

# INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC: RABAB/SURRINGAR/SAROD

#6

INDIAN MUSIC STUDY GROUP

"SAROD, SURRINGAR, + RABAB"

Tape Program:

## 1. MOHAMMED OMAR — TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF AFGHANISTAN, PLAYED ON THE RABAB.

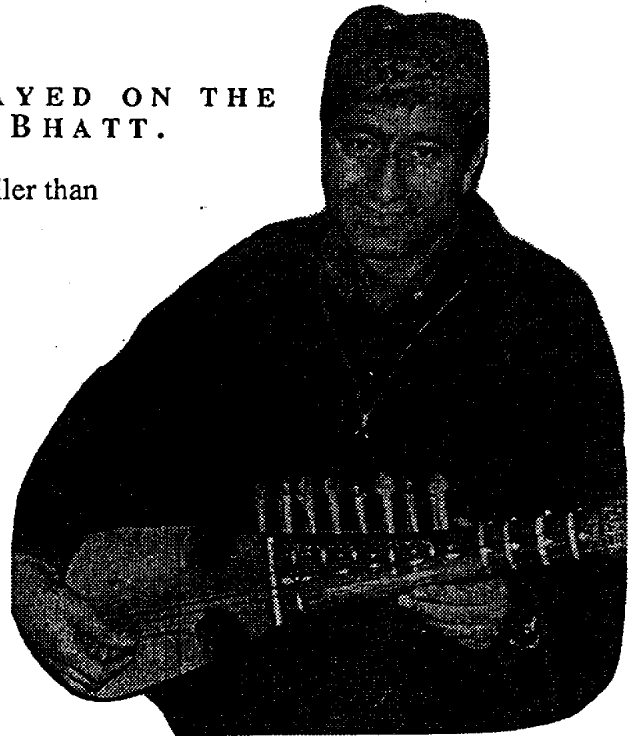


The Rabab comes originally from the Middle East, but by the time it reached Afghanistan it had taken on a distinct and different form. With four frets at the base of the neck, and gut strings, the instrument has a brilliant and percussive tone well suited to the vigorous quality of Afghani traditional music. Here Mohammed Omar (about whom no information is available) plays a traditional Afghani melody on his rabab, accompanied on the Afghani version of tabla by Mohammed Wali.

*French CBS lp: "Musiques & Traditions Du Monde: Afghanistan" — CBS 65954*

## 2. KASHMIRI MUSIC PLAYED ON THE RABAB BY MOIUDDIN BHATT.

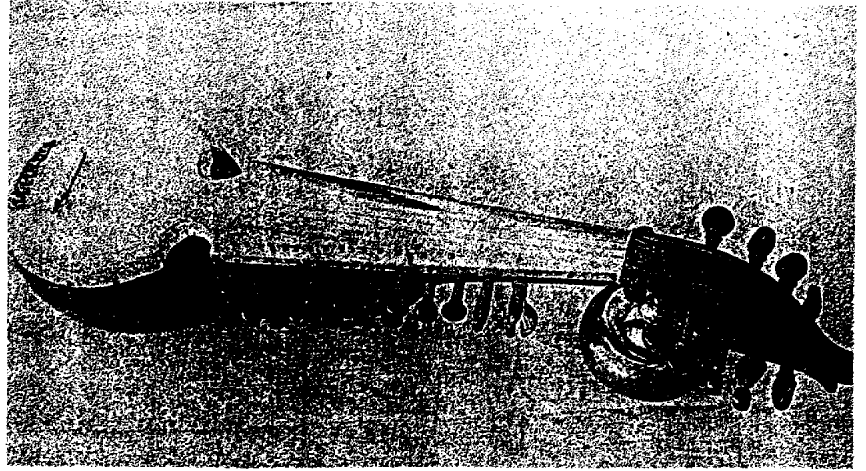
The Kashmiri Rabab is slightly smaller than its Afghani counterpart, but has the same piercing, brilliant tone quality. This piece is a traditional folk melody from Kashmir. **Moiuddin Bhat** is a professional musician from Srinagar, Kashmir; he's accompanied by **Abdul Aziz** on the nuht, a clay pot which is struck with the hands in various rhythmic patterns. This recording was made on a houseboat belonging to one of the musicians, on the banks of Srinagar's river Jhelum.



