving these least movements from the subconscious to give them an airing.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

Menuhin’s ongoing practice to achieve perfection in violin playing was like a yogi practicing to master *asana*. In yoga, a practitioner seeks a state of balance and equanimity by mastering the body through “effortless effort” of *asana*.[[33]](#footnote-33) Similarly, Menuhin’s quest, and what drew him to yoga in the first place, was to free the body of physical struggles in his violin playing. He sought a state of equanimity when performing, where the music flowed without apparent effort. After Menuhin found this state of grace, he endeavored to lead students to also find it.

#### Violin: Six Lessons with Yehudi Menuhin (1971)

Menuhin first formally transmitted his yoga knowledge to violin-playing in a six-part series of short films called [*Violin*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7BZV1btlK4&list=PL8P9oLjH35Eji_eQLUrj3vSayqRZ9IIhx) <Weblink 5.5> Each video, filmed at The Menuhin School, spans about twenty-five minutes, and the series includes students representing various stages of technical development. Soon after making these videos, Menuhin captured his ideas in the book *Violin: Six Lessons with Yehudi Menuhin* (1971). <Image 5.9> Each chapter of the book amplifies and explains the six lessons on film. Immediately in the Acknowledgements, Menuhin references the impact of his yoga practice in the lessons to follow. He expresses gratitude “to the man who I sometimes call ‘my best violin teacher,’ Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar, my yoga *guru*,’” and that “some of the principles I have evolved are based on yoga and on his teaching of yoga and several of the exercises in the first lesson are his inspiration.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

As Menuhin sets the stage in the Introduction for the chapters to come, he invokes many yogic principles to help with the task of mastering the violin. He points to ways to reduce “impediments of any kind”– the same great task of a yogi to remove obstacles on the way to liberation – through concentration (*dharana*) on the actual playing of the instrument, and also to “cultivate an attitude of mind and heart as well as certain habits of hygiene and general physical condition (*niyamas* and *asana*).”[[35]](#footnote-35) He stresses the importance of the “moral attitude” (*yamas*) as a “kind of bridge between the past and the future and between oneself and the outside world,”[[36]](#footnote-36) where dedicated practice (*abhyasa*) in solitude leads to the rewards when one gives of themselves to audiences in performance (*asmita*, non-ego). In addition to emphasizing how mental and physical health are crucial for a violinist to maintaining resistance and strength, Menuhin recommends a balanced diet with wholesome foods, free of stimulants like sugar, cigarettes, and alcohol. In the larger view, Menuhin aims to “provide the firm underpinnings of theory, method and application,” while specifying subtle details of instruction “to those minute movements, those inner feelings of parts of the fingers, which become, as it were, antennae.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

Before he even brings the actual instrument into play, Menuhin implicitly and explicitly references yoga in “Lesson One: General Preparatory Exercises.” Menuhin’s approach is based on what he calls “wave or pulse action, which reconciles conflicting impulses and directions in any one continuous activity.”[[38]](#footnote-38) He first wants to ensure the student has an awareness of the physical forces required for violin playing, and he describes movement in terms of ellipses, circles, and arcs. Conserving energy as momentum is essential in his approach. Menuhin captures the importance of balancing opposing forces in the body to create a point of equilibrium. He often returns to the basic idea of reconciling opposing forces, which echoes Patañjali’s sutra II.48 that describes how the practitioner will calmly accept dualities after practicing *asana* with “effortless effort.” Menuhin writes: “The wave action not only reconciles opposing forces by its ebb and flow, but also holds within itself the alternation of the active impulse and the passive momentum, the alternation of tension and relaxation. Within each cycle of movement there is moment of minimum effort and a point of perfect balance – I would call it the zero point.”

Menuhin explicitly integrates the yoga limbs *asana* and *pranayama* in his preparatory exercises. As in yoga, where a practitioner must first gain strength and control of the body before venturing into the realms of concentration, meditation, and total absorption, Menuhin introduces the violin student to techniques for training the body and controlling the breath as a foundation for mastering the violin. Menuhin understood how *prana* is the energizing life force, and he stresses how “it is essential to be aware of it while practicing.”[[39]](#footnote-39) He defines good breathing as the ability in inhale and exhale evenly over as long a period possible, and he offers breath exercises right out of *pranayama* instructions. His diagram <Image 5.10> illustrates “digital breathing,” where the practitioner alternately inhales and exhales through the right and left nostrils in a thin column of air while gently closing the other nostril.

