HISTORY OF CARNATIC MUSIC
2.1 **Origin of Music:**

The origin of music is not known as it occurred prior to the advent of recorded history. According to some sources, the origin of music likely stems from naturally occurring sounds and rhythms\(^{15}\). Human music echoes this phenomenon using patterns, repetition and tonality. Even today, some cultures have their music intending to imitate natural sounds. In some instances, this feature is related to shamanistic beliefs or practice. It may also serve entertainment (game) or practical (luring animals in hunt) functions.

Even aside from the bird song, monkeys have been witnessed to beat on hollow logs. Although this might serve some purpose of territorialism, it suggests a degree of creativity and seems to incorporate a call and response dialogue. It is possible that the first musical instrument was the human voice itself, which can make a vast array of sounds, from singing, humming and whistling through to clicking, coughing and yawning. The oldest known Neanderthal hyoid bone with the modern human form has been dated to be 60,000 years old, predating the oldest known bone flute by 10,000 years\(^{16}\); but since both artifacts are unique the true chronology may date back much further.

Most likely the first rhythm instruments or percussion instruments involved the clapping of hands, stones hit together, or other things that are useful to create rhythm and indeed there are examples of musical instruments which date back as far as the paleolithic, although there is some ambiguity over archaeological finds which can be variously interpreted as either musical or non-musical instruments/tools. Examples of paleolithic objects which are considered unambiguously musical are bone flutes or pipes; paleolithic finds which are open to interpretation are pierced phalanges (usually interpreted as 'phalangeal whistles'), objects interpreted as bullroarers, and rasps.

\(^{15}\) [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_music](en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_music)

\(^{16}\) [www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Prehistoric_music](www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Prehistoric_music)
Music can be theoretically traced to the age, when stone tools first began to be used by hominids. The noise produced by work such as pounding seed and roots into meal is a likely source of rhythm created by early humans. Music is also used in some cases for life. Prehistoric music varies greatly in style, function, general relation to culture, and complexity.

Music is found in every known culture, past and present, varying wildly between times and places. Scientists now believe that modern humans emerged from Africa 160,000 years ago. Around 50,000 years ago these humans began to disperse from Africa reaching all the habitable continents. Since all people of the world, including the most isolated tribal groups, have a form of music, scientists conclude that music must have been present in the ancestral population prior to the dispersal of humans around the world. Consequently music must have been in existence for at least 50,000 years and the first music must have been invented in Africa and then evolved to become a fundamental constituent of human life\textsuperscript{17}.

A culture's music is influenced by all other aspects of that culture, including social and economic organization and experience, climate, and access to technology. The emotions and ideas that music expresses, the situations in which music is played and listened to, and the attitudes toward music players and composers all vary between regions and periods. "Music history" is the distinct sub-field of musicology and history which studies music from a chronological perspective.

2.1.1 **Prehistoric Music**, once more commonly called primitive music, is the name given to all music produced in preliterate cultures (prehistory), beginning somewhere in very late geological history. It is more common to call

\textsuperscript{17} The Music of India - by Reginald Massey, Jamila Massey
the "prehistoric" music of non-European continents – especially that which still survives – folk, indigenous, or traditional music.

2.1.2 **ANCIENT MUSIC:** The prehistoric era is considered to have ended with the development of writing, and with it, by definition, prehistoric music. "Ancient music" is the name given to the music that followed. Double pipes, such as used by the ancient Greeks, and ancient bagpipes, as well as a review of ancient drawings on vases and walls, etc., and ancient which described musical techniques of the time, indicate polyphony. One pipe in the aulos pairs (double flutes) likely served as a drone or "keynote," while the other played melodic passages.

Musical instruments, such as the seven holed flute and various types of stringed instruments have been recovered from the Indus valley civilization archaeological sites. Indian classical music *(marga)* can be found from the scriptures of the Hindu tradition, the Vedas. Samaveda, one of the four vedas describes music at length\(^{18}\).

The history of musical development in Iran [Persia] Persian music, dates back to the prehistoric era. The great legendary king, Jamshid, is credited with the invention of music. Music in Iran can be traced back to the days of the Elamite Empire (2,500-644 B.C). Fragmentary documents from various periods of the country's history establish that the ancient Persians possessed an elaborate musical culture. The Sassanian period (A.D. 226-651), in particular, has left us ample evidence pointing to the existence of a lively musical life in Persia. The names of some important musicians such as Barbod, Nakissa and Ramtin, and titles of some of their works have survived.

The term Early Music Era may also refer to contemporary but traditional or folk music, including Asian music, Persian music, music of India, Jewish music,

\(^{18}\) [www.artandpopularculture.com/Indian_classical_music](http://www.artandpopularculture.com/Indian_classical_music)
Greek music, Roman music, the music of Mesopotamia, the music of Egypt, and Islam music\textsuperscript{19}.

2.2 **ORIGIN OF INDIAN MUSIC**

*The origin of Indian music is said to be rooted in the Vedas. It is said that God Himself is musical sound, the sound which pervades the whole universe, i.e. 'Nadabrahma.'\textsuperscript{20}*

2.3 **HERITAGE:**

Indian music has a very long, unbroken tradition - the accumulated heritage of centuries. The origin can be traced back to Vedic days - nearly two thousand years. The culture of India today is an outcome of the interaction and interweaving of races and cultures, both indigenous and foreign; and it is the study of the contribution of these various races and tribes that gives us the picture of the evolution of Indian music. The Negroid, the Mongoloid, the Dravidian, and the Aryan, have all contributed to the complexity of Indian culture.

North Indian music is popularly known as Hindustani music and South Indian as Carnatic; their origin is the same, only the approach and style are different. When and how the two main schools crystallized would be an interesting study – probably after the entrance of Moguls - but the earliest treatises of Indian music do not make any distinction between Northern and Southern schools.

2.4 **INFLUENCES:**

One of the strongest and most significant influences has perhaps been that of Islam (and of Persian music)\textsuperscript{21}; a few centuries of Muslim invasion and rule brought in its wake a changed perspective in the style of Northern Indian music,

\textsuperscript{19} *The Origins of Music* - by Nils L Wallin, Björn Merker, Steven Brown  
\textsuperscript{20} [www.indoclassical.com/history.asp](http://www.indoclassical.com/history.asp)  
\textsuperscript{21} [www.indianmelody.com/musicintro2.htm](http://www.indianmelody.com/musicintro2.htm)
rather than in its structure. Not being part of the religious ritual it was necessarily fostered outside the places of worship; hence an element of physical pleasure, particularly of the courtier, became predominant.

It is interesting to note the influence of Indian music on sculpture and particularly painting. Painters have portrayed the theme of the Raga and they have named their paintings after the Ragas and Ragnis. Both paintings and sculpture concentrate on creating contained, volume-filled forms. Great care is taken to keep the basis simple. The moving line and contained space complement each other, giving each other meaning. This is exactly analogous to the character of Indian musical melody, which moves in smooth united motions, including within its curves definite units of musical form.

Folk music, also said to have a natural origin, is considered by many scholars as one source that has influenced the structure of Carnatic music. While folk music evokes more spontaneity, a classical system like Carnatic music is more organised. Certain folk tunes correspond to Carnatic melodies or ragas like Anandabhairavi, Punnagavarali, Yadukulakambhoji, etc.

