

Asia Society and Sanskriti Center NY
present

Gundecha Brothers: Dhrupad Music of North India



Gundecha Brothers

Photo courtesy of the artists

Featuring: Umakant Gundecha - Dhrupad Vocal
Ramakant Gundecha - Dhrupad Vocal
Akhilesh Gundecha - *Pakhawaj*
Nirant Gundecha - *Tanpura*
Jennifer Melmon - *Tanpura*

Saturday, May 8, 2010 at 8:00 PM

Pre-performance lecture at 7:00 PM

with **Shalini Ayyagari** specialist in regional musical practices of North India

About Dhrupad Music

Dhrupad is perhaps the oldest style of classical singing in north Indian music. The heyday of this style was in the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar's court musician, Tansen. It is known for its austere quality and strict adherence to the *tal* or rhythmic structure. The moods of *dhrupad* may vary, but the most common themes revolve around devotion, the victories of great kings and mythological stories.

Dhrupad is essentially a poetic form incorporated into an extended presentational style marked by precise and orderly elaboration of a raga. The exposition preceding the composed verses is called *alap*, and is usually the longest portion of the performance. This aspect of dhrupad has been the most influential, and is reflected in other North Indian musical formats, especially in Hindustani instrumental music .

The term dhrupad itself means "the literal rendering of verse into music" and so the songs have a particularly potent impact. The actual *dhrupad* song-form is set in the specific rhythmic structure *chautal* (4+4+2+2). Some performances in this idiom include related songs, called *dhamar*, in *dhamar tala* (5+5+4 beats), but there are also other rhythmic forms which sometimes appear. These are usually somewhat lighter in content than the dhrupad proper. The rhythmic sections are generally accompanied by the two-head drum *pakhawaj* (similar to the *mridangam* of Carnatic music) and at least one *tanpura*, a stringed lute that maintains a constant drone.

This music provides a wealth of depth in melodic nuance, with the smallest motion elaborated for minutes in a variety of time-tested techniques. The sophistication of the unmeasured exposition is nearly impossible to match in the world's music, and is buoyed by a variety of patterns derived from the original melody of the *rāga* . A *rāga* is more than a scale, and includes characteristics such as ascending and descending scales, melodic phrases, microtonal variation, time of day and a general mood.

This program was made possible by the generous contributions of the Sanskriti Center's patrons **Vikas & Jaishree Kapoor**, **Maneesh & Ritu Mittal**, **Sant & Daman Chatwal** and **Hampshire Hotels & Resorts, LLC**.



Pre-Performance Lecture

Lecture by **Shalini Ayyagari**

About the Speaker

Shalini Ayyagari, a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities at Dartmouth College, is a specialist in the regional musical practices of North India. She received her doctorate in Ethnomusicology from the University of California, Berkeley. Her research examines intersections of development initiatives and music-making as members of the Manganiyar hereditary musician community are founding their own non-governmental organizations to grapple with community and caste issues in northwestern India. She is also currently working on a project which looks at the India-Pakistan border region as a site for borderlands music-making. Ayyagari is an avid Hindustani *tabla* and Balinese Gamelan player.

Program

1- **Raga Jaijaivanti** (late night) Mood shringar (love) taal: Choutal, notes: SRGMPNS, SN (komal) DPMGRS, western: CDEFGBC (ascending) CBbAGFEDC (descending) Bols are dha dha din ta kit dha din ta tit kat gadi gana 5 divisions of 2 beats 1, 5. 9 and 11 clapping 3 and 7 empty

Author: Unknown/Language: Brij

Lyrics:

Ek samaya radhika mukhana banaye ang chali sang shyamju ke kar singar roop bano tihare hi mukh ko, dekh ke swaroop ko chandra hun lajaya rahe

Translation:

Seeing the beauty and radiance of Radha Rani as she accompanied Shyam, the moon blushed as he saw her dressed for her Krishna and hid behind the clouds.

2- **Raga Hansadhvani** (evening) - Mood bhakti (devotional) Taal (rhythm)- Choutal, notes: SRGPNS western: CDEGBC (same descending) Usool-e Faqta 10 beats - Dha Gid Nag Dhig Gid Nag Gad Dhig Gid Nag five sections of 2 beats/tali (clap) on 1, 5 and 7 and khali (wave) on 3 and 9

Author: **Guru Nanak** (15 April 1469 – 22 September 1539) is the first of the ten Sikh Gurus. Sikhs believe that all subsequent Gurus possessed Guru Nanak's divinity and religious authority. Guru Nanak's teachings can be found in the Sikh scripture Guru Granth Sahib, a vast collection of revelatory verses recorded in Gurmukhi.

