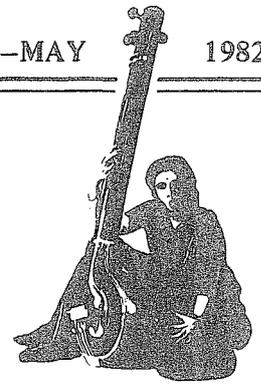




INDIAN MUSIC

NEWSLETTER



A bi-monthly information paper for lovers of Indian music in the West. Editors: Huib Schippers, Jane Harvey. Post Box 10088, Amsterdam, Holland.

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first issue of the 'Indian Music Newsletter'. We intend to publish it on a bi-monthly basis, and we hope it will help to provide a means of communication between all those who have a serious interest in Indian music in the West.

Indian music concerts have slowly begun to be accepted as a serious contribution to the cultural life of the West, but there is still much work to be done. It is rare to find newspapers and magazines which are willing to devote enough space to useful reviews or in-depth articles on Indian classical music. All too often, one comes across dismissal of Indian music as merely 'folk music', due to lack of understanding of the basic structures of the classical form.

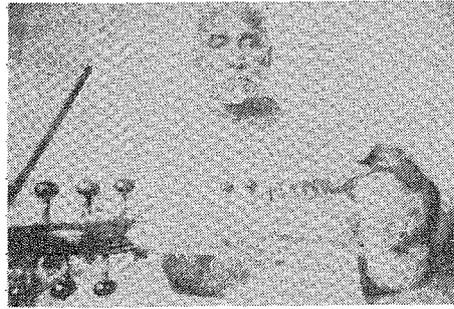
Now that the fashionable (and largely uncritical) era of Indian music in the sixties and early seventies is past, there are still a great number of music lovers in the West who enjoy listening to Indian music concerts. Many times members of the audience express a desire to have more background information about the music and musicians, to enhance their understanding and enjoyment.

The first issue includes an introduction to Indian classical music in performance (see page 3), which will be followed in future issues by more detailed articles on the various aspects.

The 'Newsletter' will also publish reviews (of concerts, records, books etc.), interviews with artists, and historical, biographical and other background articles on the music. Announcements of coming concerts will be combined, wherever possible, with background information for these concerts.

'Indian Music Newsletter' will mainly deal with North Indian classical music, as most Indian concerts in the West are of this type. Even so, we will also leave room for articles on South Indian music and occasionally for articles on dance, being closely connected with the music.

The 'Newsletter' works on a non-profit basis. The most essential way of supporting it is by subscribing. You will find more extensive information about subscription and donation subscriptions on the back page.



Ustad Allauddin Khan

INDIAN MUSIC AND THE WEST

Every year there are numerous concerts of Indian classical music in the West. Nobody is surprised at this. Still, it is only during the last 25 years or so that Indian music has found its way to a large Western audience.

Before this century, contact between Indian music and the West mostly took place in India. Travellers reported on the music there with different degrees of appreciation. Reactions like these were not uncommon:

"They delight much in musicke, and have many stringed and wind instruments, which never seemed in my ears to be any thing but discord" (Edward Terry, ca. 1619).

"The instruments were costly and of curious workmanship. To the violin the drums were added in concert, assisted with the voice of the musicians, whose ill tun'd notes and imperfect cadence made most lamentable discord. When they had sufficiently persecuted our ears..." (John Burnell, ca. 1712).

Other Westerners held different views. The most important of these is N.A. Willard, who wrote in *A Treatise on the Music of Hindoostan* (1834):

"It is perhaps owing to this general want of acquaintance with it, that Oriental music is not so much esteemed as perhaps its merit deserves."

The first time Indian classical music was actually performed in the West was probably in Paris, during the World Exhibition of 1855. It was also at this time that ethnomusicology started to develop, but its main concern then was studying those 'quaint' instruments rather than the music.

The time was probably not yet ripe for deep enjoyment of music from a different culture.

Successful colonialism had convinced the West that the culture with the greatest military and political power also possessed the finest art. Everything but Western classical music was 'folk music'.

However, in the period following this, some of our Western composers found inspiration for their compositions in Indian music.

A next important musical step was the work of the Sufi leader and vina player Inayat Khan, who came to the West in 1910. His music was appreciated in places, but he had to make his living by playing for Indian-inspired dances by Westerners. Inayat Khan even played to the dances of the famous Mata Hari!

Spirituality and dance have always been good vehicles for presenting Indian music in the West. Between the two World Wars there was the Paris-based dancing troupe of Uday Shankar. Amongst the members of his group were his younger brother Ravi and the musician who would train him to greatness, the legendary Allauddin Khan. The group was quite successful, but there was still no breakthrough for Indian music itself.

Then, in the mid-fifties, the famous violinist Yehudi Menuhin invited sarod maestro Ali Akbar Khan and later Ravi

(Continued on page 2, col. 2)



Sufi Inayat Khan

INDIAN MUSIC

NEWSLETTER

Published by Stichting Tritantri Vidyapeeth
Edited by Huib Schippers and Jane Harvey
Post Box 10088, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

We are very grateful to Joep Bor and Wim v.d. Meer for their advice.

STICHTING TRITANTRI

In 1972 Jamaluddin Bhartiya and his assistant, Darshan Kumari, opened an Indian music school in Amsterdam under the name Tritantri Vidyapeeth. Slowly organising activities grew and for a legal basis the Stichting Tritantri Vidyapeeth was founded. (A stichting is a non-profit foundation). The main aim of Tritantri is the promotion of Indian music in the West. Its funds derive from benefit concerts and support from the Indian government. Up to now Stichting Tritantri has been mainly concerned with organising concerts, but it has also published a record, and there are plans for publishing books and giving grants for studies in India to promising music students.

The editors are very grateful to Stichting Tritantri for the financial aid that made publishing this first newsletter possible.

THE EDITORS

Huib Schippers has been intensively studying sitar under constant guidance from his guru, Jamaluddin Bhartiya, since 1975. He has performed at many concerts, sometimes together with his teacher. For the theoretical side he has read widely on Indian music. He gives lectures about different aspects and is Indian music critic for one of Holland's biggest newspapers.

Jane Harvey is a vocal student of Jamaluddin Bhartiya, who learned from Amir Khan. The mid-seventies she spent working in and travelling around many Asian countries, including India. She has several years experience in editing and publishing, and is currently assistant editor for a small English-language literary magazine published in Amsterdam.

WRITING FOR THE NEWSLETTER

We would welcome the submission of articles on relevant topics concerning Indian music, although we cannot promise to print everything we receive. However, our main idea in making this Newsletter is that we edit, but not actually write everything. So please, if you would like to participate in a critical exchange of views and information via the Newsletter, send in your articles (and/or photos). Unfortunately we do not have the kind of budget necessary to pay writers, but

PHILOSOPHY BEHIND INDIAN MUSIC NEWSLETTER

Whenever we are confronted with a work of art – be it a book, a sculpture or a piece of music – there are two forces working. One is that of our previous experience or knowledge, the other our capacity to stretch these to encompass the new.

