



**TCR
Project 4**

Supported by the Commonwealth Foundation



THE TABLA PROJECT

Yogesh Dattani – Uganda / Asia – Project Leader



*Yogesh directing young musicians in his tabla workshop
at the Ndere Centre, Ntinda, Uganda*

Participants in the Tabla workshop

**Young Ugandan musicians from the Ntinda area
International musicians from 'The Commonwealth Resounds!'
Members of the FDNC Youth Band**

The Ndere Centre, Ntinda, and the Fairway Hotel, Kampala

**Wednesday 21st, Thursday 22nd, Friday 23rd
and Saturday 24th November 2007**



“The time is right to take the performing arts of India to a new level of awareness and accessibility on an international level”, says Yogesh Dattani, Head of Ealing Music Service and one of the main group leaders invited by ‘The Commonwealth Resounds!’ to organise and direct tabla teaching workshops as part of the Commonwealth People’s Forum linked to the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) taking place in Kampala, Uganda (November 2007).



CHOGM 2007 has been perhaps a very important step in this endeavour. Shrouded in mystery about its complexity, the music of India is loved by all, the world over, but would appear to be on the opposite side of the continuum as far as being aware of this rich and beautiful music.



Tabla workshops run by Yogesh were of great interest to all the musicians

Yogesh Dattani, Head of Ealing Music Service, has been teaching tabla for more than 15 years in various schools in the London area as well as community organisations and more recently to whole classes as part of the Government's Wider Opportunities in KS2 Music Programme. Having developed teaching strategies that meet the expectations of pupils in the modern British classroom, Yogesh was able to facilitate a number of UK and international young musicians to put on a tabla ensemble performance in the space of just a few days practising in the evening at the Fairway Hotel – after an action-packed day of events!



Young TCR musicians stayed up late into the night at the Fairway Hotel studying tabla-playing techniques with Yogesh

“Having been expelled from Uganda at the age of 4 with my family in October 1972 together with the opportunity to share my knowledge of Indian music with the young people of the country of my birth and the one which I have chosen to call home was an opportunity too good to be missed” said Yogesh.

The Tablá Workshops



One of the highlights of my participation in ‘The Commonwealth Resounds!’ and the Commonwealth People’s Forum was the opportunity to work together with groups of both international and Ugandan musicians at the Ndere Centre.



Musicians from the FDNC Brass Band try their hand at tabla playing

Ugandan musicians were highly receptive to the experience and, whilst drumming is integral to all African cultures including the Ugandans, they experienced a completely new way of working with percussion music including the concept of vocalising all the repertoire that was to be learned and performed as well as completely different technique of playing the tablá with its emphasis on accuracy and using the figures to play the various mnemonics.



A completely different technique when playing the tabla

Despite a very demanding programme the international musicians really excelled beyond all my expectations with regards to their commitment and dedication to putting on a tablá ensemble performance, with only 5 lessons/rehearsals, at the Gala Concert, again at the Ndere Centre. The tabla rehearsals took place in the evenings which typically started at 9.30pm and lasted for 2-3 hours.



12.05 a.m. The Fairway Hotel – they were all still happily rehearsing

What worked very well?

The collaboration of a fellow workshop leader, Joe Walters, a French Horn player who has also studied *tabla* in India recently, was a huge support. Joe not only helped coach some of the participants but also accompanied the ensemble by playing *lehra*, a time-keeping melody used in *tabla* solo and ensemble performances. Teaching musicians who are normally used to playing in the more conventional key signatures prevalent in Western music, this is invaluable in developing a 'feel' for Teen tal, a sixteen beat rhythmic framework that the performance was set to.



Yogesh Dattani
(left) with
Joe Walters
(right).
Joe assisted
Yogesh in tabla
workshops

What I would like to do more of in Trinidad & Tobago 2009



In a word make Indian music available to all. What I mean by this is that, in my view, and this has been the golden thread throughout my career in music education, is that everyone should be able to access Indian music at many different levels. For example, in a restaurant some people may wish to have a 7-course meal with all the trimmings whereas, on the

other hand, others may wish simply to have a cup of tea. In my view Indian music should be the same and made available to not only those that want to become a master sitar or tabla player but also those that wish to incorporate aspects of Indian music into the study of whatever instrument they play.



In 2009 I would dearly love to share my expertise not only with all participants of 'The Commonwealth Resounds!' in Trinidad & Tobago but also with the Trinibagonians themselves. This indeed will require a lot of thinking, hard work and planning but is something that will pay off and I certainly love to be a part of this ongoing development of musical ideas and initiatives.



Tabla in transit!

Yogesh Dattani

Group Leader – The Tabla Project

THE COMMONWEALTH RESOUNDS!



**Documentation by Yogesh Dattani and Alison Cox
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