2.5 STRUCTURE:

The tradition of Indian music should be understood in the context of Indian life and thought. The theory and practice of Indian music are the logical result of a consistent development, a distinctive process, which plays an integral part in Indian history and culture.

Each melodic structure of Raga has something akin to a distinct personality subject to a prevailing mood. Early Indian writers on music, carried this idea further and endowed the Ragas with the status of minor divinities, with names derived from various sources, often indicating the origin or associations of the

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22 www.indianmelody.com/musicintro2.htm
individual Ragas\textsuperscript{23}. In theoretical works on music each Raga was described in a short verse formula, which enabled the artist to visualise its essential personality during meditation prior to the performance. This borrowing of the meditational technique used in Hindu worship enabled the musician to enter into the mood of a particular Raga and thus perform is successfully.

2.6 **TECHNICAL ASPECT:**

Raga is neither a scale, nor a mode. It is, however, a scientific, precise, subtle, and aesthetic melodic form with its own peculiar ascending and descending movement which consists of either a full octave, or a series of six or five notes\textsuperscript{24}. An omission of a jarring or dissonant note, or an emphasis on a particular note, or the slide from one note to another, and the use of microtones along with other subleties, distinguishes one Raga from the other. There are 72 'melas', or parent scales, on which Ragas are based.

Raga has its own principal mood such as tranquility, devotion, eroticism, loneliness, pathos, heroism, etc. In Indian music there is above all awareness between man and nature, each acting and reacting on the other, and hence each Raga is associated, according to its mood, with a particular time of the day, night or a season. Improvisation is an essential feature of Indian music, depending upon the imagination and the creativity of an artist; a great artist can communicate and instill in his listener the mood of the Raga.

'Tala' is the second important factor in Indian music. These are rhythmic cycles ranging from 3 to 108 beats. The division in a Tala and the stress on the first beat, called 'Sum', are the most important features of these cycles\textsuperscript{25}. Talas having the same number of beats may have a stress on different beats, e.g. a bar of 10 beats may be divided as: 2-3-2-3, or 3-3-4, or 3-4-3. Within the

\textsuperscript{23} www.india-forums.com/forum_posts.asp
\textsuperscript{24} www.swarganga.org/articles/icmconcepts/icm6.php
\textsuperscript{25} www.indianmelody.com/musicintro2.htm
framework of the fixed beats the mridangist can improvise to the same extent as the principal artists, and after going their separate ways, come back together with an accent or stress on the first beat. Thus, the 'Sum' becomes the most important beat of emphasis throughout a recital of Indian music.

2.7 **Mythological Origin of Music:**

The general belief among Indians is that music is divine and life like. Even Gods are pleased by music. According To Hindu Mythology, Music originated with the first sound in the universe, OM, also called Naada Brahma (the first note). OM is believed to be the purest sound ever made, and just chanting of OM can heal the body. OM is positioned in Indian philosophical and religious thought as being one with the rhythms of the universe. The correct rendition of it requires a particular breath-process, and as such is believed to clear the system and the karmic cycle.

Even today, it is common to recite mantras and other hymns in praise of Gods during Hindu religious ceremonies. Often, these mantras and hymns are recited musically because they are very pleasing to those who are present in the congregation. Also, many of our culture’s stories describe some of the Gods and saints as gifted musicians, excellent dancers and learned scholars. For example, Krishna is a flute maestro. Goddess Saraswathi is a Veena player, while Nandi is an accomplished mridangist. Shiva and his wife, Parvathi are great dancers. Brahma and Saraswathi are learned, wise scholars. Brahma is also said to be the author of the four Vedas, of which the Sama Veda was chanted in definite musical patterns. Other vedic hymns were sung in plain melody, using only 3 notes.

\[26\text{ www.knowyourraga.com/ragagyan/introduction.php}\]
Sarasvathi, the goddess of learning and knowledge, is represented as playing the ancient instrument, Veena. Infact, the most common form of veena is called Sarasvathi Veena. Ravana, of the epic Ramayana, was a Shivabhaktha, so proficient in Veena that shiva gave him many boons on hearing his scholarship. The Gods and saints are not described as musicians or scholars simply to make them appear interesting, however. Through the narrations of reading about the life of these accomplished individuals, we discover the qualities that made them great but also the weaknesses that made them fail.

We must look at mythology to really see the significance that Indian music has to Indian society. This is easily illustrated in the story concerning its origin. Perhaps the clearest mythological narration may be found in Bharata’s Natya-Shastra(Rangacharya 1966). Once, a long time ago, during the transitional period between two Ages it so happened that people took to uncivilised ways, were ruled by lust and greed, behaved in angry and jealous ways with each other and not only gods but demons, evil spirits, yakshas and and such like others swarmed over the earth. Seeing this plight, Indra and other gods approached god Brahma and requested him to give the people a toy (Kridaniyaka), but one which could not only be seen but heard and this should turn out a diversion (so that people gave up bad ways).

Although it was decided to give the celestial art of Sangeetham to mankind, a suitable human had to be found who was capable of receiving this gift. Sangeetham had always been in the realm of the demigods (gandharva). A super-human of superior spiritual ability was required to convey this celestial artform to the world of man. It fell upon the great sage Narada to be the first mortal recipient of this divine art. Through Narada, we are indebted for the presence of classical music. Even now, Narada is represented with images of him carrying a Tanpura. Considering these beliefs it is not surprising that even

27 chandrakantha.com/articles/indian_music/myth_origin.html
to this day, music and musical instruments are considered sacred. All classical composers are considered saints and are worshipped (especially composers like Sri Purandara and Shri Thyagaraja) as such.

The ancient scriptures describe nine fundamental emotions from which all complex emotions may be produced. Just as all hues may be produced by mixing the three primary colours, so too, all emotions are said to be derived from these principal emotions. They are called ‘Nava Rasas’ and are shown in the table below. These emotions form the aesthetic foundation for sangeetham.

We must remember that we are talking about music. This requires an acoustic vehicle to convey these emotions. This acoustic vehicle is known as raga. Raga may be thought of as the melodic foundation upon which classical Indian music is based. During the last few centuries it was customary to anthropomorphize the raga in the form of gandharvas (demigods) and apsaras.

The divine quality of music is perhaps best illustrated in ‘Naada Siddha’. This is the ability to perform miracles by singing or playing certain ragas. The most famous miracle-working musician was Tansen (Garg 1984). It is often said that he was able to create fire or light a lamp by singing rag Dipak, or create rain by singing rag Megh Malhar28.

Viraragava iyer of Tanjore Samasthanam was requested by the king, on a very very hot oppressive day, to sing raga Vasantha. As soon as the vidwan started singing it beautifully, the heat of the place and surrounding areas was gradually brought down and cool breeze immediately began to set in.

When Muthuswamy Dikshitar asked his student to sing ‘Anandaamruthakarshini’ in raga ‘Amruthavarshini’, on his way to Ettayapuram through drought ridden area, to attend his nephew’s wedding, it started raining

Heavily. His brother got worried since he felt the wedding procession will be hindered by the heavy rains. So Dikshitar asked his student to sing the same song, but at the end instead of ‘varshaya, varshaya, varshaya’ to sing ‘sthambaya, sthambaya, sthambaya’ and the rain stopped slowly. Even raga Megaranjini when sung with bhakthi, is supposed to produce rains.

2.8 **ORIGIN OF CARNATIC MUSIC**

It is not easy to point to one period of history or one ancient form of music as the source of contemporary Carnatic music. Several changes in theory and practice have surely taken place from Vedic times to the present day. Historical records allow us to trace the interesting pattern of evolutionary changes in music.