We do not feel fulfillment when, in search of an aesthetic experience, we come across a cheap novelette or unimaginative pop music. They do not create the tension of the 'stretching'. At the other end of the scale, we may encounter a work of art that is so far from our understanding that we are unable to encompass it fully.

On first seeing the Ragini Todi painting (reproduced here in monotone), few Westerners could respond as a connoisseur might. The connoisseur would recognise symbolism and consequently deeper meaning, and probably be aware of the different traditions of miniature painting, with hundreds of comparable miniatures in his mind to judge this one. His enjoyment – or rejection – of this painting would be based on a much deeper understanding than ours.

A lack of understanding may also result in false judgement. Some may consider the lack of realistic perspective as a sign of primitiveness, instead of a particular choice of style.

This mistake is often made in the case of Indian music. On first hearing, many listeners find Indian music 'monotonous', because they include Western musical concepts, such as counterpoint and harmony, in their judgement. Indian music needs to be judged according to its own values.

INDIAN MUSIC AND THE WEST

(Continued from page 1)

Shankar over to America. At last a more widespread appreciation for Indian music started developing, a hundred years after the introduction of the music in the West.

The major breakthrough, however, came almost ten years later. 'Beatle' George Harrison asked Ravi Shankar to teach him sitar. By accepting, Ravi Shankar suddenly

It is important to note that these values come from a culture different from our own. Not so different, however, that it is impossible to bridge the gap.

With this 'newsletter' we will try to make clear which are the underlying structures and values of Indian music. Knowing these can result in a greater understanding and enjoyment of Indian classical music in performance.



Ragini Todi miniature

found himself pushed to pop star status. He was admired by youth all over Europe and America, even playing at pop festivals such as 'Woodstock' and 'Concert for Bangla Desh'.

Unfortunately, this popularity had its negative sides. Serious music lovers, Ravi Shankar himself amongst them, regretted that the enjoyment of Indian music at that time was largely based upon false assumptions, rather than on understanding of the music. Even so, it brought Indian music to the ears of many. It opened up the possibility for many top-ranking artists from India to come and perform here.

Many Westerners started taking a serious interest in the music, in both a practical and a scholarly way. Some went to India, others found Indian musicians who had started teaching in the West.

The explosive popularity declined towards the mid-seventies. But it seems that quite a large number of serious music lovers have made Indian music a stable presence in the cultural life of the Western world of today.

we may be able to help with postage costs if needed.

We urgently need up-to-date concert information for all over Europe, so organisers, please write to us.

Send enquiries, reactions to the Newsletter, articles, photos, concert dates etc. to the following address:

Indian Music Newsletter
Post Box 10088
1001 EA Amsterdam
The Netherlands.

BASICS OF INDIAN MUSIC – INTRODUCTION / A CONCERT OF INDIAN MUSIC

Under the title of 'Basics of Indian Music' we will present a series of articles about different aspects of Indian music, concentrating on the ones that are important to fully understand and appreciate actual concerts.

The introduction printed below is also a preview of the subjects that will be dealt with more extensively in future issues, such as raga, tala, improvisation, styles, musicians, instrumental and vocal music, the audience, and so on.

When we use the term 'Indian music', we are usually referring to the North Indian (or Hindustani) tradition of classical music. It is important to realise that there are many other musical traditions in India. South Indian classical music (or Carnatic music), although based on the same system, is quite different from its Northern counterpart. Also there are many types of folk music. After all, the Indian sub-continent covers an area exceeding that of Western Europe, and encompasses as many or more different cultures as Europe. In addition there is the highly popular film music, the equivalent of Western pop music.

Even within the confines of North Indian classical music there are a number of styles. The oldest and deepest classical style is *dhrupad*, which flourished at the Moghul courts in the 16th and 17th centuries. In spite of its great merits, *dhrupad* in its pure form is now virtually extinct. Its influence remains in many areas of classical music, but the predominant style is now *khayal*, which leaves more room for imaginative and virtuoso performance.

Finally there are the light classical genres, which have less strict rules than *dhrupad* or *khayal*. The most important of these is *thumri*. Close to this style is *dhun*, in which instrumentalists elaborate upon folk song melodies. Sometimes artists will perform even lighter music, such as *batiali* (Bengali boat songs), *ghazals* (love songs in the Urdu language) or *bhajans* (devotional songs).

Even within one style there is the division between the different *gharanas* or schools, but the clear distinctions between these are fading. However, there are great differences in the conception of the music by individual musicians.

INSTRUMENTS

The most important classification in the actual sounds produced is obviously between voice and instrumental music (leaving aside the varied qualities in sound of individual voices or the differences in the way a particular instrument is made or played). The main factors with instruments are their technical qualities and limitations.

The voice is widely considered to be the basis of Indian music. The *sarangi*, a bowed instrument, approaches the sound and qualities of the voice most. It is often used to accompany vocal music. The music of the *shehnai* (oboe) and *bansuri* (bamboo

flute) is also clearly voice-based.

Over the years, 'non-vocal' techniques have evolved for *sitar* and *sarod*: for instance the *jhala* technique (characterised by a frequent use of the high drone strings on the instrument) at the end of *chor* and *drut gat* (see 'Performance'). But still many instrumentalists find inspiration in vocal music. Quite interestingly, instrumental techniques have also influenced vocal music.

Even further away from the voice are the *santur*, *harmonium*, *jaltarang* (a row of cups tuned to different pitches) and related instruments. These have in common that they cannot produce the gliding notes (*meend*, pronounced *meend*) that are so basic to Indian music. They are not generally accepted as classical instruments.

PERFORMANCE

North Indian classical music is a living tradition. The music is not written down, but is handed down orally, or rather aurally, from teacher to student and has been so for centuries. No wonder there are such great differences in performance practice. Still, most Indian concerts will recognisably follow the pattern set out below.

The musicians come onto the stage. Sometimes they touch it before sitting down, for a performance is a spiritual experience as well as a musical one.

Usually there are three musicians: a *tambura* (or *tanpura*) player, a *tabla* player and the soloist, whether a singer or an instrumentalist.

First the soloist tunes the *tambura*, which will provide the essential background drone all through the performance. Next he tunes his own instrument, if necessary. Finally the smaller drum of the *tabla*, the percussion instrument, is tuned to the drone.

Then the actual performance begins. The artist starts with *alap*, an arrhythmic introduction to the *raga* he (or she) plays. (The *alap* portion is an influence from the *dhrupad* style. In pure *khayal*, *alap* is sung within the composition, to rhythmic accompaniment.) First the artist establish-

es the tonic and then explores the tonal material note for note and phrase for phrase, slowly revealing the melodic structure of the *raga*.

