

DRUMS AND DRUM PLAY OF SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Drums of Sri Lanka are happily wedded to her indigenous music. This paper examines the typology, context/contexts and the communicative aspects of the Sinhala drums. In the course of this examination much attention was paid to the continuous presence of certain types of drums both in the coastal areas and the hilly regions of the island. Temple music and music associated with its tributaries such as the folk rituals were studied with a view to categorise the drums used. Drum rhythms were examined in order to show their close association with the dance. Hevisi, Pañca Tūrya and Poya Hevisi are some of the generic terms which were examined extensively.

A survey of urban music ensembles of Sri Lanka will invariably bring us in contact with a number of Western and Eastern (mainly Indian and Persian) instruments, stringed and percussion. This combination appears to be a result of an attempt at a symbiosis between the two systems, although, at times, it has given rise to a certain element of commercialization.

Sri Lankan music culture, it has to be admitted, received special enrichment from a meaningful blending of a variety of strands contributed by groups within the larger stream, namely, Tamil, Malay, Moor, Burgher and the Eurasian. Nonetheless the music of Lanka throws into high relief the culture it represents. In other words, through all these innovations and adaptations, the Sri Lankans have been able to preserve the vigour and functional validity of their own art forms.

Lanka's traditional music displays a process of cultural interaction especially noticed after the South Indian invasion of the country. Our attempt at a study of this cultural organism involves vital components such as historical data, anthropological material and even social and economic factors.

Contextually traditional music of Sri Lanka could be divided into five broad categories; this would facilitate study as well.

Contexts:

1. Court Music
2. Temple Music
3. Ritual and/or Ceremonial Music