*“Samavedadidam gitam Samjagrah pitamaha”*²⁹

(Meaning) Brahma derived music from Sama Veda. In the south, it is held that the notes figuring in Tyagaraja's "nada tanumanijam" kriti in the raga Chittaranjani, as traditionally sung, represent the notes of the sama gana. These are the seven notes of the melakartha ragam Karaharapriya.

Indian Music had its origin in the "Vedas" (4000 B.C - 1000 B.C )³⁰. Four in number, the Vedas are considered the most sacred texts which contain about a thousand hymns. All the four Vedas were passed down by oral tradition and it is remarkable that both the text and the rituals remain unchanged to this day. It is generally accepted that the Vedas are a probable source of Indian music, which has developed over the centuries into the sophisticated system that it is today. The word “Veda” means knowledge. The thousands of hymns in the Vedas, which are dedicated to the Gods and Hindu rituals, in the form of chants were passed down by oral tradition from generation to generation.

²⁹ www.chembur.com/carnatic/page02.html
³⁰ ragaranjani.in/
The four Vedas are Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharvana Veda. The Yajur veda which mainly consists of sacrificial formulae, mentions the "Veena" as an accompaniment to vocal recitations during the sacrifices. By this time, the chants had evolved to two main notes with two accents forming the first concept of the Tetrachord (four notes). The Sama veda laid the foundation for Indian Music. The origin of Indian Music can be traced back to this Veda. Three more notes were added to the original Tetrachord resulting in the first full scale of seven notes\(^3\).

The long history of South Indian music can be divided into 3 periods:

1. The Ancient Period
2. The Medieval Period and
3. The Modern Period

The Ancient period starts from the age of Sangam (a great confederation of poets and musicians) that is, approximately from the 20th century B.C. and stretches to the beginning of 3rd century A.D., followed by a Dark Period from 3rd century A.D. till the end of 6th century A.D. this is the vedic period also. The Medieval period starts from the 7th century A.D., and ends with the close of the 15th century A.D. The Modern period begins from the 16th century A.D., and continues till today.

2.8.1 **THE ANCIENT SANGAM PERIOD.** (20th Century B.C- 3rd Century A.D.)

The origin of Carnatic music or the South Indian classical music can be traced back to the age of Vedas. Bharata's Natya Sastra , from around the 5th century A.D. , and Saranga Deva's Sangita Ratnakara , from the early 13th century A.D. , are considered the to be the earliest recorded documents available on the theory and performance of Indian classical music. In the ancient period, we come to know of the existence of the Sangams during which Tamil with its

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31 sify.com/carnaticmusic/fullstory.php
three aspects of Literature, Music and Drama flourished. Some of the great works written during this period are:

Tholkappiam, Paripadal, Purananooru, Agananooru, Pathupattu, Thirukkural and Silappadikaram.

2.8.2 **The Medieval Period**
To this period belongs the famous Kudumiyanalai Inscription found on the rock-face of a small hillock in Pudukottai in Tamil Nadu. This is an important musical inscription attributed to the Pallava King Mahendra Varman I. It gives brief Sancharams for seven ragas which are not in use today\(^\text{32}\).

2.8.3 **Age of Thevaram and Divya Prabhandham**
This period may be called the Age of Thevaram and Divya Prabhandam. Thevaram is the name given to the sacred hymns composed by the three Saivite Saints generally known as Nayanmars. They are Thirunavukkarasar, Thirugnanasambandar and Sundaramoorthi Nayanar.

2.8.4 **The Modern Period - The Evolution of Kruthi**
One of the greatest influences in the development of Carnatic music was that of the immortal musician saint, Purandara Dasa (1484-1564). He made great contributions to both Sacred and Art music. He is the most prolific of all the South Indian composers. He perfected a systematic approach to train students of Carnatic music which has since become a standard format\(^\text{33}\). He composed the "Swaravali" (simple exercises based on the Scale), "Alankaras" (exercises based on the seven basic Talas) and "Gitams" (simple melodic compositions in praise of the various deities), songs in Kannada known as "Devarnamas". He was the creator of the musical form, "Kriti" which was later perfected by the great composer "Thyagaraja".

\(^{32}\) sify.com/carnaticmusic/fullstory.php
\(^{33}\) sify.com/carnaticmusic/fullstory
Seventeenth century was a period of Vijayanagar Supremacy; Thanjavur and Madurai came under the rule of Nayaks whose mother-tongue was Telugu\textsuperscript{34}. The history of Carnatic music is incomplete without stating about the contributions made by the saints Sri Purandharadasar (15th century A.D.), Sri Thyagarajar, Sri Shyama Sastri (all of 18th century A.D.), and left an enduring legacy of compositions. This tradition has a rich heritage and is perfectly attuned with Indian culture and religion.

Carnatic music is based on a 22 scale note (swaras) on contrary to the earlier 12 note scale that is used in the western classical music\textsuperscript{35}. But in all its practical aspects and puposes, not more than 16 notes are generally used. A unique combination of these notes or swara as they are said to evolves separate ragas. The features and the constraints of a raga will be clearly defined in the arrangement of the notes in its arohanam (ascending notes) and avarohanam (descending notes). Thus, in Carnatic music, the raga connotes a mood or a route in which the music is supposed to travel. Different combinations of the notes give rise to different raga. Thus, there are thousands of unique ragas as per theory though very few of them are being used for performances in the present day.

Gamaka and brigha are the two most important features of the raga. The former refers to the modulation of the frequency of a particular swara and the latter refers to the speed with which the musician performs a set of swaras or notes. Both the gamaka and the brigha help to improve the appeal of the composition that is rendered. The brigha could be often 8, 16 or so on.

Another very important aspect of the Carnatic music is the thalam or the rhythm. The thalam is the rhythm of the piece that is being performed. Today,

\textsuperscript{34} sify.com/carnaticmusic/fullstory.php  
\textsuperscript{35} www.carnaticindia.com/carnatic_music.html
there exists more than hundred thalams, but here also, very few of them are in use. The most popular thalam have three, four, five, seven or eight beats in them.

2.9 **THE MELAKARTA RAGAMS**

![72 Melakarta chart](www.indiamusicinfo.com/melakartha/melakartha.htm)
2.10 **THE MELAKARTA RAGAMS**

This refers to the basic 72 Janaka (parent) ragams for all of the infinite number of other ragams in Carnatic Music. All of these ragams have seven notes saptaswaras, that is that they have all seven swaras which are- Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Da, Ni, and Sa. The system is further divided into two sets of 36 ragams each - The first set with the first Ma and the second with a sharper Ma. This is very similar to the Western concept of scales and the circle of flats.

2.11 **SAPTA TALAS**

This system of talams is the rhythmic basis for Carnatic music. It is based on 7 core talas which use only 3 of the 6 possible components of an Indian talam - Anudrutam, Drutam, Laghu, Guru, Plutam, and Kakapadam. The Seven Talams are Dhruva, Matya, Rupaka, Jhampa, Triputa, Ata, and Eka Talams. Using these sapta talas all of the 150 Carnatic talams can be derived.

2.12 **SWARAPRASTHAARAM OR SOLFAING**

In Indian music, solfaing is a live factor and the singing of extempore passages of music with solfa letters invests Indian music with a certain charm and grandeur. In no other system of music we have the kalpanaswaras being sung because only Indian solfas can be pronounced so easily and connected to each other so well that when grouped together and sung as plain solfa notes they sound like phrases.