Alap is considered to be the most difficult to perform. From listening to it one is convinced that a *raga* is not just a scale or a melody. Rather, it is a refined basis for improvisation that has grown and ripened over many centuries, providing the musician with a framework to express his musicality to great advantage.

Often *alap* moves on to *chor*. Here, improvisations in the manner of *alap* are elaborated on a pulse beat. There is no recognisable rhythmic structure yet.

The introduction of rhythmic structures, or *tala*, is clearly marked by a solo improvisation on *tabla* to the composition of the soloist. This improvisation ends with a stress on *sam* (pronounced *sum*), the first beat of the constantly repeated rhythmic cycle. After that the soloist improvises while the *tabla* player indicates the basic rhythmic pattern. It is a widespread misunderstanding that this rhythm is too complicated for Westerners to follow. This is especially true for the most common *tala*, *tintal*, a cycle of sixteen beats divided into four groups of four beats. The most clearly distinguishable beat is *sam*. Many times this moment is indicated by a nod from one musician to the other. *Sam* is a moment of relief after improvisations.

Most times, artists start with a slow composition. In instrumental compositions one beat in slow tempo takes about one second: in vocal, usually much longer. The tempo of the composition may increase as the performance proceeds. The slow composition is followed by a fast composition, sometimes after one in medium speed.

The improvisations become increasingly fast and virtuosity begins to play a role. However, good musicians will only use their technical skills to enhance the musical quality of the performance, creating a worthy climax. How well musicians conform to these patterns is up to the critical audience to judge.



Ali Akbar Khan (*sarod*) and Zakir Hussain (*tabla*) reach *sam*, a moment of relief.

CONCERT AGENDA

'Indian Music Newsletter' will try to present as complete a picture as possible of important Indian concerts in the west. Of course, we do not appear so frequently that we can be completely up to date. Also we depend on others to send us information and sometimes the communications may fail. For this first issue, our information system was still far from perfect. Nonetheless, we are able to give some information about artists we know are touring Europe in April-May.

HARIPRASAD CHAURASIA - *bansuri*, Amsterdam March 28, April 2 (see below for detailed concert information)

The *bansuri* or bamboo flute has been an important folk instrument for centuries. Only recently has it acquired the status of a classical concert instrument. Much of this is owing to the musical performance of the late Pannalal Gosh on this instrument.

At present there are a number of classical flautists, amongst whom Chaurasia is widely considered to be the best. Although he started studying at a later age than usual for Indian artists, the combination of good teachers, hard practice and a natural aptitude have made him a noteworthy artist.



Nasir Aminuddin Dagar

SHIV KUMAR SHARMA - *santur*; **ZAKIR HUSSAIN** - *tabla*, Amsterdam, April 24.

The *santur* is an instrument of Persian descent, but it has been known in India for many centuries, especially as a Kashmiri folk instrument.

Shiv Kumar Sharma was the first to present serious classical music on his adapted version of the *santur*. Although one may argue that the *santur* is unable to produce all sounds necessary to make classical Indian music, Shiv Kumar succeeds in making his concerts quite interesting. Part of this is due to his gift for rhythm (he was trained to be a *tabla*-player as well).

The rhythmic accompaniment by Zakir Hussain, who is considered to be one of India's best *tabla*-players, will certainly add to the music, especially since the two have much experience in playing together.

NASIR AMINUDDIN DAGAR - *dhrupad* singing, London May 27, 29, 30.

The *dhrupad* style is the oldest style of North Indian classical music still in existence. The famous musicians of historical times in India at the Mughal courts, such as Tansen, practised this style. Although *dhrupad* has left clear marks on present day music practice, there are only a few left who practise it in its pure form.

The Dagar Brothers are the most famous *dhrupad* singers from India. They come from a family which has practised this style for 17 generations. Nasir Aminuddin Dagar is the surviving half of the 'elder Dagar Brothers'; the 'younger' are in Delhi at present.

His performance for the India Festival 1982 will consist of a demonstration (May 27) and two performances (May 29 & 30).

INTERNATIONAL DATES

Friday 2 April, 8.30 p.m.

Hariprasad Chaurasia - *bansuri*, **Markandey Mishra** - *tabla*. Mozes en Aäronkerk, Waterloooplein 59, Amsterdam.

Saturday 24 April, 8.30 p.m.

Shiv Kumar Sharma - *santur*, **Zakir Hussain** - *tabla*. Mozes en Aäronkerk, Waterloooplein 59, Amsterdam.

Thursday 27 May, 7.30 p.m.

Nasir Aminuddin Dagar - *dhrupad* singing, demonstration. Purcell Room, Belvedere Road, London SE1.

Sat. & Sun. 29, 30 May, 3 p.m.

Nasir Aminuddin Dagar - *dhrupad* singing. Studio 2, Riverside Studios, Crisp Road, London W6.



This year sees quite a large festival of Indian culture being organised in Great Britain. On March 22 (before this Newsletter appears), the festival will have been inaugurated by a concert at which Ravi Shankar and Subbulakshmi were due to perform. All over England, presentations of many aspects of Indian culture are planned. There are many exhibitions, some plays, gala nights and many dance performances.

Unfortunately, there will be only a few concerts of Indian classical music. So far, only a *dhrupad* programme by Nasir Aminuddin Dagar (in May, see agenda), a sitar recital by Nikhil Banerjee (September 24) and the 'end of festival concert' (November 14) have been arranged.

The most interesting dance performances will take place on April 8, 10, 11: *Orissi dance* by Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra and Sanjukta Panigrahi, and May 8, 9: *Kathak dance* by Birju Maharaj.

Further information can be obtained from Stanley Hodgson, Festival of India, room 64/G, Government offices, St. George Street, London SW1A 1AA.

HOW TO GET THE INDIAN MUSIC NEWSLETTER

The first issue of the Newsletter is being sent out free of charge, but for the second issue onwards we will need to charge a subscription fee, which will include postage.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you would like to receive the Newsletter on a regular basis, send us an **International Postal Money Order** made out to Indian Music Newsletter. For a year's subscription rate you will receive six bi-monthly issues. Please help to support recognition of Indian Music by becoming a regular subscriber or donor subscriber.

REGULAR SUBSCRIPTIONS (including postage): Hfl. 15.- (Holland), £3,50 (UK), \$8,- (US airmail), or other international equivalent.

DONOR SUBSCRIPTIONS: We also need donations from those who can afford more, to help us continue to meet printing and production costs until the Newsletter becomes established on a subscription basis. Please send whatever you can afford over and above the regular subscription rate.

SEND SUBSCRIPTIONS TO: Post Box 10088, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.



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KHAYAL

In issue no. 2 we presented a condensation of the chapter on dhrupad from Wim v/d Meers 'Hindusthani music in the 20th Century'. Now we present an adapted version of his chapter on khayal, which naturally follows the one on dhrupad. Also it will serve as a background for the khayal concerts by Bhimsen Joshi, who is touring the West during these months.

