



Tabla Tarang — Melody on Drums

Pandit Kamalesh Maitra • *tabla tarang*

Trilok Gurtu • *tabla*



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE



FOR TRADITIONAL MUSIC

THE WORLD'S MUSICAL TRADITIONS 10

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1. Raag Deen Todi 9:18
2. Raag Bilaskhani Todi 12:13
3. Raag Bhupal Todi 9:44
4. Raag Mia Ki Todi 45:25



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(UNESCO C) Playing time 76:40*

*Recordings: Walter Quintus
Commentary: Laura Patchen*



Pandit Kamelesh Maitra is the last master of the *tabla tarang*, a melodic instrument consisting of between ten to sixteen tuned *tabla*. Tarang means "waves" and aptly describes how rhythm and melody, even harmony, are woven into one flowing element. Trilok Gurtu, who is famed for his eclectic percussion artistry in the jazz world, accompanies on *tabla*.

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TABLA TARANG—MELODY ON DRUMS

Pandit Kamalesh Maitra • *tabla tarang*
Trilok Gurtu • *tabla*
Laura Patchen • *tanpura*

Text written by Laura Patchen as told by Pandit Kamalesh Maitra
Recordings by Walter Quintus

ORIGINS OF THE TABLA

In the beginning was *anahatanada*, unmanifested sound. This concept of Hindu philosophy takes us back to the origin of all things, the creative principle in the Universe. Another concept, that of diversity in unity, the many as part of the one, allows us to understand the emergence of sound—

ahatanada—as the initial manifestation. If one were to take a sound and slow down its vibrational frequency, the pitch would drop until the continuous sound broke up into individual pulsations. This can be compared to a film run through a projector: its images are perceived as a continuous flow of movement, but, when slowed down, it can be seen to be comprised of individual frames. Or the other way around: take one beat, increase the speed with which one beat follows another, and eventually one hears a continuous sound. Thus, one could say that the First Beat was the first creative act. It produced vibration—sound manifested. This is why in the Hindu pantheon Lord Shiva, the cosmic dancer and musician, is depicted holding a small *damaru*, or hourglass drum, in one of his hands. The drum he wields is the symbol of all vibration, that is to say, Life.

What is a drum? A drum is a musical instrument made of a solid material, usually wood, metal or clay. Its corpus, which can be of varying shapes, has an opening that is covered with skin. It may have one, two or more heads. The frequency of its pitch depends on the tension of the skin and the diameter of the opening.

The origins of the drum in India go back to the hoary mythological times when it is said that Shiva, after killing the demon Brityashur in combat, took the earth that had been soaked by the demon's blood and formed the body of the first drum. He then took the skin of his felled opponent and stretched it across the clay vessel to complete his instrument. It is this drum which he used to accompany his victory dance.

Since ancient times Indian musical instruments have been divided into four categories:

1. *tata*—stringed instruments
2. *bitata*—drums



Fig. 1. Raagmala miniature: Todi.

3. *ghana*—percussion instruments

4. *sushir*—wind or blown instruments.

In the category of *bitata* some of the names that were known in those days are *dundavi*, *ourdhok*, *muroj*, *pushkor* and *aboj*.

In later times it was found that, if the skin of a drum were made heavy with an adhesive substance, it would vibrate more, and the sound produced would sustain longer. It is difficult to determine exactly when this discovery took place, but in the *Natya Shastra*, the treatise expounding the science of the performing arts written by Bharat at the beginning of the Christian era, there is a description of the use of a mud paste precisely for this purpose. We can infer from this that this method of preparing drum skins was in use at least two thousand years ago. One can still see examples of this method being used today on the bass side of the *madal* of the Santals in Santal Pargana. A further development was the use of a paste made of wheat flour placed in the center of the surface of the skin. As a means to increase the vibration of the skin it worked well. However, due to the wetness of the paste, the drum was only capable of producing low pitches. The best examples of the use of these methods in drum preparation can be found in the bass side of the *mridangam* and *pakhawaj* drums. Even at the beginning of this century in Punjab, a flour paste was applied to the bass drum, called *dhakkar* or *dhama*, of the *tabla baya*¹ set.

The most ingenious invention in this connection has been the making of iron and stone powder pastes to be used as weights on the skins of drums. Not only does the produced sound sustain considerably longer, but sharper

¹The word *tabla* generally denotes a pair of drums: the higher-pitched *tabla* and the lower-pitched *baya*, which make up the *tabla baya* set. This term is also used to indicate the higher-pitched drum alone.

and higher pitches can also be produced, and the tonal quality becomes more pleasing to the ear. With the advent of these metal and stone powder-based pastes, called *gab* or *shiai*, exact tuning of the drums to specific notes was also made possible. Drums whose skins are prepared in this way can be found throughout India, some of the more common ones being *mridangam*, *pakhawaj*, *khol*, *maddalam*, *pung*, the Nepali *dhhol*, *surmadal*, *nal* and the *tabla baya*.

It is difficult to pinpoint the time in history when the *tabla* emerged as an instrument. The drum set in use today has gone through a long process of development that began in ancient times. Since the size of the drum body and the tension of the skin make for either a higher- or lower-pitched sound, two separate drums were used together in order to produce two different pitch levels. Ancient sculptures show evidence of two drums being played together as one instrument, but the exact name of this instrument is not known.

Oral tradition attributes the development of the *tabla* as we know it today to the Sufi Amir Khusrau (1253-1353 A.D.), a musician, poet and composer living in Delhi during the reign of Allaudin Khilji. It is said that the name of the instrument probably comes from an Arabian drummer by the name of Tubol, the word evolving to *tabol* and finally to *tabla*.