The basic lessons as formulated by Sri Purandara Dasar, all have seven notes sung in various permutations & combinations. The geethams are also taught initially with swara and then the respective sahityam is taught. The jathiswarams and swarajathis by their nomenclature give a lot of importance to swaras. The varnams again give a lot of importance to swaras especially in the second half. Many kruthis have a ‘chittaswaram’ built into them that adds to their beauty. This is a very unique feature of carnatic music.
The reason one finds ‘swaraprastharam’ integral part carnatic music is that it is very easy to enunciate solfas in Indian music than in other forms of music.

2.13 **Modal Shifts**

In the history of world music, the first country to have a fine grasp of the implications and possibilities of the process of modal shift of tonic is India. Modal shift of the Tonic note to higher notes of a ragam, while retaining the note's positions (swara sthanas - sthana means position/ pitch), results in different ragams. This is called Graha bedham or Šruti bedham. For example, when Graha bedham is applied on Shankarabharanam's notes, it yields 5 other major Melakarta rāgams, namely, Kalyani, Hanumatodi, Natabhairavi, Kharaharapriya and Harikambhoji.

2.14 **Musical instruments**

The musical instruments have their own importance in the field of music. The various musical instruments of India have contributed immensely in making Indian music famous. Some of these instruments are used in Hindustani classical music that belongs to the North and some are used in Carnatic music that belongs to the south of India. The Indian musical instruments are of various types. Some are stringed instruments, some are percussion instruments and some are wind blown instruments. The music created by the instruments when played is absolutely melodious and is often used to relax the mind and the senses. Our related sections cover the different Indian music instruments in detail.

**Swaramandala** is an ancient instrument. The resonator is of wood and is trapezoid or quadrilateral in shape. It has a number of parallel strings. The strings are tied to the attachment and after passing over a bridge are tied to the pegs on the other side. The pitch is adjusted by turning the pegs. A key is used to turn the pegs. The strings are tuned to the required scale.
Kinnari is one of the oldest stringed instruments named after the inventor Kinnara, one of the musicians of heaven\(^37\). It is represented on many old Indian sculptures and paintings. The finger board consists of a round stick of bamboo and upon this is fixed 12 frets of bone with a resinous substance. Beneath the finger board are 3 gourd resonators, the middle one being larger than the other two. Strings passing over the frets are used for playing music and also there are strings used for drone purposes.

Kokkara is a most primitive instrument found among the Savaras - one of the oldest ethnic populations - and the Pulayans and Kanikars of Kerala\(^38\).

Ravanastram is believed to be the earliest of bowed instruments consisting of a bamboo stick as body to which two wooden pegs are fixed for tuning the strings and a half hollowed coconut shell as belly covered with a dried skin. The bow having a string of horse hair and belts attached to it is used as a fiddle stick.

Vedic Lute is an ancient stringed instrument referred to in the ancient literature of the Vedic period, used as an accompaniment to the chanting of samagana.

Yazh is an ancient Dravidian instrument, somewhat like a harp. It was named for the fact that the tip of stem of this instrument was carved into the head of the animal yaali (vyala in Sanskrit). The yazh was an open-stringed polyphonic instrument, with a wooden boat-shaped skin-covered resonator and an ebony stem. It was tuned by either pegs or rings of gut moved up and down the string. It is not used today but pictures of it are found in Thirumayam in Tamil Nadu, probably of the 8th century A.D. There are many reference to it in Tamil literature. This instrument was displaced by the veena in the middle ages.

Gowrikalam is a wind instrument consisting of brass tubes and used during temple festivals. Kombu or horn is called "Sringa" in the North. It is about 4

\(^{37}\) [www.karnatik.com/instr.shtml]
\(^{38}\) [www.karnatik.com/instr.shtml]
feet in length and consists of three brass tubes fitting into one another. The end piece is connected by a rod or cord to give stability. It gives a very shrill note and is used in temple processions and public amusements. It is used in amrtial music and also for signals. **Kurumkuzhal** is a woodwind, with a conical tube and mouthpiece.

**Magudi**, called "Punji" in the North, is used mostly by snake-charmers and jugglers and sometimes by mendicants. The instrument consists of bottle gourd, into the bulbous end of which are inserted two canes - their interior ends being cut so as to form reeds. One pipe gives the drone note while the other is pierced with finger-holes for playing music. Wind is blown through the hold pierced on the top of the neck of the gourd. The parts of the instrument are fastened together by means of black wax. Magudi is called "Bhujanga swaram" in the Kamikagamam. Sculptures of performers on the Bhujanga Swaram can be seen in the temples at Rameswaram and Tirukkazhukundram in Tamil Nadu.

**Bhumi dundubhi** is an ancient Vedic instrument consisting of a pit dug in the ground and covered with a stretched skin. It was played standing by several people bearing long sticks. **Brahma talam** are metallic cymbals used in temple rituals. **Budubudukkai** is an hour-glass shaped drum with a string tied to the center and a knot at the other end of the string. When the drum is rattled, the knotted end strikes the two faces alternately. **ChandraPirai** (of the shape of the moon) is a percussion instrument used in Mariamman temples and in temples of village deities. A thin parchment is strained over the iron ring of the arm. The instrument is tied over the forehead of a person and played with a stick. The instrument is also called Chandra mandalam, the Telegu name for the drum, and is used in the temple of Kalahasti. Sometimes skilled performers provide a rhythmical accompaniment with this instrument in nagaswaram concerts. Playing on this instrument is an item in the Sarva Vadyam ritual of temples.
**Chenda** is a percussion instrument of Kerala and is used in Kathakali dance. It is also used in the temple rituals. **Chengala** is a gong, with circular plates of metal struck with a light stick. **Damaram** is a conical drum. **Damaru** is an hour-glass shaped drum with a string tied to the center and a knot at the other end of the string. When the drum is rattled, the knotted end strikes the two faces alternately.

**Ghatam** is a red ceramic pot played with the hands, the mouth of the instrument against the abdomen of the artist. **Gummati** is a kind of pot drum used in the districts of Andhra Pradesh by the rural folk to provide a rhythmic accompaniment during the singing of the ballads. The instrument is held in a horizontal position and played. **Idakka** is an hour-glass shaped drum. **Jalra** is a pair of small metallic cymbals.

**Jalatarangam cups** are porcelain (previously metallic, gave rise to gamelan) drums struck with cane and bamboo sticks. In ancient times it was called udaka vadyam (water-instrument).

**Tambura** is a drone instrument with four to eight strings and only two basic notes of differing octaves. It has a gourd at the bottom and is played vertically. It is unfretted and round-bodied, with a hollow neck and wire strings. The strings of the tambura are plucked one after another in a standard pattern, in order to create a tonic resonance field for classical music. **Sruthi Box** is an instrument used for drone purposes. It is shaped like an accordion with air being pushed through an enclosed space to produce sound. More recently, electronic sruthi boxes have been developed.

**Veena**, also known as **Saraswati Veena**, is an ancient stringed instrument which is referred to in ancient literature and found in the sculptures. It is believed that sage Narada used this instrument. It is also known as Kachchapi
Veena. It is made of bamboo stick and two gourd resonators. Bone frets are fixed to indicate the svarasthanas. It is held on the shoulder and played. This classical instrument is basically a plucked stringed instrument that is used to accompany Carnatic music. It is essentially a member of the lute family. The Veena has been modified and refined over centuries and has been used since ancient times. **Rudra Veena** is a string instrument with two large gourds.

