A Song that Walked the World

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Garry Schyman's *Praan* "says" things about Life, but specifically in musical terms. Any attempt to reproduce its musical statement in your own words is doomed to failure. You cannot isolate the truth contained in it; its truth and its beauty are two and yet, mysteriously, one. As Palbasha Siddique's ethereal voice gathers power in *Praan*, you feel instinctively attuned to its melody which seems akin to watching a painting that is slowly changing in a constantly moving canvas of sound. It produces emotions in your mind, but afterward most of them fade away. What remains?

To find the answer you have to know Matthew Harding.

At 23, Matthew Harding, a video game developer from Connecticut, USA moved to Brisbane, Australia, where it is common for people to take off and travel around the world a while before getting 'serious' in life. So in early 2003, he quit his job to go exploring Southeast Asia. He created a website to keep his family and friends updated about where he was. A friend, using a Canon pocket camera with the capacity to record short video shot Harding doing his signature dance moves on the streets of Hanoi. His dance—an arm swinging, knee-pumping step, turned out to be a hit on the internet. So he kept doing it wherever he went. An online equivalent of a platinum hit, it has been watched by millions of people all over the world since then. He has turned up, grinning and bouncing, with Bushmen in New Guinea, Bollywood-style dancers in India, crowds of free spirits in Madrid, Montreal and Tokyo and even a stone-jawed military policeman in the Korean demilitarised zone. Sometimes he dances alone. From tulip fields in the Netherlands to geysers in Iceland, he has danced in cities in more than a hundred countries. "I lost count," says Harding via email. Once he showed up in the Nellis Airspace in Nevada, to perform in zero gravity.



PHOTO COURTESY: MATTHEW HARDING

In 2008, a marketing company approached him for making an official video of his dance. Harding needed some original music. He approached Garry Schyman, the only composer he knew—who has written music for films, video games and TV shows including the *A-Team* and *Magnum P.I.* Schyman says via email, "I almost said no because I did not understand the concept. Besides, I am an orchestra composer. I am not a song writer or a lyricist." Harding felt that the nature of the video lent itself to a non-English approach and Schyman thought that a Tagore poem would be perfect for the song. "I found an English translation of Gitanjali and read through it, hoping one of the poems would fit the tone of the video. *Stream of Life* beautifully articulated the feeling I hoped to express," says Harding. In the mean time Schyman started doing what he does best. "I actually wrote the melody and chord changes before setting it to Tagore's poem," says Schyman.

Now who could sing it?

Harding's girlfriend, Melissa who was the co-producer of the video started searching for singers. None of them sounded right. She was looking for someone who sings in Bangla and is capable of