In the realm of dhrupad there is room for considerable variation. But variation is a characteristic of khayal, which is at present the predominant style in vocal music. We will try to give some idea of what khayal is, in spite of the great deal of confusion which surrounds it.

Khayal started flourishing in the first half of the 18th century. The most important figure of this time was Niyamat Khan, more generally known as Sadarang. His beautiful compositions brought about the breakthrough for khayal. Dhrupad had become too sober and unworldly to suit the sensual atmosphere around the female artists of the time. Khayal was perfect for this.

While dhrupad is masculine, we can consider khayal as its female counterpart. Virtually all texts in khayal have a female ego. The ornamentations in khayal are indicative of gender as well. Whereas in dhrupad all ornamentations are slow and graceful, those in khayal are faster and more jerky. They are best performed when brief, soft and brisk. Therefore they suit thin (female) voices better than sonorous (male) ones.

However, one should not see khayal as a style unconnected with dhrupad. There is hardly anything in khayal that cannot be found in dhrupad. When we compare khayal compositions that are based on dhrupad, the only difference lies in the ornamentations, which have no basic function in the *raga*, but only serve to embellish.

Sometimes it is even hard to distinguish between the two styles. It would be more correct to speak of a continuum, ranging from very light khayal to heavy dhrupad.

In spite of this and leaving scope for the great variation to which khayal is subject, a performance in this style will generally follow these lines.

First an *alap* is sung. The tonal material of the *raga* is explored in free rhythm, without tabla accompaniment. Usually this part is quite short or almost absent in

khayal, as opposed to dhrupad where it is the most important part.

Next the artist sings the composition, consisting of two parts. First comes *sthayi* (the first line of the composition), which in its best form is a cyclic statement of the *raga*. After that the artist builds up to an octave above the tonic in *antra*, again in the proper way for the *raga*. *Sancari* and *abhoga*, which we find in dhrupad, are absent in khayal.

The beginning of the composition is clearly marked by the entry of the *tabla*. Usually the first composition is in slow tempo. This may be as slow as more than 5 seconds per beat of the cycle. Common cycles for slow khayal are *ektaal* (12 beats) and *jhumraal* (14 beats).

After the composition has been rendered, the artist returns to *alap*, while the *tabla* accompaniment goes on. Often this is done by elaborating upon parts of the composition. These elaborations are concluded by returning to *sam*, the primary stress of the rhythmic cycle.

This elaboration of the composition may flow over into *layakari*, which closely resembles *bolbanao* in dhrupad (see issue no. 2), although in khayal the rhythmic variations are much less strict. Their main purpose is to bring variety into the performance.



Bhimsen Joshi; characteristic expression for khayal
Photo by Wim van der Meer

It is usually at this stage that the most striking and unique feature of khayal is introduced, known as *tana*. A *tana* is a rapid succession of tones of equal duration. The order and prominence of the notes used must be characteristic of the *raga*. Each artist and school has a number of 'standard tanas' which serve as the basis for others.

There are many kinds of *tanans*. Some move quickly over the whole range of the voice, some have turns, some are patterned and some use particular vocal techniques. Often these elements are mixed.

Tanas can be sung to different sounds. Sometimes the words of the composition are used, sometimes the names of the notes (*sa re ga ma pa dha ni*), sometimes the long vowel 'a' and sometimes the syllables *nom tom ta ra na* etc., creating the effect of a plucked instrument being played.

Indeed, quite frequently we find a fast composition (which follows the slow) composed of these last syllables. These compositions are called *tarana*. Fast compositions are often set to a rhythmic cycle of sixteen beats called *tintal* (see 'basics' article). In the course of the performance the note patterns become longer and more complex, and bring the performance to a climax.

Khayal means 'whim' or 'fancy' and indeed, the interweaving of the different parts allows considerable freedom. For instance, an artist may sing a 10-second *alap*, sing the first line of the composition, then start some *alap* with *tabla* accompaniment, return to *sam* with a *tana* and proceed from there in a variety of ways.

The clearest distinction between dhrupad and khayal is that in the latter the elements may be mixed according to the school, taste and inspiration of the artist.

On the whole the art of khayal is less demanding for the artist. The mixing of elements makes it easier to hide mistakes. For the audience it is often more attractive to listen to khayal, because dhrupad is rather petrified and khayal, as stated before, fanciful. However, in the end, only one thing matters. The *raga* performed must be complete, coherent and clear, yet with some originality.

Wim v/d Meer

INDIAN MUSIC

NEWSLETTER

Published by Stichting Tritantri Vidyapeeth
 Edited by Huib Schippers and Jane Harvey
 Post Box 10088, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Contributing editor: Joep Bor

EDITORIAL

Unfortunately it is not yet possible to devote an editorial to the state of Indian music in the West. Again we have to go into our financial position, as it is directly connected with the existence and quality of the Newsletter.

We passed the one-hundred-subscribers mark. This puts us in an awkward position; there seems to be enough interest to go on (new subscribers are still coming in), but we need at least one hundred subscribers more to be able to manage financially.

As you can see, this issue has been produced as professionally as the last two. This has been made possible by donations. We would like to especially thank Ins & Outs Press, Mr. V. van Kooten and our guru, Jamaluddin Bhartiya for their financial help.

However, we need more help. Our experience over the past few months has proved that personal stimulation of potential subscribers and donators is the most fruitful way. Therefore we again request our readers with a passion for Indian music: Please show the Newsletter to acquaintances who might be interested. Help us out of our financial dilemma.

Subscriptions to the Newsletter cost f 15,—. Subscribers in Holland can put this on our postgiro account, no. 5265123, Amsterdam. Internationally we prefer International Postal Money Orders. Money in (registered) letters will also be accepted. As stated, donations will be greatly appreciated. Please indicate if you want to receive the Newsletter from issue no. 1 (free) and then six issues from no. 2 onwards, or if you want the subscription to start from a later issue.

BASICS OF INDIAN MUSIC II — TALA

Indian music uses very complex rhythms. The awareness that this is so keeps most people from trying to follow it. Unfortunately. Understanding the basic rhythm of a performance increases enjoyment. In this article on the basics of Indian music we will try to make clear that the basic rhythm of Indian music is not very difficult to understand. We will concentrate on a rhythmic cycle known as tintal, which is the most common rhythmic cycle. In future issues we will go into more complex aspects of rhythm.

The two most important components of Indian music are *raga* and *tala*. *Raga* provides a performance with melodic structure, *tala* structures the rhythm.

Indian music works with rhythmic cycles. This means that the same basic rhythmic pattern is repeated again and again, creating a particular feeling (as most rhythms do). This forms a firm basis for the composed and improvised parts of the performance.

In the predominant styles of today, vocal *khayal* and instrumental styles, the rhythm is not very difficult to follow. During a performance, there are several indications of the structure of the rhythmic cycle.