**Violin** is not a traditional musical instrument of India. The history of violin does not originate in India. It emerged in its current form in Italy during the 16th century. It was imported from the West and was used with south Indian classical music for the first time during the 18th century.

**Flute** is a musical instrument that belongs to the woodwind family and produces a sweet sound. A person who plays the flute is known as a flautist or a flutist. A flute produces sound only when a stream of air is blown through it, which bounces in and out of its numerous holes.

**Nagapani** is a brass wind instrument. **Nedunkuzhal** is an instrument made of bamboo used by the shepherds. A mouth piece is inserted at about the centre of the tube. The part of the pipe below the mouth piece is the tune pipe. This part has 8 finger holes and the upper part has 7 holes and this part is the drone pipe. The air blown inside by the performer feeds both the tune pipe and the drone pipe. **Ottu** is a wind instrument made of a cylindrical ebony tube body. It is used as a drone.

**Tabla** is an Indian percussion instrument, which dates back to the times of Persian Muslims. Actually, Tabla forms a major instrument of Indian music. The instrument used to be the part of Classical and Hindustani music, but today it is adding to the flavor of every kind of music, especially jazz. **Mridangam** is a classical percussion instrument much popular in South India. Mridangam is
the main instrument that provides rhythm to Carnatic music performances. Mridangam is also known by the name of mridanga, mrdangam, mrudangam and mrithangam.

The thavil is a barrel shaped percussion instrument from South India. It is used in folk music and Carnatic music, often accompanying the nadaswaram. The thavil and the nadaswaram are essential ingredients of traditional festivals and ceremonies in South India. The thavil consists of a cylindrical shell hollowed out of a solid block of jackfruit wood. Layers of animal skin (water buffalo on the right, goat on the left) are stretched across the two sides of the shell using hemp hoops attached to the shell. The right face of the instrument has a larger diameter than the left side, and the right drum head is stretched very tightly, while the left drum head is kept loose to allow pitch bending.

Nagaswaram is a very famous classical instrument played mainly in the southern states of India. The world's loudest non-brass acoustic instrument, Nadaswaram is also known as Nadhaswaram and Nagaswaram. It is a wind instrument, which is quite similar in its appearance to the North Indian musical instrument, Shehnai.

Gettuvadyam is also known as Getchu vadyam or Gethu vadyam. It is a very rare instrument which is played in Southern part of India. Gettuvadyam is 2-3 feet long and is like a hammered lute. The Getchu Vadyam is like tambura which is supported at the neck and has four strings. Sometimes, it is used as the secondary instrument accompanying Mridangam.

Gottuvadyam also known as Mahanataka Vina is one of the concert instruments of South India belonging to the stringed group. It is just the veena without the frets & the waxy ledge. It is played by gliding a piece of cylindrical wood over the strings. The compass of the gottuvadyam extends over four
octaves. **Mandolin** is a descendant of the lute but smaller and with a nearly straight neck and is played with a plectrum of tortoise shell or some other flexible material.

Kanjhari, Kanjira, Khol, Kidikittu vadyam, Kudamuzha, Kuzhi talam, Morsing, Nagara, Nattuva talam, Pambai, Pushkaram, Segandi, Suddha maddalam, Surya Pirai, Talam, Tanti Panai, Tatappalagai, Udukkai, Urumi are some of the other musical instruments used in south Indian Music\(^\text{39}\).

### 2.15 **CHANTING OF VEDA MANTRAS**

The language of Veda mantras is called Chandas and is quite similar to current Sanskrit language, with some differences in grammar\(^\text{40}\). Sounds of the Veda mantras carry the listeners to spiritual experiences. The acoustical characteristics, in addition to the clear phonetic articulation of chants, have deep impact on the listeners. It is shown that the intrinsic pitch difference effects can be overridden in Vedic chanting. The sitting arrangement is in two rows to facilitate alternate chanting.

Since only in Sama Veda, the saptha swaras echo in entirety, it is called marga sangeetham. Brahma discovered suddha sangeetham. The suddha sangeetham, unlike the Vedas resembled hymns with certain ragas.

In deva loka, Vedas and suddha sangeetham reverberated all the time. Generally, we find that among pandits who have learnt the Vedas, those familiar with the Rig and Yajur Vedas were more while the practitioners of Sama veda were less. The reason is that Rig & Yajur Vedas are relatively easy to learn because there are only 3 undulations N S R. in the Sama veda, on the other hand, there are seven undulations – the whole saptha swaras – D N S R G M P. it is more difficult and there were fewer people willing to learn it.

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\(^{39}\) www.karnatik.com/instr.shtml

\(^{40}\) www.acoustics.org/press/147th/Prasad.htm
Because of the changes that took place with time, there was a decline in the scholars who learnt the Vedas. But simultaneously, the upaveda, sangeetham, with its saptha swaras became more prominent and several distinguished practitioners of music emerged.

2.16 **Sounds of Conch-Shells and Bells**

The chants from Vedas are extensively used in worship and sacrament rituals at homes and temples\(^4\). In Hindu temples, sounds from conch-shells, bells and musical instruments are used along with worship rituals. It is interesting to note that sound from a conch-shell has a sharp tonal quality that can be recognized while listening. The conch-shells are blown and bells are rung in addition to the chanting by priests during the maha mangalarthi. The conch shell was also used by Lord Krishna in Mahabharatha during the war – inferring that it was used as a war cry.

2.17 **Music and Hinduism**

In addition to communication and entertainment, the Vedic literature emphasizes that speech and music have a spiritual role. Speech connects the abstract thoughts and physical actions. The phonetics and grammar of Sanskrit language bring out the spiritual effects through prayers, chants, etc. The sacred role of speech is emphasized in the unison of thought-speech-action as a spiritual goal.

The classical vocal & instrumental music of Hindu culture synthesize both art and science of acoustics. In particular the sounds from the percussion instruments Mridangam etc are melodious to hear in addition to their rhythms. The Nobel laureate Sir C.V. Raman has shown (in 1920) that the melody in

Tabla and Mridangam is due to their special design in achieving harmonic relationship in first five natural frequencies\(^42\).

### 2.18 **Musical Pillars of Hindu Temples**

Acoustics plays a very important role in Vedic metaphysics. An evolutionary order is given for the five elements of nature. The Vedic evolutionary order is from the subtle to gross i.e. space, air, fire, water and earth. This order of elements is matched with senses of perception as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Senses of Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>Sound (hear)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Touch and Sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>See, Touch and Sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Taste, See, Touch and Sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Smell, Taste, See, Touch and Sound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Vedic metaphysics emphasizes that sound is the only descriptor of space but also can be used in sensing other four elements. Hence acoustics has received primary importance in Vedic Hinduism. In ancient India, the Hindu temples played important roles in all aspects of life such as for worship, a space for art performance, and for education. There is a special hall, called Purandhara Mantapa, built in the 16th century during the time of Vijayanagara Empire in Hampe, Karnataka, where musical pillars were used to render performances\(^43\).