Menuhin carefully explains the supreme importance of good posture as an essential foundation of violin playing exactly like a yoga teacher would explain how to practice *asana*. While it may appear that a yoga practitioner is passively holding a static pose, a good teacher provides instructions for the tremendous amount of internal work required to balance actions in some parts of the body with relaxation in others. Likewise, Menuhin stresses how one must discover a natural stance that will “absorb and accommodate the various movements of the body associated with playing the violin.”[[40]](#footnote-40) Just holding the violin can present the student with obstacles. The student must be able to hold the instrument in a natural posture to allow true freedom of movement and the ability to continuously adjust movements, which he claims is the “secret of violin playing.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

Like a good yogi, Menuhin directs the student to perform his exercises barefoot. He first directs the student to find the correct center of weight on the balls of the feet, and he essentially reframes Iyengar’s instructions for the foundational *tadasana* (mountain pose) as the basis for good posture. His Diagram 2, <Image 5.11> also illustrates the internal energy flow a student should try to feel throughout the body from the foundation in the feet to the head. Next, Menuhin outlines a series of stretching and balancing exercises, including what he calls [“the stork”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7BZV1btlK4&list=PLDLWkEm-ud7RedkBpuYEHasFuueIVGJdx) <Weblink 5.5 cue 16:22> <Image 5.12> done on one leg. His “swinging exercises” prepare movements for playing the violin. They call on his emphasis of continuous motion to stretch the arms, torso, shoulders, and back. <Image 5.13> To conclude his preparatory chapter, Menuhin provides instructions and diagrams for five basic yoga postures, the first four to be coordinated with three cycles of the breath: Prayer pose (*namaskar)* behind the back, shoulder stand, plough pose, bridge pose, and corpse pose. Shoulder stand <Image 5.14> and corpse pose <Image 5.15> are two sequential poses that typically conclude an Iyengar yoga class.

To Menuhin, “violin playing is an art of self-discovery”[[42]](#footnote-42), and in the following five chapters, he lays out his approach to actually playing the violin. Still, his instructions echo and build on his yoga-based exercises in the preparatory chapter as he addresses techniques for holding the bow in the right hand, holding the violin in the left hand and shoulder, bow movements, left-hand movements, and both hands together. Throughout his lessons. Menuhin emphasizes ways to release tension, and he shows how to maintain flexibility, balance, coordination, and integration in the body. He summarizes his holistic approach to violin playing in Lesson 6 in a reverential tone:

Like love which requires two to become one, so violin playing only becomes alive with the complete integration and co-ordination of both hands. To achieve this state (in which the breathing also plays an essential part), the whole of the upper body must itself be flexibly, yet firmly poised, ready to yield to and to reconcile, as well as to initiate and maintain the movements.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Finally, in Appendix I, Menuhin offers six hints on practicing, where he again calls on his yoga experience of physical practice and self-study (*svadhyaya*). Specifically, he advises the student to never clench the jaw (a standard yoga instruction, too!); concentrate on the breath; pause and return to a state of relaxation after exerting effort; and to focus the mind on concurrent details so to be “continually active, checking detail after detail.”[[44]](#footnote-44)

#### Life Class (The Compleat Violinist): Thoughts, exercises, reflections of an itinerant violinist (1986)

Fifteen years after publishing *Violin: Six Lessons*, Menuhin worked out many of his pedagogical ideas in his second book on violin playing *Life Class*. <Image 5.16> Also published under the title *The Compleat Violinist* in the US, the book moves beyond a narrow focus on violin training as it weaves together a narrative about Menuhin’s life as a musician, his “exercises” for the body, violin technique, and many of his ideas about music. Throughout the four chapters – “An Introduction,” “On Tour,” “On Composers and Performers,” and “Fiddler on the Hoof” – Menuhin intersperses vignettes on musical topics with a series of six Exercises accompanied by photos of his own demonstrations. In these Exercises, Menuhin continually returns to the theme of integration of body and motion in small and subtle actions for playing the violin, and he emphasizes awareness of the bodily space a violinist embraces when playing the instrument.

Throughout the work, Menuhin intertwines his knowledge and experience gleaned from yoga in subtle and direct ways. He especially echoes concepts from key yoga sutras regarding “effortless practice” as he presents ways to help a violinist to be free of body’s physical limitations that block the creative flow. Just as a regular yoga practice is meant to remove obstacles in the consciousness in order to “abide in one’s true nature,” Menuhin’s Exercises are intended to help violinists remove obstacles to their violin technique to achieve true musical expression of the self. While he emphasizes *asana* and *pranayama* in this book, Menuhin also touches on principles and concepts in the other six limbs of yoga – *yama*, *niyama*, *pratyahrara*, *dharana*, *dhyani*, and *samadhi*. In this personal and reflective work, Menuhin reveals deeper levels of integration of yoga and music as he touches on many themes related to his philosophical/spiritual belief system (discussed in detail in Chapter 6).

In the following pages, I illustrate Menuhin’s approach in *Life Class* with videos enacting his instructions for some of the Exercises. My student research assistant at Emory, violinist Catherine MacGregor, performs in the videos while I narrate Menuhin’s instructions. Catherine’s relevant written comments and interpretation of the exercises are included below the video links.

