

old, dating to the time of Tan Sen. The song itself consists of two to four parts based on the poetic texts, and once these parts have been stated in their fixed form, the singers engage in a dramatic improvisatory process known as *bol-bant*, in which the words are used in increasingly complex and richly syncopated rhythmic patterns (which play against the powerful cross-rhythms of the *pakhawaj*) to conclude the performance of the *raga*.

Shubha Sankaran will also be performing in *Dhrupad* style on the *surbahar*, following the vocal *Dhrupad* format.

* * *

ABOUT THE INSTRUMENTS

The *surbahar*, a comparatively rare instrument, developed from the oldest stringed instrument of India the *rudra vina* (also called the *been*). The *surbahar* is characterized by its deep, rich voice, and has a practical range of three and a half octaves, with a wide neck, thick strings, and a single large, flat gourd. The *surbahar* has sympathetic strings that help to create the distinctive sound of the instrument, and employs the technique of “bending” a note by the deflection of one of the playing strings sideways across a fret for a range of up to seven tones. The tonic (Sa) of the *surbahar* on this recording is equivalent to G# in terms of western absolute pitch.

The *pakhawaj*, which will accompany both the *Dhrupad* vocal and the *surbahar* performances, is the dominant barrel-drum precursor to the more commonly used pair of drums known as *tabla*. The right side of the *pakhawaj* is tuned precisely to and resonates with the tonic of the *surbahar*, while the left side is given an additional ineffable broad-spectrum depth by an appliqué of moist flour paste.

— Notes by Brian Q. Silver

The Gundecha Brothers' current U.S. tour has been made possible with the generous assistance of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations and the Embassy of India; Shubha Sankaran's performance is partially funded by the DC Commission for the Arts and Humanities, an agency supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

* * *

106th Season, 125th program



SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

Beall Concert Hall
8:00 p.m.

Friday evening
May 5, 2006

THE WORLD MUSIC SERIES

presents

NORTH INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC

featuring

***The Gundecha Brothers:
Umakant & Ramakant Gundecha, vocals
Akhilesh Gundecha, pakhawaj
Shubha Sankaran, surbahar***

*Cosponsors: UO Yamada Language Center,
Office of International Programs, &
Oregon Humanities Center.*

Oriental rugs courtesy of Oveissi & Co.



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

ABOUT TONIGHT'S ARTISTS

Umakant and Ramakant Gundecha are among India's leading exponents of the *Dhrupad* style of Indian classical music, and are the most active young performers in that style in Indian and international circuits. Born in Ujjain in Central India, both were initiated into music by their parents. They received conventional university educations while also studying music under the renowned *Dhrupad* vocalist Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar, and also with the late Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar (the distinguished performer of *rudra vina*) at the *Dhrupad* Kendra in Bhopal. The Gundecha Brothers have sung Hindi poetry by Tulsidas, Kabir, Padmakar, and Nirala in the *Dhrupad* style, and have recorded more than 25 cassettes and CDs for H.M.V., Music Today, Sundaram Records, Rhythm House, Sense World Music, IPPNW Concerts Berlin, Navras, and AudioRec. They have performed on many television channels in India, and in broadcasts on British, U.S., German, and French radio. In addition to being an integral part of all of India's prestigious music festivals, the Gundechas have performed along with *Dhrupad* workshops at many important international festivals and institutions in more than 20 countries. They received the Madhya Pradesh Government Scholarship from 1981 to 1985, the National Fellowship from 1987 to 1989, the Ustad Allauddin Khan Fellowship in 1993, the Sanskriti Award in 1994, the Kumar Gandharva Award from the Government of Madhya Pradesh in 1998, and the Dagar Gharana Award from the Mewar Foundation in 2001. At present the Gundechas are teaching many Indian and international students at the *Dhrupad* Institute which they founded in Bhopal. For more information on the Gundecha Brothers, go to www.Dhrupad.org

Akhilesh Gundecha studied the *pakhawaj* with Pandit Shrikant Mishra and Raja Chhatrapati Singh JuDeo. He has graduate degrees in music and in law, and has also received scholarships from the Ustad Allauddin Khan Sangeet Academy in Bhopal and from the government of India. He has accompanied such *Dhrupad* masters as Ustad Z. F. Dagar, Ustad Fahimuddin Dagar, Pandit Siyaram Tiwari, Shrimati Asghari Bai, Dr. Ritwik Sanyal, and Bahauddin Dagar. He has also played solo recitals in the Tansen Festival in Gwalior, the Haridas Sangeet Samaroh in Mumbai, the *Dhrupad* Samaroh in Bhopal, and many other festivals. He has toured more than 20 countries, and performs regularly on radio and television in India.

to this singing, certain syllables—te, re, ri, ne, na, nom, tom—are used to articulate the melody. After exploring the lowest octave, the singers move up into the middle octave—again singing in alternate improvisations that set new, progressively higher watermark—ultimately reaching another dramatic stage by ascending to the tonic of the highest octave. This gradual, progressive ascent is what is most dramatic about the *Dhrupad alap*, and the longer the vocalists can sustain their creativity in keeping the listeners engaged, the more liberating the resolution in reaching the highest octave.

Next comes the *dugun* (literally, double) *alap*, in which there is the introduction of a slow, regular pulse; this section is the vocal counterpart to the *jor* in instrumental music. Using the same syllables in singing the notes of the *raga*, the brothers alternate in their improvisations by transversing—now with a rhythmic component—somewhat the same range covered earlier, though usually concentrating on the central octave. The notes come more frequently, and to the drama of ascent is added the power of a gradually accelerating rhythm.

