



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Arts

IMPORTANCE OF FLUTE IN INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The Bansuri is used for classical, folk, and popular performances of North India. Often, the Bansuri is a solo instrument accompanied by table and tanpura, and sometimes a second Bansuri becomes an echo of the solo Bansuri. The Bansuri only became a stage performing instrument in the twentieth century. There are no established stylistic schools of Bansuri like with vocalists and stringed instrumentalists. Many of today's great flutists such as Pannalal Ghosh, Vijay Ragha Roa, Hariprasad Chaurasia, and Nityanand Hadipur did not study with flutists but other instrumentalists. There are many different types of ornamentations used in Hindustani music, and many of the instrumental ornamentations are based on vocal genres. Good Bansuri sound is strong vibrato, full tone, use of dynamics, and the use of sustained tones. According to Potter, tone quality is actually more encouraged in film music rather than classical music, but Chaurasia encourages his classical students to produce full, strong tone quality.

Krishna is a Hindu deity, worshipped as an incarnation of Vishnu. Krishna is known as the divine charmer who played flute and through his music, caused many to fall in love with him. Many believe that the North Indian bamboo flute is sacred, and only those who are very blessed and very spiritually inspired can "pick up the most pristine and natural instrument in their mortal hands and go on to make divine music with it". Lord Krishna is also called Murlidhar or "the flute-holder" is told of in stories about his flute playing and seduction of women to his divinity. Many in the Hindu faith believe that Krishna's flute playing represents the human soul yearning for union with the divine lover.

The transverse (held across or side blown) flute is found in almost every culture. The bamboo transverse flute is found in Asia and the West Indies. The Bansuri is not the only North India; bamboo flute, but is commonly the concert-flute or the classical flute of North Indian music. First millennium BC history cites] flute, harp, and drum in Vedic rituals. Vedic text is the oldest; layer of Sanskrit literature and the oldest scripture of Hinduism. "The flute is, perhaps, one of the oldest instruments in the world, making an appearance iconographically in Egypt around 4000 BC". Buddhist sculptures showed flutes being played by humans, men and women, celestial beings, instrumental ensembles and accompanying vocal music, chamber music and in the court and temples. "The Sufis (members of mystical sects of Islam, the earliest dating from 8th century Persia) believe that the flute and!

The man of God are one and the same". The Santal tribes of North India (the largest tribal community of India) believe that the flute connects the mortal humans with supernatural forces. The flute is a very important instrument in Indian culture; many poets such as Sarojini Naidu wrote about the flute. After the Muslim invasions of India that began in the 12th century, the Bansuri disappeared as a court instrument but remained common in the folk tradition the states of Bengal, Odisha, and Assam.

The Bansuri flute is a North Indian classical instrument that may be performed in many different venues, in many different genres, and in many different ensembles. The Bansuri is a cylindrical tube with a uniform bore made from a single piece of straight, smooth bamboo that is free of notches. The concert Bansuri is usually between 60 and 90 centimeters and 25 millimeters in diameter, but the Bansuri flute can be of many different lengths (especially in folk music traditions). The top end is closed (either naturally or with a cork stopper) and the lower end is open. The placement of the finger holes are dependent upon the tuning of the instrument, but there is a mcftth hole at the top and usually six finger holes. There is also often a small hole at the end of the flute for tuning. The Bansuri can be made in any pitch. Flutes used for folk and

popular music are often higher pitched than classical Bansuri flutes, which are often pitched at E-l.