During Emperor Akbar's rule (1556-1605 A.D.), the *dhrupad* style of singing reached its peak, blossoming under his illustrious court musician, Tansen. The *pakhawaj* was then the most important accompanying rhythmic instrument. After the demise of Aurangzeb² in 1712 new forms of vocal music began to appear. As the *khyal*, *thumri* and *ghazal* styles of singing

²The last of the great Moghuls, Aurangzeb had banished music and musicians from his court. His death marked the end of the darkest age in Indian musical history.

came into vogue, the *tabla* began to take the place of the *pakhawaj* as the preferred instrument for rhythmic accompaniment. The *tabla* was also used to accompany *kathak* dance and instrumental music. Because of its versatility—that which can be played on other drums can be played on the *tabla*, but not vice versa—the *tabla* has become the most popular rhythmic instrument in modern northern India, developing also into a solo instrument with a vast repertoire of its own.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABLA



Fig. 2. The wooden body of a tabla. Of the many resonant woods available for making the tabla body, some of the most popular are neem, bijaysar and sisham. Note how the interior cavity has been hollowed out by means of chiseling.

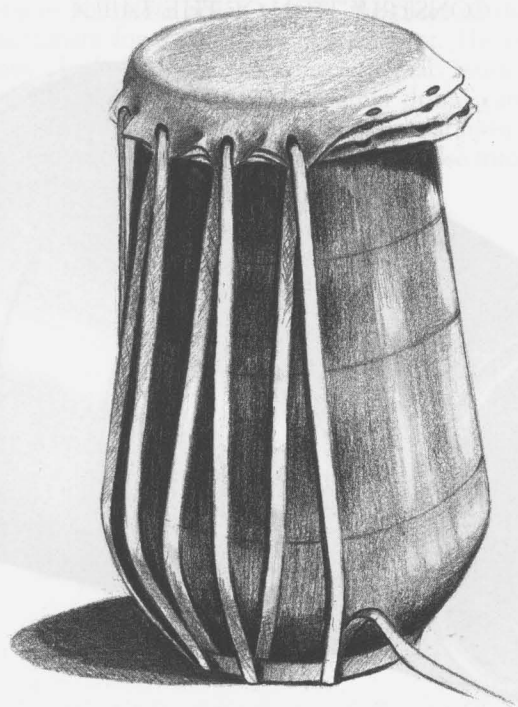


Fig. 3. Preliminary mounting of the skins. Three layers of goat skin are mounted on the finished corpus of the tabla and held in place by means of lacing about 10 meters of chota, or leather strapping, through the skins and a ring placed at the bottom of the drum.

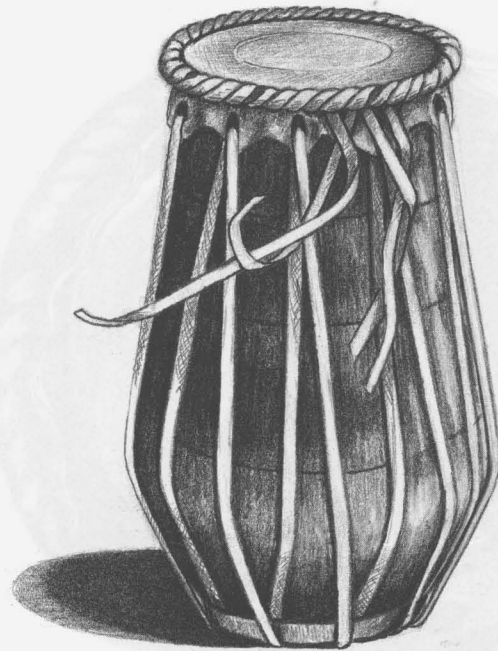


Fig. 4. The pagri. Lacing of the pagri, or ring, around the head of the drum is one of the most important processes in constructing the tabla, as the ring serves a three-fold purpose: it holds the three skin layers tightly together, keeps the head of the drum permanently in place by means of leather straps laced through it, and it is indispensable for steady tuning. The top layer of skin has been cut around the periphery to make the kinnar, or striking edge.

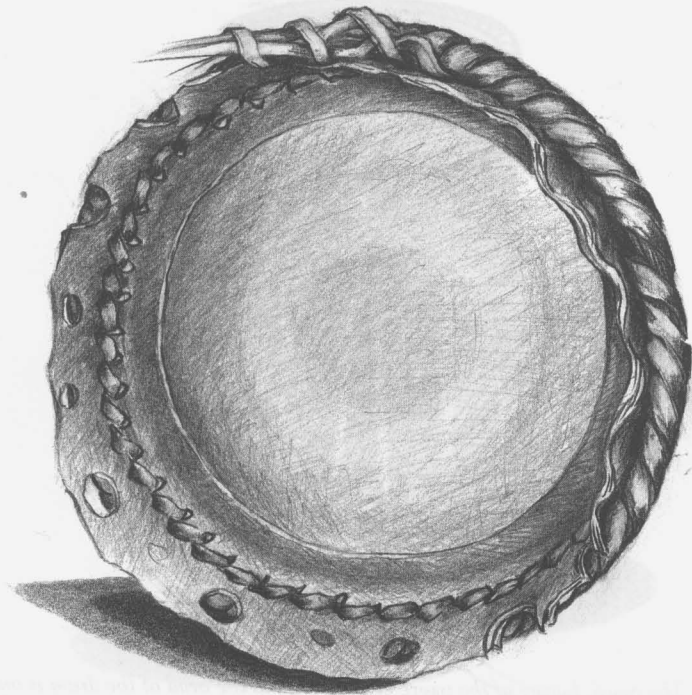


Fig. 5. The underside of a finished skin. A tabla skin as seen from the underside. The lower layer of skin has also been cut around the edge, leaving the middle skin layer as the actual resonating membrane of the drum.