Beginning with characteristic honesty and humility in the introductory first chapter, Menuhin lets the reader know his work is not intended to be a strict method, but rather to share his knowledge. He only wishes “to set down experiences and exercises as they have crucially affected the only violinist I feel I can comment on with any authority – myself.”[[45]](#footnote-45) Yogic concepts and philosophy jump off the page as Menuhin describes his approach to violin playing – words and phrases such as “equilibrium;” the “body move moving in harmony” (union); “continuous refinement;” “search for enlightenment and harmony;” and how the mind must “continuously engage in routine checking to improve awareness” (*svadhyaya*). Like acquiring a *siddhi* (yogic power) upon discovering they are on the right path of heightened awareness and sensitivity, violinists will find “greater joy, greater elation, greater abandonment, [and] greater freedom….The effects will be felt in the musician and…also in the music, for the music will become a carrier of the musician’s own inner harmony. As he or she improves, so the music’s compelling, convincing, persuasive powers will increase in the same proportion.”[[46]](#footnote-46)As in *Violin: Six Lessons*, Menuhin includes yoga-based preparatory activities at the end of the Introduction in Exercises 1, including special attention to the feet and toes, stretching, and breathing.

Menuhin refers to yoga concepts as he reflects on his busy life as a musician on the road for over fifty years in the second chapter, “On Tour.” He relished the solitude of being “incarcerated” in hotel rooms, where he could be free of the “tyranny of time” and able to deeply concentrate (*dharana*) and find total absorption (*samadhi*) in preparing for concerts.[[47]](#footnote-47) Ever mindful of what he put into his body, Menuhin again stressed the importance of maintaining a clean diet free of sugar, alcohol, white bread, and desserts. “A Violinist’s Shopping List” includes foods and other items like herbal teas and bath essences he considered vital while on tour.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Part of Menuhin’s integration of yoga into his violin pedagogy in this chapter includes his own adaptions of yoga-like movements targeted for the violinist to achieve fluid body motions as well as demonstrating actual yoga poses. Following his warm-up techniques of bending and stretching, relaxing the neck, and balancing on the feet in Exercise 2, he illustrates the benefits of such standard yoga *asanas* as downward facing dog (what he calls “the press up”), shoulder stand, plough, and head stand. <Image 5.17> Then in Exercises 3, Menuhin explains his own techniques that promote freedom of movement in the arms that he calls “painting” and “golf swing,” and he offers instructions in other standard yoga postures especially well-suited to violinists, such as “working behind the back,” (*gomukasana*) and now what he calls “fiddler’s prayer” (*namaskar* behind the back) . <Image 5.18> Finally, Menuhin applies his exercises to the violin with “Shadow Fiddling,” specifically related to holding an imaginary violin and the bow. <Video 5.1>

Menuhin’s deeper yoga values surface in his third chapter, “Composers and Performance.” Even as he reflects on performing and interpreting the music of various composers from Bach and Beethoven to Bartok and Enesco, he muses on more philosophical issues. For example, in his reflections “On the Violinist,” Menuhin suggests universal yogic values like *ahimsa* (nonharming) as he discusses how artistry finds balance and subtlety in a world full of violence and barbarity, and how “true art teaches instead humility, tolerance, honour, and respect.”[[49]](#footnote-49) As the ASO violinist Chris Pulgram observed in the maestro’s teaching at the Gstaad Academy, Menuhin’s his own words express his belief in the duty of the musician to spread compassion through music. Even more, they express his fundamental belief in how such “enlightened human behavior” also applies to violin playing, and therefore he “looks upon music as the most complete exposition of the body and spirit of man – of our universe.”[[50]](#footnote-50)

Menuhin’s yoga-centered approach pervades the preliminary exercises in this chapter as he teaches interdependence of all parts of the body and how “no movement happens in isolation.”[[51]](#footnote-51) As he addresses the bow in Exercises 4. Menuhin asks the violinist to use her powers of observation (*svadhyaya*) while doing the actions of an upbow and downbow. Like a true yogi, he infuses a spiritual quality to these instructions through the word “surrender,” which helps the practitioner let go of tension, while also linking the motion to the breath (*pranayama*). Menuhin’s instructions are demonstrated for “Taking up the bow” <Video 5.2>, “Strengthening Exercises” <Video 5.3> and “The Push and the Pull” <Video 5.5>.

Menuhin’s cleverly-titled final chapter, “Fiddler on the Hoof,” conveys many other ways he integrated yoga into his life and teaching. In the opening narrative about his life as a travelling musician, he promotes a yogic-centered approach incorporating principles of the *niyamas*. For example, in dealing with critics Menuhin maintains *santosa* (contentment) as he humbly encourages “an attitude of acceptance and even gratitude” for the lessons both positive and negative reviews may teach a performer.[[52]](#footnote-52) In one short paragraph, “Against Drink and Drugs,” he upholds his values of *sauca* (cleanliness) as a means to prevent one of the nine yoga disturbances, *bhranti darsana* (living under an illusion). He advocates for keeping the body clean as he warns the performer against “anything that provides an illusion of assurance. Such false comforters have proved the undoing of many a great artist.”