Every rhythmic cycle has a number of stresses, the most important of which is *sam*, the first beat of the cycle. It forms the starting point for many and the finishing point of most improvisations and receives an audible stress in that way.

It becomes even more audible when the artist uses a *tihai*, a thrice-repeated rhythmic pattern leading up to *sam*. Especially after complicated improvisations the soloist will often nod at the *tabla* player or vice versa, acknowledging this most important point of reference in the rhythmic cycle.

We will now look closely at *tintal*, the most common *tala* in Indian classical music. Virtually all fast compositions, vocal and instrumental, are set to this sixteen-beat cycle as well as many of the slow and instrumental ones. In fact, the introduction of different *talas* for instrumental music is fairly recent. Some great artists, like the *sitar* player Vilayat Khan, still play all compositions in classical *ragas* in *tintal*.

The sixteen beats of *tintal* are divided

into four groups of four. The main stress lies on the first beat (*sam*). There are two minor stresses, on beats 5 and 13. The ninth beat, *khali*, is unstressed. The fact that there are three stresses is clearly indicated by the old name of *tintal*; *trital*, meaning 'three claps'.

The easiest way to follow the rhythm is by watching the *tabla*. While the soloist is improvising, the *tabla* player usually indicates the rhythm without much ornamentation. Basically, he plays the syllables presented below, indicative of the sound.

There are several points of reference. The *dha* and *ta* sounds from the right hand drum are clearer than the *dhin* and *tin*. Of the two consecutive clear sounds, the second one corresponds to beat 1, 5, 9 or 13.

Beats 10 and 14 are indicated even more clearly. At beat 10 the *tabla* player stops producing the bass sound with the big left hand drum. Often he strikes the skin with the flat of his hand. The absence of the bass lasts for four beats, so that 14 is clearly marked by the re-entry of the bass sound. By counting 14, 15, 16, *sam* one can find the first beat.

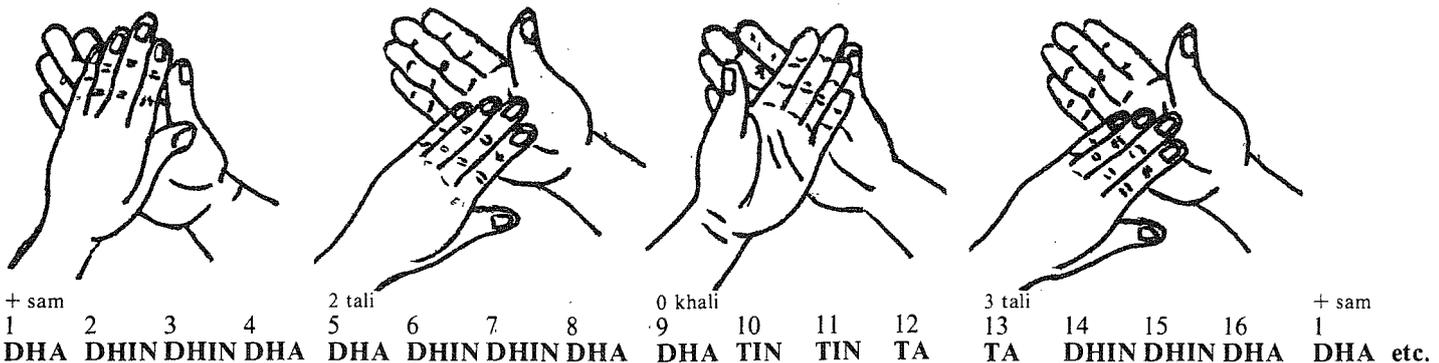
Frequently there are fellow-musicians, music students or other connoisseurs at concerts. They may be a great help in following the cycle by clapping the stresses in the way shown below.

In instrumental slow compositions one beat usually lasts 1-2 seconds. Fast compositions are 2 to 4 times as fast, while the climactic *jhala* (especially for *sitar* and *sarod*) may be over 8 times as fast (one cycle per 2 seconds).

In the beginning it may seem a waste to spend so much energy on trying to follow rhythm while beautiful music is going on. Following the rhythm demands all one's concentration at first. Therefore it is best to spend only parts of concerts (or boring concerts) on this 'training' or to try with records (where the visible indications are absent, of course).

After initial hardships, one finds that in the course of time, keeping the rhythm comes more and more naturally. Then the positive effects present themselves. By following the rhythm one feels closer to the artists and the music with an increased understanding and appreciation of their performance.

Tintal, the most common tala



THE SARANGI

As Yehudi Menuhin once put it, the sarangi 'most revealingly expresses the soul of Indian feeling and thought.' Indeed, Indian musicians unanimously agree that the sarangi is the most versatile and colourful instrument. On the other hand, the musicians themselves warn that the sarangi is the most difficult musical instrument, and that it should not be used for solo performances. Why the sarangi has remained in the background and why for centuries it has only been used as an accompaniment to vocal music, we can only answer when we study the history of the instrument.

Let us first say a few words about the sarangi itself, or rather the large group of North Indian bowed instruments which are generally referred to as sarangis and include such instruments as the Bengali, Assamese and Afghani *sarindas*, the *saroz* from Baluchistan, the *chikaras* etc. What all these instruments have in common is that they are chiselled from a solid piece of wood and that the soundbox or resonator is covered with a skin. The one-stringed *banam*, which is played by the Santhal tribals of Bihar and Orissa is undoubtedly one of the most primitive types of sarangis. A little less archaic is the small Nepali sarangi, a four-stringed instrument, which a tourist in Nepal can buy for a few pennies. It is played by the poor low-caste musicians of the Gaine caste, who make a simple living by singing their ballads and accompanying themselves on the sarangi. More advanced both from a musical and structural point of view are the sarangis played by the Langa musicians of Rajasthan.

In folk music the sarangi functions both as a support and shadow of the voice, and also as a rhythm instrument (with the bow). Besides, the sarangi often provides a prelude and short interludes, giving continuity to the song when the voice takes a rest. This triple function of the folk musician who is primarily a singer, but at the same time provides his own melodic and rhythmic accompaniment, is very typical for sarangi players all over North India.

It must have been during the late 16th and 17th centuries that the small folk sarangis started playing a role in the music life of the wealthy Indian cities. The Moghul period was a time when all the arts and sciences flourished, not only in the North, but also in the southern Deccan. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, a late 16th-century encyclopaedia written at the court of the emperor Akbar, we find the first description of a sarangi.

The first Moghul paintings on which sarangis are depicted show us that the musical mendicants playing these instruments are standing close to an ascetic or his hermitage. Most probably, both the *rabab* (the lute) and the sarangi were initially the favourite instruments of the Hindu and Muslim religious bards, who,

with their spiritual songs, tried to reach and convert the common man.

