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The **tabla** is a percussion instrument that has been an integral part of Indian classical music for centuries. It is a set of two drums played by hand, producing a range of unique sounds that add rhythm and character to the music. The larger of the two drums, known as the bayan, is made of metal and is played with the left hand. The smaller drum, known as the dayan, is made of wood and is played with the right hand. The two drums are played together to produce a wide range of beats and rhythms.
The tabla has its roots in ancient Indian music and has evolved over time to become an essential part of classical music performance. It is a versatile instrument that can be played in solo or accompaniment, and is capable of producing both simple and complex rhythms. The instrument is widely used in various forms of Indian classical music, including Khayal, Dhrupad, and Thumri, as well as in popular film music and devotional music in Indian classical music. The tabla is considered a vital part of the ensemble and is used to provide rhythm and pulse to the music. It is played with intricate hand movements and precise finger strikes to produce a range of sounds and beats.
The tabla is also an important solo instrument, with virtuosic players capable of performing complex pieces that showcase their skills and musical abilities. The tabla is closely associated with different gharanas, or schools, of playing, each with its own distinctive style and tradition. These styles have been passed down through generations of musicians and reflect the unique musical traditions of different regions of India. The gharana tradition is important in preserving the music and ensuring that the skills and techniques are passed down to future generations.
Structure of the tabla
The structure of the tabla is a critical aspect of understanding how the instrument works and what makes it unique. The tabla is comprised of two drums: the bayan and the dayan. The bayan, which is larger in size, is typically made of metal and is played with the left hand. The dayan, on the other hand, is made of wood and is played with the right hand. The two drums are played together to produce a wide range of sounds and rhythms.
The bayan is typically made of brass or copper and has a distinct, deep tone that provides the bass notes in the music. The playing surface of the bayan is covered with a thin layer of animal skin, which is stretched tightly over the frame. The bayan has a small hole near the playing surface that can be adjusted to change the pitch of the drum.
The dayan, which is typically made of wood, has a higher pitched tone and is used to play the melody. The playing surface of the dayan is also covered with animal skin, which is stretched tightly over the frame. The dayan is usually smaller in size than the bayan and has a narrow waist that gives it a distinctive shape.
Both the bayan and dayan are typically held in place by a strap that goes over the shoulder of the player. This allows the player to move freely while playing and gives the instrument a unique mobility. The size, shape, and materials used to make the tabla can vary, depending on the style of playing and the preference of the player.
Playing Techniques
The playing techniques for the tabla are a critical aspect of understanding the instrument and the artistry of its players. The techniques involve intricate hand movements and precise finger strikes, producing a range of sounds and rhythms that are unique to the tabla.
Basic hand positions and movements are an essential aspect of playing the tabla. The right hand is used to play the dayan, and the left hand is used to play the bayan. The right hand is positioned with the fingers spread wide and the thumb placed under the drum. The left hand is positioned with the thumb resting on the edge of the bayan and the fingers positioned in such a way as to allow for quick and precise strikes.
A range of different sounds can be produced by the tabla, depending on the type of stroke and the part of the drum that is struck. The sounds produced by the tabla include bass notes, high-pitched sounds, and a range of other tones that are used to create rhythm and melody. The player uses different hand movements and finger strikes to produce these sounds, and the combination of these sounds creates the distinctive sound of the tabla.
Complex rhythms are an important aspect of playing the tabla, and skilled players are able to perform intricate pieces that showcase their musical abilities. These rhythms are produced by combining different sounds and beats and are used to add variety and interest to the music. Players use a range of techniques to produce these rhythms, including combinations of different hand movements, finger strikes, and playing styles.
Styles of Playing
The styles of playing the tabla are an essential aspect of understanding the rich history and diversity of Indian classical music. Over the centuries, different regions of India have developed their own unique approaches to playing the tabla, resulting in a range of styles that are characterized by their distinctive sounds and rhythms.
Introduction to different gharanas (schools) of tabla playing is an important aspect of understanding the styles of the tabla. The term gharana refers to a school or style of playing that has been passed down from generation to generation and is characterized by its own distinct traditions, techniques, and musical forms. There are several well-known gharanas of tabla playing, including the Lucknow gharana, the Farrukhabad gharana, and the Ajrada gharana, each of which has its own unique style and tradition.
The styles of playing the tabla in the northern region of India tend to be more rhythm-focused and fast-paced, while the styles of playing in the southern region tend to be more melodic and expressive. The significance of the gharana tradition in preserving tabla music is an important aspect of understanding the history and importance of the tabla. The gharana tradition ensures that the unique styles and techniques of playing the tabla are passed down from generation to generation, preserving the rich musical heritage of India.
The gharana tradition also provides a sense of community and identity for tabla players, who feel a connection to their musical roots and the traditions of their gharana. In conclusion, the styles of playing the tabla are an essential aspect of understanding the rich history and diversity of Indian classical music. The gharana tradition is an important aspect of preserving the tabla music, ensuring that the unique styles and techniques of playing the instrument are passed down from generation to generation. The comparison of styles from different regions of India highlights the diversity of the instrument and the rich musical heritage of India.
Role of tabla in Indian classical music
The tabla is an integral part of Indian classical music, playing a key role in both accompaniment and solo performance. Understanding the role of the tabla in Indian classical music requires an understanding of the different forms of Indian classical music and the role that the tabla plays in each form.
Indian classical music can be broadly categorized into two main forms: vocal music and instrumental music. Within these two forms, there are several sub-forms, including khayal, thumri, and dhrupad. In each form, the tabla plays a different role, providing accompaniment and rhythm in vocal music, and playing a more prominent role as a solo instrument in instrumental music.