The Bansuri is made from special bambo that has large cross-sections (large spaces between notches). It is believed that Assam, a state in north-eastern India, produces the highest quality bamboo. The bamboo is cut after the rainy season and left to dry for months. One end is corked after the bamboo in cleaned and holes are pierced by a red hot iron rod. After the mouth hole is created, the finger holes are created in relation to the pitch created from the moth hole. Sometimes oils, such as mustard and coconut, are used on the inside of the bamboo to keep the instrument from drying out and cracking. According to Catherine Potter, instruments are commonly made by flutists themselves who are self taught. However, there is an American flute maker at the Ali Akbar Khan School of Indian Classical Music in St. Raphael, California who makes some of the best Bansuri that are often ordered from professional flutists in India. The following teachings are based on books by Lyon Leifer who studied with Pandit Pannalal Ghosh and Catherine Potter who studied with Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia. Notation of North Indian classical music is rare because of the depth of their aural tradition. However, the notation that is used is Bhatkande notation using Swara syllables. Swara syllables are similar to the western tradition of solfege and include the syllable sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, and sa. The Bansuri can have six or seven holes. The advantage of seven holes according to the Ghosh/Murdeswar school is as follows: Additional half-step of low range; immensely greater flexibility in treating the register break; and register breaks can make gliding difficult, so the seventh hole is advantageous : for ease of register breaks. Lyon Leifer details the advantage of six holes as being only one: Prevents the performer from having to stretch the right hand for the seventh hole. When playing in an ensemble, the other instruments that will play with the Bansuri will tune according to the pitch of the given Bansuri. The Bansuri played while sitting cross legged, horizontally, either to the left or to the right.

The first hand facing in towards the musician and the second hand (furthest away) is palm out. The first three fingers of each hand are used to cover the holes and sometimes the middle part of the finger is used to cover. Microtonal ornamentation and sliding is often used. Bansuri flutes can play at least two and a half octaves, the upper octaves are achieved by over blowing to the harmonics. Bansuri flutes do not have perfect intonation, so tuning is often done with compensation from the embouchure and the turning of the flute in or out to push the airstream further in the hole or further across the hole. Below, is a Bansuri fingering chart from Catherine Potter's Hariprasad Chaurasia: The Individual and the North Indian Classical Music Tradition. Staging can often be he ensemble sitting center stage, the tabla player stage left, and two

Tanpuras behind the Bansuri player. While playing the Bansuri, the fingers may cover the holes with second phalanx of the fingers, which facilitates covering the holes that are large distances apart. The holes can be partially uncovered to produce different intonation, slides, microtonal effects. However, there are Bansuri players who use the pads of their fingertips to cover the holes of the Bansuri, and this may be more comfortable at first for the western flutist when making the shift from the Boehm flute to the Bansuri. Below is an image of finger placement on a Bansuri using the second phalanx from Catherine Potter's Hariprasad Chaurasia: The Individual and the North Indian Classical Music Tradition. As stated by Catherine Potter, Chaurasia's idea of a Good Bansuri sound is strong vibrato, full tone, use of dynamics, and the use of sustained tones. According to Potter, tone quality is actually more encouraged in film music rather than classical music, but Chaurasia encourages his classical students to produce full, strong tone quality. The Bansuri, unlike the Boehm flute, can be held to either the right or left side of the performer. If held to the right, the left hand is placed on the instrument first (first as in closest to the face), palm in, thumb supporting the Bansuri away from the palm, index finger straight and angled toward the tone hole. The first three fingers of left hand are placed on the first three holes. Then, the right hand is placed second (furthest away from the face), palm out, fingers flat, some use the tip of the fingers to cover the holes, others use the second phalanx. The little finger of the right hand must angle out from the hand in order to reach the seventh tone hole. The seventh tone hole is reached by keeping the forearm and hand in-line (wrist not flexed) and rotate them together. Below you will see a picture of hand and finger position from Lyon Leifer's How to Play the Bansuri. However, after listening to many Bansuri recordings and watching many videos, I have collected a few ideas: Pitches can ornament by physically moving the Bansuri up and down and with side to side motions to effect the embouchure placement. Mind (or Meend) is produced by slowly rolling the finger in a circular motion to gradually open and close the hole. Kana is produced by sliding the fingers over or off the hole after blowing. Gamaka is produced by approaching each pitch from above by using the kana technique in combination with embouchure movement and air movement. Gamak is an oscillation between two notes (usually a diatonic step apart) like a tremolo. Taan is improvised variations including rapid variation in accordance with the raga. Below you will see a chart of simple Taans in Raga Yaman from Lyon Leifer's How to Play the Bansuri.

Double note paltas are patterns with a repeated note that is separated by a lower neighbor grace note.

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