When the bards started migrating to the cities, they could easily earn a living by accompanying the courtesans in their saloons. The thousands of dancing girls who flocked into the cities naturally needed competent musicians to accompany their emotional songs, and they soon realised that no instrument was more suited to echo their voice than the sarangi. Moreover, the sarangi players being traditionally both singers and instrumentalists, became the ideal music masters for the young girls, enriching



Sarangi player. Detail from a Moghul miniature

their repertoires with folk tunes, which were an important factor in the development of new vocal genres, such as *tappa*, *thumri*, *dadra* etc. In this way, sarangi players started making a name for themselves. Through their association with famous songstresses they were able to enter the courts. Then, once appointed in the court, they had access to the classical music tradition.

The devaluation of *dhrupad*, an exclusively Hindu art form, and its replacement by *khayal*, a hybrid form and a happy blend of Hindu and Muslim musical conceptions, must have led to the acceptance of the sarangi as an accompanying instrument in the 17th century. The beginning of the 18th century was certainly a period of musical innovations, when not only *khayal* and the sarangi flourished, but also the *sitar* and *tabla* emerged on the musical scene.

It was difficult for great sarangi players to break away from their subordinate role as accompanists and receive credit as soloists. Sarangi players, neither having the status of singers or instrumentalists, were generally treated with little respect and stigmatised as low-caste musicians. In addition, as the dancing girls often combined their artistic careers with prostitution, their musical companions' reputations had to suffer.

Yet it is known that many sarangi players were excellent musicians and knowledgeable singers. If such a sarangi

player had a talent and ambition to become a soloist, there was no other way for him than to put the sarangi aside and start a career as a singer.

This is the way that talented sarangi players or their sons became highly accomplished singers. To mention a few names, Ali Baksh and Fateh Ali, the founders of the Patiala *gharana* (or school) and their famous disciple, Bade Gulam Ali Khan; Abdul Karim Khan, Abdul Wahid Khan and Rajab Ali Khan of the Kirana *gharana*; Badal Khan of Calcutta, Aman Ali Khan of Bombay, Amir Khan of Indore and Chand Khan of Delhi.

Starting from a rather simple folk-fiddle, the sarangi has evolved into one of the most complex musical instruments of India. With its 35 resonance (sympathetic) strings, which are never bowed, it looks at first sight like an impossible instrument to tune.

The three main strings of the sarangi which are gut and quite thick, are the only strings which are played with the bow. They are attached to large pegs which are laterally inserted into the peg-box. The pitch of these strings is variable, and depends largely on the choice of the musician. If he uses the sarangi for accompaniment, it depends on the key-note of the vocalist. Ordinarily, the three gut strings are tuned as follows: key-note — fifth — octave, or in Indian parlance; *sa-pa-kharaj*.

Another remarkable feature of the sarangi is the left hand technique. Like many of the mediaeval *vinas* the strings are stopped by pressing the fingernails against the side of the strings.

Among the old masters, Bundu Khan (1886-1955) was undoubtedly the greatest sarangi player. He changed the image of the sarangi completely and should be accredited as the first sarangi player whose solos were not only accepted in private gatherings, but also on the stage. Quite a number of his recordings have been preserved. In spite of his fame, this incredible musician was a very simple and detached man, shabbily dressed and completely unaware of the world around him.

Rajesh Bahadur, a close associate of Bundu Khan, narrates:

'Even when he had fully established himself as a maestro, he remained a compulsive player, prepared to lavish his treasures on anyone who would listen... and I must add, even those who would not. He had an innocent way of presuming that everyone and everything around him understood what he was playing. On one occasion he arrived two hours before the appointed time... When the session was to begin he was nowhere to be found and frantic search parties went looking for him all over. He was finally located in a patch of sweetpeas in the garden. When asked what he was doing, he said: "I have gone out to play something for these flowers".'

Joep Bor



INDIAN MUSIC

NEWSLETTER



A bi-monthly information paper for lovers of Indian music in the West. Editors: Huib Schippers, Jane Harvey. Post Box 10088, Amsterdam, Holland.

A large part of this Newsletter will be devoted to Ali Akbar Khan and his music. Although he is not touring Europe this year after all, we did not wish to let the year of his 60th birthday pass without paying tribute to him.

INTERVIEW WITH ALI AKBAR KHAN, November 1980

(Reconstructed from the notes and memory of Elsje Plantema and Huib Schippers.)

How did you become a musician?

I had a very strict and disciplined training. I was the son of the legendary musician Allauddin Khan, who was a court musician in Jodhpur at the time. From the time I was three my father taught me the basics of Indian music. From when I was nine, I concentrated on sarod.

I had to practise up to 18 hours a day. I remember that my father tied me to a tree for whole days without food because he wasn't satisfied with my practice.

The one time I did not practise for any length of time was when my father was on a European tour. I didn't touch my sarod and had a wonderful time. As soon as he heard this, he broke off his tour and came back to India to get me back in line.

Don't you feel you missed something of your youth?

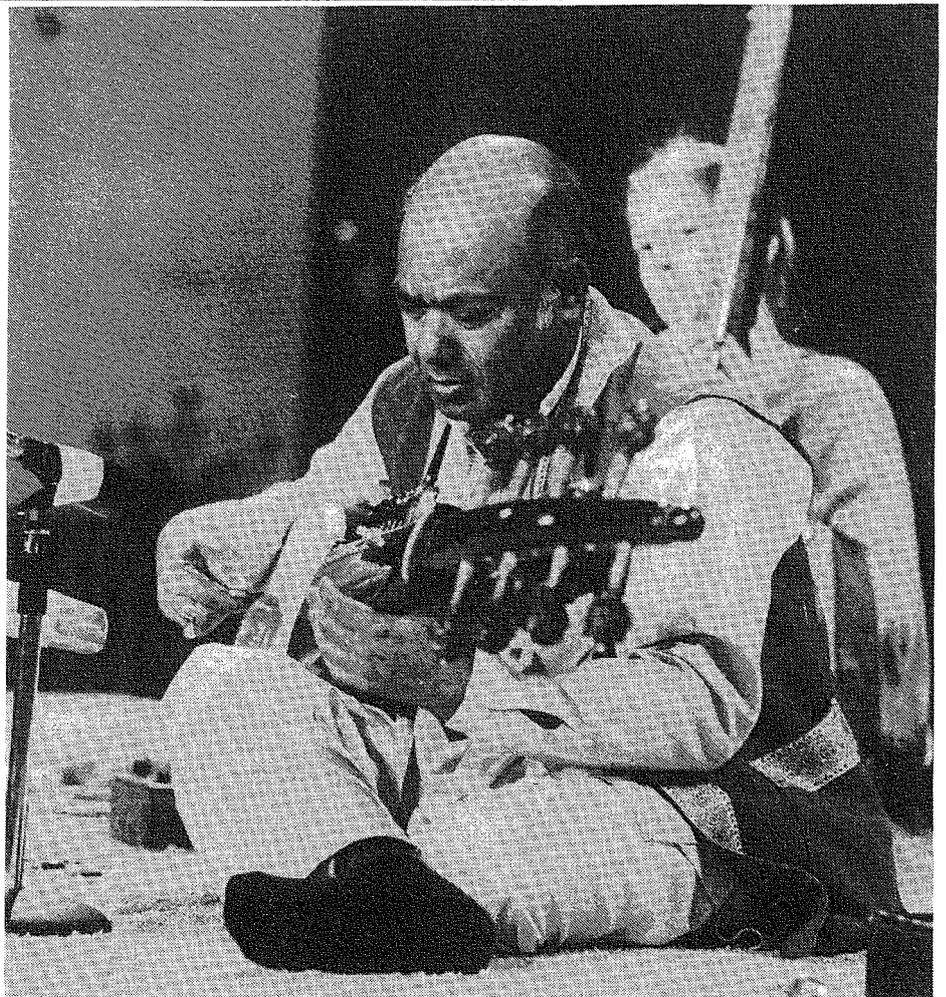
Perhaps. But remember, there were no distractions where we lived. The only thing we could do besides making music was taking walks. I didn't know any better. A frog that only knows a little pool he lives in does not long for the big sea. Anyway, I can still catch up now.