In accompaniment, the tabla provides rhythm and support for the singer or main instrumentalist. The player uses a range of different hand movements and finger strikes to create intricate rhythms that complement the main performance. The tabla player must have a deep understanding of the musical form being performed and be able to respond and adapt to the improvisations of the singer or main instrumentalist.
In solo performance, the tabla takes centre stage, showcasing the musical abilities of the player. The tabla player performs a range of musical pieces, including fast-paced rhythms, intricate solos, and virtuosic displays of skill. Solo performance provides an opportunity for the player to showcase their musical abilities and express their individuality as an artist.
Famous tabla players have made significant contributions to Indian classical music, and their legacy continues to inspire new generations of musicians. Some of the most famous tabla players include Ustad Alla Rakha, Ustad Zakir Hussain, and Pandit Anindo Chatterjee, who are known for their virtuosity, musicality, and innovative approach to playing the instrument. These players have inspired and influenced many young musicians, and their contributions to Indian classical music have helped to keep the tradition alive and thriving.
Conclusion
The tabla is a remarkable percussion instrument that has played a significant role in Indian classical music for centuries. With its intricate rhythms, diverse playing techniques, and rich cultural heritage, the tabla is an instrument that demands respect and appreciation.
Throughout this article, we have explored the structure of the tabla, the playing techniques, and the different styles of playing the instrument. We have also discussed the role of the tabla in Indian classical music and the contributions of famous tabla players. These key points serve to highlight the importance of the tabla in Indian classical music and its place in the wider cultural heritage of India.
The tabla is an instrument that deserves to be appreciated and explored further. For those interested in Indian classical music, learning more about the tabla can deepen their understanding of this rich musical tradition and provide a new appreciation for the beauty and complexity of this incredible instrument. We encourage everyone to further explore the tabla and its role in Indian classical music, and to develop a greater appreciation for the artistry and skill that goes into playing this remarkable instrument.
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Tabla is the most famous percussion instrument of India, finding popularity among many musical styles all over the world. The use of tabla has been particularly significant in Hindustani classical music for the last several hundred years and continues to be the most prominent classical rhythm instrument. While hand drums can be regarded as one of the more simplistic types of instruments, the tabla is rich in complexity and tradition.
The tabla instrument is a set of two drums, both with stretched membrane heads, closed resonating chambers, and barrel-shaped bodies. The smaller drum is called the dayan and it is played with the musicians right (or dominant) hand. The bigger drum is called the bayan and it is played with the left. Pairs of drums vary slightly in size but most are around 15 to 20 centimeters in diameter and 25 to 30 centimeters in height. The barrels are made of hollowed out wood or metal with goat skin stretched across the top in two layers. The drum heads are secured in place with laced hoops and thongs along the edges and sides, and the tension is adjusted to affect a change of pitch in either drum. The dayan is the higher-pitched of the two and the bayan is a kettle drum that produces a deeper bass sound. The head of each drum has an area called the syahi, a circle of black paste that results in a clearer pitch and tone. The drums are positioned on chutta or biraa cloth base in the shape of a ring that supports each drum. The tabla player sits in front of the drums with their legs crossed.
Like many classical instruments, tabla has a number of gharanas dedicated to it. Gharanas can be thought of like a school or house, where technique and tradition are passed down from teacher to student over many generations. Gharanas developed according to geography and are usually confined to one region of India. Historically, these were very traditional master/apprentice relationships but the barriers between different gharanas and the strict teaching formats have been relaxed in later years. There are six widely-accepted gharanas in tabla, each with a long and rich history of their own. Below are the six main tabla gharanas:
Ajrara
Benares
Delhi
Farrukhabad
Lucknow
Punjab
Like many historical instruments, the tabla has disputed origins. While the name comes from the Arabic word for drum, it is commonly believed that the tabla has ancient Indian origins and was renamed under Islamic rule. The tabla is considered a modern version of the ancient pushikara drums, small hand-held drums found in many temple carvings from the 6th and 7th centuries, and even as early as temple carvings from 500 BCE. The drawings showed drummers sitting before two separate drums and playing with their palms and fingers. Textual evidence of drums similar to the tabla exist in Natyashastra, a Sanskrit text from 200 BCE, and just a few hundred years later there was the South Indian text Silappatikaram, which describes many different kinds of rhythm instruments. Drums and taals (rhythm) were mentioned in Vedas, as well. The tabla's exact origin is unknown and attributed to many but unquestionably, the modern tabla developed from a combination of ancient Indian drums. What is recognised as the modern tabla came into use during the 18th century, which can be marked as the beginning of the main gharanas in tabla. It was during this era that the tabla became the primary rhythm instrument for Hindustani classical music. Over the years the drums have slowly evolved into the form that is popular today in both classical and popular music. Tabla can vary in many ways, even being customised to individual players. Many elements of the drums can be altered to achieve a specific tone, making customization both easy and desirable. For professional players, exact specifications for tabla drums may be derived from their preferred gharana, particularly if certain measurements are well-suited to a specific technique. The base material of the drums, the lacings, the thickness of the membraneeach affects the resonance and sound of the instrument. Many elements on the tabla must also be regularly maintained and replaced, particularly the drum heads. Learning how to maintain the drums is as essential to learning to play