*Recording Source: Field Recording by  
Warren Senders, Srinagar, Kashmir —  
March 21, 1986*

### 3. USTAD KUKAB KHAN: RAGA BHAIRAVI ON SAROD.

This recording dates from the 30's. No information is available about **Kukab Khan**, but his style is virtuosic and expressive, a fine demonstration of the sarod's power. Within a 3-minute recording, **Kukab Khan** builds a clear and compelling performance of the traditional raga **Bhairavi**, demonstrating as well the **rabab**-based style of sarod music in favor at the time.



*Recording Source: 78 Record, privately retaped, no information available*

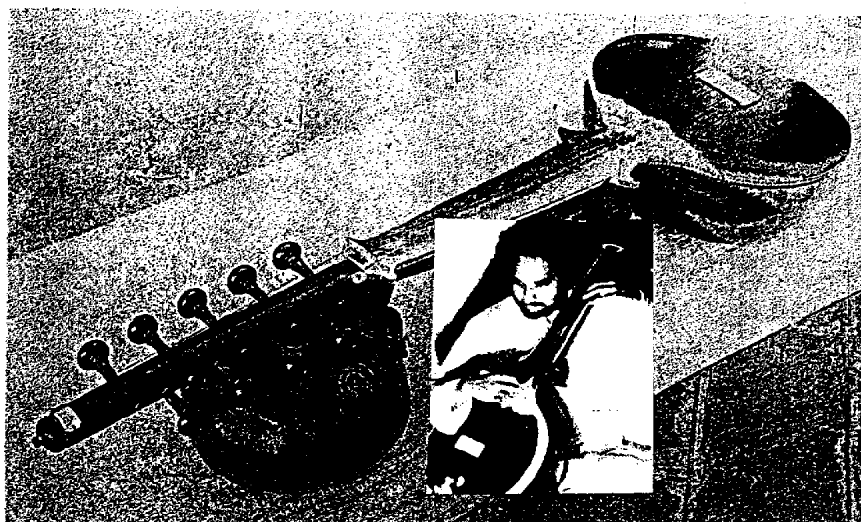
### 4. USTAD ALLAUDIN KHAN: RAGA KAUSHI BHAIRAV ON SAROD

**Allaudin Khan** is one of the greats of Hindustani music. Born in the 1860's, he died over a century later. A master of the sarod, he was a versatile musician and composer who could perform on dozens of other instruments as well, including violin, sursringar, clarinet, tabla, trumpet, sitar, rabab, harmonium, and more. His son **Ali Akbar Khan** is still performing from his base in California; his son-in-law **Ravi Shankar** is an internationally known artist and probably the most famous Hindustani musician in the world; his daughter **Annapurna Devi** is one of the most respected teachers of instrumental music in India. **Allaudin Khan's** disciples also include **Nikhil Banerjee** (sitar) and **Pannalal Ghosh** (flute). This recording was made in his old age; he was in his late 80's. The precision of his playing has diminished, but we can hear the power and brilliance of the **Ustad's** music still shining through.



*Recording Source: HMV lp, "Great Master, Great Music" — number unknown*

## 5. ALLAUDIN KHAN: RAGA NAT ON SURSRINGAR



The Sursringar is very rare. It is to the Sarod as the Surbahar is to the Sitar. Here Allaudin Khan performs the popular evening raga Nat on this unusual low-register instrument. Note that the Sursringar has no sympathetic strings, and, as the inset photograph of Sulalit Sinha demonstrates, is played in an upright position (rather like the been). Its soft tone and difficult technique have diminished the sursringar's popularity over the past century.

