

# THE SITAR

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE KING OF NORTH INDIAN INSTRUMENTS

### HISTORY

The “Sahtar” (sah = three / tar = string), dates back at least 700 years. Originating in ancient Persia, the instrument is said to have been invented by Amir Khusro. With the Persian invasions of India came the meeting of the arts and musics of the two cultures. By the 14<sup>th</sup> Century the innovation of combining the Sahtar with the Veena, the ancient Vedic instrument, took hold.

This “Sitar” was a new and strange instrument which did not catch the musician’s fancy immediately. Over the next 400 years the Sitar underwent further refinements, with the addition of more strings and a bridge of sympathetic resonating strings. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, there came a blossoming of the instrument under the masterful hands of Ustad Imdad Khan and Allauddin Khan of Maihar.

Ustad Allauddin Khan is the famous teacher of Sarod maestro Ali Akbar Khan (his son). He is also the teacher of Ravi Shankar, the famed Sitarist who taught George Harrison (of the Beatles) the instrument. Other famous Sitar masters are Ustaad Vilayat Khan and Nikhil Bannerji.

### CONSTRUCTION OF THE SITAR

Constructed of Teak wood for the neck and sound board, Rosewood pegs, brass frets, metal strings of varying gauges and alloys, bone and sometimes ivory ornaments, and a large gourd for the body.

### STRINGS: GAUGES AND REPLACEMENT OF STRINGS

(handout)

### CARE OF THE SITAR

Store in the case

Carrying the sitar

The gourd and cracks

The bridges, frets and pegs:

CLEANING

MOVING

REPAIRING

### HOLDING THE SITAR/YOGA

Foot placement

Support w/elbow & balance

Thumb at last fret

Mizrab technique

DA = inside

RA = outside

DIRI = in/out

### TUNING THE SITAR – LISTENING FOR THE MICROTONE

Microtonal vs. Tempered tuning

The importance of vocalization and singing to pitch

### SARGAM AND RAGA NOTATION (HANDOUT)

SA-RE-GA-MA-PA-DHA-NI-SA

### RAGA DEMONSTRATION & QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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