Language: Hindi

Lyrics:

Sadho mana ka maan tyago
kaam krodh sangat durjan ki
tate ahanis bhago
Sukh dukh dono sam kari jano
aur maan apamana
harsha shok te rahe atita
tin jag tatva pahchana
Stuti ninda dou tyago
khoje pada nirvana
jana nanak yeh khel kathin hai
khou gurumukh jana

Translation:

Guru Nanak Deva states:
Let the mind be clear and still like a lake
Let the mind be devoid of pride,
Let it be free of desire and anger,
Treat Happiness and Sorrow with equal equanimity,
Let not be affected by pride or insults,
Joy and sorrow, praise and criticism should not matter
Recognize the elements of the three worlds,
Attain a state of Nirvana.

3 - Raga Charukeshi ("Late Morning"). Mood Shanti (peace)

Taal: Sooltal, Charukeshi **is** the 26th mela of the Karnatic organizational system of ragas. notes: SRGMPD (komal) N (komal) S western: CDEFGAbBbC (same descending)

Author: **Kabir**. Kabir was born in the year 1398AD, 71 years before Guru Nanak. He was never formally educated and was almost completely illiterate. Kabir is one of India's most quoted poets and mystics. He is spiritually significant to Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims alike. Kabir openly criticized all sects and gave a new direction to Indian philosophy.

Language: Avadhi

Lyrics:

Jhini Jhini bini chadariya
Kahe ke tana kahe ke bharani
kauna tara se bini chadariya
ingala pingala tana bharani
sushumana tara se bini chadariya

pancha tattva guni bini chadariya
jo chadara sura nara muni odhi
Odhi ke maili kinhi chadariya
Dasa kabira jatana se odhi
jyun ki tyun dhara dini chadariya

Poet Kabir Das says: “When I was born, the world smiled and cried. However, I will do such deeds that when I leave, I will be the one smiling and the world will be the one crying.” This life is like a very thin transparent shawl which should be drenched in the holy name of Lord Rama, the Reservoir of Pleasure. 2) The eight lotuses is the spinning wheel using the five earthly elements to make the chadar (the body). In nine of ten days, the chadar is completed; however, the fools will destroy it. 3) When the chadar is completed, it is sent to the dyer (the spiritual master) to color it. The dyer (the spiritual master) colored it as such that it is all red (the color of self-realization). 4) Do not have doubts or fears while wearing this chadar. It is only given to you for two days and it is temporary too. The foolish people do not understand the temporariness of this chadar, and they day by day destroy it. The servant, Kabir Dasa, is attempting to wear this chadar as given to him originally by his guru. Kabir says: “I have covered myself with this cloth with great care and eventually I will leave it like it was.”

4- Raga Shivanjani Shivanjani-taal: Sooltal,
notes: SRG (komal) PDS
western: CDEbGAC (same descending)

This is a very melodious raga and is sung during late evenings. As the name suggests, this raga is used to compose tunes to please the fearsome Lord of destruction, Shiva. This *raga* is known to evoke the moods of romance and sorrow. Sometimes liberty is taken with *raga* Shivanjani and Shudha Gandhar (Ga) may be used by some musicians. *Raga Shivanjani* is originally from South Indian Classical music later adapted in North India. This song is in praise of Devi.

Author: **Guru Mata Amma Sridhar Sri Gudda**
Language: Sanskrit

Lyrics:
Sandhya sanjivani sur samadhi rupini
gayatri trivarg dhatri savitri trilok yatri
mahamantra mahayantra mahatantrini
rahoyaga krimaradya rahstarpini
om lum vam ram rhim yam

Translation:
Composition in praise of the all pervading goddess Devi, the shining one.

About the Artists

Umakant and Ramakant Gundecha are India's leading exponents of the **Dhrupad** style of music. They are among the most active young performers of Dhrupad in Indian and international circuits. Born in Ujjain in Central India, both were initiated into music by their parents.