Like dealing with the yoga obstacles (*klesas*), Menuhin’s discourse on “Nerves and Stage Fright” echoes yogic practice most profoundly in body, mind, and spirit as he shares his knowledge and experience of dealing with this bane of the performing musician. In a kind of karmic cause-and-effect framework, he stresses how it is “important to know that such an affliction is an end product, not a first cause.”[[53]](#footnote-53) Menuhin categorizes three such afflictions, namely technical problems, emotional tension, and fear, and he offers remedies for each.

First, a violinist must face the physical obstacles in the body that cause problems in their technique. Menuhin’s remedy, to have “faith in work over a very prolonged period,”[[54]](#footnote-54) strongly echoes Patañjali’s sutra I.14, “Long, uninterrupted, alert practice is the firm foundation for restraining the fluctuations."[[55]](#footnote-55) Furthermore, Menuhin’s insistence that a great deal of effort is required to master technique “to render it effortless”[[56]](#footnote-56) reframes Patañjali’s sutra II.47 for the musician: “Perfection in an *asana* is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached.”[[57]](#footnote-57) Then, like a promise in yoga to find Liberation, Menuhin describes the rewards of recognizing and correcting technical deficiencies. A continuous stream of integrated attention (*dhyana*) will result “when musician and music are joined in one even flow of body, mind, will, and imagination in which everything is correct and continuous.”[[58]](#footnote-58) Menuhin’s promise again echoes a yoga sutra, III.2, that states how “A steady, continuous flow of attention directed towards the same point or region is meditation.”

The second affliction, emotional tension during performance, presents more difficult hindrances in violin playing. Menuhin’s solution to calming such worries is to shore up concentration(*dharana*) in the mind and to stay in the present moment. Then, the performer may be free “to do his job…to translate what he sees in a composition, the ideal image of the score, into sound.”[[59]](#footnote-59) In short, the end result is a kind of *samadhi*, where the emotions of the performer flow unencumbered into the music.

Fear presents a third psychological obstacle to many performers, especially fear of failure and inadequacy. Menuhin encourages a performer to detach (*vairagya*) from such fears by removing the ego and letting go of outcomes in a performance. “The performer must give everything to the work; but he must not be dominated by it, he must not allow himself to be subject to one single exclusive dominant ambition or fear.”[[60]](#footnote-60) Menuhin suggests a way to counter the fear of memory lapses is to practice mental discipline, again concentration, by going through the musical scores in one’s head.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Menuhin concludes this exposition on facing the obstacles of nerves and stage fright by stressing the importance of rest and relaxation to calm the spirit. For him, yoga was a key to maintaining such inner peace. He acknowledges how, although he played the violin well when he was young, he did not really know *how* to play it. He remembers often being in a state of exhaustion or excitement, but as he later “became interested in yoga and other exercises as a means of developing a feeling of inner calm,” he learned how aging solo performers must “pace themselves and conserve energy – or they will crack beneath the strain.”[[62]](#footnote-62)

Menuhin sets out his yoga-centered approach for the handling the violin in the final two sets of Exercises in his fourth chapter, where he continually reinforces his approach to awareness of movement and its cause-and-effect. In Exercises 5, three examples demonstrate, namely “Putting up the violin,” <Video 5.5>, “The pivot of the elbow” <Video 5.6>, and “Rolling the violin.” <Video 5.7> Menuhin then calls upon a couple of key yogic concepts in “Some Warming Up Exercises.” <Video 5.8)> Like in the beginning of an *asana* class, he begins gently and progresses to more intensity by degrees as he encourages the violinist to develop heightened awareness of the fingers. To aid in the focusing the mind, Menuhin instructs how to coordinate the breath while humming on the exhale. This is an actual *pranayama* technique called *bhramari* breath (like a buzzing bee).

Two yogic-centered bowing exercises follow in Exercises 5. “Bowing But Not Scraping” <Video 5.9a> subtly breaks down the order of component parts of bowing into active motions and relaxation. “Rhythmic Pressures on the Bow” <Video 5.9b> instructs continued observations of the body movements, always with an eye to integrate them. His relevant paragraph on wrist flexibility <Video 5. 10> further instructs about the cause and effect of an integrated arm and wrist action, where a firm, though not rigid, “wrist and the base of the thumb (which is a crucial pivot) remains receptive to the momentum from the arm.”[[63]](#footnote-63)

Menuhin intersperses his practical exercises with other yoga-centered words of encouragement to the aspiring violinist. In his final Exercises 6, Menuhin first reminds the violinist to approach practice holistically, as “one is dealing with a living entity,” and to remember that “every action has its reaction.”[[64]](#footnote-64) As he deliberately touches on spiritual matters, Menuhin encourages the violinist to have trust in oneself and in the process of motion: “You must have faith in the motion and faith in the continuity of the motion – faith that it will carry you provided you go with it and not against it, and provided that through practice the trajectories along which the motion flows are perfected.”[[65]](#footnote-65)