them. All parts of the drum will need to be replaced apart from the bases, which have been known to be passed down through generations. The tabla has very specific techniques for playing, each derived from one of the six gharanas. There are also techniques specific to improvisation and alap that may differ from gharana techniques. Although not exactly the same, all of these techniques use bols to comprise taals. Bols are the individual strokes on the drums in the oral tradition of mnemonic syllables. Taal is the Indian system of rhythm with many established taals that measure musical time. There are about 16 bols, including the most popular ta, ghe, dha, ka, na, and tu. The technique for each stroke varies by school but here is one example of how to execute ta on the dayan: striking the rim of the drum with the index finger while applying pressure to the edge of the syahi with the fourth finger. There are many more tabla taals than can be counted. Like ragas for melody, each one has a specific structure that provides the foundation for classical music, both Hindustani and Carnatic tradition. Some of the most popular tabla taals are tintal, jhoonra, dhamar, and keherwa. The last one, for example, is comprised of eight beats in a four/four pattern. It is rare that classical tradition includes written notation, so players must memorise bols and taals to be able to play compositions or improvise. While it is possible for some drums to be played instinctually or randomly, the hand positions that accompany each bol must be practised extensively for the tabla to be played correctly. Beginning students must be dedicated to tabla playing and tabla lessons. While many percussion instruments and drums are unpitched, both drums of the tabla have a limited tuning range. This versatile ability makes the tabla unique and desirable as a rhythm accompaniment. To some degree, the size of the drum determines the range of pitch it is capable ofwith larger or heavier materials producing a lower pitch and smaller or lighter materials producing a higher pitch. The skins stretched across both drums are secured with loops of leather at high tension. Tuning blocks, called ghatta, are inserted into the loops of the dayan. The blocks are moved up or down to change the tension, and therefore pitch, of the drum head. The edge of the skin is secured with braided laces and these can be struck with a small hammer to fine tune the drums. These tuning methods, in addition to playing techniques, allow for the pitch of the tabla to be altered depending on the composition. In the classical tradition, the smaller dayan is tuned to the ground note of the raga being played with the deeper bayan tuned an octave below. The composition, size, and placement of the syahi, or tuning paste, also affects pitch and tone. The paste is typically a mixture of rice, water, and iron shavings and is applied by an expert. The mixture adds weight to the head of the drum, which alters the speed of vibration. The location of syahi on the drum head usually depends on the school of technique being used. There are many different tabla players, past and present. Below are some of the most talented and well-known modern day tabla players from around the world.
Detailed Introduction of Tabla: History, Structure, and Significance
The Tabla is a prominent instrument in Indian classical music, used for accompaniment in singing, playing, and dancing. In ancient times, instruments like Pakhawaj or Mridang were used, but in modern times, the Tabla has taken their place. The Tabla is played with both hands and is increasingly popular as a solo instrument as well. It is made up of two parts:the right-hand Tabla and the left-hand or Dagga. Lets explore the structure of the Tabla and its various components in detail.information of tablaWood: The main part of the right-hand Tabla is made of wood, usually from jackfruit, mango, khair, teak, or Vijayal. It is hollow inside, with a height of about 1 foot, a top diameter of 6 inches, and a bottom diameter of 9 inches.Pudi: The leather covering over the wooden top is called Pudi, made from goat skin. It is tightened over the wood using Baddhi (leather straps). The Pudi is composed of Chanti, Lav, Syahi, and different parts of the hide.Gajara: The leather ring around the Pudi is known as Gajara. It has 16 holes through which the Baddhi passes, keeping the Tabla tight.Chanti: The leather strap on the edges of the Pudi is called Chanti, which contributes to the Tabla's sound.Syahi: A black circular paste is applied in the middle of the Pudi, called Syahi. The thickness of the Syahi controls the pitch of the Tabla's sound.Lav: The empty space between the Chanti and Syahi is called Lav or Maidan, which helps balance the Tabla's sound.Baddhi: The long leather strap passing through the Gajara to keep the Pudi tight is called Baddhi. It passes through the Gatta and secures the Tabla firmly.Gatta: There are eight small wooden pieces on the Tabla, known as Gatta. They help control the pitch of the Tabla.Gudri: A leather ring at the base of the Tabla, called Gudri, helps in placing the Tabla on the ground and maintaining stability.Kundi: The main part of the Dagga is called Kundi, which is made of clay, copper, or wood. The Pudi is also stretched over its mouth.Pudi: The Pudi on the Daggas is similar to that of the right-hand Tabla, including Chanti, Lav, and Syahi.Got: The leather strap on the edges of the Pudi is called Got, which influences the sound quality.Syahi: The black paste in the middle of the Pudi on the Daggas is called Syahi, which controls the depth of the sound.Lav: The empty space between the Chanti and Syahi is called Lav, which adds melody to the Tabla's sound.Gajara: A leather ring around the Pudi of the Daggas is known as Gajara. It determines the tightness of the Daggas sound.Dorr: A cord or leather strap is used to tighten the Pudi on the Daggas. Some Daggas also use rings for tightening.Gudri: There is also a Gudri at the base of the Daggas, which helps in keeping it stable on the ground.The Tabla is an essential percussion instrument in Indian classical music, and it must be tuned correctly to match the rhythm. The process of tuning the Tabla is called Tabla Milana. Here, we will look at how to properly tune the Tabla.Process of Tuning the Tabla: The focus is primarily on tuning the right-hand Tabla (Din). The process involves the following steps:Tuning the Right-Hand Tabla: First, the right-hand Tabla is played to check if its sound needs to be raised (higher pitch) or lowered (lower pitch). If the pitch seems too high or low, it is adjusted using the Gatta and Gajara.Using Gatta and Gajara: If there's a significant difference, the pitch is adjusted by striking the Gatta with a hammer. For fine adjustments, the Gajara is struck. To