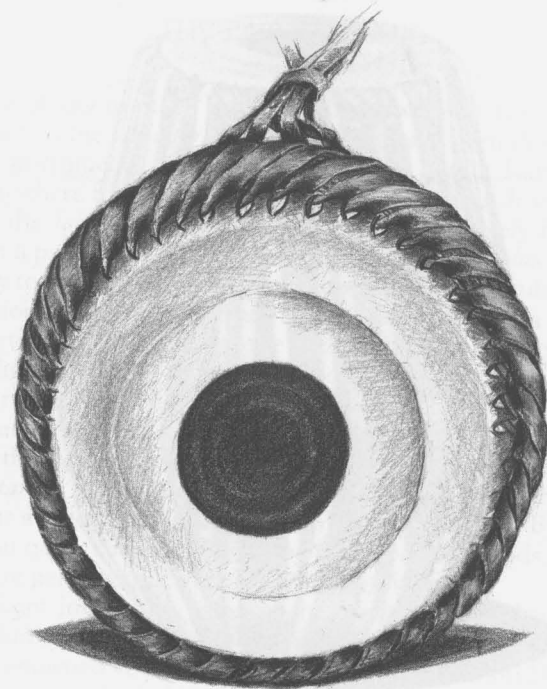


Fig. 6. The gab. The black spot, called gab or shiai, is made from a mixture of boiled rice, iron powder and water ground to a fine paste and applied to the center of the skin in numerous circular layers. This most delicate process is essential for ensuring the note-sustaining character of the tabla.



Fig. 7. The tabla. Small wooden logs called gullis are placed under the leather straps of the finished tabla and serve to increase or decrease the tension of the skin. They are used for rough tuning; fine tuning is achieved by hitting the laced ring around the skin upwards or downwards with a special tuning hammer.

THE TABLA TARANG

Without the ability to make highly resonant, precisely tunable drums, an instrument such as the *tabla tarang* would never have been thought possible. This melodic instrument, as it is played today by Pandit Kamalesh Maitra, consists of anywhere from ten to sixteen *tablas*. The bass drum *baya*, which is integral to the *tabla* set (see footnote 1) and used solely for expressing rhythm, is not a part of the *tabla tarang*. The number of *tablas* used depends on the melody to be played. Each *tabla* is tuned to the particular notes of the scale in question, and they are set up in ascending order in a semi-circle in front of the artist, the bass notes to the left and the treble notes to the right. The lowest-pitched drum is tuned to the perfect fourth below the tonic and has a diameter of 16 cm. The highest-pitched drum has a diameter of 11 cm and can be tuned as high as the perfect fifth above the tonic, one octave higher. Thus, the range of the *tabla tarang* is exactly two octaves.

The world *tarang* means “waves” and describes the characteristic sound of the instrument at the hands of an accomplished performer. By striking the tuned drums in quick succession with the palms of both hands, the musician creates what are perceived as waves of sound, or melodies.

A rather recent innovation amongst the myriad Indian drums, the *tabla tarang* is first known to have existed as an instrument in Maharashtra in the late 1800s. A renowned vocalist of those days, Pandit Vishnu Digamber, was said to have been in the habit of using *tablas* tuned to different notes to teach children singing. One of his pupils, Vishnudas Shirali, a vocalist in his own right, also played many different instruments. He joined Uday Shankar, the celebrated genius in the field of Indian dance, in 1930, later becoming music director of the internationally acclaimed Uday Shankar Ballet. Shirali

brought with him the knowledge of playing the variously tuned *tablas* and became himself an accomplished performer on the *tabla tarang*.

It was Uday Shankar, however, who pioneered the further development and promotion of the *tabla tarang*, bringing it out of obscurity by integrating it into his dance orchestra and giving it the status of a solo instrument. Drummers who joined the troupe were encouraged to learn to play the instrument, and a short demonstration of performing melody on drums was always a part of the regular programming. Due to the novelty of the instrument and the breathtaking virtuosity it demanded of the artist, these solo performances never ceased to amaze, and ever since have inspired admiration among audiences around the world. Vishnudas Shirali became the first artist to record on the *tabla tarang* outside of India, on an RCA record entitled *The Original Uday Shankar Company of Hindu Musicians, Recorded During Its Historic 1937 Visit to the United States*. Whereas in those days Shirali would perform the solos, a musician by the name of Karendikar used to play the *tabla tarang* in the company's orchestra. Karendikar also played *tabla tarang* in Uday Shankar's film *Kalpana*, which premiered in 1948 and was filmed under the music direction of Vishnudas Shirali.

Other dance ensembles took up the idea of using *tabla tarang* in their orchestras. One of these was the group formed by Menaka, a female dancer well known in India, which toured Europe from 1934 to 1936. Among the musicians was Janardan Abhyankar, who, interested in the *tabla* from an early age, later added the *tabla tarang* to his musical expertise. A leading film musician, he also worked under Vishnudas Shirali while the latter was with the Government of India Film Division and toured Russia as a Government of India delegate. Later, he also worked under Pandit Ravi Shankar, record-

ing a short *tabla tarang* solo in 1967 on World Pacific Records' *The Anthology of Indian Music, Volume One*.

Among the other musicians known to have performed on *tabla tarang* are Lalmani Misra, music director of the Uday Shankar Ballet after Shirali, Ramesh Thakur, brother of the famous singer Pandit Omkarnath Thakur, and Pandit Jnan Prakash Ghosh, the doyen of *tabla* in Calcutta. Of these three artists, only Pandit Jnan Prakash Ghosh is known to have recorded the *tabla tarang*, on his *Drums of India Volume II*, produced by EMI.



Fig. 8. Pandit Jnan Prakash Ghosh as the guest of honor at Kamallesh Maitra's *tabla tarang* performance at the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta, 1989.

Above all, it has been Kamalesh Maitra, having acquired skill in the art of Indian drumming and deep knowledge in the realm of *raag*, who has undertaken the task of extending the technical and musical boundaries of the instrument as established by his predecessors. In the earlier style of *tabla tarang* performance, as well as in other forms of instrumental music, vocal music was followed as closely as possible. In contrast to this, Maitra has succeeded in not only integrating the rhythmic element coming from the large repertoire of drum compositions, but also has adapted the highly intricate classical patterns generally played only on string instruments to his playing technique. Despite the difficulties inherent in the preparation and transportation of so many drums, not to mention the limitations of the instrument itself (percussive instruments being able only to approximate the movement of the voice, on which all Indian classical music is based), he is the only musician in the field of Indian classical music who has tirelessly worked to keep alive the art of performing *raags* on the *tabla tarang*. Before him a *tabla tarang* solo would range anywhere from five to fifteen minutes. Maitra, with his virtuoso command of the drums, is the only artist who has ever played full-length concerts on this instrument, expounding each *raag* in depth.