Back to more practical matters, Menuhin points the violinist to finger dexterity in “Aiming for Flexibility of Thumb and Fingers Finger Exercises <Video 5. 11a>, followed by his “Finger Exercises.” <Video 11b>Menuhin relays his yogic mind/body perspective of how the player must relax and let go of tension in order to accomplish these actions. Invoking yet another core yoga concept of nonattachment (*vairagya*), he acknowledges how the natural human tendency is to “hold, to grasp, to cling to things. But this involves tension – and tension shortens the muscles. The result is loss of flexibility, a holding back, a fear – which has a bad effect on the playing.”[[66]](#footnote-66) To conclude these finger exercises, Menuhin again sounds like a yoga instructor encouraging the violinist to release, let go, and practice: “The violinist should be the least grasping of creatures. He or she has to learn to give, to open, to lift. These lifting and falling exercises, assiduously practiced, will give a very resilient, spring-like action to the fingers.”[[67]](#footnote-67) Menuhin demonstrates a good way to check one’s hand position in “Shifting.” <Video 5.12>

As a musician ultimately who absorbs himself in the sense of sound, Menuhin concludes his instructions by offering yoga-based suggestions for the violinist to control and study vibrato in his “Note on vibrato.” In keeping with the yogic practice of *svadhyaya* (study) Menuhin writes: “The violinist must learn to control every possible nuance of tone. It is a question of sensitivity, of subtlety, of learning to know yourself.” On the pure level of sound, he summarizes the benefits of his exercises and how they “point towards the possibility of sensing and welcoming these vibrations.”[[68]](#footnote-68) Finally, he reminds the student-reader that when practicing the violin she should always move from soft to loud, and from slow to fast by degrees. Again, like practicing *asana*, this instruction prompts the student to begin a practice session gently, then demand more from the body.

Menuhin encapsulates many aspects of yoga philosophy as he brings a spiritual perspective to his views on life and music in the conclusion of *Life Class*,“Images of the Self: Some Final Thoughts.” A violinist must draw on the imagination (*vikalpa*) to build a positive self-image and to visualize results of motions and actions. Again, this requires pure concentration with an eye on *ahimsa* (nonharming), rather than forcing oneself with a strong will into practicing hours, for “brutality has no place in the life of the violin.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Menuhin inspires hope by describing the fruits of such practice: “By analysis and cool development of subtle sensations I find that I have improved the quality of my sound, reduced tension, acquired greater precision and expression of pitch, liberated my musical inspiration and worked less.”[[70]](#footnote-70) His goal is to clear a channel by bringing the whole body into practice, to acquire the “readiness to express oneself, and that can happen only when all the avenues are clear.” (147) Finally, as a true yogi, Menuhin invokes equanimity, detachment, and self-study, in both life and work: “I advocate that in the handling of any problem in life one should aim for a balance, remaining sensitively responsive, analytical and pragmatic, with an attitude both critical and encouraging.”[[71]](#footnote-71) *Life Class* represents Menuhin’s life-long search for these qualities, and he dedicates it to “all his colleagues, young and old, in the hope that I may spare them time and trouble (though not effort and thought) and that they may thus be allowed to give and receive joy and wisdom, support and help in more abundant measure.”[[72]](#footnote-72)

# Menuhin’s Knowledge and Advocacy of Indian Music

As yoga intersected deeply with Menuhin’s approach to and teaching of violin playing, it also influenced his pursuit of knowledge of Indian music and sharing with the general reader and audience. While yoga led him to actively engage with Indian music as a performer, as discussed in Chapter 4, his curious mind led him study its musical structure and how it might connect to Western music. An underlying current of idealism consistently runs throughout his writings, along with his strong moral convictions about life and his spiritual belief in “unity in diversity.” In relation to these spiritual convictions, Menuhin’s engagement with yoga certainly influenced his burning zeal to advocate for and share knowledge of Indian music in particular.

Menuhin felt he had much to learn from the ancient culture of India after he started to practice yoga. As he studied, Menuhin fell in love with all things Indian, especially Indian music. He first went to India eager “to learn and thirst for new experiences, for new sounds, new colours, new concepts of music.”[[73]](#footnote-73) Menuhin’s fascination with classical Indian music ran deeply. Soon after his early trips to India in 1952 and 1954, Menuhin embarked on a holistic engagement with Indian music in body, mind, and spirit as he enthusiastically performed, studied, and promoted it with Ravi Shankar and his other “Indian colleagues.”