raise the pitch, strike from the top, and to lower it, strike from the bottom.Pitches and Tuning of the Tabla: The pitch of the Tabla depends on the ragas in classical music. It is mainly tuned to three notes:Sa (Shadja)Ma (Madhyam)Pa (Pancham)The choice of pitch depends on the raga. For example:In ragas where Pancham is not used, like Malkauns, the Tabla is not tuned to Pancham.In ragas where both Ma and Pa are forbidden, the Tabla is tuned to Sa.Generally, the Tabla can be tuned to Sa for any raga.The history of Tabla is very ancient, with many theories about its origin. Most scholars believe that the Tabla was invented in the 13th century by Amir Khusrô. He is said to have split the Pakhawaj into two parts to create the Tabla.Some scholars also believe that the Tabla evolved from an ancient instrument called the Durdur. Others suggest that the Tabla's origin is linked to the Arabic instrument Naqqara. There are three main Gharanas of Tabla:Western Gharana: Includes Delhi and Ajrada Gharanas.Eastern Gharana: Includes Lucknow, Farrukhabad, and Banaras Gharana. This is an independent Gharana.The Tabla is an integral part of Indian music and is played in all types of classical, semi-classical, and folk music. Additionally, it holds its significance as a solo instrument. Playing the Tabla is an art that requires a profound understanding of rhythm and beats.What are the different parts of the Tabla and their uses?The main parts of the Tabla include the right-hand Tabla (Din), left-hand Tabla (Daggas), Gatta, Gajara, and Sira. The pitch of the right-hand Tabla is adjusted by striking the Gatta and Gajara with a hammer.Which notes are used to tune the right-hand Tabla and why?The right-hand Tabla is primarily tuned to Sa, Ma, and Pa. This depends on the raga, and in ragas where Pancham is forbidden, Pancham is not used.How was the Tabla created? Explain.The Tabla originated from the Pakhawaj. It is believed that Amir Khusrô split the Pakhawaj into two parts to create the Tabla, making it an integral part of Indian classical music since then.For More RaagClick hereFor Classical Music Theory Please Visit HereClick For Classical MusicClick For Harmonium NotesClick For Guitar ChordsClick For Indian Classical MusicThank YouThank you for reading our post! We hope this information has been beneficial to you. If you find any errors in this post, please let us know by leaving a comment. We will make every effort to correct our mistakes. Our goal is to introduce you to the depths of Indian classical music and enrich your love for music. Your suggestions are important to us. If you want to learn about a specific Raag, its compositions, or an introduction, please let us know. We will try to provide detailed information on that Raag in our next post.We are grateful for your support and encouragement. Please stay connected and share our posts with your friends and family.Thank you and best wishes!Regards,IndianRaag.comWe Need Your Help Dear friends,At this time, we need financial support. Even a small contribution means a lot to us. If you wish to join us on this journey, please support us financially. We have provided a QR code and UPI details below. You can take a screenshot of the QR code and make a payment through any UPI app. Every small or large contribution is valuable to us. We are sincerely grateful for your support. Ways to Support:QR Code: Take a screenshot and pay via any UPI app.UPI ID: indianraag@kotak The tablaa percussion instrument that has captivated audiences for centuriesis the heartbeat of Indian classical music. Known for its intricate rhythms and soulful tones, the tabla is both a storyteller and a timekeeper. Did you know that the word tabla originates from the Arabic word tabl, meaning drum? From traditional ragas accompaniments to global fusion beats, the tabla's versatility continues to amaze music lovers worldwide. The tabla's roots trace back to the 13th century during the Delhi Sultanate, where it likely evolved from instruments like the pakhawaj or mridangam. Legend credits Amir Khusrâu, a famous Sufi musician and poet, with splitting the pakhawaj into two drums to create the tabla. Over the years, it has become an integral part of Hindustani classical music. Ustad Zakir Hussain: A global ambassador for tabla, whose collaborations span from Ravi Shankar to international artists like Mickey Hart. Pandit Kishan Maharaj: A master of the Benares gharana, known for his thunderous and precise playing. Ahmed Jan Thirakwa: Revered as a pioneer who refined the art of solo tabla performance. An interesting story goes that the tabla's split drums symbolize the cosmic duality of masculine and feminine energies, embodied in the vibrant Dayan (right drum) and resonant Bayan (left drum). The tabla consists of two drums: Dayan (right hand drum): Made of hardwood, it produces high-pitched tones. Bayan (left hand drum): Crafted from brass or copper, it delivers bass tones. Both drums feature a syahi (black circular patch) made from a paste of soot and gum that enhances tonal precision. Standard Tabla: Used in classical and semi-classical music. Fusion Tabla: Modified for global genres.Na: A crisp, clear sound played on the Dayan. Ge: A deep, resonant stroke on the Bayan. Dha: A combination of strokes on both drums. The tabla thrives on taalrhythmic cycles with distinct beats (matras). Popular taals include: Teentaal (16 beats): The backbone of Hindustani classical music.Dha Dhin Dhin Dha | Dha Dhin Dhin Dha | Na Tin Tin Ta | Ta Dhin Dhin Dha Keherwa (8 beats): Common in folk and Bollywood music.Dha Ge Na Ti | Na Ke Na Ti Listen to Teentaal Demonstration: Click here to listen Zakir Hussain's Solo at Carnegie Hall: A mesmerizing display of tabla virtuosity. Ravi Shankar and Alla Rakha at Woodstock (1969): A historic moment that introduced Indian music to the West. Zakir Hussain's Tabla Performance Ae Watan Raazi, 2016)The tabla adds a soulful rhythm to this patriotic Bollywood anthem. O Rangrez (Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, 2013)A beautiful blend of classical instruments and tabla beats. Radha Kaisa Na Jale (Lagaan, 2001)A playful mix of folk and classical tabla rhythms. Discover More Songs: Explore on Spotify The tabla's influence has transcended borders, inspiring global genres like jazz, fusion, and EDM. Collaborations with international artists such as John McLaughlin and Anoushka Shankar showcase its adaptability. Did you know that tabla tutorials on YouTube attract millions of views, reflecting its growing popularity among younger generations? Q1: How many beats are in Teentaal? Q2: Which drum produces bass tones? Answers: Check Here Zakir Hussain Solo Ravi Shankar and Alla Rakha Fusion with EDM The tale of tabla is a rhythmic journey that bridges tradition and modernity. From its classical