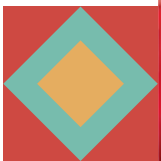
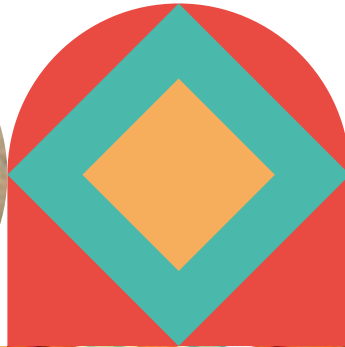




Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal

FOLK MUSIC INSTRUMENTS OF BENGAL





I have spent many days stringing and unstringing my instrument while the song I came to sing remains unsung.

Rabindranath Tagore

Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal



West Bengal is a treasure trove of natural and cultural heritage. The intangible cultural heritage of Bengal is an exemplary instance of the aesthetic lineage of Bengal. Utilitarian lifestyle items like basketry made with date palm leaves and Sabai grass, hand spun and hand woven jute rugs (Dhokra), mats made with cane slips (Sitalpati) or Madurkathi (Madur), pottery, Kantha-spreads, decorative and ritualistic items made out of Shola and others, reflect a curious fusion of indigenous craftsmanship and utility. Bengal's art and craft reflect cultural history, ethnic roots, and lifestyle in-tune with nature. Variety of masks, Dokra and metal work, range of indigenous weaves and embroideries, dolls, masks and figurines curved out of wood are examples of Bengal's artistry. Culture of Bengal is enriched by the mellifluous tunes of the Baul, Bhawaiya, Bhatiyali singers, rapturous dances of Chau, Raibenshe and Jhumur, storytelling traditions like puppetry and Patachitra, and folk theatres like Gambhira, Banbibir Pala among other folk forms.

The Rural Craft and Cultural Hub (RCCH) Project is an initiative of the Department of Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises and Textiles (MSME&T) and UNESCO aiming to rejuvenate the rich cultural heritage of West Bengal and strengthen rural creative enterprise. The journey started in 2013 and the RCCH project currently covers 50,000 handicraft and folk artists across the state. It has strengthened the ecosystem supporting the transmission of traditional skills in art and craft, fostered direct market linkage, engaged youth in pursuing their traditions, and promoted cultural tourism to the villages of the artists. The project is indeed a testimonial to the contribution of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) to sustainable development, social inclusion and also to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



FOLK MUSIC INSTRUMENTS OF WEST BENGAL

West Bengal is a treasure-trove of folk music. There are different types of folk music genres across the state, and indigenous musical instruments are used for accompanying folk songs and dances. The instruments are of different categories including chordophone (strings), aerophone (winds), membranophone (leather percussion) and autophone (bells). All the instruments produce different tones and frequencies to create an organic soundscape.



CHORDOPHONE (STRINGS)

Chordophone instruments such as Ektara, Dotara and Khamak are commonly used in various genres of Bengali folk music including Baul, Bhawaiya, Bhatiyali, and Bangla Qawwali. Along with stroke based string instruments, there are few bowing string instruments like Kendri, used in Jhumur and sarinda, mostly used in Bhawaiya.

EKTARA

Ektara, a single stringed drone type instrument, is quite popular amongst Bauls in rural Bengal. The Ektara has a spherical resonator made of dried pumpkin, or gourd, to which a split bamboo is attached as a neck. A string is attached to a piece of leather at the bottom of the resonator. This string is passed through the resonator, then between the bamboo forks, to the top end of the neck and is wrapped around a peg there. The instrument is spiritually compared with human body system by the Bauls. It is always turned in a particular scale's tonic or base note.

Maker

Tarun Das : 8670570515 (Santiniketan, Bolpur)
Manobendra Roy : 9002630055 (Panikhali, Nadia)
Anil Das : 8926201015 (Ranaghat, Nadia)



Arjun Khyapa (Goas, Nadia)



Kungal Khyapa (Joydev, Birbhum)

KHAMAK

Khamak, also known as the Gub-gubi or Anandalahari, is a percussive string instrument played by the Bauls of Bengal. Two strings made with rawhide or nylon are passed through an inverted drum and secured on its outside base with stick or rawhide. The tensions of the strings are maintained by having their opposite ends attached to the head of a small inverted brass drum. The tensions of the strings are regulated by pulling of the smaller drum, and a wide range of tunes and beats are created. The drum is made of mango or neem wood with 6-8 inches diameter.

