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The Use of *Solkattu* as a Primary Method of Rhythm Instruction for Drummers

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Abstract

With the introduction of new pedagogies and modifications of time-tested pedagogies to suit present-day musical requirements, the avenues towards rhythm instruction are endless. As a percussionist and drummer trained in both Western and Indian systems, the author has experienced the flexibility and ease of rhythm *internalization*, *retention* and subsequently, *execution* that a 'dual-system' or 'synthesized' pedagogy can enhance. The research is a product of the author's desires to promulgate the possibilities surrounding the improvement of rhythmic instruction through the adoption of a pedagogy that integrates Western and Indian methods.

The research aims to explore the viewing of rhythm syllables as a lens, through which the design of a hybrid pedagogy synthesizing rhythm instruction approaches from Western and Indian musical practices for drummers, can be conceptualized. It also proposes the adoption of the *Solkattu* rhythm syllables as a key method of instruction for drummers. The processes involved in this research highlight ways in which a recontextualization of elements from a historically rich system into a relatively novel and culturally contrasting system can take place. It also has the potential to stand as a forerunner to a much more elaborate model of learning, which can be adopted by music educators or individuals pursuing parallel research journeys.

The research process involves an initial literature review on the practice of *Solkattu*, as well as the use of rhythm syllables as is seen in more commonly adopted pedagogies of the West. The gaps within the Western approaches are then surfaced, and an attempt to address them from the viewpoint of an Indian practice is made. Expert opinions, as well as the author's personal experience, are factored into an analysis of the gaps and subsequent crafting of the lens through which rhythm pedagogy can be re-imagined.

The research findings shed light on the differences in versatility, arguing that the *Solkattu*, *Takadimi* and Gordon systems are more versatile, therefore having the potential to i) address a wider range of rhythmic concepts and ii) troubleshoot problems of varying degrees more easily. However, even within these systems, the *Solkattu* system still stands out as the most flexible. This can be attributed to its ability to extend beyond being merely a system of syllables associated with beat subdivisions.

With the discussion of findings, it is hoped that this research will provide educators and musicians alike with new perspectives from which rhythm instruction for drummers can be approached.