

# INDIAN ART AND LETTERS

NEW SERIES. VOL. XVIII., No. 1

FIRST ISSUE FOR 1944

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*Published twice annually by*

THE ROYAL INDIA SOCIETY

3 VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W. 1

1944

5s. per issue

Ten Shillings per annum

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O necklace of death ! O armband of Śiva !  
 O wristlet of destruction ! O anklet of Kālī !  
 I know you have poison, you are full of poison.  
 But I am given to drinking " the poison of fate."  
 Shall I make you my cup-bearer ?  
 Shall I make you my cup-bearer, O denizen of the secret abode ! Come and dwell in my  
 body and heart, O dweller in the secret abode !

O dweller in the secret abode, you are not very poisonous.  
 Among human beings are thousands of snakes, white, black and yellow.  
 Mullā, Nītā, Pīr, Pandit, Rāja, Pānda and Lālā,  
 They all live on earth, but are more poisonous than you.  
 Shall I have my heart stung by you ?  
 Shall I have my heart stung by you, O dweller in the secret abode !

Your poison is only a drop and their poison an ocean :  
 You sting in desolate places, they sting in each and every house.  
 Those stung by you live for a day, but those stung by them die instantaneously.  
 Your poison has effect only on the body, but their poison destroys the soul.  
 I wish to wipe out their poison from my heart ;  
 I wish to wipe out their poison from my heart, O dweller in the secret abode !  
 Come and dwell in my body and heart, O dweller in the secret abode !

In conclusion I should like to add that Urdu poetry in Hyderabad also has made very great progress during the last twenty-five years, and some of the poets of this place may favourably be compared with the best poets of Northern India and elsewhere.

## THE APPRECIATION OF EASTERN MUSIC<sup>1</sup>

By DENNIS STOLL

"THE Appreciation of Eastern Music" is a title which may appear, at first sight, presumptuous. So I should like to establish my attitude clearly. There is a philosophy behind it, a deep distrust of instruction. Put in the form of an aphorism after the Chinese, my philosophy might be phrased: "Only a fool or a schoolmaster imagines he is capable of teaching anybody anything."

I am sure that most of you, whether you look at art from a Western or an Eastern viewpoint, will share my abhorrence of the popular modern usage of the term "musical appreciation." All too often it simply means that the teacher, working to the time table and text book, instructs his pupils how to listen to music as if he were some eloquent encyclopædia bursting with superior knowledge and brain power. That, I can assure you, is not my attitude this afternoon.

On the contrary, as a Westerner, I feel that the appreciation of music far removed from one's own culture must imply a very humble attempt at understanding; an increase in one's normal capacity for listening. It implies an effort to approach with sympathetic intelligence those unfamiliar patterns of sound, so charged with vivid emotion and meaning for musicians

<sup>1</sup> Lecture delivered at the Netherlands House on March 25, 1944. Mr. B. N. Mukerjee presided.

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with different racial roots, in all their varying degrees of human usefulness, beauty and complexity.

At its deepest level, appreciation of Eastern music might be described as what the Hindus call *sādhanā*, the awareness of existence outside time and space, the realization of self unobscured by mental conflicts and prejudices. At another level, probably better understood in the Near East and the West than in India, it can be regarded as a striving to increase and refine one's sense of enjoyment of life. But of all the views that may be taken of this extraordinarily adaptable word "appreciation," my philosophy holds that the most inaccurate and most horrible is that standard dictionary definition: "To recognize or feel the worth of . . . by instruction."

"Only a fool or a schoolmaster imagines he is capable of teaching anybody anything." There is surely some truth in my aphorism, as far as musical appreciation is concerned at any rate. To my mind, the pursuit of music, like all knowledge, is comparable with the exploration of new country. Master and pupil alike are adventurers. He alone deserves to be called a master who is, not necessarily the more learned, but the more curious and aware of what there is to wonder at.

In addressing this learned Society on the subject of Eastern music, my hope is that we may go together as friendly travellers. Some of you are, perhaps, visiting a strange land for the first time. Occasionally I may be able to enhance your vision of the journey; to remark upon some aspect of the sky and clouds, where the shadows are darker or lighter than at home; to point out some curious bird or unfamiliar beauty of the landscape, as one who has been there before.