roots to its global resonance, the tabla continues to inspire and innovate. Ready to explore its magic? Start with a simple beat or immerse yourself in a tabla concertyou won't regret it! BhagawanSingh Tagged #BollywoodMusic, #CulturalHeritage, #FusionMusic, #GlobalMusicInfluence, #HindustaniMusic, #IndianClassicalMusic, #IndianMusicLovers, #MusicalInstruments, #PercussionInstruments, #RhythmAndBeats, #Tabla, #TablaTutorials, #TeenTaal, #WorldMusic, #ZakirHussain, Google Tabla is a pair of 2 drums originating from India and is played with the hands. It is an essential percussion instrument within Indian Classical Music, and is performed in the form of solos as well as accompaniment with other instruments, singing, and dance. While Indian Classical Music is an art form which has existed for thousands of years, tabla is a relatively new instrument with origins likely being a few hundred years ago. Tabla is an instrument that requires extensive practice and knowledge. As Indian Classical Music spotlights improvisation and creativity in the observation of musical rules, tabla players use several components of imagination, mathematical patterns, and logical variations in order to compose astonishing percussion. As a result of various schools and lineages of thought within the world of tabla, different styles have contributed towards both a diversification and more recently unification of tabla as different techniques have merged into one common practice today. Tabla follows the idea of taal, or a cycle of a set number of beats. Within repeating cycles of a taal in various designated speeds can exist different compositions, both fixed ones and ones that can be expanded through the help of various variations. With a content-filled dictionary of vocabulary, sharp consonants as well as resonating vowels are used to make bigger arrangements.Descriptive knowledge of percussion instruments was available from the Vedic times. This information and conceptual framework was used for the research and development of tabla. Bols of past percussion instruments such as the pakhawaj were used to develop new tabla bols, which created new thekas and compositions. The reasons for the establishment of tabla included factors such as sound quality and flexibility of application. Today, learning tabla is a more accessible process compared to other instruments because of the diverse body of students and teachers, making it a very expansive field of knowledge. If you are a fan of Indian classical music, theres a very high possibility that youve seen a tabla in action. Almost always, its either a tabla or a dholak which handles the rhythm section of the Hindustani Classical Music. So, if you have any intentions of getting your hands dirty with the instrument, you absolutely have to know the fine details that defines it. So, lets get started.Physical build of the tablaTabla has two drums: A Dahina/Daya (also called dal or chattu) made of wood and a Baya (also called daggas) made of metal. Both of these have a membrane which is usually made of goat skin and have a patch of syahi (ink) which is generally made of starch. The Syahi serves to impart a unique set of tones to each drum.The Daya, is the higher pitched drum which is smaller and has a cylindrical hollowed out wooden structure. It is usually played with the dominant hand of the player (Daya translated to right in Hindi). It has a hoop around it with thick laces running along its side and 8 wooden cylinders (called gattas) to adjust the tone of the tabla. It is usually tuned to the key of the accompanying instrument.The Baya, is the bigger, lower pitched drum and has a round kettle-drum shape. It is usually played with the recessive hand of the player (Baya translates to left in Hindi). It too has a hoop around it with laces and 8 gattas to adjust the tone. It is usually tuned to Sa and around 5 octaves below the tabla.A brief history of TablaOriginal article: History of TablaTabla is an ancient instrument and has its root as far back as the Vedic Period. The origins of tabla have been a topic of debate for a long time and experts still differ as to whether it originated in the Indian subcontinent or in the Middle East. However, increasing amount of evidence points to it originating in the Indian subcontinent itself.The basic structure of compositionsTaals form the root of all the compositions played on the tabla. A Taal is essentially a musical meter, which serves to bind all the music in a particular number of matras (beats). More importantly, the compositions played have to abide to the taal structure. Not only does the taal define the total number of matras, but also dictates the pattern of the compositions. Each taal has a certain point where it starts (sum), taali, khaali and vibhaags (measures). For understanding these seemingly alien words, have a quick look at this article.Compositions can be divided into two main categories:1. Smaller compositions like tukras, parans, uthaans etc.2. Longer compositions like Peshkaras, Kaidas, and Relas etc.

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The bayan is typically made of brass or copper and has a distinct, deep tone that provides the bass notes in the music. The playing surface of the bayan is covered with a thin layer of animal skin, which is stretched tightly over the frame. The bayan has a small hole near the playing surface that can be adjusted to change the pitch of the drum.
The dayan, which is typically made of wood, has a higher pitched tone and is used to play the melody. The playing surface of the dayan is also covered with animal skin, which is stretched tightly over the frame. The dayan is usually smaller in size than the bayan and has a narrow waist that gives it a distinctive shape.
Both the bayan and dayan are typically held in place by a strap that goes over the shoulder of the player. This allows the player to move freely while playing and gives the instrument a unique mobility. The size, shape, and materials used to make the tabla can vary, depending on the style of playing and the preference of the player.
Playing Techniques
The playing techniques for the tabla are a critical aspect of understanding the instrument and the artistry of its players. The techniques involve intricate hand movements and precise finger strikes, producing a range of sounds and rhythms that are unique to the tabla.
Basic hand positions and movements are an essential aspect of playing the tabla. The right hand is used to play the dayan, and the left hand is used to play the bayan. The right hand is positioned with the fingers spread wide and the thumb placed under the drum. The left hand is positioned with the thumb resting on the edge of the bayan and the fingers positioned in such a way as to allow for quick and precise strikes.
