

BluGuru (Bollywood) - Teacher's Resource Notes

Bollywood is the name given to the Indian film industry based out of Bombay (Mumbai). Mumbai is the largest city in India and the main language of Bollywood films is the national language Hindi. Bollywood films are generally musicals that have several song and dance items throughout the movie. Indian film music or Hindi songs, are the most popular form of music in India.

Bollywood songs are usually very upbeat and have large scale choreographed dance pieces for large groups fronted by a principle dancer. The costumes are very elaborate, bright and colourful and during a single song there are normally several costume changes. It is almost compulsory that Bollywood actors can dance, as there is at least one dance scene in every movie.



Bollywood songs are sung by 'playback' singers, which are pre-recorded and then mimed by the actors as they dance. Some of the most famous playback singers are Asha Bosle, Lata Mangeskar, Sonu Nigam and Udit Narayan. Bollywood movies have developed dramatically over the years as styles from the West influence staging, costumes and musical content.

Recently some Bollywood styled films have been released for Western audiences such as 'Slumdog Millionaire' and have made a big impact on the worldwide popularity of Indian music and dance. Indian sounds and instruments have been highlighted in popular music for a long time, as with the introduction of the sitar by George Harrison and Ravi Shankar in The Beatles. Now R&B and Hip-hop singers incorporate Indian beats and words into their music as with the Pussycat Doll's and their hit record 'Jai Ho' which was co-produced with one of India's top musical producers, A. R Rahman.

The origins of Bollywood as a style of dance come from the traditional classical and folk dance of India. 'Kathak' is a North Indian form of classical dance that incorporates fluid upper-body movement with swift turns and intricate footwork. It is performed with bells

(gungaroo) strapped around each ankle to give extra balance and provides percussive rhythms that accompany the music. Kathak dancing is a very expressive dance form that is used to tell stories of the ancient Gods and characters of the traditional Vedas (holy book) of Hinduism.



Bhangra is the North Indian (Punjabi) folk dance that is performed at celebrations and festivals throughout the year. It is very joyful, fun and energetic style of dance with big, loud movements and colourful costumes. It is generally accompanied by a Dhol drum which is hung around the musicians shoulders and played with two sticks. The beats played are fast and easy to dance to encouraging anyone to put their arms up and move freely in the air.



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS



Two of the most common North Indian Classical instruments are the Sitar (pictured on the left above) and the Tabla (Indian drums pictured on the right).

The sitar was developed from its ancestor the Rudra Veena around the 18th century. It can have up to 20 strings and is played with a metal pick called a ‘misrab’ attached to the player's index finger. Its iconic sound is largely due to its double layer of sympathetic strings that provide a natural reverb sound to the instrument. When a note on the main top string is played, the corresponding string that is tuned to that particular note picks up the vibrations from the body of the sitar and starts ringing in sympathy with it. The body of a sitar is made from a gourd.

The tabla is one of the most intricate percussion instruments in the world. The tabla has its own vocal language called “Bol” which translates to “speak”. While learning the tabla students must first learn the different names of each way of hitting the drum like “Na”, “Tin”, “Te te”, “Ge”, and “Dha”. Combinations of these syllables are then joined together to create patterns that fit into rhythmic cycles used in Indian classical music such as 16, 10, 7 beat cycles or more complicated rhythms such as 11.5 beat cycle.