*Recording : All India Radio, privately retaped, no information available.*

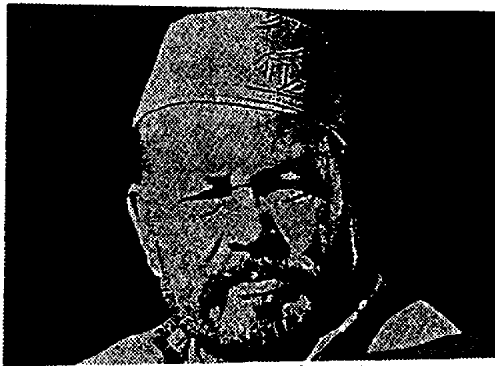
## 6. USTAD ALI AKBAR KHAN: RAGA AHIR BHAIRAV

Ali Akbar Khan for many years defined the music of the sarod. His approach to the instrument combines the powerful strokes of a **dhrupad**-based style with an expressive grace and lyricism well in evidence on this recording, made in the 1960's. His rendition of the beautiful morning raga **Ahir Bhairav** (a sub-melody of the important raga **Bhairav**) is marked by delicate ornamentation and a sense of swinging, syncopated rhythm. Note the beautiful **tabla** playing of **Mahapurush Misra**. Although **Ali Akbar Khan**'s recent recordings and performances are less consistent,, his early recordings are classics in the field, and serve as exemplary renditions of Hindustani instrumental music. Also very significant are his recorded duets with his brother-in-law, **Ravi Shankar**. The two were trained side-by side under **Allaudin Khan**, and their styles reflect two very different instrumental approaches to the same set of musical aesthetics. Now the head of the **Ali Akbar College of Music** in California, **Ali Akbar Khan** devotes much of his time to teaching a large group of American instrumentalists, some of whom have achieved professional status.



*Recording: Connoisseur Society LP "Pre-Dawn to Sunrise Ragas" — CS 1967*

## 7. USTAD HAFIZ ALI KHAN — RAGA MIAN KI MALHAR



**Hafiz Ali Khan** was a contemporary of **Allaudin Khan**. He learned from his father, **Ustad Nanhe Khan** — a representative of the family of musicians responsible for creating the contemporary **sarod** out of the **Afghani/Kashmiri rabab**. **Hafiz Ali Khan** also learned **dhrupad** from **Shri Ganeshlal Chaubey**, and for many years was a disciple of **Ustad Wazir Khan** of Rampur, also the guru of **Allaudin Khan**. It is instructive that **Wazir Khan's** two chief disciples developed such distinctive styles; their sons continue this stylistic divergence. This excerpt presents the rainy-season raga **Mian ki Malhar**, supposedly a creation of the great 16th century musician **Mian Tansen**, the singer at the court of **Emperor Akbar**.

*Source: HMV Cassette No. STC 04B 7388*

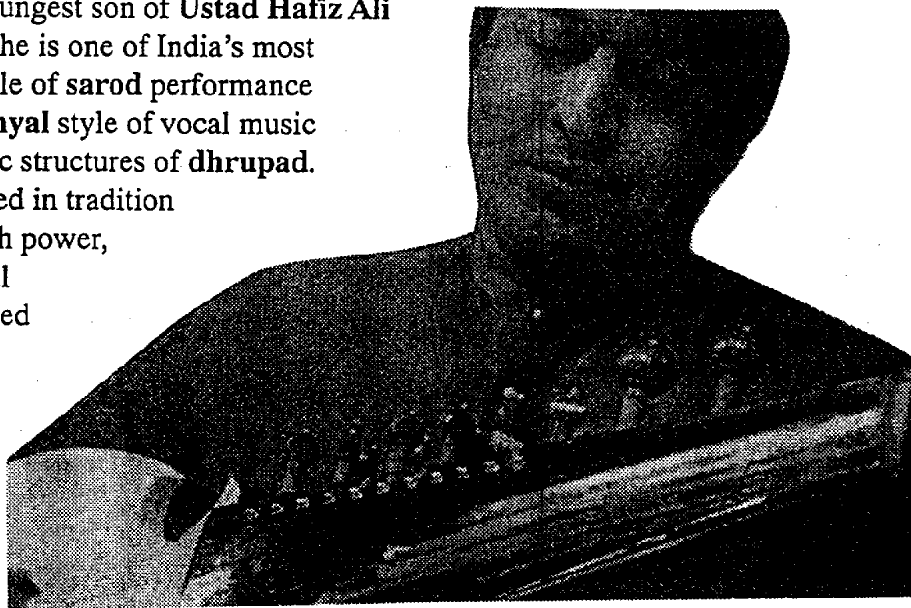
## 8. AMJAD ALI KHAN:

A — INTERVIEW EXCERPTS & DEMONSTRATION

B — RAGA DARBARI KANADA

**Amjad Ali Khan** is the youngest son of **Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan**. Now 47 years old, he is one of India's most famous musicians. His style of **sarod** performance owes more to the lyrical **khyal** style of vocal music than to the austere rhythmic structures of **dhrupad**. However, he is firmly rooted in tradition and plays the old ragas with power, expression and phenomenal technique. His widely varied stroking patterns and exquisite intonation make him an example for young musicians.