A range of different sounds can be produced by the tabla, depending on the type of stroke and the part of the drum that is struck. The sounds produced by the tabla include bass notes, high-pitched sounds, and a range of other tones that are used to create rhythm and melody. The player uses different hand movements and finger strikes to produce these sounds, and the combination of these sounds creates the distinctive sound of the tabla.
Complex rhythms are an important aspect of playing the tabla, and skilled players are able to perform intricate pieces that showcase their musical abilities. These rhythms are produced by combining different sounds and beats and are used to add variety and interest to the music. Players use a range of techniques to produce these rhythms, including combinations of different hand movements, finger strikes, and playing styles.
Styles of Playing
The styles of playing the tabla are an essential aspect of understanding the rich history and diversity of Indian classical music. Over the centuries, different regions of India have developed their own unique approaches to playing the tabla, resulting in a range of styles that are characterized by their distinctive sounds and rhythms.
Introduction to different gharanas (schools) of tabla playing is an important aspect of understanding the styles of the tabla. The term gharana refers to a school or style of playing that has been passed down from generation to generation and is characterized by its own distinct traditions, techniques, and musical forms. There are several well-known gharanas of tabla playing, including the Lucknow gharana, the Farrukhabad gharana, and the Ajrada gharana, each of which has its own unique style and tradition.
The styles of playing the tabla in the northern region of India tend to be more rhythm-focused and fast-paced, while the styles of playing in the southern region tend to be more melodic and expressive. The significance of the gharana tradition in preserving tabla music is an important aspect of understanding the history and importance of the tabla. The gharana tradition ensures that the unique styles and techniques of playing the tabla are passed down from generation to generation, preserving the rich musical heritage of India.
The gharana tradition also provides a sense of community and identity for tabla players, who feel a connection to their musical roots and the traditions of their gharana. In conclusion, the styles of playing the tabla are an essential aspect of understanding the rich history and diversity of Indian classical music. The gharana tradition is an important aspect of preserving the tabla music, ensuring that the unique styles and techniques of playing the instrument are passed down from generation to generation. The comparison of styles from different regions of India highlights the diversity of the instrument and the rich musical heritage of India.
Role of tabla in Indian classical music
The tabla is an integral part of Indian classical music, playing a key role in both accompaniment and solo performance. Understanding the role of the tabla in Indian classical music requires an understanding of the different forms of Indian classical music and the role that the tabla plays in each form.
Indian classical music can be broadly categorized into two main forms: vocal music and instrumental music. Within these two forms, there are several sub-forms, including khayal, thumri, and dhrupad. In each form, the tabla plays a different role, providing accompaniment and rhythm in vocal music, and playing a more prominent role as a solo instrument in instrumental music.
In accompaniment, the tabla provides rhythm and support for the singer or main instrumentalist. The player uses a range of different hand movements and finger strikes to create intricate rhythms that complement the main performance. The tabla player must have a deep understanding of the musical form being performed and be able to respond and adapt to the improvisations of the singer or main instrumentalist.
In solo performance, the tabla takes centre stage, showcasing the musical abilities of the player. The tabla player performs a range of musical pieces, including fast-paced rhythms, intricate solos, and virtuosic displays of skill. Solo performance provides an opportunity for the player to showcase their musical abilities and express their individuality as an artist.
Famous tabla players have made significant contributions to Indian classical music, and their legacy continues to inspire new generations of musicians. Some of the most famous tabla players include Ustad Alla Rakha, Ustad Zakir Hussain, and Pandit Anindo Chatterjee, who are known for their virtuosity, musicality, and innovative approach to playing the instrument. These players have inspired and influenced many young musicians, and their contributions to Indian classical music have helped to keep the tradition alive and thriving.
Conclusion
The tabla is a remarkable percussion instrument that has played a significant role in Indian classical music for centuries. With its intricate rhythms, diverse playing techniques, and rich cultural heritage, the tabla is an instrument that demands respect and appreciation.
Throughout this article, we have explored the structure of the tabla, the playing techniques, and the different styles of playing the instrument. We have also discussed the role of the tabla in Indian classical music and the contributions of famous tabla players. These key points serve to highlight the importance of the tabla in Indian classical music and its place in the wider cultural heritage of India.
The tabla is an instrument that deserves to be appreciated and explored further. For those interested in Indian classical music, learning more about the tabla can deepen their understanding of this rich musical tradition and provide a new appreciation for the beauty and complexity of this incredible instrument. We encourage everyone to further explore the tabla and its role in Indian classical music, and to develop a greater appreciation for the artistry and skill that goes into playing this remarkable instrument.
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Tabla is the most famous percussion instrument of India, finding popularity among many musical styles all over the world. The use of tabla has been particularly significant in Hindustani classical music for the last several hundred years and continues to be the most prominent classical rhythm instrument. While hand drums can be regarded as one of the more simplistic types of instruments, the tabla is rich in complexity and tradition.
The tabla instrument is a set of two drums, both with stretched membrane heads, closed resonating chambers, and barrel-shaped bodies. The smaller drum is called the dayan and it is played with the musicians right (or dominant) hand. The bigger drum is called the bayan and it is played with the left. Pairs of drums vary slightly in size but most are around 15 to 20 centimeters in diameter and 25 to 30 centimeters in height. The barrels are made of hollowed out wood or metal with goat skin stretched across the top in two layers. The drum heads are secured in place with laced hoops and thongs along the edges and sides, and the tension is adjusted to affect a change of pitch in either drum. The dayan is the higher-pitched of the two and the bayan is a kettle drum that produces a deeper bass sound. The head of each drum has an area called the syahi, a circle of black paste that results in a clearer pitch and tone. The drums are positioned on chutta or biraa cloth base in the shape of a ring that supports each drum. The tabla player sits in front of the drums with their legs crossed.