How did your career as a professional musician start?

When I was 20, I became court musician to the Raja of Jodhpur. I had to play eight to nine hours a day for him. Afterwards, I played for the radio and gave concerts elsewhere.

In fact, during this period I was still under the intensive guidance of my father. Whenever I played something wrong for the radio my father would be on the telephone immediately.

Then, in 1955, I came to America for the first time. Yehudi Menuhin invited me



Ali Akbar Khan

Photo by Peter Bottelier

for concerts and recordings.

You have been performing for Western audiences for 25 years now. Can you say something about that?

When I first came to the West, the music was completely new and different for the listeners and so was the audience for me.

Later, there was the wave of immense popularity for everything that sounded Indian. I deliberately kept at a distance during this period. I did not like the superficial interest of that time. I prefer serious listeners. I did not want to change my style, for instance by playing shorter pieces, because that would do injustice to the music.

Now I find—that Western audiences

understand and appreciate our music quite well. I often prefer Western audiences to Indian ones.

What are Indian audiences like?

It used to be so, that at every concert the front rows would be filled with musicians and other connoisseurs. You could tell from their appreciation or disapproval how your performance was going. They could go as far as climbing on to the stage and embracing or punishing a musician. This state of affairs was very good for the music.

Nowadays the rich take the front seats. The real music lovers must be happy if

(continued on page 2)

ALI AKBAR KHAN INTERVIEW

(continued from front page)

they can find a small place at the back of the hall. The result is that musicians can become careless and try to impress the audience with sheer virtuosity. That is not real music.

Do you think Indian classical music is in danger?

No, not really. There will always be genuine musicians who will continue playing, no matter how difficult it is.

Classical music is food for the soul and the body. It gives inner peace. Music is the language of the gods; it brings you closer to them. Making music you can only win.

You attach much importance to teaching Indian music; to passing on your knowledge.

VOCAL MUSIC

In Indian music the voice is considered superior to the instruments, a fact which may come as a surprise to many Westerners who have heard more of the sitar, the sarod, the sarangi and other instruments.

The voice makes use of the breath, which is felt to be strongly connected with the life-force. Moreover it has the advantage of combining music with poetry.

Some subtle ornamentations are really inflexions of the voice that are quite similar to the intonations of ordinary speech. A good vocalist achieves a powerful expression of emotions merely through these inflexions.

Another ground for the superiority of vocal music may be found in social distinction. The caste of Brahmins considered themselves masters of vocal music. They were also the exponents of the sciences of language and poetry. Instruments were second-rate to them (c.f. the situation in the world of Islam, where recitation of the Qu'ran is allowed, but instrumental music despised).

Paradoxically, in the past stringed instruments formed the basis of the science of musical intervals and scales, permitting precise verification.

In the first truly important work on the performing arts, the Bharata Natya Shastra (dated between 200 BC and 200 AD), musical theory and instruments are treated as one subject.

Instrumental music and recitation was the domain of men in ancient times, whereas it was felt that vocal music should be performed by women, because a woman's voice is naturally sweet, while male voices are strong.

A quotation from the play 'The Impoverished Caradutta' (2nd century AD) shows us that the female voice was the ideal: '... his voice was so clear, even in the highest register... Truly if I had not

Yes. I don't think it is good to spend all one's energy on concerts; it affects the quality; there's the danger of playing mechanically. My main aim is to teach. It is my duty. I cannot keep what I have to myself. I have to pass it on.

After the king of Jodhpur died, I started the Ali Akbar College of Music in Calcutta, in 1956. My sister, Annapurna, is still teaching there.

Then many Western students started coming to India. I saw that it would be much easier for one guru to get on a plane than for hundreds of students to come the other way. In this way the Ali Akbar College of Music in California was opened in 1967. I am teaching there four days a week for a large part of the year.

The students are mainly Westerners. Some have been learning for well over 10 years now. They help me teach. I don't need assistant teachers from India any more. Westerners can learn our music perfectly well. Its qualities are universal.

seen him I would have thought he was a woman.)

Even today a high-pitched voice is greatly appreciated. Abdul Karim Khan, the great vocalist of the thirties had such a voice. When one vocalist performs after another he feels that if his *tanpura* is tuned to a lower tonic, his music will sound dull.

A high-pitched voice 'shines' more. An enormous emotional power can be transmitted by the almost strident sounds in the high register.

However, the development of one's vocal powers depends on the lower register. To retain resonance whilst singing the lowest tones is not only a difficult art in itself, it is also essential in order to restrain the voice when singing high notes.

The three octaves of the voice, low, middle and high derive from the chest, the throat and the head respectively, but a good vocalist manages to blend them into a smooth and continuous whole.

The basis of Indian singing is the open *ā*-sound. A very important exercise for gaining control is *mandra sadhana*, which consists of singing *ā* in the lowest tone possible and trying to make the sound of the voice merge with the rich sound of the *tanpura*.

Of course, the artist should also sing in tune. To do this with a full-throated open voice is very difficult, so arduous practice on this subject is required. (When the legendary Allauddin Khan wanted to learn vocal music, his teacher told him to practice scales and exercises for ten years first, after which he would be able to learn all the ragas very quickly. The teacher died after eight years.)

Finally the vocalist will have to come to a full understanding of all the different vocal techniques and ornamentations. Then he becomes a *sharira-vina* — an instrument of the human body, fit to express the subtleties of *raga*, the soul of Indian music.