We hear him discussing his instrument as part of a 1984 interview with WGBH's



**Robert J. Lurtsema** (who grunts occasionally in the background). I'm told by a **rasika** who prefers anonymity that **Amjad Ali's** demonstration of finger technique is a subtle dig at **Ali Akbar Khan's** style, which uses the pad of the finger rather than the nail tip.

Here he plays the profound evening raga **Darbari Kanada** with tabla by **Ustad Shafat Ahmed Khan**, in **tintal**. His bends, slurs and graces indicate his deep connection with the aesthetic of vocal music.

*Recording Source: Music Today Cassette: "Night Ragas Vol. 4" — No. A 90016*

9. PT. RADHIKA MOHAN MOITRA —  
RAGA JOGIYA

Radhika Mohan Moitra was a highly revered figure in the world of sarod. Born in Bengal in 1917, he first learned the rabab style of sarod performance from one of the great artists of the time, Ustad Ameer Khan (not to be confused with the khyal vocalist of the same name). Ameer Khan died when Moitra was 17, after nine years of instruction. After this, Moitra learned for many years with Ustad Dabir Khan, grandson of Wazir Khan (guru of Allaudin and Hafiz Ali).



His style was deeply rooted in tradition, although he introduced some new techniques in the performance of sitar-style taan passages. After a long career as a respected performer, Radhika Mohan Moitra died in 1981. Here he presents a short performance of the morning raga Jogiya.

*Recording Source: All India Radio, privately retaped, no information available.*

10. PT. BUDDHADEV DASGUPTA:  
RAGA SURDASI MALHAR



Buddhadev DasGupta is the foremost disciple of Radhika Mohan Moitra. Although an electronics engineer by profession, he is recognized as one of India's top exponents of sarod. His style is marked by intelligence and economy — he's a brilliant technician, but his priorities have always been musical ones. Consequently, he remains something of a "musician's musician;" not a popular figure, but a great artist. This short rendition of the obscure rainy-season raga **Surdasi Malhar** (credited to the blind singer-saint **Surdas**) demonstrates DasGupta's musical resources. The tabla accompaniment by Nayan Ghosh is sympathetic and intelligent.

*Recording Source: Magnasound Cassette  
"A New Dimension to Sarod" — No. C4H10283*

## 11. ZARIN DARUWALLA — RAGA MALKAUNS

There have been very few women performers on the sarod, which has been almost exclusively a male, Muslim instrument (due to its origin in the hereditary musicians' families from Afghanistan). **Sharan Rani** was a disciple of **Ali Akbar Khan** who achieved top professional status, but until **Zarin Daruwalla**, the field has been rather empty. **Daruwalla** is an unusual and distinctive figure. She is a **Parsi (Zoroastrian)** — a group normally not involved with Indian classical music at all; many **Parsi** musicians are exponents of Western music (like **Zubin Mehta**, for example). The only other **Hindustani** musician who is a **Parsi** is the vocalist **Feroze Dastoor**. **Zarin Daruwalla** was born in 1946. A musical prodigy from the age of four, she has studied with many distinguished teachers. Perhaps because many of them were not sarod players, her style is distinctive and original. Her teachers include vocalists **Laxmanprasad Jaipurwale** and

**S.C.R. Bhat**, musicologist and vocalist **S.N. Ratanjankar**, vocalist/beenkar/sitarist **Bhishmadev Vedi** and violinist **V.G. Jog**. Due to this tremendously varied background, **Daruwalla** has become one of the most distinctive performers of **Hindustani** instrumental music today. Her style is marked by a preference for unusual ragas and complex rhythmic development — but her melodic inflections show a comprehensive background in vocal music. Here she renders **alap** and **gat** in the popular and beautiful evening raga **Malkauns**.