At some point in the *dugun alap*, the double pulse bursts into a quadruple pattern, and *chaugun* (four-fold) *alap* begins; this section is the vocal equivalent of *jhala* in instrumental music. Here, the rhythmic element comes to dominate the melody with increasingly complex phrases, ornamentation (including distinctive, heavy oscillations called *gamaks*), and rhythmic patterns that contrast with the elegant calm and simplicity of the beginning *alap*. The dramatic conclusion of the *chaugun alap* is usually marked by a gliding, downward slide through the entire middle octave, and ends on the same tonic around which the improvisations began.

Throughout the development of the *alap*, a periodic punctuation device, the *mohra*, separates the improvisatory phrases. In the simple *alap*, such a device anticipates the coming rhythm, whereas in the *dugun* and *chaugun* it serves as a kind of brake, occasionally slowing the increasing rhythmic momentum. Sometimes, the *pakhawaj* player will give a simple tap to his drum on the last note of the *mohra*.

The performance of the *raga* concludes with the song, set with *pakhawaj* accompaniment to one of the distinctive *Dhrupad talas*. A song in a ten- or twelve-beat *tala* is called a *Dhrupad*, while a song in the fourteen-beat *dhamar tala* is known eponymously as a *dhamar*. The performance consists of a straightforward statement of the fixed song composition, which is traditional and may sometimes be extremely

raga and determine the choice of a particular composition. The most effective concerts, therefore, are those that arise in response to the conditions of the moment, without any planning, and it is usually a disservice to the artist to prescribe in advance a given format or a fixed sequence of *ragas*.

* * *

DHRUPAD

The classical music of the Indian subcontinent is divided into two main traditions: the northern, known generally as Hindustani, and the southern, known generally as Carnatic. The Hindustani style prevails not only in northern and central India, but in Pakistan and Bangladesh as well. While Hindustani music is best known in the West through instrumental performance, in South Asia instrumental music is considered secondary to vocal music, which continues to be the heart of the tradition.

Tonight, the Gundecha Brothers present an evening of traditional vocal music known as *Dhrupad*, the oldest and most profound form of classical Hindustani vocal music. *Dhrupad* developed in India in medieval times, and we have examples of distinct compositions attributed to the legendary Tan Sen (or Tansen), who, as both a player of the *been* and a vocalist, was one of the nine jewels of the royal court of the great Mughal emperor Akbar (1542–1605). *Dhrupad* was the dominant form of vocal music in northern India until the eighteenth century, when it was gradually overtaken by the lighter, more florid vocal style known as *khayal* (literally, imagination).

A customary full performance of *Dhrupad* is in two parts—the *alap*, an extended melodic improvisation that explores the mood of the *raga*, and the *Dhrupad* or *dhamar*—a composition set to a distinct poetic text with *pakhawaj* accompaniment. The *alap* itself goes through three states known as *alap*, *dugun*, and *chaugun*. The simple *alap* explores the distinctive melodic features of the *raga* without recourse to rhythm. The customary vocal range of *Dhrupad* is two to two-and-a-half octaves, and the *alap* begins with the tonic (do, or C in Western terms) of the middle octave as its center. The vocalists sing alternately in extended, improvised passages and generally begin by moving downward, note by note, exploring the lowest octave, sometimes finally reaching a distinctly dramatic point by touching the deep tonic of that octave. Although there are no lyrics

Shubha Sankaran is among a handful of musicians currently performing the *surbahar* on the concert stage. She studied *sitar* with Ustad Imrat Khan, vocal music in the *khayal* style with the late Pandit Shrikant Bakre, the South Indian technique of *tanam* with Kalaimamani Ranganayaki Rajagopalan, and *Dhrupad* with the Gundecha Brothers. She has performed on *surbahar* throughout the United States, including at Lincoln Center in New York, and in concert and in radio and television broadcasts in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Europe, Great Britain, Morocco, and Central and South America. In 1994, 2000, and 2006, she was recognized for her *surbahar* performance by the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. She composed the music for the award-winning NPR radio series “Passages to India,” and the award-winning 1997 BBC documentary, “Monsoon” (available on CD); she has also been featured on NPR’s “All Things Considered.” She performed with the Gundecha Brothers on their previous U.S. tour in 2004, and in their 2005 concert series in Australia and Singapore. She has released two CDs, now available at www.surbahar.com.

* * *

ABOUT TONIGHT’S PROGRAM

Each performance of Hindustani music is a unique musical experience based on complex improvisation within traditional forms. In terms of musical possibilities, this improvisation is limitless in the hands of a master. The improvisation occurs in two realms: the melodic, as embodied in the *raga*, and the rhythmic, as embodied in the *tala*. A *raga* is a complex melodic structure used as a basis for melodic improvisation, usually chosen from a common repertoire of more than a hundred widely known *ragas*, though there are hundreds of rarer *ragas* that may also be selected. A *tala* is a fixed, repeating cycle of a consistent number and pattern of beats and sub-beats that serves as the rhythmic framework upon which the melodic performance is constructed.

The selection of *raga* and *tala* is up to the melodic soloist, who makes these choices according to the time of the day (most *ragas* are restricted to certain hours, others to particular seasons), his or her own mood and inclination; and sometimes the degree of audience sophistication and knowledge expressed in the subtle vocal utterances that outstanding performances elicit from seasoned listeners. All these factors shape the spontaneous unfolding of the