My own early glimpse of Eastern music was, like so many experiences with a chastening inner aspect, quite frivolous on the surface. It was in Tangier. A deceitful old snake-charmer was producing harmless snakes from his long, untidy white beard. Beside him a young Moorish boy was attracting the crowd, making his *darbūka* drum heard above the pandemonium of the bazaar. His thin muscular fingers tapped and turned a dozen different ways on the skin of the drum, giving out as many different tone-colours as rhythms. He changed the striking position of his right hand so rapidly, fluttering the left from the wrist like a brown sparrow's wing, that I gained the impression of a blurred photograph in which he had developed twenty pairs of flying hands.

He was assisted by a brother virtuoso with a reed-pipe. This sounded to me rather strident, as if a Western oboe had been scared into a permanent shriek. Playing an endless *legato* fountain of semiquavers *allegro vivace*, the oboist appeared never to take a breath. I watched him at this fabulous performance for some fifteen minutes, expecting any moment to have to give him artificial respiration. Then I retired baffled, my Western sense of matter-of-fact having been badly shaken. One might have expected musical technique in Tangier bazaar to be child's play. But at the first encounter with a couple of popular baby musicians, I found myself very much corrected.

The mystery of the "breathless" oboist proved as simple in solution as it was astonishing. A small hole had been pierced behind each of the boy's ears, through which he was able to breathe in comfort. The operation is done, I understand, almost painlessly in the cradle to Arab infants destined for the musical profession. I had not realized that such things could happen outside *The Arabian Nights*.

What a remarkably musical book *The Arabian Nights* is! I have always felt that not the least of its thousand-and-one marvels are the musical references. Whether the narrative leads us into the Caliph's Garden of Delight, the noisy bazaar or the silent desert, music is conjured up before we can cry "Open Sesame!"

Flattering though it is that Shahrazad assumes that we are familiar with Arabian music, and are appreciative of its technical niceties, how many of us can really distinguish the *ghinā' al-mutqan*, classical music of the palace of Harun, from the *hudā'*, caravan music of the desert camel train, or from the *rakbānī*, popular folk music of the streets of Baghdad? Few of us could, I imagine, name the eighteen Arabian modes, let alone whistle a simple melody in any one of them.

If we could re-create the Caliph Harun's private orchestra, that "symphony of lutes, drums and tambourines," would we, like the musical Mukhāriq, "shake with delight" at the sound? Sir Arthur Sullivan, who once heard an Arabian orchestra play for three and a half hours in Cairo, wrote: "The music is impossible to describe and impossible to note down. I came away dead beat, having listened with all my ears and all my intelligence."

Where the composer of *Patience* failed, could we succeed? I believe that we could. But we must be prepared to devote more than three and a half hours to the study of an art which has required centuries for its evolution, and the devotion of men as great in their way as the Elizabethan madrigalists in ours.

However, a warning. It is essential in listening to Eastern music to rid ourselves of the idea, if we ever had it, that it can be criticized as though it were music of the West. We shall be imposing an unnecessary strain on ourselves if we try to retain our native perspective and draw odious comparisons.

Alain Daniélou, in his book, *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales*, recently circulated among members of the India Society, points out that Orientals often pass remarks similar to this: "The Beethoven symphonies are very interesting, but why have all those chords been introduced, spoiling the charm of the melodies?" Conversely, the Westerner is inclined to say: "When these queer modal tunes of the Orient are given a substantial backing of harmony, then they will be really worth listening to!"

Such misunderstandings are, as Mr. Daniélou puts it, "not without serious consequences."

Let us therefore not look for harmony in Eastern music's unspoiled regions of clear sky, but take melody and rhythmic counterpoint as our guiding stars.

First, a simple illustration. We are translated to North Africa, somewhere beneath the vault of the mid-Saharan night, far away from the sound of all harmonic things. The magical effect of Arab flutes, rhythmmed across the sand, insinuates itself into our consciousness. A Bedouin is singing a nomadic *hudā'* song of the desert, mouthing it rather crudely for sophisticated ears. But we will keep our minds free from the prejudice of mere habit. We will remember that this is a song of one who has plodded through the heat of the day toward the cool well of night and a few hours' idleness. The unvarying strain of the flutes, set against the wailing yet robust sigh of the singer, is like the endless sand of the dunes running through time's fingers. And always there is the sorrow of the journey tomorrow—always tomorrow.

I wish I could tell what effect that simple nomadic music has made on you. Probably each one of us has received a different æsthetic impression. But if it has helped us to find that common basic ground on which Oriental music can be approached and appreciated, it will have served its purpose.