Wim van der Meer

EDITORIAL

We dedicate this issue of the Newsletter to Ali Akbar Khan, who has reached 60 this year. Usually, we do not centre our attention on an individual artist. We think that Ali Akbar warrants an exception. He transcends the limits of a mere musical personality. Whoever has met him, cannot fail to have been struck by his humble personality. He feels it is not he, but his music that is great. Ali Akbar sees himself as a link in a chain of musicians that serve the Indian classical tradition.

In performance, his strong awareness of tradition merges with a sense of the present and ideas of innovation, resulting in a musical experience that justifies practically all the misused superlatives so commonly found on record covers and in reviews.

Musicians like Khansahib keep the tradition and the music alive; steering clear of the dangers of petrification and innovation for innovation's sake.

With this issue we also commemorate the deaths of Ali Akbar Khan's father, the legendary Allauddin Khan, and his guru brother, Hafiz Ali Khan (the father of Amjad Ali Khan). Both died 10 years ago. We hope to honour their memory with the article on sarod on the facing page.

Finally to more earthly matters. The Newsletter is still in despair. This is the 4th issue. At the moment of printing we have 125 subscribers. We decided that we need to have 200 by the beginning of the next season (April-May 1983) or we will have to stop. We don't want to. Again, *please help*. Many, many lovers of Indian music don't know about the Newsletter. It is only through you that we can reach them.



The unity of singer and *tambura*. The late Amir Khan, one of the best vocalists of this century.

INSTRUMENTS OF INDIAN MUSIC III — THE SAROD

After articles on the *rudra vina* (issue no. 2) and the *sarangi* (issue no. 3) we continue our series on instruments with an article on sarod, which is the instrument of Ali Akbar Khan, to whom this issue is dedicated, and of Amjad Ali Khan, who is touring Europe at this time.

In spite of its relatively recent invention, the sarod is one of the most popular instruments in Northern India and Pakistan today.

Its crystalline tone, rich in harmonics, together with its technical possibilities have made it possible for the sarod to adapt to all the characteristic styles of Hindustani (North Indian) music and to rival the sitar in interpretation of classical ragas.

The sarod is a descendant of the *rabab*,* a type of lute with gut strings. A particular feature is the thin leather membrane stretched over the belly of the instrument.

The famous Tan Sen, musician at the court of the emperor Akbar (1542-1605) was a virtuoso of the *rabab*. He taught this art to his four sons Suratsen, Saratsen, Tarangsen and Bilas Khan. Their descendants subsequently took the name of *rababiyas* (players of the *rabab*) as opposed to the *bin-kars* (*bin* players, see issue no. 2, front page), disciples of Tansen's daughter, Saraswati and her husband, the prince Misri Singh.

The first sarods appeared in Bengal at the beginning of the 19th century. Three great *rababiyas* were chiefly involved in this development: Ustad Pyar Khan, Ustad Ghulam Ali Khan and Ustad Asadullah Khan. Dissatisfied with the *rabab's* limitations, they transformed it into what would later become the sarod.

(Amidst the great masters of the 19th century whose influence on the future of the sarod was decisive, Ustad Jafar Khan, Ustad Ahmed Ali Khan and Ustad Mohammed Wazir Khan should also be mentioned).

The sarod differs from the (Afghani or Kashmiri) *rabab* mainly in the following

characteristics:

- the resonating chamber is larger, but less deep;
- the neck is larger and covered by a smooth metal plate; the gut ligatures have been removed;
- the strings (varying in number from 13 to 25) are no longer gut, but steel and bronze.

For a while the instrument took the name of *sharadiya-vina* (vina of the autumn).

The two main types of present-day sarod were created at the beginning of this century by Ustad Allauddin Khan and Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan, both disciples of Mohammed Wazir Khan and several other sarod masters of the 19th century. Thus, their music descends in a direct line from Tan Sen.

Their importance stretches far beyond mere musical performance. They both managed to develop a distinct style of playing, using all the characteristics of the new instrument in the service of the great Hindustani classical tradition.

'Baba' Allauddin Khan (d. 1972) became a legend in his own lifetime. India acclaimed him as the greatest instrumentalist of the 20th century and his disciples venerate him as a saint who realised a high level of *Tawhid*, or unity (in the Islamic doctrine).

Allauddin Khan was one of the earliest Indian musicians to go to Europe. His first visit took place in 1931, with the dancing troupe of Uday Shankar (Ravi's elder brother).

The review by René Daumal following their performance in Paris shows how much of a revelation this evening was for him:

'The musician (Allauddin) is marvelous at playing in almost-silence; he plucks a string; from the instrument living echoes arise, just as they arise in the body of the listener. With spidery dexterity, using precise vibrations, he creates a whole variety of resonances; he lets the sound fade, sculpting it until it dies away, until the moment of silence. Then the music becomes almost visible around the musician; his fingers seem to move by luminous and silent inspiration. The musical miracle at this instant of perfect silence causes the knowledgeable listener to experience a supreme moment of self-revelation.'

The sarod used by Allauddin Khan and his disciples (Calcutta type) is quite heavy and has 25 strings. It contrasts with the lighter Delhi model, which has 19 to 20 strings, characteristic of the *gharana* of Hafiz Ali Khan (d. 1972). The latter comes from an old musical family of Afghani origin. He spent a large part of his life as court musician to the Maharaja of Gwalior and received the highest distinctions that can be given to a musician.

He transmitted his art to his sons Mubarak, Rehmat and Amjad, the most famous of the three, and possibly the most brilliant present-day technician of the instrument.



Female *rabab* player, detail from a miniature. Delhi, 18th century.

Some of the technical characteristics of the sarod are as follows:

- The body of the instrument is carved from a single piece of hard wood, a sort of teak, about a metre long. The hemispherical resonating chamber is covered by a glued-on goat-skin. After the waist, it shapes into a thick, hollow neck, which gradually narrows up to the pegbox.
- A steel fingerboard, often chrome-plated, is attached to the front of the neck.
- The strings are made of steel and bronze. They are divided into four groups. The four strings used to form the melody run along the entire length of the instrument. Parallel to these is a group of two (Delhi type) to four (Calcutta type) strings, which are tuned to dominant notes in the *raga*. Next to these are two strings with a rhythmic function (*chicari*). They are tuned one octave above the tonic. Finally, there are 10 to 15 sympathetic strings (*taraf*), tuned to the notes of the *raga* and resonating when a note is played on one of the main strings. They are tuned with the small pegs on the side of the neck.

The musician sits on the ground with his right leg over his left thigh. The instrument rests horizontally on his right thigh. The strings are plucked with a thick plectrum made from coconut shell. The nails of the left hand press the strings onto the metal fingerboard.

By gliding the nails along the string the melodic ornaments characteristic of Indian music are produced. The correct execution of these constitutes the principal secret of playing the sarod.

Laurent Aubert

* The name *rabab* (*rebab*, *rubab*, *rabob*, etc.) is rather confusing. It is used for a large number of bowed and plucked instruments we find all over the world of Islam, from Morocco to Malaysia.

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