Like many classical instruments, tabla has a number of gharanas dedicated to it. Gharanas can be thought of like a school or house, where technique and tradition are passed down from teacher to student over many generations. Gharanas developed according to geography and are usually confined to one region of India. Historically, these were very traditional master/apprentice relationships but the barriers between different gharanas and the strict teaching formats have been relaxed in later years. There are six widely-accepted gharanas in tabla, each with a long and rich history of their own. Below are the six main tabla gharanas:
Ajrara
Benares
Delhi
Farrukhabad
Lucknow
Punjab
Like many historical instruments, the tabla has disputed origins. While the name comes from the Arabic word for drum, it is commonly believed that the tabla has ancient Indian origins and was renamed under Islamic rule. The tabla is considered a modern version of the ancient pushikara drums, small hand-held drums found in many temple carvings from the 6th and 7th centuries, and even as early as temple carvings from 500 BCE. The drawings showed drummers sitting before two separate drums and playing with their palms and fingers. Textual evidence of drums similar to the tabla exist in Natyashastra, a Sanskrit text from 200 BCE, and just a few hundred years later there was the South Indian text Silappatikaram, which describes many different kinds of rhythm instruments. Drums and taals (rhythm) were mentioned in Vedas, as well. The tabla's exact origin is unknown and attributed to many but unquestionably, the modern tabla developed from a combination of ancient Indian drums. What is recognised as the modern tabla came into use during the 18th century, which can be marked as the beginning of the main gharanas in tabla. It was during this era that the tabla became the primary rhythm instrument for Hindustani classical music. Over the years the drums have slowly evolved into the form that is popular today in both classical and popular music. Tabla can vary in many ways, even being customised to individual players. Many elements of the drums can be altered to achieve a specific tone, making customization both easy and desirable. For professional players, exact specifications for tabla drums may be derived from their preferred gharana, particularly if certain measurements are well-suited to a specific technique. The base material of the drums, the lacings, the thickness of the membraneeach affects the resonance and sound of the instrument. Many elements on the tabla must also be regularly maintained and replaced, particularly the drum heads. Learning how to maintain the drums is as essential to learning to play them. All parts of the drum will need to be replaced apart from the bases, which have been known to be passed down through generations. The tabla has very specific techniques for playing, each derived from one of the six gharanas. There are also techniques specific to improvisation and alap that may differ from gharana techniques. Although not exactly the same, all of these techniques use bols to comprise taals. Bols are the individual strokes on the drums in the oral tradition of mnemonic syllables. Taal is the Indian system of rhythm with many established taals that measure musical time. There are about 16 bols, including the most popular ta, ghe, dha, ka, na, and tu. The technique for each stroke varies by school but here is one example of how to execute ta on the dayan: striking the rim of the drum with the index finger while applying pressure to the edge of the syahi with the fourth finger. There are many more tabla taals than can be counted. Like ragas for melody, each one has a specific structure that provides the foundation for classical music, both Hindustani and Carnatic tradition. Some of the most popular tabla taals are tintal, jhoonra, dhamar, and keherwa. The last one, for example, is comprised of eight beats in a four/four pattern. It is rare that classical tradition includes written notation, so players must memorise bols and taals to be able to play compositions or improvise. While it is possible for some drums to be played instinctually or randomly, the hand positions that accompany each bol must be practised extensively for the tabla to be played correctly. Beginning students must be dedicated to tabla playing and tabla lessons. While many percussion instruments and drums are unpitched, both drums of the tabla have a limited tuning range. This versatile ability makes the tabla unique and desirable as a rhythm accompaniment. To some degree, the size of the drum determines the range of pitch it is capable ofwith larger or heavier materials producing a lower pitch and smaller or lighter materials producing a higher pitch. The skins stretched across both drums are secured with loops of leather at high tension. Tuning blocks, called ghatta, are inserted into the loops of the dayan. The blocks are moved up or down to change the tension, and therefore pitch, of the drum head. The edge of the skin is secured with braided laces and these can be struck with a small hammer to fine tune the drums. These tuning methods, in addition to playing techniques, allow for the pitch of the tabla to be altered depending on the composition. In the classical tradition, the smaller dayan is tuned to the ground note of the raga being played with the deeper bayan tuned an octave below. The composition, size, and placement of the syahi, or tuning paste, also affects pitch and tone. The paste is typically a mixture of rice, water, and iron shavings and is applied by an expert. The mixture adds weight to the head of the drum, which alters the speed of vibration. The location of syahi on the drum head usually depends on the school of technique being used. There are many different tabla players, past and present. Below are some of the most talented and well-known modern day tabla players from around the world.