Our next piece is a Persian folk-song, *rakbānī*, popular music of the street. It lies between the *hudā'* style, which we have just heard, and the *ghinā' al-mutqan*, classical music. One listens to such a song in a coffee-house, where a singer is expected to be also a poet. But we should beware of imagining that it is the equivalent of a restaurant ballad in this country. The *rakbānī* is the folk-music of an ancient culture, and this example, at any rate, is without

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the least trace of commercial cheapness. It is a sincerely human song: everything that music of the people should be. Indian members of the audience, particularly if they come from the north, will feel at home with it, because, I need hardly remind you, the music of Arabia and old Persia—the Muslim influence—has over centuries blended with the Hindu art to form the present-day system known as Hindustani music.

The instruments used in the accompaniment are the *'ūd*, or fretted lute, a sort of mandolin; and a bowed instrument, a cross between the Western violin and an Arabian *rebāb*.

One might describe such a song as expressive of the tender human spirit.

Al-Hujwirē, in the eleventh century I think it was, divided listeners into two types: "Those who listen for the spiritual meaning, and those who listen only for the physical sound." I mention with temerity, for I believe that there are some Muslims present, that there is no word of censure against music as such in the Koran. Out of what appears almost a maze of religious tradition and legal theory, Islam has formulated conflicting rules on listening to music. Some contend that music, being an inheritance from the "Days of Idolatry," is without exception unlawful. Others maintain that a song is good for the ear of the true believer, who listens for the spiritual meaning.

In either case one must assume that the jolly musical time that was had by all in *The Arabian Nights* was unlawful. Even the famous musician Ibrāhīm al-Mosilē, unrivalled as a composer at Harun's court, was too secular an artist for orthodox Islam. According to Perron, he was the first conductor "who, with baton in hand, marked and indicated the cadence and musical measure." Ibrāhīm seems to have had an extremely acute ear, as the following Beechamesque story bears out. During an audition for some thirty singing girls, who were playing their lutes together, an interfering know-all complained that one of them was out of tune. "My dear fellow, you don't say so!" exclaimed Ibrāhīm with feigned surprise, and immediately named the faulty player and told her which string needed attention.

Throughout the Golden Age of Muslim urban civilization in the Near East—that is, from about 750 to 1250—everybody could claim to be more or less musical. It was as usual to have a professional singing girl about the house as it was for us to have a piano in our Victorian drawing-rooms. Some of the girls were exceptionally talented, and they always sang and played the best classical music, *ghinā' al-mutqan*.

All *ghinā' al-mutqan* was melodic: whether a musician had his song accompanied by one or a hundred instruments, only the melody was performed. But a species of percussive counterpoint, known as *īqā'*, giving scope for instrumental virtuosity, added a complex variety of rhythms. The earliest and most popular of these counter-rhythms was the *hazaj*. As the art developed groups of instruments played different rhythms concurrently, making a kind of chordless harmony.

The illusion of harmony was also created by the improvised variants with which a singer or player habitually adorned a melody. Even today Europeans are deceived by Arabian radio orchestras into thinking that the gossamer of ornaments constitutes actual harmony.

An element of rhythmic improvisation runs through all chamber music from the Near East to the Far. Philip Thornton, who has spent some years in intensive study of Arabian music, relates an amusing personal story illustrating how complex this element can be. While himself performing on the drums with an orchestra in Morocco, he says that the musicians tangled the time by setting three rhythmic variants going at once. Even his experienced ear failed to keep pace. In his own words, he was "quite silenced and covered

with confusion." When he tried to retaliate by beating out a new rhythmic theme, the musicians one after another played about with it and adorned it until he had quite forgotten how it originally ran! This was no doubt the case with the advanced classical music that made Sir Arthur Sullivan come away "dead beat" at Cairo.

The capacity for following two or more different rhythms at the same time is, of course, a necessary demand which must be made upon every musical listener's perception. But for the Westerner, the rhythmic counterpoints of an Arabian orchestra are made doubly difficult because they have no legitimate harmonic relationship. He who listens with mind and ears attuned to Bach or Bax is bound to get in a tangle.

I propose to give an Egyptian example of this. Superficially it bears some resemblance to European eighteenth-century contrapuntal technique. But that fact once observed by the Westerner, it is best in listening to forget it. We should be aware simply of a violin, a flute and a zither carrying an original Arabian theme through all sorts of melodic and rhythmic variations. In the end we shall be rewarded with some beautiful solos, which appeal more to the emotions than the intellect. These solos are greeted with swooning murmurs of appreciation from the Eastern audience, who have characteristically identified themselves with the music to such an extent that they have actually become a part of the performance.

