

Indian Rhythm Workshop

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Figure 1: tabla (<http://www.kalyangayansamaj.com>)

Rhythm is the foundation of our lives. In this interactive workshop, students will learn the basics of rhythm in Indian Classical traditions and perform their own musical ideas in a creative group context. First, students will learn a brief history of Indian Classical music. Next, they will learn basic rhythmic patterns used in Indian Classical music. Finally, students will create their own patterns and improvise them in a collaborative musical setting.

BACKGROUND

Indian classical music is a rich and diverse musical tradition. Rhythm is central to the art form. Unlike Western music, Indian classical music is organized around complex rhythmic cycles called *tala*. We can understand the principals of *tala* through *solkattu*, an embodied pedagogical method that utilizes spoken rhythms and various hand clapping gestures in a call and response format.

SOLKATTU

Perform the following exercise in a group setting:

- 1) Clap a beat and count to 8
- 2) Clap a beat and speak the following the syllables aloud:
ta – ka – di – na -ta – ka – jo – no
** each beat should correspond to 1 spoken syllable*
- 3) Clap a beat and speak the same syllables twice as fast
** each beat should correspond to 2 spoken syllable. You will repeat the spoken pattern 2 times*
- 4) Clap a beat and speak the same syllables four times as fast (optional)
** each beat should correspond to 4 spoken syllables and you will repeat the spoken pattern 4 times*

GROUP EXERCISE

- 1) Now create your own exercises by combining the following rhythmic patterns while clapping a steady beat:

ta ka (2-beat)

ta ki ta (3-beat)

ta ka di na (4-beat)

ta di ki ta tom (5-beat)

** for instance: [ta ka, ta ka, ta ki ta] or [ta ki ta, ta ka di na] etc.*

- 2) Now students can create their own nonsense syllables using 2, 3, and 4-note patterns, and combine them to create longer improvisations in a call and response format:

For instance: de do = 2, sha blab bo = 3, wah wee do dip = 4, etc.

LISTENING EXAMPLES

Here are a few examples of *konnokal*, the vocal recitation of *solkattu* in a performance context. Notice the complexity and speed of the patterns.

- 1) Instructional Video by Vikku Vinyakram
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXS6UByE_y8
- 2) Adi Tala solo by Vidushi Smt Sukkanya Ramgopal
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozaCxI_C9Gk&t=13s
- 3) Mishra Chapu Tala Solo by B R Somashekar Jois
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmhJuG0IF40>
** Notice how the vocals correspond to actual instrumental performance*