Detailed Introduction of Tabla: History, Structure, and Significance
The Tabla is a prominent instrument in Indian classical music, used for accompaniment in singing, playing, and dancing. In ancient times, instruments like Pakhawaj or Mridang were used, but in modern times, the Tabla has taken their place. The Tabla is played with both hands and is increasingly popular as a solo instrument as well. It is made up of two parts:the right-hand Tabla and the left-hand or Dagga. Lets explore the structure of the Tabla and its various components in detail.information of tablaWood: The main part of the right-hand Tabla is made of wood, usually from jackfruit, mango, khair, teak, or Vijayal. It is hollow inside, with a height of about 1 foot, a top diameter of 6 inches, and a bottom diameter of 9 inches.Pudi: The leather covering over the wooden top is called Pudi, made from goat skin. It is tightened over the wood using Baddhi (leather straps). The Pudi is composed of Chanti, Lav, Syahi, and different parts of the hide.Gajara: The leather ring around the Pudi is known as Gajara. It has 16 holes through which the Baddhi passes, keeping the Tabla tight.Chanti: The leather strap on the edges of the Pudi is called Chanti, which contributes to the Tabla's sound.Syahi: A black circular paste is applied in the middle of the Pudi, called Syahi. The thickness of the Syahi controls the pitch of the Tabla's sound.Lav: The empty space between the Chanti and Syahi is called Lav or Maidan, which helps balance the Tabla's sound.Baddhi: The long leather strap passing through the Gajara to keep the Pudi tight is called Baddhi. It passes through the Gatta and secures the Tabla firmly.Gatta: There are eight small wooden pieces on the Tabla, known as Gatta. They help control the pitch of the Tabla.Gudri: A leather ring at the base of the Tabla, called Gudri, helps in placing the Tabla on the ground and maintaining stability.Kundi: The main part of the Daggas is called Kundi, which is made of clay, copper, or wood. The Pudi is also stretched over its mouth.Pudi: The Pudi on the Daggas is similar to that of the right-hand Tabla, including Chanti, Lav, and Syahi.Got: The leather strap on the edges of the Pudi is called Got, which influences the sound quality.Syahi: The black paste in the middle of the Pudi on the Daggas is called Syahi, which controls the depth of the sound.Lav: The empty space between the Chanti and Syahi is called Lav, which adds melody to the Tabla's sound.Gajara: A leather ring around the Pudi of the Daggas is known as Gajara. It determines the tightness of the Daggas sound.Dorr: A cord or leather strap is used to tighten the Pudi on the Daggas. Some Daggas also use rings for tightening.Gudri: There is also a Gudri at the base of the Daggas, which helps in keeping it stable on the ground.The Tabla is an essential percussion instrument in Indian classical music, and it must be tuned correctly to match the rhythm. The process of tuning the Tabla is called Tabla Milana. Here, we will look at how to properly tune the Tabla.Process of Tuning the Tabla: The focus is primarily on tuning the right-hand Tabla (Din). The process involves the following steps:Tuning the Right-Hand Tabla: First, the right-hand Tabla is played to check if its sound needs to be raised (higher pitch) or lowered (lower pitch). If the pitch seems too high or low, it is adjusted using the Gatta and Gajara.Using Gatta and Gajara: If there's a significant difference, the pitch is adjusted by striking the Gatta with a hammer. For fine adjustments, the Gajara is struck. To raise the pitch, strike from the top, and to lower it, strike from the bottom.Pitches and Tuning of the Tabla: The pitch of the Tabla depends on the ragas in classical music. It is mainly tuned to three notes:Sa (Shadja)Ma (Madhyam)Pa (Pancham)The choice of pitch depends on the raga. For example:In ragas where Pancham is not used, like Malkauns, the Tabla is not tuned to Pancham.In ragas where both Ma and Pa are forbidden, the Tabla is tuned to Sa.Generally, the Tabla can be tuned to Sa for any raga.The history of Tabla is very ancient, with many theories about its origin. Most scholars believe that the Tabla was invented in the 13th century by Amir Khusrô. He is said to have split the Pakhawaj into two parts to create the Tabla.Some scholars also believe that the Tabla evolved from an ancient instrument called the Durdur. Others suggest that the Tabla's origin is linked to the Arabic instrument Naqqara. There are three main Gharanas of Tabla:Western Gharana: Includes Delhi and Ajrada Gharanas.Eastern Gharana: Includes Lucknow, Farrukhabad, and Banaras Gharana. This is an independent Gharana.The Tabla is an integral part of Indian music and is played in all types of classical, semi-classical, and folk music. Additionally, it holds its significance as a solo instrument. Playing the Tabla is an art that requires a profound understanding of rhythm and beats.What are the different parts of the Tabla and their uses?The main parts of the Tabla include the right-hand Tabla (Din), left-hand Tabla (Daggas), Gatta, Gajara, and Sira. The pitch of the right-hand Tabla is adjusted by striking the Gatta and Gajara with a hammer.Which notes are used to tune the right-hand Tabla and why?The right-hand Tabla is primarily tuned to Sa, Ma, and Pa. This depends on the raga, and in ragas where Pancham is forbidden, Pancham is not used.How was the Tabla created? Explain.The Tabla originated from the Pakhawaj. It is believed that Amir Khusrô split the Pakhawaj into two parts to create the Tabla, making it an integral part of Indian classical music since then.For More RaagClick hereFor Classical Music Theory Please Visit HereClick For Classical MusicClick For Harmonium NotesClick For Guitar ChordsClick For Indian Classical MusicThank YouThank you for reading our post! We hope this information has been beneficial to you. If you find any errors in this post, please let us know by leaving a comment. We will make every effort to correct our mistakes. Our goal is to introduce you to the depths of Indian classical music and enrich your love for music. Your suggestions are important to us. If you want to learn about a specific Raag, its compositions, or an introduction, please let us know. We will try to provide detailed information on that Raag in our next post.We are grateful for your support and encouragement. Please stay connected and share our posts with your friends and family.Thank you and best wishes!Regards,IndianRaag.comWe Need Your Help Dear friends,At this time, we need financial support. Even a small contribution means a lot to us. If you wish to join us on this journey, please support us financially. We have provided a QR code and UPI details below. You can take a screenshot of the QR code and make a payment through any UPI app. Every small or large contribution is valuable to us. We are sincerely grateful for your support. Ways to Support:QR Code: Take a screenshot and pay via any UPI app.UPI ID: indianraag@kotak The tablaa percussion instrument that has captivated audiences for centuriesis the heartbeat of Indian classical music. Known for its intricate rhythms and soulful tones