Maker

Tarun Das:- 8670570515 (Santiniketan, Bolpur)
Manobendra Roy : 9002630055 (Panikhali, Nadia)
Anil Das : 8926201015 (Ranaghat, Nadia)



DOTARA

Dotara is an indigenous type of lute with four to five strings. It is an integral part of Bengal's folk music traditions like Baul-Fakiri, Bhawaiya, and Bhatiyali. Dotara is made by carving of neem, jackfruit and teak wood, and the soundboard made of goat skin stretched across the face of the resonator. Usually, the length of Dotara varies from 18 inch to 22 inch depending on the scales, and steel of brass plates are used to make the finger board. The strings are made of steel and nylon. Traditionally fine Muga silk yarn was used in north Bengal. Plectrums made of wood or horn are used to play the Dotara. There are 4-5 strings tuned in root-fifth-root-fourth (I-V-I2-IV) of a particular scale. The main string (I2) is often used in couple.

Maker

Tarun Das : 8670570515 (Santiniketan, Bolpur)
Manobendra Roy : 9002630055 (Panikhali, Nadia)
Narendranath Roy : 9609997397 (Dhupguri, Jalpaiguri For Bhawaiya Dotara)
Anil Das : 8926201015 (Ranaghat, Nadia)



Gobindo Das Baul (Murshidabad)



Padmashri Mangalakanta Roy
(Maynaguri, Jalpaiguri)

SARINDA

Sarinda is a bowed instrument of North Bengal with three strings. Hollowed out of a single block of wood, the lower part of the resonator is covered with parchment made of goat skin. This instrument is played with a horse hair bow and is used as an accompaniment mostly in Bhawaiya songs. There are 3 strings in this instrument, two metal and one nylon or cotton thread is used. Three strings are tuned in fifth-root-fourth (V-I-IV) of a particular scale.

Maker

Narendranath Roy: 9609997397 (Dhupguri, Jalpaiguri)
Manobendra Roy: 9002630055 (Panikhali, Nadia)

KENDRI

Kendri is an indigenous musical instrument played by the tribal community of West Bengal and Jharkhand. Kendri is mostly used with tribal songs and Jhumur songs. It's made of a wooden handle of an umbrella fit into a coconut shell covered with goat skin. A metal string is tied with a tuning peg made of wood or bamboo and played with a bow. The string is tuned in the tonic of a particular scale and tones are changed by touching the string with the fingers of left hand.

Maker

Mohan Patra: 9732318386



BANAM

Banam is an indigenous musical instrument played by the tribal community of West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand. It is mostly used in Chadar Badar (Tribal puppetry) and Jhumur dance. It's made of wood and the resonator is covered with animal skin. The length of the instrument is around 1.5 feet with one/two strings, played with a bow.

Maker

Sonai Murmu: 75869 71127



Mongol Saren
(Jadabgunj, Purba Bardhaman)



AEROPHONE (WINDS)

Aerophone instruments produce the legato notes. Instruments like flutes and Sennai come to this type.

BAMBOO FLUTE

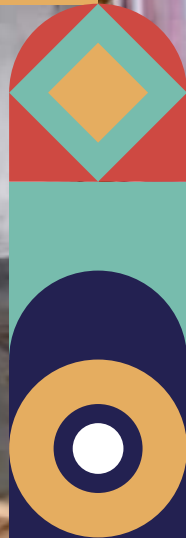
The Flute is Bengal's very own wind instrument. It is usually made of bamboo. The Flute has contributed to an overall enrichment of Indian classical music and dulcet rendition of Bengali folksong. It is an integral part of various folk music genres like Baul, Bhawaiya, Bhatiyali and Jhumur. The Bamboo Flute is typically between 10-36 inches in length and the 0.5 inch to 2 inch in thickness. One end of the Flute is closed and few centimetres from the closed end is its blow hole. Longer Flutes feature deeper tones and lower pitches. Musicians create different musical notes by covering and uncovering the various finger holes.