Acoustics plays a major role in Vedic Hinduism from Mantras to Music. Acoustics for Hindu sages was not only a tool of science, but also a spiritual medium to understand life in all its aspects. A visit to a traditional Hindu temple

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\(^{42}\) [www.acoustics.org/press/147th/Prasad.htm](http://www.acoustics.org/press/147th/Prasad.htm)

\(^{43}\) Musical Instruments of India – Chaitanya Deva
during rituals and an Indian music or dance concert will provide more in-depth experience of acoustics in Hinduism.

### 2.19 Different Schools – Bani

Bani is the characteristic style of singing or performing associated with a particular school, singer or performer. This is applicable to instrumental performance and vocal performance as well. Bani is a school of music that has a distinct and characteristic style of expression. Banis are Carnatic equivalent to the Hindustani Gharanas. Yet, Bani does not feature much in the carnatic pedagogy, while it does in Hindustani music (Gharanas dictate how a raaga is learnt, its scale, poetic metres of salient compositions etc).

Bani is an omnipresent word in the lexicon of carnatic music. Legends across time have evolved, performing styles which are followed by generations of musicians. This performing lexicon has expanded constantly and added to the repertoire of carnatic music and widened its appeal constantly. Each bani is a school of music that has a distinct and characteristic style of expression, and reaches adulation of a high order that transforms it into a cult stature.

Any art form, not only music, is the artist’s experience, his/her own thoughts, his/her own wisdom. These find expression in what the artist’s style is, be it painting, music, sculpture, in fact any art form. This being so, it is but imperative that each artist, develops his own style of expression, the simple reason being that his thoughts, his experiences, his wisdom cannot be expressed in somebody else’s words as in writing, notes as in music and strokes as in painting and so on. Any serious student of art is able to recognize at a glance, a Van Gogh, a Michelangelo, a Ravi Verma. A music lover instantly identifies a composition of St.Thyagaraja, Purandaradasa, and Muttuswami Dikshit. Each

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44 [www.carnaticindia.com/dictionary.html](http://www.carnaticindia.com/dictionary.html)
of these works of art has the artist’s stamp on them. In the context of music, in Indian vocabulary, we call it the Bani, or style.

Perhaps this term Bani can be explained in simpler terms with an everyday example. Each of us, with a discerning tongue can immediately identify our mother’s cooking. The ingredients which go into the dish may be the same but the blending, the proportions are unique and hence the taste is unique. Given the same ingredients, two cooks produce, the same dish each with a distinct taste. That is his Bani, his signature on his chosen art form, in this instance, cooking. In any endeavour that involves creativity, it is imperative that there is a style, if it were to be distinctive.

Extending the same principles to music, let us take some examples among musicians with different Banis. Disciples of the same guru get tutored in the same fashion, but they develop their own distinctive and distinguished style in rendering music. Both Maharajapuram Santhanam, and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer were disciples of Maharajpurum Viswanatha Iyer. Yet both developed very distinct styles of their own, after imbibing the essence of Carnatic Music form their guru. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, to start with was rather handicapped by his voice, which had a restricted range. With intense saadhakam, and fully aware of the limitations of a voice such as his, he developed a style where he could produce a very distinctive and distinguished way of rendering. So did Maharajapuram Santhanam. These two stalwarts or Carnatic Music are standing examples of how Bani distinguishes one artist from another artist. G.N.Balasubramanian, on the other hand had a voice that could handle brugas effortlessly and hence he developed a style where he put this to maximum use to enrich his rendition. If Nityashree, the young granddaughter of D. K. Pattammal, who learnt music from her grandmother, had blindly followed her grandmother’s style, she couldn’t have made a niche for herself. She would
have just remained another good singer, not a distinguished one, albeit with a
great heritage. It is possible for a musician to evolve his own style or Bani only
when he has mastery over art and the medium of expression.

Madurai Mani Iyer is a classic example of how a musician develops his own
style of singing. Both he and Madurai Seshagopalan were students of the
Harikesanallur house of music. But no two styles could be more dissimilar!
When both make svara sanchaaras, Mani Iyer always uses the simple sarva
laghu pattern, but Seshagopalan with his mastery over laya, likes to use that
skill in rendering kanakkus. Nevertheless, Mani Iyer's singing of swaras is so
unique, it is his stamp. Nobody else could imitate that style effectively. It is his
Bani!

Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman is an internationally recognized violin maestro in the
Carnatic tradition. Jayaraman was born into the illustrious musical lineage of
Saint Tyagaraja and received rigorous training in Carnatic music from his
father Sri Lalgudi Gopala Iyer. He started his musical career at the age of twelve
as an accompanying violinist and quickly rose to become one of the most
prominent solo Carnatic violinists of our time. He revolutionised the art of
Carnatic violin by accompanying vocalists in their own style and by inventing a
whole new "voice-based" expressive technique of playing the violin that has
come to be known as the 'Lalgudi Bani.'

Now to the question of how important Bani is to music. Just as our features are
what give us an identity, a face in the crowd, it is Bani which gives a musician
his identity. Without Bani, a musician’s music lacks life and individuality.
Whereas our features are ordained for us, a Bani is consciously and intelligently
developed by the musician keeping in mind. Bani is what breathes life into his
music. The Bani evolves from his mastery, his understanding of the music and
his own abilities. When one's knowledge of his craft is shallow, one can never
build on it. To rise above a certain level, one needs that extra spark that is his style. This is true of any art form and particularly of any form of music. Take for example, M.S.Subbulakshmi or G.N.B. There were many musicians who worked hard to copy their style. In the end, they remained just what they aspired to be – a mere copy of those great originals. They failed to realize that they missed out on creating their own individual styles – Bani – and hence failed to make a mark. They remained just that - poor imitations of the original and imitations have short lives, never for posterity.

There is a debate as to whether one can consciously develop a Bani or is it inborn? The answer is yes and no. It is fifty percent conscious effort and fifty percent inborn. Rather with the given voice a person can consciously develop a style to suit the same, but the intelligence to do so is inborn! That intelligence can also be called creativity.

When we look at the situation today, it is a fact that technology is in a way deterring young and aspiring musicians from developing a bani of their own. Today it has become possible to learn music with the help of tapes and CDs, and even from the Internet, unlike in the olden days when the disciples spent years with their gurus and learnt the art at their feet. They were not exposed to various singers, till they reached a certain level of maturity. Their foundation was laid strong and when they were ready, they could choose a style which best suited their sharIram, or voice range. But when one learnt from CDs and cassettes by just listening to them and reproducing them, it becomes a parrot-like repetition. Hence in one kriti they sound like MS, in another like MLV and in third like Pattammal! There is no depth to their music. The chief ingredient which distinguishes talent from genius, namely creativity is missing. In short, a bani is sadly lacking.
This can be overcome if the student realizes that technology has to be used selectively with the help of a guru and in no way can replace a guru. A serious student of music should learn the fundamentals of music, from one single capable guru and having mastered them, should go on to evolve their own style based on this knowledge.

Padaandram is often mistaken for another name for Bani, but it is very different. Whereas two students from the same school of music can develop two different banis, their padaandrm remains the same. Paadaandram is the way music is taught. It is again unique to one guru, his shishyaas, their shishyaas etc. Mahaarajapuram padaandram, Harikesanallur padaandram – the school’s unique way of teaching music is totally independent of the bani their students imbibe to suit their voice and ability. Again, the influence of electronic media diluted the purity of paadaandram.