PANDIT KAMALESH MAITRA

Kamalesh Maitra was born in 1928 in the Tangail district of what was then East Bengal, India, into a family of medical practitioners. After some years the family moved to Calcutta, where Maitra as a young boy became

fascinated by the music drifting over from a neighbor's house. In 1940, notwithstanding his family's disapproval, the young Kamalesh was initiated into the art of playing *tabla* by his neighbor, Phani Sen, a singer. When the Second World War started taking its toll on Calcutta, the family moved again, this time to Benares, to escape the bombings. Here the young high school student sought out Professor Vasudev Chatterjee, a disciple of Pandit Kanthe Maharaj of the Benares *gharana*, or school of music, and continued his *tabla* practice under the professor's guidance. He tells the story of how his instructor would take no money from him as was the tradition in India when a teacher accepted a student, but upon leaving the practice room would tell Maitra to continue playing without stopping until he returned or else he need not to come back the next day.

Being dissatisfied with the prospect of having to follow the family tradition and become a doctor, Maitra decided to fend for himself and headed for Lucknow, where he found a job at the Prudential Insurance Company. His search for a *tabla* teacher in the new city led him to Sudharsan Adhikari, disciple of Ustad Wajid Hussein Khan, the main exponent of the Lucknow *gharana*. It was in Lucknow that Maitra came in contact with a disciple of Timir Baran, the *sarod* player Santosh Chander, who later introduced him to Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, then on the staff of All India Radio.

After the end of the war the insurance company returned to its Calcutta base, Maitra along with it. There he entered and won a first prize in the Shivpur Musical Competition. As he tells it, he used to frequent the green rooms of concert halls, hoping to come in contact with some of the great musicians. One evening he heard Ustad Keramatulla Khan, who was then at the height of his career, playing. The great *tabla* master recognized the

young man standing quietly in one corner of the green room, having been on the panel of judges during the Shivpur Music Competition. The Ustad told Maitra he could come for *talim*, or lessons, but would have to perform the traditional ring ceremony, called *nara*, with him first. So in 1946 Maitra took *nara* with Ustad Keramatulla Khan of the Farukhabad *gharana*.



Fig. 9. Ustad Keramatulla Khan.

During this period in Calcutta Maitra became well established as a *tabla* player. In 1948 he had the chance to see Uday Shankar's film *Kalpana*, which he says greatly influenced him. When he later saw Pandit Ravi Shankar's stage production *Discovery of India*, the history of India as told through the media of dance and music and based on the book by Jawaharlal Nehru, he made up his mind that he wanted to devote his life to music. Sudharsan Adhikari, who was also engaged in the production, arranged an audition with Pandit Ravi Shankar for his ex-student. Maitra was approved and was to join the troupe in Bombay after they had finished their tour in Delhi. However, the troupe disbanded shortly thereafter, and Maitra had to wait for another chance to fulfill his dream.

The opportunity came unexpectedly in 1950, when Amala Shankar came to Calcutta looking for musicians for the Uday Shankar Ballet. A *sitar*-playing friend auditioning for the ballet troupe's musical ensemble asked Maitra to accompany him on *tabla*. On that occasion he was asked to join the troupe. Within a few days Maitra had quit his secure job with the insurance company and gone to Madras to join Uday Shankar's dancers and musicians as a master drummer.

The condition was made, however, that the young, talented musician would learn to play the *tabla tarang*, the unusual melodic instrument which Uday Shankar had incorporated into the vast array of drums and percussion instruments used in his orchestra. When asked by Madame Shankar if he could play the *tabla tarang*, Maitra, determined to join the musical ensemble, announced that within six months he could learn to play any instrument. His first mentor became Sishir Sobhon Bhattacharya, brother of the famous composer Timir Baran and a longtime member of the Uday Shankar training center in Almora.



Fig. 10. K. Maitra as master drummer of the Uday Shankar Ballet in the early 1950s.

Although he had never played the instrument himself, Bhattacharya was able to teach Maitra the rudimentary techniques of the *tabla tarang*. Uday Shankar encouraged the newcomer to develop his own technique and gave him permission to use the musical instruments room, so that he could concentrate on his own solo practice after the eight-hour work day with the dancers.

This was the start of a long and fruitful relationship that lasted well over twenty years. A first tour to the United States and Canada with the Uday Shankar Ballet troupe in 1951-52 proved highly successful for the novice *tabla tarang* player. Upon returning to India he proceeded to widen his musical horizons by becoming proficient on a number of instruments, and when Lalmani Misra, then music director of the troupe, left in 1953, Maitra was asked to take charge of the music department.

In 1955 the Indian government created the Sangeet Natak Academy, now called Rabindra Bharati University, with Uday Shankar as one of the directors. Maitra joined him and spent the next four years as the orchestra composer and assistant in the Manipuri dance department of the Academy. That year also saw the opening of the Ali Akbar College of Music in Calcutta. Wanting to deepen his knowledge of the melodic aspect of the music, Maitra joined the college and received tutelage in *sarod* from both Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and Srimati Annapurna Devi. Maitra formally became music director of the Uday Shankar Ballet in 1956. In the same year the premiere was held of Uday Shankar's two-and-a-half-hour color shadow play *The Great Renunciation—Life of Buddha*, for which Maitra had composed the music. The visits of various government delegations to Calcutta in this period presented more opportunities for Maitra to perform both within and outside of India.



Fig. 11. Kamallesh Maitra with Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, Berlin, 1985.



Fig. 12. Uday Shankar, Amala Shankar and their daughter Mamata at the Great Wall of China in 1957 with Kamallesh Maitra and other members of the troupe, accompanied by a group of Chinese students of Indian dance.

On one occasion he had the honor of performing one of his compositions for Ho Chi Minh. A Chinese delegation visit to India headed by Chou En-Lai was followed by an invitation to Uday Shankar to perform in China. In 1957 the ballet troupe of about thirty members toured China for six months. It was in China that Maitra had his music first recorded and broadcast; the piece that was recorded was a composition that he says he composed on the train while on tour.