Maker

Dipankar Roy Dakua: 9932257022 (Maynaguri, Jalpaiguri)
Anil Mitra: 9836927285 (Agarpara, North 24 PGS)



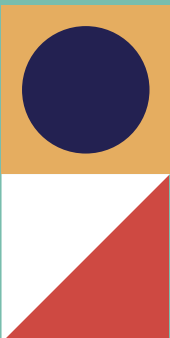
Dipankar Roy Dakua
(Maynaguri, Jalpaiguri)



Compounder Kalindi (Purulia)

SANAI

Sanai is a woodwind musical instrument played both in folk and classical music of India. In West Bengal, Sanai is often played with Chau dance. Sanai is made of wood and with a double reed at one end and a metal or wooden flared bell at the other end. The sound of the Sanai is considered auspicious, and for this reason, it is still played in temples and is an indispensable component of any Indian wedding.



KHAL

The khal is a tribal bamboo flute used by the Rabha community of North Bengal that signifies celebration and pain, and traditionally been essential to weddings, festivities, and funerals. The Rabha community loves its music and almost every occasion is celebrated with song and dance. Khal is not only used for celebration but also for expressing pain. The melancholy tunes of Khal usually accompany the sorrow of funeral. The time before burial, the mourners keep vigil and believe unholy spirit might enter the body if left alone, and that is when the Khal is played. Khal is made of a special kind of bamboo found in forests, which is also a favourite food of elephants.



Dhanbir Rabha
(Mendabari, Alipurduar)

MEMBRANOPHONE (LEATHER PERCUSSION)

Most of the rhythm instruments of Bengal produce sound through the vibration of stretched membrane fitted on the drum. Different leather percussions used to create different soundscape.

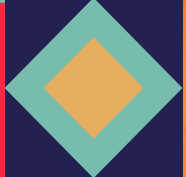
DHOL

Dhol is the most popular percussion instrument of Bengal. This is a drum which consists of a wooden barrel with leather coverings stretched over the open ends. The wooden barrel is carved out of a log of Mango wood, and goat skin is used to cover the open ends. The leather can be stretched or loosened with a tightening mechanism made up of interwoven ropes and metal rings. One side of the Dhol produces bass sound, where as another side produces mid to high mid frequency sound. The right side of the drum is beaten with palm and fingers, and the left side with a small stick and palm. Dhol is an integral part of rituals, festivals and social ceremonies like wedding.

Maker

Biswajit Das : 9733837404 (Haringhata, Nadia)
Anil Das : 8926201015 (Ranaghat, Nadia)

Biswajit Das
(Haringhata, Nadia)



DHAK

Dhak is the iconic musical instrument of Bengal used in several rituals and especially in Durga puja. Along with that, Dhak is also played with Chau dance, Raibenshe dance and Natua dance. It is made of wood covered with goat skin in both sides. The leather can be stretched or loosened to tune the instrument. Dhak played with a pair of sticks made of bamboo and cane and produces loud sound.

Maker

Biswajit Das : 9733837404 (Haringhata, Nadia)
Anil Das : 8926201015 (Ranaghat, Nadia)

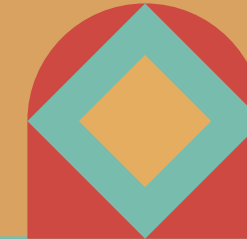


KHOL

Khol is one of the oldest percussion instruments of Bengal. It is a barrel-shaped asymmetrical drum where the two faces are of different sizes. The body of Khol is essentially made of clay with the two faces covered with two layers of leather with tuning paste (locally called Gab) in the center. These parchments are held by braids, both of which are connected with thin leather strips equally distributed into thirty-two spaces. Bigger side of the Khol produces bass tune, where the smaller side produces treble tune. Khol is an essential instrument of Keertan and widely used for Baul songs with Keertan based tunes and are also used in Bhawaiya music.

Maker

Biswajit Das : 9733837404 (Haringhata, Nadia)
Anil Das : 8926201015 (Ranaghat, Nadia)





Pijush Banerjee
(Mangolkot, Purba Bardhaman)

DUBKI

Dubki is a percussion instrument common to the Bauls of Bengal. It consists of a skin stretched and pasted on a circular wooden frame. The Dubki is tuned to various pitches by wetting the skin. It is held at the bottom of the frame by the left hand, which also varies the tension of the skin, and is beaten with the fingers of the right hand. Dubki produces a watery flanging sound by controlling the tension of the skin. The diameter of the instrument is 5-6 inches and made of neem or mango wood.