2.20 Teaching Methodology
A Gurukulam is a place where a teacher and students live together and learn the scriptures, music, arts etc. Guru means ‘teacher’, Kulam means ‘home’. In ancient India the custom was that when a child becomes 7 or 8 years old, he stayed with the Guru (master/teacher) for 12 years and learned all he had to learn to become a good citizen. It has been proved now that this is the best system to impart knowledge to a child.

During olden times in India, music was taught by Gurus who were talented teachers and belonged to different Musical Gharanas of Indian Classical Music or Hindustani Music. Such Teachers or Gurus passed over their knowledge to deserving pupils who carried forward their legacy. The Guru - Shishya bond was sacred and very strong and the traditional method of teaching in India was the Gurukula system (Guru - Teacher, Kula - Family). The Gurukula system
involved living with the teacher, as if the student were a part of the family\textsuperscript{46}. Education was a dynamic process, imbibed through living, travelling with and completely associating oneself with the Guru (teacher).

The Guru, according to Indian tradition is equated to God and was considered primary for the learning of any art. In other words, teachers were always held in high esteem. The relationship between the teacher and the student (sishya) is known as Guru-sishya Parampara. The art was handed down from the teacher to the student through direct oral instruction.

This form of imparting the education has been a special tradition in Carnatic music. Certain scholars make a slight distinction between Gurukula system and Guru-shishya Parampara, though the mode of learning, on principle, was almost the same. The difference is that the Gurukula system can be compared to the present day residence or boarding school. Thus, a group of students lived with and studied under one single Guru, till they completed their education. It may be noted here that from Vedic times, any art form, including music, was taught through this method.

Most of the texts were taught in Veda Paatashala (or Gurukulas). Students mostly lived with the teacher till he learnt all the texts. This is the beginning of

\textsuperscript{46} www.carnatica.net/sangeet/traditionalaspects.htm
Guru-Shishya parampara. The parampara was important in transmitting knowledge, whether religious or musical, to the next generation. Also, the knowledge itself was regarded as a secret, a kind of heirloom. Teachers were most reluctant to make their knowledge public. This was one the reasons why a lot of these were never penned down. That way, teachers made sure the knowledge remained within their family and students, who were considered part of the family.

Even after the invention of writing, the oral tradition continued - especially in religious studies like Vedas and learning Music. In fact Vedas and music continued to be taught exclusively through oral tradition well until 20th century. Even now, it is considered unscholarly to refer to books when chanting Vedic hymns or singing.

With times, the gurukula system was replaced by the guru-sishya system of teaching. Gurukula system was equivalent to boarding school. The Guru-sishya Parampara is considered as learning on a one-to-one basis (the teacher and a single student). With the end of royal patronage, artists could no longer teach a large number of students who would live with them in the age old guru-shishya system. So, students started learning from artists on a part time basis, living in their own houses with parents. They would pay the Gurus a monthly tuition fee. Artists, especially the ones not very successful on the concert circuit, found this to be a good, steady source of income. There were also many formal music schools and colleges teaching music on a full time basis. All these contributed to the end of Guru Shishya Paddhathi.

The Gurukula system and the Guru-sishya system were an effective medium to preserve this traditional art form without losing the values. The student has the advantage of being in the presence of the Guru spending most of his/her time

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47 www.carnatica.net/cyber/gurukulam.htm
learning different nuances along with the freedom on the part of the Guru to teach according to individual talents and capacities. More importantly, through constant observation, a good student could imbibe the central features of the Guru’s music and his personality. Several prominent musicians and composers have been a product of this system. The student also goes through a said pattern of learning which was formulated by Purandara Dasa. This involves varisais (graded exercises), alankaras (exercises based on the seven talas), geethams or simple songs, and swarajathis. After the student has reached a certain standard, varnams are taught and later, the student learns kritis. It typically takes several years of learning before a student is adept enough to perform at a concert. The learning texts and exercises are more or less uniform across all the South Indian states. The learning structure is arranged in increasing order of complexity. The lessons start with the learning of the sarali varisai (solfege set to a particular raga).

Musicians often take great pride in letting people know about their Guru Parampara, or the hierarchy of disciples from some prominent ancient musician or composer, to which they belong. People whose disciple-hierarchies are often referred to are Thyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, Syama Sastri, Swathi Thirunal and Papanasam Sivan, among others.

2.21 **TRANSMISSION – CONCEPTS & PRACTICE**

Carnatic music continued to be transmitted orally for centuries without being written down\(^4\). Till microphone was discovered and later audio recording was made possible, the propagation of music was only through hearing, learning and again passing on to others by hearing - “SEVI VAZHI KALVI” was the only way and as this was not a perfect way.

\(^4\) [wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnatic_music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnatic_music)
Though the Vedas were also transmitted this way – sruthi – they had only three basic notes and none of the complicated sangathis or special phrases that is unique to carnatic music. Hence, though the Vedas transmission was more accurate, this was not the case in carnatic music. There was no manodharmam in Vedas. It was easy for the student to ‘mug’ it up – without much understanding. This proved to be a boon as far as true transmission was concerned, but for music, this became the main reason for distortions. Even to this day, there are many kruthis for which scholars differ in the way it has to be sung – there is no actual proof, and the scholars are trying only to guess at the composers’ frame of mind.

2.22 PERFORMANCE

Carnatic music is usually performed by a small ensemble of musicians, who sit on an elevated stage. This usually consists of, at least, a principal performer, a melodic accompaniment, a rhythm accompaniment, and a drone. The tambura is the traditional drone instrument used in concerts. However, tamburas are increasingly being replaced by śruti boxes, and now more commonly, the electronic tambura. The drone itself is an integral part of performances and furnishes stability - the equivalent of harmony in Western music.

Performances can be musical or musical-dramatic. Musical recitals are either vocal, or purely instrumental in nature, while musical-dramatic recitals refer to Harikatha. But irrespective of what type of recital it is, what is featured are compositions which form the core of this genre of music.

In a vocal recital, a concert team may have one or more vocalists as the principal performer(s). Instruments, such as the veena and/or flute, can be occasionally found as a rhythmic accompaniment, but usually, a vocalist is supported by a violin player (who sits on his/her left). The rhythm accompanist is usually a mridangam player (who sits on the other side, facing the violin
player). However, other percussion instruments such as the ghatam, kanjira and morsing frequently also accompany the main percussion instrument and play in an almost contrapuntal fashion along with the beats. The accompaniments form an integral part of every composition presented, and they closely follow and augment the melodic phrases outlined by the lead singer.

The vocalist and the violinist take turns while elaborating or while exhibiting creativity in sections like raga, niraval and kalpanaswaram. Unlike Hindustani music concerts, where an accompanying tabla player can keep beats without following the musical phrases at times, in Carnatic music, the accompanists have to follow the intricacies of the composition since there are percussion elements such as eduppu in several compositions. Some of the best concerts feature a good bit of interaction with the lead musicians and accompanists exchanging notes, and accompanying musicians predicting the lead singer's musical phrases.

**Concert content:** A contemporary Carnatic music concert (called a kutcheri) usually lasts about three hours, and comprises a number of varied compositions. Carnatic songs are composed in a particular raga, which means that they do not deviate from the notes in the raga. Each composition is set with specific notes and beats, but performers improvise extensively. Improvisation occurs in the melody of the composition as well as in using the notes to expound the beauty of the raga.

Concerts usually begin with a varnam or an invocatory item which will act as the opening piece. The varnam is composed with an emphasis on swaras of the raga, but will also have lyrics, the saahityam. It is lively and fast to get the audience's attention. An invocatory item may usually follow the varnam.