As Menuhin embarked on his study and practice of yoga during the 1950s and 1960s, those decades were also especially productive for him in his study of Indian music. He enthusiastically shared his knowledge and understanding of Indian music with the public through articles in newspapers and magazines, and on scripts for TV and radio programs. <Images 5.19, 5.20, 5.21 and 5.22> Some of his efforts “to bring East and West closer together on a cultural plane” coincided with his concerts, such in Sydney, Australia in 1962.[[74]](#footnote-74) By the time he first released the recording with Ravi Shankar *West Meets East* in 1966, Menuhin had already prepared the detailed program notes.[[75]](#footnote-75) Even as he became absorbed in other projects in the 1970s and 1980s, Menuhin continued to promote Indian music and support the country’s cultural events. He helped welcome Indira Ghandi to Great Britain with a message for the India League in 1971, and he wrote a message in 1972 for the Silver jubilee anniversary celebration of Indian independence. Menuhin enthusiastically participated in the BBS “World Phone In” with his reminiscences of India, and he contributed to a Festival of India celebration in the US in 1984.

Menuhin “felt all along the necessity to protect the arts of India,”[[76]](#footnote-76) and he became a special steward of Indian music on his broader educational mission. As he sought to illuminate the deep cultural connections he found between the West and the East, Menuhin wanted to show how and why Indian music was relevant to the world today. He continually worked out three main ideas about Indian music in his essays and programs. One idea traces the origins of Western music back to a source in Indian music; the second assesses how Western music adapted to Eastern influences; and the third idea proposes ways Western music could benefit from knowledge and exposure to Indian music. Menuhin’s continued efforts to working out these three ideas reflects his passion for Eastern music and his steady zeal to uncover the depths of its meaning in relation to Western music.

### Indian music as a source for Western music

Menuhin’s fascination to uncover the deep cultural connections he sensed between the West and the East, first inspired by his yoga practice, led him to believe Western music evolved from the East, along with influences from the Middle East, Hungary, Spain, and Africa. Perhaps stemming from his childhood fascination with gypsy music, Menuhin held that the gypsies were the link between East and West as they carried their music from India to eastern Europe, and eventually to Spain where it transformed into Flamenco. In short, eastern Europe became a musical crossroads of cultures, from which music evolved in northern Europe and beyond.[[77]](#footnote-77)

Menuhin emphasized this east-west connection in *West Meets East* by including Georges Enesco’s “Sonata for Piano and Violin” on the album. To Menuhin, Enesco embodied this link, and he highlighted how the Romanian composer represented a common cross-cultural connection between himself and Shankar in his program notes to the recording. Both Menuhin and Shankar encountered Enesco’s sphere of influence in the early 1930s in Paris, as Enesco used to listen to Shankar rehearsing Indian music, and Enesco took Menuhin to the Colonial Exhibition in Paris in 1932 to hear the Indonesian Gamelan Orchestra. Menuhin found Ensesco’s Sonata “miraculously translated his people’s improvised gypsy musical idiom into a formal and complete Western sonata…This could only happen through the mind and heart of one born and bred of a union between the intuitive world of the East and the crystallized and consolidated world of the West.”[[78]](#footnote-78)

Menuhin finally was able to formally communicate his idea about east-west musical connections on a program titled “From the Sitar to the Guitar” in 1995. Working with Ravi Shankar on this program from Brussels, Menuhin proposed his plan “…to illustrate the relationship between classical Indian music and Spanish Flamenco through the Gypsies who came from India.”[[79]](#footnote-79) The sitarist enthusiastically supported Menuhin’s idea and agreed to participate. He praised Menuhin’s vision: “Who but you in the West would have such a magnanimous heart and love for other traditions of art and culture to do this!”[[80]](#footnote-80) The program showed “the great trek of the Gypsies – the Romanians – from India to Spain both North and South of the Mediterranean over a thousand years,” which gave Menuhin “the realization of a lifetime desire to illustrate and make heard the voices of the oppressed.”[[81]](#footnote-81)

Still a spokesman and advocate of Indian music in the last years of his life, Menuhin reiterated his pet theory in a book review on Indian music in 1997. While he commended the work to be balanced and objective, Menuhin reflected more on the greatness of Ravi Shankar and “world music.” He wished the book had said more about “the great linking thread between India and Spain that connects the musical nomads of Rajashan via the Gypsies to the music of Andalusia.”[[82]](#footnote-82)

### How Western music adapted to Eastern influences

As Menuhin developed his idea of cross-fertilization between music of the East and West, he simultaneously explored how western music adapted to the influences of Indian music. He often compared and contrasted the two musics in his articles and programs, and he deduced western music reflected a culture of compromise resulting from a stream of myriad influences. Such compromises, Menuhin thought, yielded western music’s tuning system of equal temperament, and its approach to time and harmonic closure. He found western music to be “contrary to the very spirit of Indian classical music which is timeless and which shuns the clear and pronounced start or finish,” while he believed western harmony caused restrictions of “certain freedoms, elaborations, ornamentations, conventions and cadenzas of private initiation which exist in Indian music until this day.”[[83]](#footnote-83)