Maker

Tarun Das: 8670570515 (Santiniketan, Bolpur)
Manobendra Roy: 9002630055 (Panikhali, Nadia)
Anil Das: 8926201015 (Ranaghat, Nadia)

MADOL

Madol is a small drum made of baked clay with stretched skin covering the ends, and in the center of both skins, a paste is used for tuning. It is struck with both hands. Madol is played in Jhumur songs and is part of festivities of Santhal and other indigenous communities of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha and northeastern states. The bigger side of the Khol produces bass sound, where the smaller side produces mid to high mid frequency sound.

Maker

Gangadhar Ruhidas : 8016370363 (Hatakol, Purulia)
Durgacharan Das : 9002899975 (Parodda, Purulia)
Rathu Das : 8293052436 (Hatakol, Purulia)
Purna Ruhidas : 9932696595 (Sindri, Purulia)



Som Hasda
(Jadabgunj, Purba Bardhaman)

DHAMSA

Dhamsa is a type of Indian nagara which has a body made of wood or iron. It is a percussion instrument made at Paradda village of Balarampur block in Purulia district. Dhamsas come in different sizes, are found individually or in pairs, and is beaten with two sticks. Dhamsa is made of wood or metal and covered with cow or buffalo skin. It produces bass sound with a very deep tone. This is often played along with other drums. Dhamsa is an essential instrument of Chau dance and Jhumur songs.

Maker

Gangadhar Ruhidas: 8016370363 (Hatakol, Purulia)
Durgacharan Das: 9002899975 (Parodda, Purulia)
Rathu Das: 8293052436 (Hatakol, Purulia)
Purna Ruhidas: 9932696595 (Sindri, Purulia)



AUTOPHONE

Small percussion used in folk music of Bengal are mostly autophones.

MANDIRA

Mandira or Kartal is a pair of small bell-shaped cymbals used by the Bauls and other folk musicians of West Bengal. This percussion instrument has a high frequency sound and made of brass. The tuning is depending on the size and the thickness of the metal.



OTHER PERCUSSION

KHORKUTO

Khorkuto is a typical bamboo percussion used exclusively in Chador Bador (a form of Tribal puppetry). It is a piece of 2.5 feet long dried bamboo played with another piece of wood or bamboo to create a percussive sound.

Maker
Loxsha Hembram : 7865853526

GHUNGUR

Ghungurs or Ghungrus are a bunch of small bells often used as a musical anklets by the Bauls while dancing. It is made of brass or alloy, and a string of ghungurs can range from 50 to greater than 200 bells knotted together.



Moral Soren
(Jadabgunj, Purba Bardhaman)

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF THE HILLS

Tumbok/ Tungbuk is a traditional musical instrument of the Lepcha community. The instrument is carved out of a single piece of soft wood, about 2 ft in length. Goat leather is stretched over a hollowed box and 3 holes are bored into the leather. A bridge is fixed to the leather surface. It has 3 strings attached to 3 tuning pegs and is stretched across the bridge. The strings are nowadays made of nylon, but in the past used to be made of nettle fiber. It is usually plucked with a bamboo plectrum. A cloth band is often attached to the instrument so that it can be hung around the shoulder of the performer.

Nimbryok Plith is a traditional flute of the Lepcha community, consisting of 2 end-blown bamboo flutes joined side by side, which produces one tone. Each flute has six holes and is 1 foot in length. It is played by pressing the holes with fingers while blowing on the end holes.

Bomphatyut is a Lepcha flute with one hole, which is played to make the sounds of birds. These short bamboo pipes can be of various sizes and are used as bird whistles or to insert sound effects in music. Bomphatyut was primarily invented for signalling in the jungle, and short-distance communication.

Popatek is a bamboo tube-like percussion instrument which was traditionally used by the Lepchas to scare away the birds and animals from the fields. Nowadays, it is often played as an accompanying percussion instrument during their cultural programs. It is held in one hand and struck on the palm of the other hand in a definite rhythm. Popatek is also used to maintain the rhythm of a song.

Maker
Anand Lepcha : 6295568155 / 7076753185



Damphu is the primary musical instrument of the Tamang community. It is a double-sided disc-shaped drum resembling a Tambourine. The Damphu often has a green wooden bird attached to it on the top surface, which appears to move in a dancing rhythm when the Damphu is played. There is a legend associated with the instrument. It says that Peng Dorje, an ancestor of the Tamang people once killed a beautiful deer and brought it home. Seeing the dead animal, his wife became sad and Peng tried to lift her mood but all effort went in vain. One day he brought a piece of wood, four feet in length, and shaped it into a circle of four inches' width. He tightened a goat skin to the frame with 32 wooden spikes. Peng started singing songs on the gods and his ancestors and all the creatures from the jungle started dancing to the tunes. His wife forgot her sorrow and joined the dance. The bird, 'Danpha', danced so beautifully that Dorje decided to name his instrument after her. The Damphu soon became an integral part of the lifestyle of the Tamangs.