*Recording Source: HMV Cassette "Ornate Strings" STCS 04B 7448*

# It's all in the family

Amjad Ali Khan's teenage sons mark the seventh generation of the first family of the sarod

**W**indsor Hall at Hotel Le Meridien in Delhi. A press conference for this year's music festival for the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) is underway. Seated are R.P.Goenka of the RPG group, *santoor* maestro Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, singer Ila Arun and hordes of journalists.

Also seated in a corner are two nervous boys. Dressed in smart polo-necked sweaters and blazers, and sitting with their heads bent and their hands folded quietly in their laps, they look up with polite smiles only when any reference is made to them.

Sirifort Auditorium, three days later. The last day of the music festival. A packed auditorium is waiting to hear a *sarod* recital by Ustad Amjad Ali Khan. The crowd is also waiting to hear his two sons — 16-year-old Amaan Ali Bangash and 14-year-old Ayaan Ali Bangash — perform. Dressed this time in traditional costume, silk kurta-pyjamas, they present a picture of calm confidence. They touch their father's and accompanist Ustad Shaafat Ahmed Khan's feet and go on to play raga Malkauns to an encouraging response.

A week later, Amaan and Ayaan take a day off from school for a Spic Macay concert in Gwalior. This is followed by a trip to Aligarh where Amaan is giving a solo performance. Their mother is not there to help them pack. Neither is their father there to give them last-minute instructions (both of them are in Dubai for Amjad Ali Khan's concert) but Amaan and Ayaan don't seem to mind.

PHALS. GIROTA



## AMAAN ALI BANGASH

**"We have mental pressures as we have to live up to our father's expectations and the audiences' expectations"**

If this doesn't beat a professional's busy diary, nothing will. And all this, when their itinerary for this year still hasn't been finalised by their father. Amaan and Ayaan are not only the youngest artists to arrive on the Indian classical music scene, they also carry a legacy of

seven generations of *sarod* players on their young shoulders. (The Bangash family — the family name was dropped by Mohammad Ali Khan Bangash who improvised the *rabab* to a *sarod* — is the only family in the country which has been playing the instrument for seven generations.)

The legacy has not always rested lightly with the boys. "There was a time

when we didn't enjoy the practice sessions," confesses Amman, "but we have finally reached a stage when we are enjoying playing the *sarod*".

But even though their love for the instrument wasn't to blossom until later, the boys remember having been virtually born with it. Says Ayaan, "Appa had these toy *sarods* made for us when I was four. We used to hold them when he practised." Their father also made sure that they were given the right training.

"As a guru he is very strict," says Amaan. Adds Ayaan, "But he is also very patient with us. He tells us that his father would stomp out of the room if he made a mistake but when we make mistakes, he explains everything to us very nicely and patiently."

Four years of practising the *shudh ragas* (which involve all the seven

swars) under Amjad Ali Khan's guidance, and Amaan and Ayaan were ready to give their first public performance.

But only just, since the evening was not without its near disasters. They were to give a tandem performance at the first Festival of Sarod held under the aegis of Ustad Hafiz Khan Memorial Society at the Kamani Auditorium in Delhi. Not only were they nervous but Ayaan also realised that he had forgotten the first lesson he had been taught by his father. "Appa had told us," he remembers, "to be prepared for any eventuality on stage,

streams of music. We were scared that if both of us failed at the *sarod*, the family name would suffer. But he told us that we should put in all that we have — and leave the rest to God."

Clearly, someone up there loves them, for the boys are doing well.

And working hard. They attend school in the morning. Relax for an hour in the afternoon and then practise for three hours. This is followed by homework and studies and then comes listening to recordings of their father's concerts or spending time with him picking

Amaan. Both Amaan and Ayaan have plans of doing their graduation by correspondence while they concentrate more on their music as they grow older.

**A**nd for those who think their path has been smoothed for them — Amjad Ali Khan as parent and teacher, interaction with the best classical music talent in the country, and easy access to various festivals and events where they can play — Amaan and Ayaan have a different story to tell.