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49 [www.icmca.org/explore/music/carnatic/concerts](http://www.icmca.org/explore/music/carnatic/concerts)
After the varnam and/or invocatory item, the artist sings longer compositions called kirtanas (commonly referred to as kritis). Each kriti sticks to one specific raga, although some are composed with more than one raga; these are known as ragamalika (a garland of ragas).

After singing the opening kriti, usually, the performer sings the kalpanaswaram of the raga to the beat. The performer must improvise a string of swaras in any octave according to the rules of the raga and return to beginning of the cycle of beats smoothly, joining the swaras with a phrase selected from the kriti. The violin performs these alternately with the main performer. In very long strings of swara, the performers must calculate their notes accurately to ensure that they stick to the raga, have no awkward pauses or lapses in the beat of the song, and create a complex pattern of notes that a knowledgeable audience can follow.

Performers then begin the main compositions with a section called raga alapana exploring the raga. In this, they use the sounds aa, ri, na, ta, etc. instead of swaras to slowly elaborate the notes and flow of the raga. This begins slowly and builds to a crescendo, and finally establishes a complicated exposition of the raga that shows the performer's skill. All of this is done without any rhythmic accompaniment, or beat. Then the melodic accompaniment (violin or veena), expounds the raga. Experienced listeners can identify many ragas after they hear just a few notes. With the raga thus established, the song begins, usually with lyrics. In this, the accompaniment (usually violin, sometimes veena) performs along with the main performer and the percussion (such as a mridangam). In the next stage of the song, they may sing niraval or kalpanaswaram again.

In most concerts, the main item will at least have a section at the end of the item, for the percussion to perform solo (called the tani avartanam). The percussion artists perform complex patterns of rhythm and display their skill. If
multiple percussion instruments are employed, they engage in a rhythmic dialogue until the main performer picks up the melody once again. Some experienced artists may follow the main piece with a ragam thanam pallavi mid-concert, if they do not use it as the main item.

Following the main composition, the concert continues with shorter and lighter songs. Some of the types of songs performed towards the end of the concerts are tillanas and thukkadas - bits of popular kritis or compositions requested by the audience. Every concert that is the last of the day ends with a mangalam, a thankful prayer and conclusion to the musical event.

In earlier days, performances were of three kinds.

1. Performance at Temples during festivals as part of the rituals.
2. Performance at Darbars of Kings & Zamindars by great vidwans to show their vidwat & be appreciated. The venue shifted to temples & halls later.
3. Performance of vidwans & students as part of learning process.

During the temple rituals, & wedding rituals, Nadaswaram was considered as the most important Mangala Vadyam, mainly because of its loudness. Weddings & temples during festivals are generally crowded, with a very high decibel sound. For the music to be heard above this loud noise, the instrument had to be really loud. Nadaswaram met this requirement when there were no microphones & hence was popularly chosen as THE MANGALA VADYA for all auspicious occasions.

Vocal music forms the basis of South Indian music\(^{50}\). Although there is a rich instrumental tradition that uses veena, flute and violin, they revolve around instrumental renditions of vocal forms. There are a number of sections to the

\(^{50}\) chandrakantha.com/.../Indian_music/carnatic_sangeet.html
Carnatic performance. Varnam is a form used to begin many south Indian performances. The word varnam literal means a description and this section is used to unfold the various important features of the ragam. The kritis are fixed compositions in the raga. They have well identified composers and do not allow much scope for variation. However such compositions are often preceded by alapana. The alapana offers a way to unfold the ragam to the audience, and at the same time, allow the artist considerable scope for improvisation. The nируval and the kalpana swara also provide opportunities to improvise. Another common structure is the ragam, thanam, and, pallavi. The rich tradition of South Indian music is one of the world’s gems. The high performance standards and the well organised theoretical foundation put it on par with anything that world has seen, either East or West.

Music must be performed according to tradition in order to have the proper effect. Vocal music is pre-eminent. Indian classical music is chamber music. Players freely improvise within a given rhythmic and pitch framework. Music is transmitted orally rather than in written form even though written forms of ragas and thalas exist.

2.23 AUDIENCE

Audience form a very important part of any performance. In olden days, the typical audience consisted of the king or the Zamindar, the ministers or assistants & their family. The elite crowd, normally had a good understanding of the music. Or sometimes other musicians were also part of the audience. On these occasions, it was a challenge for the musicians to come up with something unique or extraordinary to get an appreciative nod from the audience. Being good was not enough. That was only expected and no appreciation was

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extended. This also helped the artists engage in a positive competitive mood, thus trying to excel themselves.

When the concert venue shifted to accommodate more people, the quality of the audience also changed. The audience of a typical concert has a reasonable understanding of Carnatic music. In carnatic music where laya plays a prominent part, it is also typical to see the audience tapping out the tala in sync with the artist's performance. Sometimes when the audience does not have a good knowledge of rhythm, it is common to see the disturbed performer requesting the listener to stop putting thalam. During the ‘thani’ it is normal for the whole audience to join the laya vaadhyams with loud thalam. As and when the artist exhibits creativity, the audience acknowledge it by clapping their hands.

With experienced artists, towards the middle of the concert, requests through chits of paper start flowing in. The artist usually sings the requests, and it helps in exhibiting the artist's broad knowledge of the several thousand kritis that are in existence. Some of the younger performers are unable to do this since they would have prepared for a fixed style of concert and not experienced enough to handle the deviation expertly. There are occasions when the performer lists a few names and asks the audience their choice. In effect, the carnatic concert is very interactive unlike hindustani or western classical concerts.

Also the venue of the concert decides the type of the audience which in turn decides the type of the kruthis the performer chooses to sing/play. For example, a concert in Kalakshethra for the students will be very different from a concert in Music Academy or a concert in a marriage hall or a Ramanavami concert in Bangalore. The audience in Kalakshethra, who are students of music & dance will want to hear some complicated pieces which they can later discuss & dissect intellectually. The music academy audience will be a mix of
connosieurs and musicians themselves. Their expectations will be on a slightly different level. Bangalore rasikas will obviously expect a lot of dasaru kruthis to be included. Marriage hall rasikas will be guest of the bride and the groom families – not necessarily musically knowledgeable – and will enjoy listening to popular well known fast paced lively music. Hence a performer should be able to feel the pulse of the audience in a short time and perform accordingly to get the maximum appreciation.

2.24 Acoustics of Halls

Acoustics has played important roles in all cultures and religions of the world. This is natural as acoustics deals with sound, one of the senses of perception. In Hinduism, acoustics is of major importance in various aspects of life like spirituality, religion, culture, science, art, etc. The mantapams constructed in temples, the palaces etc were carefully designed that the audience can listen to performers easily. Water was very cleverly used as acoustic medium.

Generally there is a mantapam in the middle of the temple tank. Musicians used to sit in this mantapam and perform. The listeners sit on the steps of the tank all around. The music passing through the water medium is heard with a certain clarity which is particularly pleasing at night. It is obvious that even in early days, we knew about the changes the sound waves undergo when passing through water body and also about acoustics.

A concert hall is a cultural building, which serves as performance venue, chiefly for classical instrumental music. Many concert halls exist as one of several halls or performance spaces within a larger performing arts center and, where appropriate, the name of the arts centre is included. Many larger cities have both public and private concert halls. Particularly in smaller cities with fewer alternative venues, concert halls may also be used to accommodate other activities.