Menuhin particularly thought western harmony constricted free improvisation and ornamentation as it adapted to influences from Indian music. To him, the pure and sacred Indian music represented a synthesis of Art/Freedom in improvisation with Science in the *ragas* (melodic framework for improvisation) and rhythmic structure. Yet, Menuhin advocated for a meeting of the two cultures in the spirit of diversity: “Western music has a long history of absorbing and appropriating other influences…It thus becomes apparent that this meeting of opposites…is merely one more such fruitful encounter in a long history of such nuptial flights.”[[84]](#footnote-84)

Through his idea about how Western music adapted to Eastern influences, Menuhin found ways to reach the educated layperson in his articles and programs. He typically introduced the sitar, which was an exotic and foreign instrument to most readers and audiences, and he tried to frame the sounds of Indian music within known contexts of Western music.For example, he liked to explain how certain melodic strands in Western music adapted Indian melodic ideas that had also evolved into Greek, Gypsy, and Arabic modes. He framed the standard Western musical elements of rhythm, instrumentation, and form in terms of the Indian *raga* and art of improvisation. In particular, Menuhin opened the door to American listeners through the key rhythmic element of Indian music by relating it to jazz rhythm. Menuhin also provided a western analog for Indian melody by comparing the *raga* to the 12-tone row, which he found to be “the equivalent of the Indian *raga* or model scale,” although “the [12-tone] system has not yet discovered the subtleties and varieties of mood which come of using a limited number – nine, eight or seven tones– as the Indian musician knows so well.”[[85]](#footnote-85)

Beyond comparing such musical elements between West and East, Menuhin believed sharing his knowledge of Indian music would help open people’s minds. His unwavering belief in “unity in diversity” always appealed to the higher aspects of the human spirit: “Despite the vast contrast in civilizations, the wonderful thing about mankind is precisely that we have it within us, instinctively and consciously, to conduct and find a sympathetic response for everything, including our opposites.”[[86]](#footnote-86)

### How Western music could benefit from Indian music

Just as Menuhin found the practice of yogato benefit his violin playing and teaching, he believed a cross-cultural fertilization with Indian music could benefit Western musicians. In particular, Menuhin held that Indian musicians were especially skilled in ornamentation, melody, and rhythm, with an “acute and accurate sense of hearing and pitch,” and that we could cross-fertilize without “damaging the roots and trunk of the tree of Indian…yet bring forth wonderful fruit.”[[87]](#footnote-87) Menuhin enumerated six areas where Western music can benefit from and be influenced by Indian music, most of which echo yogic spiritual overtones regarding flexibility, freedom, and unity. As discussed in Chapter 4, Menuhin also cites improvisation as a means to unlock the creative spirit in a performer. His list of how Indian music can influence Western music, with yoga-related concepts in bold-face, includes:

“1) the **flexibility** of the tone-row; 2) melodic **freedom** and invention, including ornamentation; 3) the peculiar technique of **uniting** melody and pulse in Indian music, so different from that **union** of melody and pulse in jazz; 4) the ability to improvise, together with the particular training required and the **release** of inspired creative energies in the performer; (5) the quality of serenity, a type of unique, exalted and personal **expression of union with the infinite**, as in infinite love; 6) the study of the incredibly complex rhythmic organization of Indian music….This is a prime example of unbounded intellectual complexity holding the emotional surge in check.”[[88]](#footnote-88)

Menuhin believed Western violinists in particular had much to learn from Indian violinists, especially by studying Indian techniques like the glissando and intonation. “Our music and our stance is, in fact, alien to the perfection of the glissando technique as it exists in Indian music.”[[89]](#footnote-89) Menuhin also admired how Indian musicians have great accuracy of pitch and ability to play in tune “unencumbered by the fuzz of the keyboard harmonies.”[[90]](#footnote-90)

Menuhin further suggested ways Indian music could revitalize western contemporary composers by providing new compositional resources. While he did not fault the modern composers, who have lost the quality of “serene exaltation” he found in Indian music, since we have little of that quality to draw on in our civilization, he issued a kind of call to action for them to “help us find this quality again.”[[91]](#footnote-91)

Through print, television, and musical recordings, Menuhin disseminated his knowledge of this so “unbelievably rich and wonderfully inspiring culture.”[[92]](#footnote-92) Ever the idealist, Menuhin believed the cultural exchange between Indian and Western cultures benefited not only musicians but Westerners in general to acquire such values as non-commercialism, a new sense of time, and order of life. He sought to help people understand “this incredible contrast between the American and the Indian, between the new world and that very old world of India and when we will be given a chance to deepen our understanding of each other and to share the future in harmony an inspiration.”[[93]](#footnote-93)