Maker
Kumar Tamang: 6294544186



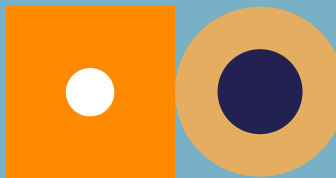
Kumar Tamang
(Kaffer Gaon, Kalimpong)



Santabir Tamang
(Kaffer Gaon, Kalimpong)

Tungna is another very important musical instrument of the Tamangs which is played along with the Damphu on all auspicious occasions, and festivities such as the ushering of New Year or harvest seasons. The instrument has four strings with a bridge set at the hollow box in the bottom, creating a tension for the strings. The hollow box is covered with animal skin.

Maker
Kumar Tamang: 6294544186



ABOUT THE INSTRUMENT MAKERS



Tarun Das: Tarun Das, the instrument maker of Santiniketan, Bolpur is well-known for making of Dotara, Ektara and Khamak. Being born and raised in Santiniketan, Tarun was closely associated with various Bauls since his childhood and was familiar with various Baul instruments. With time, his interest towards making of instrument making grew and he took it up as his profession. Tarun's made musical instruments are widely used by the Bauls and the urban musicians. He has his own shop at Shyam Bati, Santiniketan. Along with traditional Dotara, Tarun is experimenting by making of other types of Dotara with different shapes and styles.

Narendranath Roy: Bhawaiya is the lifestyle folk music of North Bengal and different types of folk instruments are used for accompaniment. Naren Roy of Dhupguri from the district of Jalpaiguri is best known for making of Bhawaiya instruments, specialising in making of Dotara and Sarinda. Apart from instrument making, he is also a graded Dotara player and has worked at All India Radio, Siliguri. Professional Dotara and Sarinda players uses instruments made by him for its fine finishing and unique tone. He trained his elder son Gopal, who also work with him.

Anil Das: Anil Das of Aranghata, Nadia is one of the biggest entrepreneurs of musical instrument making and has his own workshop. For generations, they are into this business and make various types of musical instruments including Dhak, Dhol, Dotara, Ektara, Tabla etc. Apart from his family's four members, six other persons are also appointed in production. They supply their instruments in various parts of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Mumbai, etc. He also take international orders through an exporter.

Manabendra Roy: Panikhali of Nadia district is famous for Dotara making. Manabendra Roy is one of the most senior instrument makers of this area. For generations, his family is known for making of musical instruments. At a very early age, he migrated from Manikgunj, Bangladesh with his father and started working with him. Along with Dotaras, Manabendra also make Ektara, Khamak, Dubki and Sarinda. He trained his son Mintu Roy, who looks after his business in recent times and is also expanding the market of traditional instruments with the help of digital platforms.

Anil Mitra: Anil Mitra of Agarpara, North 24 Parganas is one of the few flute makers of West Bengal. His childhood was spent in Bangladesh. At the age of 7 or 8, he went to visit a village fair celebrating Rathayatra where he bought a bamboo flute and started playing folk tunes. Later in 1975, after the liberation war of Bangladesh, he migrated to India and settled in North 24 Parganas. Despite of the extreme resistance from his family, his flute training continued under the tutelage of Shri Binoy Bose along with education. After completing his graduation, Anil decided to make flute to earn his livelihood and within few days he became a professional flute maker. Now many of the professional flute players buy instrument from him and appreciates his talent of making the instrument.

Dipankar Roy Dakua: Dipankar Roy Dakua is one of the finest flute players of Bhawaiya music and has a vast experience in playing and making bamboo flutes. He has his small workshop at his own house at Maynaguri and also cater to online orders.

Biswajit Das: Biswajit is a Dhol player and also an instrument maker. He learned instrument making from his father and expanded his family business by using digital platforms. Along with various parts of Bengal, Biswajit gets orders from Mumbai, Assam, Delhi, etc. He has made an organisation called 'Banglar Souhardo' with the Dhak players of West Bengal.





Rina Das Baul
(Santiniketan, Birbhum)



Kishan Murmu & Team
(Jadabgun, Purba Bardhaman)





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