

# Folk musical instruments of the land

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The Daily Star

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FEAR OR FAVOUR

The kara is seen during the Ashura fairs and performances and is played with two sticks. It is also referred to as the 'side drum.' Nakara, in olden times, was called the Dunduvi. It is usually placed on the ground, or a platform for playing. An essential in Muharram performances, the nakara is also used in 'nouka baich' (traditional boat rowing of the region) to control the pace in rowing.

Dhak and dhol are often referred to as similar instruments, but these too are different in use and performance. Usually, the dhak is one of the most prominent and larger musical instruments. It is carried on one side, and played on one side with a stick or two.

The dhol differs from the dhak not only in size, but in playing style as well. It is played on one side with a stick,

puja, Baishakh, as well as for any joyous performances and processions.

The dug-dugi, an easily playable instrument, can be found in local fairs. The popular instrument is also used to draw attention and used by snake charmers and hawkers. This simple instrument however is also fabled to be the world ending musical instrument, as the Hindu God Shiv is said to play it as the world crumbles!

After string and hitting instruments, the next set of instruments are the wind instruments, or aerophones. The instruments that are part of this type are identified by their tubular build, and are played using various blowing techniques.

The very first mention in the category would be the banshi. It is easily the of local music, and can resonate feelBanshi' this one is somewhat similar to the western flute, but the playing mechanism and the instrument itself are different. From Bhatiyali to Bhawaiya to solo performances, the Banshi is simply a stand out instrument.

While not used in performances, the tubri cannot be left behind. This is commonly known as the 'been,' used by snake charmers for their trade. Made from a dried gourd, the instrument has two distinct bamboo tubes that produce sound.

No grand wedding in the region is complete without the sound of the shanai, which is another much used flute like instrument. A deceivingly easy looking instrument, the shanai requires not only proper breath control, but also proper synchronisation of fingers. most melodious instrument in any type In ragas, the shanai, when used, is given a solo as a main instrument.

Moving away from the various tubular instruments, the harmonium too falls in this category as it uses wind to produce sounds. Often compared to the western accordion, the instrument is believed to have originated in France in the 1800s.

single burst of sound without any rise

and fall in sound. How long the sound

player can hold his or her breath and

Another instrument that has its

Originally made from buffalo horns,

wood. This instrument too, is used in

local festivities like Chaitra Sankranti,

lar instruments, the harmonium too

produce sounds. Often compared to

falls in this category as it uses wind to

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is believed to have originated in France

Of course, the form that we are

familiar to took much time to evolve,

but over the centuries, the instrument

has become a standard for the begin-

ners to experts. Not only is it used for

essential vocal practices, but also for

practicing classical dance paces. The

quintessential for any and all classical

performances throughout the region.

The last segment on this journey of

idiophonic or autophonic instruments.

harmonium and the tabla-baya are

musical instruments would be the

These types of instruments produce

sound without any strings or mem-

branes. The entire instrument body is

used to produce sound. These instru-

ments are used to mainly keep pace

to the other main instruments in a

and add a unique dimension of sounds

Moving away from the various tubu-

the shinga can also be made from

origin in wars is the shinga, or the horn

will last depends on how long the

blow through it.

in the 1800s.

incorporated into various musical performances, but it has a prominent place in Kirtans. The mandira is often mistaken with the kortal, but it is distinct in shape, as it resembles two small bowls that are slightly different in size. It is used extensively in Rabindra Sangeet, as well as in Baul and Kirtan performances.

discs that are slightly raised in the

middle. The kortal is often paired with

the khol, and is used to create variations

in tempo and sound. The kortal can be

Clay pots are also used as idiophonic instruments in various performances for a resonant sound. South Indian music is incomplete without the ghatam, an upside down clay pot. Locally, this can be seen in any type of performance for that added sound, accompanied by plates. There is a known trend in the Dinajpur region to announce the birth of a child with hitting brass plates.

A highly customisable instrument is the khat-tal or Krishna Kathi. Resembling two wooden spirit levels with miniscule discs placed in the holes, the khat-tal is used by a wide range of people from performers to hawkers.

Coming to the ghungur, the much beloved accessory for classical dancers, it is made up of miniscule enclosed bells made of bronze, copper or in cases silver. While it is not an instrument on its own, when added to a dance, it can create a mesmerising ambience.

In conclusion, it can be said that local instruments most definitely are not limited to the handful that have been mentioned here. For expert musicians, even the simple desk or a piece of brass can be an instrument, if used in harmony with a complete ensemble!

All in all, musical instruments are a sign of how culturally inter-connected humanity really is. As of now, organologists around the globe are yet to agree on a chronological origin of musical instruments, but the lack of history cannot be a factor to not enjoy, and even practice an instrument. It is, after all, through playing and creating music that makes an instrument thrive through the ages.

By Iris Farina Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel Performance by Joler Gaan Location: PRAN Premium Ghee-Anandadhara Pitha Fest 2019, Pan



and on the other by hand. It can be played using hands on both sides as well.

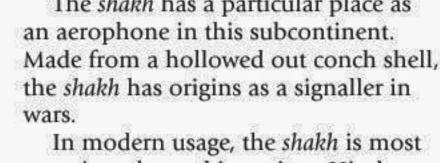
A smaller version of the dhol is the dholok. It is widely used in jatra, and theatre, and immensely popular in Ghazal and qawali performances. Dhak, dhol, dholok - all three are prominently used in performances during

ings of joy to sheer sadness in the hands of an expert player. Although usually translated as flute, the banshi, is vastly different from the flute that is used in western music.

Sri Krishna, the grand avatar in Hinduism, is always portrayed with a banshi that is played by holding it horizontal to the ground. Known as 'Arr

The shakh has a particular place as an aerophone in this subcontinent. the shakh has origins as a signaller in

In modern usage, the shakh is most prominently used in various Hindu religious festivities, as well as an indicator of good tidings. It produces a solid



performance. The kortal, made up of two tied brass Pacific Sonargaon Hotel



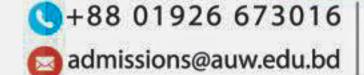
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