

South Indian Music

Carnatic music is south India's classical style of music, dating back to the 15th century. Its most common form is the *kriti* -- a composition based on a fixed *raga* (melody) and *tala* (rhythm), which involves a great deal of improvisation. The greatest concentration of Carnatic musicians are found in the city of Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu. If you are a fan of Carnatic music, you shouldn't miss the Chennai Music Festival (also known as the Madras Music Season), held annually in Chennai from mid December to mid January. Over 1,000 performances take place during the festival. The Thyagaraja Carnatic Music Festival, held every January in Thiruvaiyaru (in the Tanjavur district of Tamil Nadu) also emphasizes the importance of music in South Indian tradition.



The 7 notes of infinity...

- **Indian classical music** refers to the art music of India. The origins of Indian classical music can be found in the Vedas, which are the oldest scriptures in the Hindu tradition. The Samaveda, one of the four Vedas, describes music at length. The Samaveda was derived from the Rigveda so that its hymns could be sung as Samagana.
- Indian classical music is both elaborate and expressive. Like Western Classical Music, it divides the octave into 12 semitones of which the 7 basic notes are, in ascending tonal order, *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa*, similar to Western music's *Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do*. However, Indian music uses just-intonation tuning, unlike most modern Western classical music, which uses the equal-temperament tuning system. Indian classical music is monophonic in nature and based around a single melody line, which is played over a fixed drone. The performance is based melodically on particular ragas and rhythmically on talas. Because of the focus on exploring the raga, performances have traditionally been solo endeavors, but duets are gaining in popularity.

Hindustani Music

- Hindustani music is mainly found in North India. There are several classical and semi-classical forms in this genre of music. There is a significant amount of Persian influence in Hindustani music in terms of the instruments and style of presentation. Also, as is the case with Carnatic Music, Hindustani music has assimilated various folk tunes. For example, ragas such as Kafi and Jaijaiwanti are based on folk tunes.
- The performance usually begins with a slow elaboration of the raga, known as *badhat*. This can range from long (30–60 minutes) to short (8–10 minutes) depending on the raga, the style and preference of the musician, and the medium. Once the raga is established, the ornamentation around the mode begins to become rhythmical, gradually speeding up; this section is called the *drut* in vocal performances or the *jor* in instrumental performances.



Carnatic Music



- Carnatic music, from South India, tends to be more rhythmically intensive and structured than Hindustani music. Examples of this are the logical classification of ragas into melakarthas, and the use of fixed compositions similar to Western classical music. The opening piece is called a varnam, and is a warm-up for the musicians. Devotion and a request for a blessing follow, then a series of interchanges between ragas (unmetered melody) and talas (the ornamentation, equivalent to the jor). This is intermixed with hymns called krithis. The pallavi or theme from the raga then follows.
- Primary themes include worship, descriptions of temples, philosophy, and nayaka-nayika (Sanskrit "hero-heroine") themes. Tyagaraja (1759–1847), Muthuswami Dikshitar (1776–1827) and Syama Shastri (1762–1827) are known as the Trinity of Carnatic music, while Purandara Das (1480–1564) is the father of Carnatic music.