During a fallow period for the Shankar dancers following the China tour, Maitra joined Jog Sunder's Indian Revival Group in 1958 as a *sarod* and *tabla* player and music director. He rearranged the available music that had previously been collected from all parts of India and toured over the next few years with the group in Nepal, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon and Hungary. In Budapest his *tabla tarang* solo performance was televised for the first time outside of India. In 1960 he had the chance to perform before Khrushchev and Barasolov during a Russian delegation visit to Calcutta.

The 1960s was a period of heightened productivity for Maitra. He spent some time with the Uday Shankar Culture Center under Amala Shankar and some of his time with the Uday Shankar Ballet troupe directed by Uday Shankar himself. In his free time he composed and arranged music for documentary films, stage productions and dance dramas, becoming also a regular contributor to the film music industry as a guest musician. His music for the dance drama *Meghnath Bodh*, based on an episode of the Ramayana and performed by a company of a hundred artists, created a furor in Calcutta. He formed his own troupe of dancers and musicians, the United Artists of India, which was contracted by the Tourism Department to

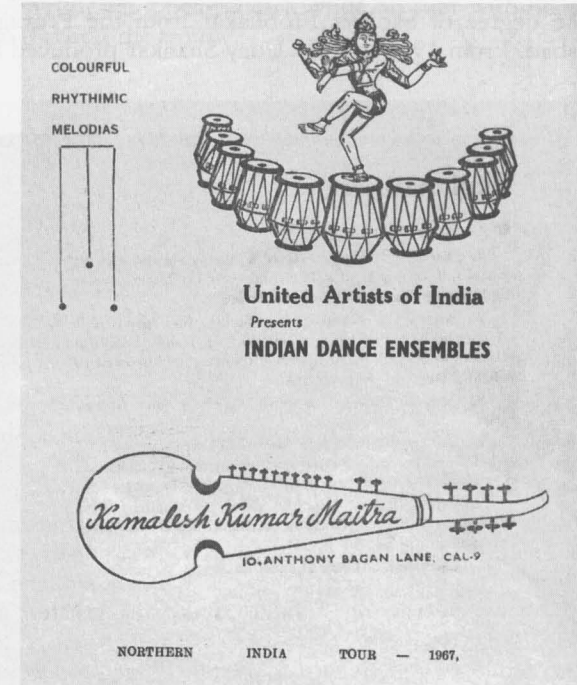


Fig. 13. The program announcing the 1967 tour of Kamalesh Maitra's United Artists of India dance and music ensemble.

present a program of folk songs and dances called *Glimpses of India* and with which he toured to different parts of the country. Meanwhile he found time to earn the degree of Sangeet Probhakar from the Prayag Sangeet Samiti in Allahabad. From 1964 to 1965 Uday Shankar produced his dance



Fig. 14. Kamalesh Maitra with his instrument on the 1968 tour to Japan.

drama *Prakriti and Ananda*, based on Rabindranath Tagore's *Chandalika*, for which Maitra composed and arranged the music. Unfortunately, the great dancer suffered a heart attack while on tour with his new stage show and had to disband the troupe.



Fig. 15. Kamalesh Maitra and Uday Shankar in the Calcutta Technician Sound Studio during the recordings for the Shankar Scope production in 1970.

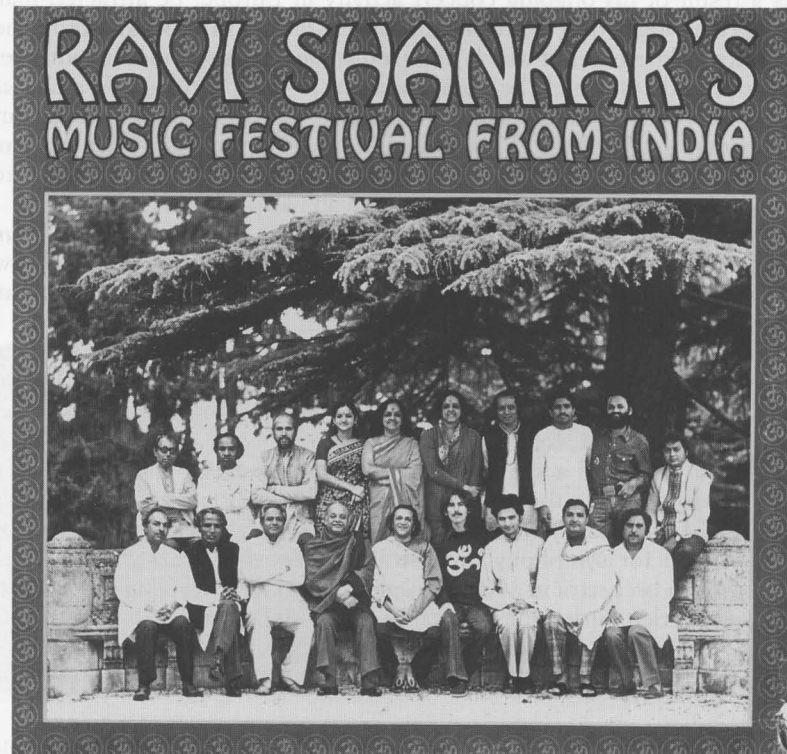
The year 1968 found Maitra on a second tour to the United States and Canada with the Uday Shankar Company. In the same year he went to Bhutan with Amala Shankar and to Japan during the preparations for the opening of the World's Fair EXPO '70. In Tokyo he performed a *tabla tarang* solo for a Fuji TV broadcast entitled "World Surprise Show."

At home in Calcutta he performed at the prestigious Dover Lane Conference, the Bongio Sanskriti Parisad Festival, and at other occasions.

Shankar Scope, Uday Shankar's last great work, won Maitra acclaim as composer of both the songs and the instrumental music. A variety show based on the Laterna Magika technique of combining film and theater, it opened in 1970 and was an immediate box office success. Before collaborating with Uday Shankar on this last production, Maitra had taken on the music directorship of the Star Theater in Calcutta during its stage presentation *Monjori Opera*. Following this project Pandit Ravi Shankar, Uday Shankar's younger brother, asked Maitra in 1974 to join his Festival from India tour to Europe and the United States, which was produced by George Harrison.

