



Smithsonian Folkways

Melodic Rhythms of India

A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson

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Summary:

Introduce students to the melodic rhythms of the *tabla tarang*, classical drumming from India, through music and movement. Learn to improvise the *jati* system of vocalizing rhythms.

Suggested Grade Levels: 6-8

Country: India

Region: Asia

Culture Group: Indian

Genre: World

Instruments: Voice, Membranophones

Language: Hindi

Co-Curricular Areas: Social Studies

National Standards: 3, 6, 9

Prerequisites: None

Objectives:

- Listening (to tabla tarang)
- Improvising using *jatis* (vocally and instrumentally)

Materials:

- “Raag Deen Todi” by Kamallesh Maitra from *The World's Musical Traditions, Vol. 10: Tabla Tarang--Melody on Drums* (SFW 40436)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/kamalesh-maitra/raag-deen-todi/world/music/track/smithsonian>
- Music in North India by George E. Ruckert
- World Map
- Map of India
- Album cover of SFW40436 of the tabla tarang
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/kamalesh-maitra/the-worlds-musical-traditions-vol-10-tabla-tarang-melody-on-drums/world/music/album/smithsonian>

Lesson Segments:

1. **Listening** (National Standards 6, 9)

- 2. Vocalizing Rhythms** (National Standards 9)
- 3. Improvising Using *Jatis*** (National Standards 3, 9)

1. Listening

- a. See map of world and find India.
- b. Play recording of “Raag Deen Todi”.
 - i. Face a partner and mirror their movements while listening to the recording
 - ii. Listen again and make movements follow the melody of the drums
 - iii. Ask students to try to identify the instrument playing the melody
 - iv. Describe the tabla tarang and look at the photograph of Pandit Kamalsh Maitra sitting in the circle of 13 tuned tabla

Assessment: Can the students feel the pulse while they are improvising movement?
Can the students answer questions about the instrument?

2. Vocalizing Rhythms

- a. Practice reciting jatis (The jati system of vocalizing rhythms is utilized by musicians from both north and south India.- See pg. 8 of Ruckert book).

Assessment: Can the students easily vocalize the rhythms from north and south India?

3. Improvising Using *Jatis*

- a. Practice both *chhand* (one syllable per beat) and *laya* (syllables subdivide the beat).
- b. Decide on *chhand* or *laya* for the rhythmic improvisation.
 - i. *Chhand* Improv:
 - 1. The class keeps a steady pulse on body percussion or quiet drums
 - 2. Improviser uses four groups of each speech pattern, but chooses different orders during performance (the performer claps or plays a drum at the beginning of each grouping, and this is what we must be able to hear over the accompaniment during the improvisation!)
 - 3. Example (The performer plays four sets of 4, four sets of 2, four sets of 3, then ends with four sets of 1)

Claps: x x x x
Voice: ta ka di mi ta ka di mi ta ka di mi ta ka di mi

Claps: x x x x
Voice: ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka

Claps: x x x x
Voice: ta ki ta ta ki ta ta ki ta ta ki ta

Claps: x x x x
Voice: ta ta ta ta

ii. Laya Improv:

1. The class keeps a **slow** and steady pulse on body percussion or quiet drums (they should be able to fit 9 subdivisions into each pulse)
2. Improviser chooses various orders of subdivisions of beats to say and play on his/her drum while performing (begin with only two or three choices rather than using all nine)
3. Example (the performer chooses 2, 2, 8, 1)

Beat: x x x x x x
Improv: ta ka ta ka takita takita taka ta
Groupings (2) (2) (8) (1)

Assessment: Can the Improviser complete both *Chhand* and *Laya* Improv? Can the rest of the class support him or her?