As I have already pointed out, the Hindu-Muslim contact in North India produced a synthetic art, now largely assimilated into what is known as Hindustani music. I hope that on some future occasion our Chairman, Dr. Bhupen Mukerjee, will bring to the India Society his *tabla* drums and *sarode*, on which instruments many of you will already have heard what a skilled and imaginative performer he is, and demonstrate this profound unity of Hindu and Muslim cultures to us.

We must pass over this interesting northern aspect this afternoon. But we are indeed fortunate in having with us a distinguished *vina* artist from Malabar. His is the pure Hindu art of the South—Carnatic music—and he will be able to show us how it has evolved free from the Muslim influence in its own right.

I have pleasure in introducing Mr. Narayana Menon, to whom I am sure we will all wish to signify our gratitude for making an appearance here today between very pressing duties on the Eastern Programme of the B.B.C.

The *vina* which Mr. Menon is holding in his hands is generally regarded as the national instrument of India. For thousands of years it has been venerated by musicians and poets, not least by Tagore, who found in it a symbol of his beloved Motherland. "Make me thy *vina*," he sang; "lift me in thine arms. All the strings of my heart will break out at thy finger-touch. . . . None knows in what new strains her songs will rise up to the heavens and send a message of joy to the shore of the infinite."

The first piece that Mr. Menon is going to play to us is a classical *Gita* hymn of the fifteenth century, very simple in form and rhythm. It is in six-time—1 2 : 3 4 5 6—with the accent on the one and three. The time, or *tāla*, is gently droned out by three subsidiary strings which Mr. Menon plucks with the little finger of his right hand. The four main strings, used for playing the melody, he plucks with his first and second fingers. The delightful whirring tone, *jīvala*, characteristic of the instrument, is effected by the insertion of four thin metal strips below the wires at the bridge.

Without further comment I shall now ask Mr. Menon to play the *Gita* hymn.

Passing on to the early nineteenth century, we come to Tyāgarāja, South India's most revered composer of devotional songs. Frequently one hears him compared to the psalmist David, and indeed some eight hundred compositions of his have the spiritual awareness of one who had attained those serene distant heights to which David also aspired.

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Mr. Menon has chosen a song of Tyāgarāja's in praise of music, called *Ornament of the Lord Siva*. It begins characteristically with an introductory *ālāp*, or prelude, and ends with a brilliant cadenza in the primary *rāga*, or "melody-type," *Sankarābharana*, one of the most popular *rāgas* in South India.

At home in Malabar, Mr. Menon would take at least an hour to perform this piece. But as a concession to our Western mania for hustle he has agreed to cut it down to six minutes. Alas! we have not yet learned, with Chang Ch'ao, that: "Only those who take leisurely what the people of the world are busy about, can be busy about what the people of the world take leisurely."

It is important to realize the disadvantage at which we are placing an Indian artist when we restrict his time-limit. He is used to dallying with the *ālāp* prelude for ten or twenty minutes before the mood of inspiration strikes him and he pours out those remarkable variations, partly traditional, but mostly improvised by himself, based on the composer's original melody. In a word, the Indian musical art is essentially at peace and re-creative.

I think it would be correct to say that what we are about to experience can be no more than a glimpse of what might be. As an expert and imaginative *vīna* player, it is Mr. Menon's job to dress the bare melody of Tyāgarāja in garments of grace, ingenious variant and the jewels of embellishment. We are scarcely allowing him time even to pull on a pair of slippers.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the *vīna* is its ability to give a delicate vacillating wail on, or round about, a note. This is produced when the player deflects a wire with his left hand. All sorts of ethereal grace notes, *gamakas*, can be expressed in this manner. Mr. Menon has composed a piece, charmingly exploiting a phrase that wails from the impulse of this typical deflecting device. It is called *Dance of the Peacock*, and is dedicated to Rukmini Devi, the South Indian dancer, who has made it a favourite of her repertoire.

An interesting aspect of this composition is its "unsingableness." Most of the old *vīna* music was limited to what was practicable for the human voice. But modern Indian composers, like Mr. Menon, tend more and more to write for the instrument itself, making the most of its technical peculiarities of which the *gamaka*, by deflection, is one of the most subtle and attractive to the ear.

On this note of new music it seems appropriate to end our journey. I have pointed out what I could of the landscape, which I hope you have found beautiful and not too strange. Our time was short and we have had to travel quickly. We need leisure to visit the country of Eastern music, and the peace of mind to think about it. But as Dr. Bhupen Mukerjee said in that unforgettable address he gave this Society a year or two ago, there is a hopeful Indian philosophy to fall back upon: "The greatest traveller does not travel at all. The truth lies within him, and is only revealed when he has given up all travels."