In 1976 Maitra was invited to perform as a *tabla tarang* soloist at the Berlin Metamusik Festival. The death of Uday Shankar in 1977 coincided with an invitation to teach from the Berlin-based German-Indian dance school Nataraj, and so Maitra decided to settle in Berlin and teach.

Fig. 16. (opposite page): The cover of the George Harrison LP production, *Ravi Shankar's Music Festival from India*, released in 1976. Top, left to right: Kamalesh Maitra, Satyadev Pawar, Harihar Rao, Vijji Shankar, Lakshmi Shankar, Kamala, T.V. Gopalakrishnan, L. Subramaniam, Kumar Shankar, Kartick Kumar. Bottom, left to right: Gopal Kishan Veenkar, Anantlal, Rijram Desai, Alla Rakha, Ravi Shankar, George Harrison, Shivkumar Sharma, Hariprasad Chaurasia, Sultan Khan.



As a result of his ongoing concert activity in Europe, he attracted many students who wanted to learn Indian classical music. In 1980 Maitra formed his Ragatala Ensemble, in which both Indian and Western instruments were integrated and for which he composed music based on the classical *raag* system. In 1982 Maitra started teaching Indian classical vocal and instrumental music at the Wilmersdorf Musikschule in Berlin. At the same time the Ensemble grew in size, eventually undertaking widely appreciated tours to Spain in 1984 and over the years to all parts of Germany.

Two Ragatala Ensemble records and the first LP recording of *tabla tarang* as a solo instrument were released between 1984 and 1986, all Maitra's own productions. He also collaborated with Pandit Ravi Shankar in 1986 in Paris during the recording of the music to Mrinal Sen's film *Genesis*.

During the course of his career as a professional musician, Maitra's performances have been recorded for numerous 45 rpm, cassette, LP and CD productions. Since his arrival in Europe, he has also appeared as a guest artist with various jazz, folk, rock and pop groups on an experimental basis. He has also produced a short 16 mm color documentary film, *Tabla—The Indian Drum*, showing the various phases of the construction of a *tabla*. A dream long harbored by Maitra was finally fulfilled when his compositions were arranged for symphony orchestra and performed first by the music school's youth orchestra in 1986 and again in 1992 by the Kammerorchester Unter den Linden during the Festival of India "Parampara!" in Germany.



Fig. 17. Kamalesh Maitra with Pandit Ravi Shankar, Berlin, 1985.

Sri Maitra remains an active performer and teacher. Tours with his *tabla tarang* to the United States in 1987 and to India in 1989 and 1994 have served to maintain the legacy handed down to him by his master, Uday Shankar. Acknowledged as the last virtuoso on this very rare instrument, his mission is to keep *tabla tarang* from dying out completely by hoping to inspire a younger generation of musicians to take up the instrument and continue the work he started.

TRILOK GURTU

Trilok Gurtu was born into a highly musical family in Bombay, India, in 1951.

My mother, Shobha Gurtu, is a classical singer, “the queen of *thumri*,” my grandmother is a classical singer, and my grandfather on my father’s side was a *sitar* player and a scholar of music, and on and on it goes. We always had music around us. It was like food, and I discovered it naturally, as a source of pleasure, but also as something which I had to give something of myself to—this is what I understood about music, as far as I could analyze it when I was young. When I was six years old I studied the Benares *gharana* with my teacher Manik Rao Popatkar. Later I had a teacher, a very good *tabla* player who was famous with the film industry. His name was Abdul Karim. In 1975 I became a disciple of Ahmed Jan Thirakwa. I went whenever I could to my mother’s public concerts. In India at that time people used to organize lots of concerts at home. It was called *mehfil*: a gathering at a house. So all the people who knew music, who loved music, were there. There was food and drink and a *puja*. Musicians used

to play in private concerts. I remember Sultan Khansahib playing in our home. My mother’s teacher Gaman Khan was an incredible *tabla* player too, but nobody knew him. I never depended on scholars although my grandfather was a scholar who published a book on music. I never go by the books now, there is too much controversy, even conflict about whose *guru* is right.



Fig. 18. Trilok Gurtu

I play *tabla* every day. All that I play in music is due to what I studied with my *gurus*. It is now in my blood. I am thankful that God has given me this gift to express myself. Indian music is very close to jazz because of this improvising part. We have a theme, and then we improvise. My training in classical Indian music helps me to play other kinds of music, and the experiences with other kinds of music help me to play Indian music a little differently, like how to accompany soft, loud, not overplaying. I don't mind adapting. I don't have to be in the foreground. You can say a lot at the back. If the background is good, everything in the front is perfect.

After playing with a succession of Bombay hotel bands, Trilok Gurtu accompanied the Indian fusion band Waterfront to Paris in 1971. In the mid-1970s he played with Charlie Mariano and John Tchicai at Bombay's Jazz Yatra Festival. He travelled all over Europe and the United States playing with Don Cherry, Philip Catherine, L. Shankar, Barre Phillips, Archie Shepp, Gil Evans, Jack De Johnette and Airtio Moreira. In 1984, after the death of his friend Collin Walcott, he joined the band Oregon in New York. Four years later he met John McLaughlin and The Mahavishnu Orchestra in Europe, and became an integral part of The John McLaughlin Trio as the featured soloist on their enormously successful tours around the world. Trilok Gurtu has recorded with many of the big names in jazz, but also cut an album of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* in 1988 in Paris with the famous piano duo Katja and Marielle Labèque. His CMP debut album *Usfret* (which means "spontaneity" in Sanskrit) was recorded in the same year with Shobha Gurtu, his mother, accompanying him as a vocalist. In 1991 CMP released *Living Magic*, which featured Gurtu along with Jan Garbarek, Nana Vasconcelos and Shanti Rao, followed by *Crazy Saints* in 1993 and an album entitled *Believe* in 1994. Maitra and Gurtu appeared

together for the first time in 1983 on CMP's recording *Sura* with Mark Nauseef, Joachim Kühn, Markus Stockhausen and David Torn.