1. Such as *The Music of Man* (1979), *Menuhin Music Guides* (1980s), and *The Violin* (1996). His important essays and lectures from 1949-1970 have been collected in *Theme and Variations* (1972). See Bibliography for list of Menuhin’s books. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Yehudi Menuhin, “Be Sensitive to Small Sensations,” *Music Insider Newsletter*, March, 1982, Foyle Menuhin Archive, Royal Academy of Music, London. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Yehudi Menuhin, *Unfinished Journey: Twenty Years Later* (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1997), 376. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Humphrey Burton, *Menuhin: A Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 411. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Menuhin, *Unfinished Journey*, 385. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Burton, *Menuhin: A Life*, 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Menuhin, *Unfinished Journey*, 373. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid., 374-375. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid., 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid., 379. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid., 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid., 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid., 388. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid., 389. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Yehudi Menuhin School Student Interview Transcripts, 1964, Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Menuhin quote in Irving Kolodin, “Education on the Menuhin Plan,” November 27, 1965, Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Yehudi Menuhin, “Man: By Definition a Religious Animal: Of the sacredness of consciousness, conscience and choice,” *World Faiths Insight* (Spring 1981): 3, Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Menuhin, Unfinished Journey, 425. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Natasha Boyarsky, violin instructor, Yehudi Menuhin School, interview with Catherine MacGregor and Kristin Wendland, Surrey, England, March, 15, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Menuhin, Unfinished Journey, 383. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. “Remembering Yehudi,” August 10, 2016, The Yehudi Menuhin School Archive, yehudimenuhinschool.co.uk. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Menuhin, *Unfinished Journey*, 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Nicola Benedetti, violinist, interview with Catherine MacGregor and Kristin Wendland, London, England, March 16, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Menuhin, quote in Burton, *Menuhin: A Life*, 465. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Lysy had already started other chamber groups in Argentina, including the Camerata Bariloche in 1967 and Camerata Lysy in 1971. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Lisa Yancich, interview with Catherine MacGregor, Atlanta, GA, October 2017, and Kristin Wendland via email, August 18-20, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Christopher Pulgram interview with Catherine MacGregor, Atlanta, GA, December 2017, and Kristin Wendland via email, August 18-20, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Yehudi Menuhin, *Violin: Six Lessons with Yehudi Menuhin* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Menuhin, Unfinished Journey, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid., 321. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Patañjali’s sutra II.47, “Perfection in an *asana* is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached,” from B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali* (London: Thorsons, 1996), 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Menuhin, *Violin: Six Lessons* *with Yehudi Menuhin*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid., 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ibid., 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid., 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid., 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ibid., 18. Author’s note: A violinist must constantly and subtlety shift the position of their fingers on the strings in order to play with perfect intonation, which requires concentrated listening and complete physical presence in the moment. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Menuhin, Lesson Six video. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Menuhin, *Violin: Six Lessons* *with Yehudi Menuhin*, 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Ibid., 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Yehudi Menuhin, *Life Class* (London: Heinemann, 1986), ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Ibid., 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ibid., 27-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid., 34-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid., 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid., 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Ibid., 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ibid., 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ibid., 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Menuhin, *Life Class*, 124-125. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Menuhin, *Life Class*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ibid., 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid., 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ibid., 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid., 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ibid., 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ibid., 136-137. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Ibid., 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid., 139-141. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ibid., 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ibid., 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ibid., 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibid., 145-146. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ibid., 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. BBC interview with Aley Hasan, Nov. 17, 1960, Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Yehudi Menuhin, “Indian and Western Music: An attempt to forecast future trends,” *Hemisphere:* *An Asian-Australian Magazine* (Sydney, Australia, April 1962), Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. “Mr. Menuhin’s Notes for Sleeve of Record with Ravi Shankar,” July 5, 1966, typescript, Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Yehudi Menuhin, “An Ancient Art and a New Experience,” Ravi Shankar’s program in honor of Alaudin Khan, Dec. 3, 1972, Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. # While Menuhin dates these east-west common origins to around 1,000 years ago, archeologists have indeed traced migration of near-eastern farmers into southeastern Europe about 8,000 years ago, where the two cultures mixed in the area of the Danube, and “southeastern Europe continued to be a nexus between east and west after the arrival of farmers…” “The genomic history of southeastern Europe,” accessed August 20, 2019. <https://www.nature.com/articles/nature25778>.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Menuhin, notes for record sleeve of record with Ravi Shankar. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Menuhin letter to Ravi Shankar, Oct. 14, 1994, Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Burton, *Menuhin: A Life*, 479. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Yehudi Menuhin, “The reification of rhythm,” *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, (July 11, 1997). Book review of *Indian Music and the West* by Gerry Farrell. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Menuhin, “Indian and Western Music: An attempt to forecast future trends.” [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Yehudi Menuhin, typescript of Ford Foundation *Omnibus* program, Salt Lake City, March 16, 1955, Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Yehudi Menuhin, “The Music of India,” in *Theme and Variations* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Yehudi Menuhin, “The Music of India, an Ancient Art Form” (*New York Times*, Sunday, April 17, 1955) and “Indian and Western Music: An attempt to forecast future trends.” [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Menuhin letter to Dr. Satyanath in response to the BBC World Phone-In Program, November 4, 1983, Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Menuhin, “The Music of India, an Ancient Art Form.” [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Yehudi Menuhin, 1985 Festival of India message, undated typescript message, Foyle Menuhin Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)