



Smithsonian Folkways

Indian Music and the Sitar

A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson

Designed by: Kevin Williams
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Summary:

Students will experience traditional Indian music and internalize it by moving to it. There will be an opportunity to listen to, play and dance to sitar music and ragas.

Suggested Grade Levels: 4-5, 6-8, 9-12

Country: India

Region: Asia

Culture Group: Indian

Genre: Indian Classical

Instruments: Sitar

Language: Hindi

Co-Curricular Areas: Social Studies, Dance

National Standards: 2, 4, 5, 6, 8

Prerequisites:

- For Lesson Segment 2, a working knowledge of solfege
- For Lesson Segment 3, instrumental sight-reading ability

Objectives:

- Experience Indian music by feeling the pulse
- Learn about the sitar by listening to a raga
- Gain an understanding and feel for playing Indian Music

Materials:

- Recording of “Aalap and Dhrupad in Rag Bhairavi,” performed by Nirmalya Dey from *Dhrupad* (ARCE00018_104)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/nirmalya-dey/aalap-and-dhrupad-in-rag-hem/track/smithsonian>
- “Bageshwari” by Shamim Ahmed from *India's Great Shamim Ahmed: Three Ragas* (MON00489_101)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/shamim-ahmed/india-three-ragas/world/music/album/smithsonian>
- Attached diagram of Sitar
- “Omkaaraaya Namaha,” by Ravi Shankar (see below)

Lesson Segments:

- 1. Listening and Moving to Indian Music** (National Standards 6, 8)
- 2. Understanding Sitar Through a Raga** (National Standards 6)
- 3. Playing Music from India** (National Standards 2, 4, 5)

1. Listening and Moving to Indian Music

- Play recording of “Aalap and Dhrupad in Rag Bhairavi” and then ask questions:
 - What part of the world is this music from?
 - What kind of mood does it invoke?
 - Is it in Western tuning?
- Ask students to partner up, and to choose a leader and a follower (they'll eventually trade roles).
- Play the recording again, and the leader will interpret the music through body movements, and the follower will mirror the leader.
- Leaders and followers trade roles, and play the recording one more time.

Assessment: Are the students making appropriate body movements with the music?

2. Understanding the Sitar Through a Raga

- Ask the following questions before the first listen of “Bageshwari”: What part of the world is this music from?
 - What instrument is being played?
- Ask students the following questions after listening for the first time:
 - What might the instrument look like / what is it made of?
 - What causes the instrument to make the sound?
- After second Listening, talk briefly about how ragas are improvised.
 - Each raga is in a different tonal mode
 - It is based on one motif/melody and then expanded upon
- Show diagram of Sitar.
- Explain the basic structure of the sitar.
 - There are 20 strings. 7 are plucked, and 13 are resonators (tarab)
 - Each string has its own tuning peg
 - The bridges connect their respective strings to the main gourd
 - The gourds act as resonators, to help project the sound

Assessment: Are the students discussing the raga? Are they engaged in learning about the sitar?

3. Playing Music from India

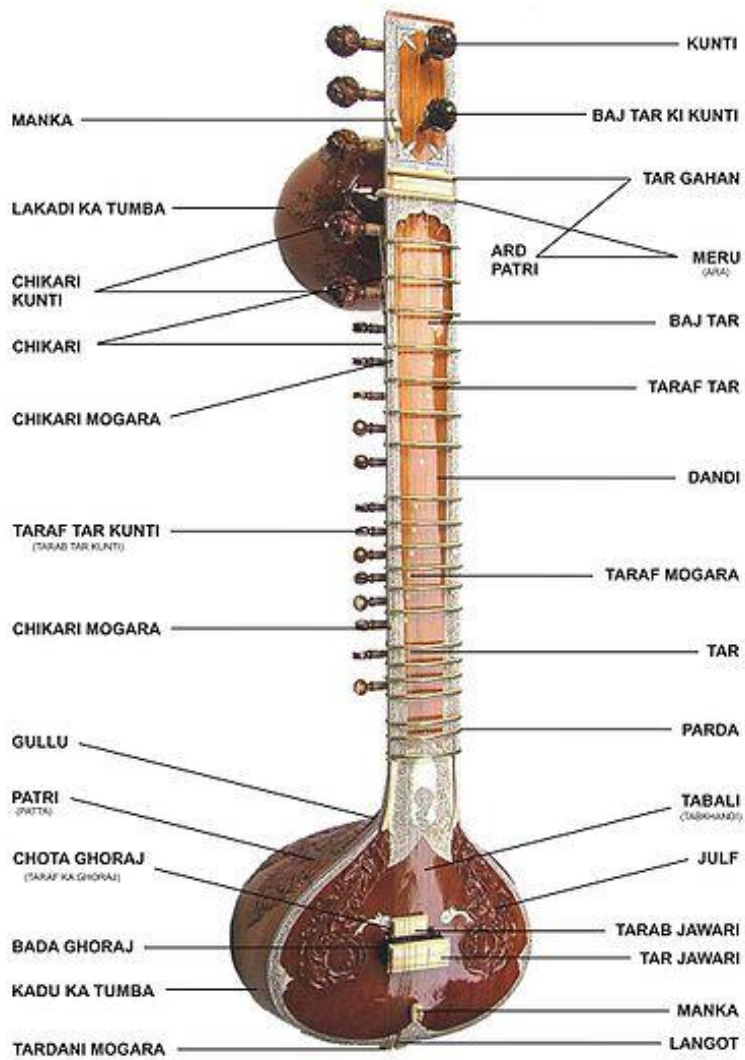
- Hand out parts to “Omkaaraaya Namaha”, and rehearse each as necessary.
 - What instrument is being played?

- b.** Refer to Lesson Segment 2, and explain that by layering the motifs the students have in front of them, they'll be improvising an Indian song.
- c.** Perform the piece.
 - i.** Place students in small groups (not necessarily by instrument, but it would be easier for younger players); each group is responsible for playing one of the motifs
 - ii.** This arrangement of the piece is based on layering; bring in drones first, and then stack other motifs in; experiment with different instrument/layering combinations
 - iii.** To take it another step further, have the students dictate when to come in with their motifs themselves

Assessment: Did the students play an arrangement of the piece? Were they able to improvise when to come in when layering?

PARTS OF THE SITAR

by Jan Kraus



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Score

Omkaaraaya Namaha

[Subtitle]

Ravi Shankar
arranger: Kevin Williams

♩ = 70

Flute
Clarinet in B \flat
Alto Sax.
Horn in F
Tuba
Viola

stagger breath
stagger breath
stagger breath
stagger breath

1 2 3 4 5

Fl.
B \flat Cl.
A. Sx.
Hn.
Tuba
Vla.

3 3 3 3 8

6 7 8 9