Gurtu is known not only for his eclectic percussion artistry in the jazz world but also as a talented *tabla* player. He managed to take time out from his busy tour schedule to work on this project, as he considered it important for him to record with *tabla tarang* in the field of Indian classical music.



Fig. 19. Recording session at CMP Studio at Zerkall, Germany, in February 1994. Kamlesh Maitra on tabla tarang, Trilok Gurtu on tabla, Laura Patchen with tanpura.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RECORDED MUSIC

As India is a vast country with multifarious languages and traditions, many controversial opinions exist about culture in general and art in particular. It therefore becomes a matter of debate to accept any one theory in the field of Indian music.



Fig. 20. Raagmala miniature: *Gujari* (Basholi, ca. 1700). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

It appears that the Raag Todi existed in ancient times in as many as thirteen different forms. At present one can find more than twenty various types, some of them being derived from other *raag*s such as Asavari Todi or Jaunpuri Todi. The word *raag* means a combination of musical notes or a melodic framework with a determined set of rules which creates a special,

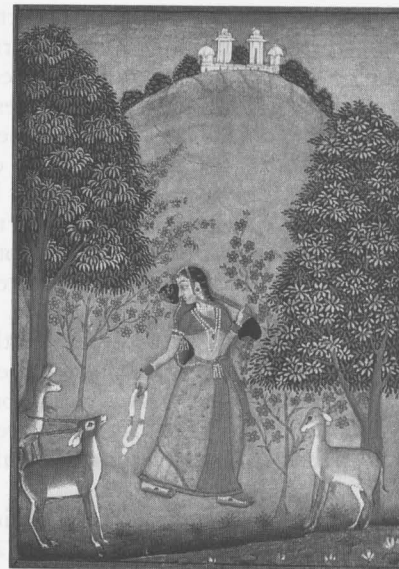


Fig. 21. Raagmala miniature: *Todi* (Bikaner, late 17th C). Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay.

colorful feeling in the mind. Except for a few Todis, the main combination characteristic of the Todi group is the use of the minor second, the minor third and the sixth. Of the nine different feelings or moods such as love, heroism, sadness, peace, etc., that can be expressed through the medium of the *raag*, the Todis create a mood of quietness and devotion—the sun having risen, the energy level slowly increases, and the day's activities begin. In *raagmala* paintings and in poetry, Todi is usually depicted as a beautiful young lady standing in a garden or under a tree, surrounded by deer enchanted by her playing on the stringed instrument called *vina*. The name Gujar (see Fig. 20), an ancient form of the *raag* which uses the same, typical relationship of notes found in Todi, implies that the melody comes from Gurjar, the old name of what is known today as the state of Gujarat. It may be that the melodies of the Gujarati people provide the basic form of the Todi *thaat*, or scale. After some changes over the years this basic form of Todi *thaat* has become *Sa re ga ma Pa dha Ni*, although other combinations are called Todi as well because of their use of the characteristic relationship between *komal re* and *komal ga*.

The Indian *raags* have been categorized according to the time of day or night in which they are to be performed. Following a three-hour cycle, there are early morning, late morning, midday, early afternoon, late afternoon, evening, night and midnight *raags*. Raag Todi is to be played in the morning, a time called *dityo prabar*, which means “the beginning of the second quarter of the day.”

The four different types of Todi selected for this recording are Deen Todi, Bilaskhani Todi, Bhupal Todi and Mia Ki Todi. They all have the main combination *Sa re ga*, in addition to other notes. Kamallesh Maitra uses the following system:

The Indian system of notation is a relative system, which means that the tonic is not absolute. Therefore, *Sa*, or the tonic, can correspond to any pitch in the octave. In this table *Sa* = C.

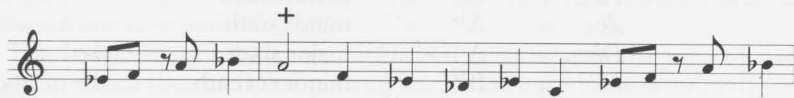
<i>Sa</i>	=	C	=	tonic
<i>re</i>	=	D ^b	=	minor second
<i>Re</i>	=	D	=	major second
<i>ga</i>	=	E ^b	=	minor third
<i>Ga</i>	=	E	=	major third
<i>Ma</i>	=	F	=	perfect fourth
<i>ma</i>	=	F [#]	=	augmented fourth
<i>Pa</i>	=	G	=	perfect fifth
<i>dha</i>	=	A ^b	=	minor sixth
<i>Dha</i>	=	A	=	major sixth
<i>ni</i>	=	B ^b	=	minor seventh
<i>Ni</i>	=	B	=	major seventh

The term *komal* refers to a flatted note; *tivra* means that the note is augmented.

1. Raag Deen Todi 9:18

Deen Todi starts in the first part of the scale, following the Todi character with emphasis on the minor second and the minor third. The upper part of the scale gives the feeling of Raag Aahir and instead of the minor sixth, the major sixth is used along with the minor seventh. For this reason it is also called Aahiri Todi. However, Ustad Ali Akbar Khansahib taught his students this *raag* as Deen Todi.

Jhaptal (10 beats)



Musical Example 1: Deen Todi

Maitra has set the *gat*, or composition, in the rhythmic cycle known as *jhaptaal*. An uneven pattern of 10 beats, it is divided into sub-divisions of 2 - 3 - 2 - 3 . The *theka*, or basic structure of the *taal*, is:

+		2			0			3		
Dhin	na	Dhi	dhin	na	tin	na	Dhi	dhin	na	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Note: The + symbol in the Indian classical music notation system denotes the *sam*, or first and most emphasized beat of the rhythmic cycle. The *tali* are the other stressed beats in the cycle and are indicated by the use of numerals, in this case “2” and “3.” The *khali*, or empty, unstressed beat, is symbolized by the use of “0.” In writing the *bols*, the names of the *tabla* strokes, Maitra has developed the system of using capitals to denote accents; a non-capitalized *bol* has no accent.