The Gundecha Brothers received conventional university education and learned the Dhrupad vocal art under the renowned Dhrupad vocalist Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar, and also with Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar (the distinguished performer of Rudra Veena) in Dhrupad Kendra Bhopal.

The Gundecha Brothers have sung poetry by the great poets of Hindi, Tulsidas, Kabir, Padmakar, and Nirala in Dhrupad style. They have recorded approximately 25 cassettes and CDs with H.M.V, Music Today, Rhythm House, Senseworld Music, Sundaram Records, IPPNW Concerts Berlin, Navras and Audio Rec London. They have also sung for many television channels in India and have been broadcast on British, American, German, French, Japanese, and Australian radio as well. In addition to being an integral part of all of India's prestigious music festivals, the Brothers have also performed at many important international music festivals and institutions in over 25 countries, including throughout Europe, the U.S., Australia, Japan, Egypt, Singapore, Bangladesh, U.A.E, and Hongkong.

They received an M.P. Government Scholarship from 1981 to 1985, a National Fellowship from 1987 to 89, and the Ustad Allaiddin Khan Fellowship in 1993. They have also received numerous awards, such as the Sanskriti Award in 1994, the Kumar Gandharva Award in 1998 given by the Government of Madhya Pradesh, and the Dagar Gharana Award from the Mewar Foundation in 2001.

Akhilesh Gundecha learned Pakhawaj playing from Pandit Shrikant Mishra and Raja Chhatrapati Singh JuDeo. He has a postgraduate degree in music and also graduated in Law. He received a scholarship from Ustad Allaiddin Khan for Sangeet Academy in Bhopal from the Indian government. He has accompanied many of the Dhrupad Maestros such as Ustad Z.F. Dagar, Ustad Fahimuddin Dagar, Pt. Siyaram Tiwari, Shrimati Asgari Bai, Dr. Ritwik Sanyal and Bahauddin Dagar. He has also played solo recitals at the Tansen Festival in Gwalior, the Haridas Sangeet Samaroh in Mumbai, the Dhrupad Samaroh in Bhopal, and many other festivals. He has toured throughout Germany, Switzerland, Hong Kong, the USA and Canada, and is regularly featured on radio and television.

About the Instruments



Tanpura

Tanpura is a drone instrument. It resembles a *sitar* except it has no frets. It has four strings tuned to important pitches of the raga. The word "*tanpura*" (*tanpoora*) is common in the north, but in south India it is called "*tambura*", "*thamboora*". The tanpura is known for its very rich sound. There are three main styles; the *Miraj* style, the *Tanjore* style and the small instrumental version sometimes called *tamburi*.

The *Miraj* style is the typical north Indian *tanpura* (*tambura*). This is the favorite of Hindustani musicians. It typically is between 3 to 5 feet in length. It is characterized by a pear shaped, well rounded *tabali* (resonator face) and non-tapering neck. It usually has a resonator made of a gourd, but rarely one may find resonators made of wood. It does not partake in the melodic part of the music but it supports and sustains the melody by providing a very colorful and dynamic harmonic resonance field based on precise tones, and including the neutral pitch of the raga.



Pakhavaj

The **Pakhavaj**, also called **Mardal**, **Pakhawaj**, **Pakuaj**, is an Indian barrel-shaped, two-headed drum, the North Indian equivalent to the Southern mridangam. It is the standard percussion instrument in the dhrupad style and is widely used as an accompaniment for various forms of music and dance performances. The pakhavaj has a low, mellow tone, very rich in harmonics. Set horizontally on a cushion in front of the drummer's crossed leg, the larger bass-skin is played with the left hand and the treble skin by the right hand. The pakhawaj rhythms are taught by a series of mnemonic syllables known as bols.

About the Sanskriti Center NY

Sanskriti's goal is to promote and preserve the legacy of Indian culture by imparting the gift of that rich tradition to the children of the greater New York area. Sanskriti works to instill its students with an abiding appreciation of India's heritage, to transform them into cultural ambassadors. Through arts in education and promoting all artists Sanskriti is committed to building bridges not only between America and India, but between the past and the present cultural history of India. Our Motto is "SA VIDYA YA VIMUCHYATE" Knowledge is that which liberates. For more information, see <http://www.sanskriticenter.org>

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Performing Arts programming at the Asia Society is made possible in part by support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Helen and Will Little Endowment for Performing Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts and The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc.



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