Says Ayaan, "The pressures are tremendous. Even though we are not that bothered about studies, we are bothered about how well we are going to do in the field that we have chosen." Adds Amaan, "There is a lot of criticism at times, that we have had it easy. That we have an established father who is helping us. We agree that we don't have pressures like not having enough money for a meal or living in a single room, but we have mental pressures. We have to live up to our father's expectations and also the audiences' expectations."

A mature stand to take, certainly, but at times their defences fall. "We miss a healthy interaction with our teachers and friends in school. There is no one that we can discuss our music with," says Amaan. "In fact, we feel out of place in school. We can't take part in the conversation that takes place, because we have nothing in common with our classmates," says Ayaan.

So they are left with being friends with each other. "It is pointless trying to be friends with others. They only try to play one of us against the other, which leads to fights, and that is what we cannot afford to have — because when we step out of the house, we are representatives of our family," says Amaan.

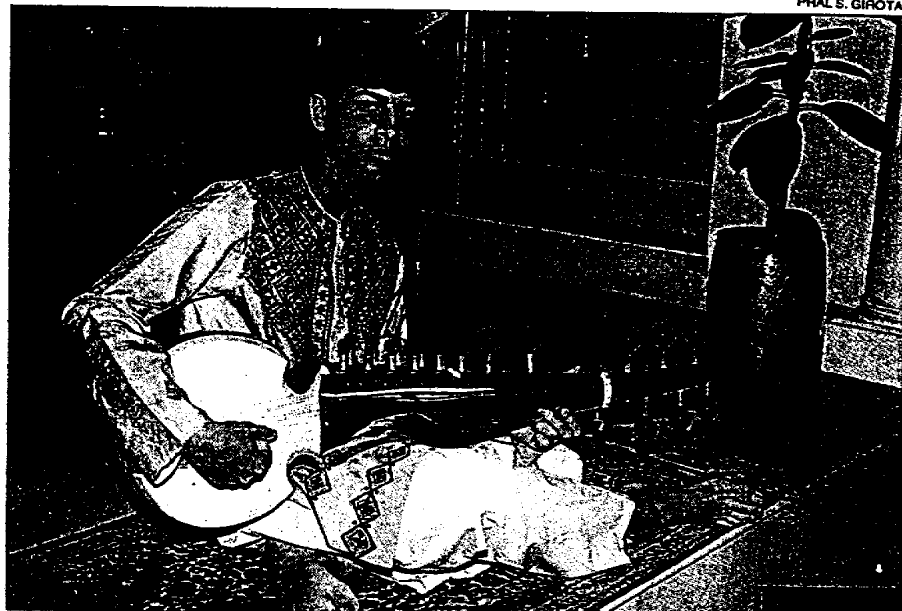
There it is, the 'family' again. The deeply felt legacy (the not musically-

minded might say burden) of generations of musicians. But Ayaan and Amaan have known it too long to question why it's there. Or consider throwing it away.

They had a choice, they insist, and they made it. "Our father is our friend," they remind you firmly. "And he has given us the freedom to do what we want." •

**Punam Thakur/New Delhi**

PHAL S. GIROTA



## AYAAN ALI BANGASH

but despite his repeated advice, I had not learnt what to do when a string broke."

And as luck would have it, the string of his *sarod* broke as he was playing. "I didn't know what to do," says Ayaan, the memory still embarrassing him.

Fortunately, Amjad Ali Khan was backstage, and stepped in to the boy's rescue while Amaan continued playing.

**N**ot only did Ayaan learn how to replace the string in his *sarod*, the brothers also learnt another lesson which they haven't forgotten still — that they are a team and they have to perform as one.

Says Amaan, "I remember having a discussion with my father in which I said that only one of us should train to be a *sarodia* while the other should be an accompanist, so that we can master two

ing up the finer nuances of their instrument. "According to our father, it is more important to listen than to play if we have to understand music," says Ayaan.

The boys have performed with their father in honour of the former president of India R. Venkataraman, accompanied him to concerts in America, Trinidad, Singapore and at the Festival of India in Russia.

Needless to say, with the demands made by music on their time and concentration, their studies suffer, but "fortunately enough, our teachers have now started realising that what we are doing is important enough for us not to concentrate on studies so much," says

**"According to our father, it is more important to listen than to play if we have to understand music"**