2. Raag Bilaskhani Todi 12:13

Mia Tansen, the great musician at the court of Moghul Emperor Akbar the Great (1556-1605 A. D.), carried the honorable title of “Jewel of the Empire” because of his outstanding musical abilities. It is said that his singing was so powerful that he could create natural phenomena like rain and fire through the extraordinary vibrations contained in his voice. His musical expertise was unmatched throughout the land, and it seemed that there would be no one who could follow in his footsteps. When he died, his family and the best musicians of the time gathered to lament the deceased.

Bilaskhani Todi expresses a very deep, pathetic, sad feeling. Although the notes used are those of Raag Bharaivi (the second, third, sixth and seventh intervals are flatted), the treatment of the notes maintains the distinctive combination of Todi, *komal re* and *komal ga*.

First staff of musical notation, featuring a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a sequence of notes with plus signs above them.

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+			0		
Dha	dhin	na	Dha	tin	na
1	2	3	4	5	6

Raag Bhupali is a pentatonic combination made up of the notes *Sa Re Ga Pa Dha* and is performed in the evening. Known also simply as Bhupala, Bhupal Todi is pentatonic as well. However *re, ga* and *dha* are *komal* and the character expressed is that of Raag Todi. *Bhupal* means "owner or king of the earth."

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Traditionally, *taals* were made up of either an even or uneven number of beats. Nowadays rhythmic cycles are being created with fractions of beats, such as those using half- and quarter-beats. Maitra has chosen one of his favorite patterns for the *gat* in Bhupal Todi. This four-and-one-half-beat cycle called *ardha matta taal* is divided as follows:

+	0	2	3
Dhin	tak	Dhin	Dha ge na
1	2	3	4 ½

4. Raag Mia Ki Todi 45:25

Mia Tansen is known to have composed many *raag*s that are still popular. All of them are recognizable in that they were called *darbari* or *mia*, the title that was given to Tansen, along with the name of the *raag*, e.g., Darbari Kanara or Mia Ki Malhar. One of them is Mia Ki Todi, sometimes also called Darbari Todi, as it used to be sung in the *darbar*, or court, of the emperor. The notes in this scale run as follows: *Sa re ga ma Pa dha Ni*, which means that the perfect fifth has been added to the Gujari Todi notes.

Mia Ki Todi is now accepted as the main scale for Raag Todi. Typical for the mood of this *raag* is the use of *komal re* and *komal ga*, as can be heard in the main theme of this recording:

Teentaal (16 beats)



Musical Example 4: Mia Ki Todi

Teentaal, the rhythmic cycle of 16 beats, has been chosen for the two fixed compositions in Raag Mia Ki Todi. Evenly divided into 4 - 4 - 4 - 4, the *theke* runs as follows:

+	2	0	3
Dha Dhin Dhin Dha	Dha Dhin Dhin Dha	Dha tin tin ta	tata Dhin Dhin Dha
1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16

Following a short *alap*, in which the movement of the *raag* is slowly unfolded, the first *gat* is developed in the slow speed called *vilambit*. The second composition starts in *madhya laya* or middle speed and finally ends in a very fast speed with *jhalla*, a climax of notes in varying rhythmic patterns.

All pieces on this recording are composed by Pandit Sri Kamalesh Maitra.



Fig. 22. The late Hirendra Kumar Ganguly expressing his appreciation to Kamalesh Maitra after his *tabla tarang* performance at the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta, 1989. In the background are Dhananjya Mullick and Kumar Bose.

Walter Quintus, who was responsible for making the recordings on this CD, has his own views on recording techniques:

Before starting any kind of recording, I sit with the musician who is going to play, trying to listen to the sound of the instrument from his or her point of view or, better, point of listening. Depending on the size of the instrument, I check even closer positions to the instrument than the musician's ears and then decide where to put the microphones. Since there are so many recordings which sound rather distant, as if taken from the last row in the audience, I go for the sound of exactly how the musician will hear his or her instrument. Obviously, if more than one musician is involved, this theory gets a bit more complicated, since everyone hears only his or her own instrument very directly, not the other's. Still, it works, even with Indonesian *gamelan*.

In this present recording, three Neumann condensor microphones, one stereo USM 69 and two mono U 87, were used for the *tabla tarang* due to the size of the semi-circle in which the instrument is set up around the artist. Two Neumann TLM 170 microphones were used for the *tabla* set and one Neumann KM 84 for the *tanpura*. The listener gets a result that sounds somewhat as if both Kamalesh's and Trilok's ears are put together in two channels.

So lean back, close your eyes and imagine sitting amongst the musicians while listening. Basically, all you need are ears, and the closer they get to those of the musicians, the better!



Fig. 23. Kamalesh Maitra at CMP Studio, Zerkall, Germany, with Trilok Gurtu, Walter Quintus, Laura Patchen and Mita Morgenstern, listening to the recordings. Feb. 1994.

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- 1967 *The Anthology of Indian Music Volume One.* Liberty Records, Inc. WDM-6200/ WDS-26200.

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- 1976 *Ravi Shankar's Music Festival from India.* Dark Horse Records, AMLH 22007.

- 1979 *Drums of India Volume II.* EMI, The Gramophone Company of India Ltd., ECSD-2583

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- 1986 *Tabla Tarang—Ragas on Drums.* Teldec Schallplatten, 66.23798.

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- 1991 *Four Drummers Drumming—Electricity*. (With Albrecht Riermeier). Backyard Records, RIFF 911-2.
- 1993 *Masters of Raga—Kamalesh Maitra—Tabla Tarang—Ragas on Drums*. Wergo/Spectrum, SM 1602-2; 281 602-2.
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- 1983 *Nada Brahma—Die Welt ist Klang*. (With Joachim E. Berendt) Wergo/Spectrum, SM 1044-10.
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*Front cover photo: Pandit Kamalesh
Maitra with his tabla tarang, Subl, 1994
Back cover photo: Trilok Gurtu and
Pandit Kamalesh Maitra at Zerkall, 1994*



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