

Teaching Tabla in the Classroom: the process of transadaptation in creating a new teaching and notation system

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Abstract

This article examines the cultural and pedagogical issues involved with a practice-based research project developing a series of teaching books and a notation system for teaching the Indian tabla drums in schools in the UK. The project worked with both classical Indian musicians and teachers, and Western percussionists and teachers, to create an approach that respected the original musical and teaching context, whilst also adapting it to be suitable for teaching in schools. The issues of adapting traditions, problems with 'authenticity', and finding new ways to teach music from other cultures are explored through the term 'transadaptation' to question how to 'translate' practices and traditions in a sensitive way to make them accessible in the new context.

Keywords: Tabla; notation; teaching books; Indian music

Changes to the National Curriculum for teaching music in schools, reflecting shifts in government policy towards a more inclusive education, have resulted in music teachers being encouraged to expand the musical cultures and instruments introduced to students across primary and secondary levels. This includes the teaching of aspects of 'World Music', and forms, styles, and approaches from different musical cultures and traditions which also reflects the changing nature of Britain. As Sarah Hennessy explains in relation to this shift in the National Curriculum,

Broadening the repertoire would also serve to reflect a multicultural or pluralist view of education which would do several things: reflect the increasingly multi-ethnic population of the UK, combat racism and reflect the music in society as a whole, in which 'world' music has established a significant presence.
(Henessey, 2005: p. 218)

The idea that a broadening of musical knowledge would connect to a more inclusive and tolerant society may be seen as having validity, and can challenge the dominance of Western classical music as the default dominant form taught in schools and music colleges. However, the attempt to introduce these 'other' forms into classrooms can also be fraught with questions and tensions for teachers, and raise problematic issues of authenticity, expertise, accessibility, and appropriation that can hinder the practice of a wider range of forms being integrated into the curriculum in a meaningful way.

This article will examine these issues through discussion of a project which developed a new series of books and a notation system aimed at teaching the tabla

drums in schools in order to make the drums more accessible and usable in a classroom setting. The project raised important questions about teaching music from 'other' cultures, as well as contestations relating to the adaptation of 'traditional' teaching methods and approaches to the music and the instrument. These questions will be explored through theories from performance and cultural studies to suggest that the 'transadaptation' of forms can be helpful for creating greater knowledge and practice of musical forms and instruments, whilst also acknowledging the potential limitations and conflicts that may arise. The article will focus on two aspects of the project, examining the changes in approach to the teaching tradition, and the development of a new notation system, to explore the complex cultural and pedagogical issues and contestations that arose in the process of creating the new system of teaching and writing the books.

The project began as a collaboration between South Asian musician Kuljit Bhamra and myself. Bhamra is a renowned performer, composer, and producer, working across Indian and Western forms of music, and performing in a range of contexts including classical and jazz concerts, as well as music for theatre and film. My background has been in a range of performance forms including South Asian music and dance. Although I now work in a University Drama Department, my research and teaching move across theatre, music, and dance, and examines issues involved with performance across different cultures, with a particular focus on the performance and cultures of the British South Asian communities. Bhamra and I have collaborated on two previous research projects over the past ten years, and began working on the tabla project in 2013.

The incentive for the project came from Bhamra's experience in performing, composing, and teaching the tabla drums. These two-piece drums are a foundation instrument in much South Asian music, particularly in North Indiaⁱⁱ, and travelled to Britain along with successive patterns of migration since the 1950s, where they have been taught using traditional methods in South Asian community contexts. Bhamra was one of the few tabla players who worked across musical genres performing with Westernⁱⁱⁱ musicians, and this led to his invitation to perform as part of the orchestra for the musical *Bombay Dreams*, produced by Andrew Lloyd Webber, which opened in London in 2002. The show required two South Asian percussionists to be visible on stage during the performances, and Bhamra realised that he needed to find a way to write down the music for the percussionists for when they were replaced due to sickness and holiday. This needed to be included as part of the orchestral score, and this necessitated Bhamra developing a new way to do this, as traditionally the music would be passed on orally rather than being written down, and so began to create an accurate form of notation that could be used as part of the score. He continued to develop his new approach to notation following this, including a residency in Dartington College of Arts working with musicians across musical traditions, and began to teach the notation to students at the Sound and Music Summer School, run by Sound and Music at the Purcell School, leading to compositions for tabla and other instruments written by young composers, thus creating a new repertoire for the instrument which had not been possible before.

Bhamra was also invited to lead workshops in schools across all levels to introduce students to the tabla and Indian music. He explains that this was because teachers needed to include music from other cultures due to the National Curriculum, and also

wanted to broaden the knowledge and experience of their students as Hennessy notes above. As they had no experience of the instrument or Indian music themselves, they wanted to bring in an 'expert' to introduce the tabla to students. He often found that schools had bought sets of tabla as part of this expansion of music cultures, however as no-one had been able to teach them, they were kept in a cupboard, or had been damaged by students not knowing that they must not hit the black circular paste discs (*syahi*) on the drum skins with a stick as this destroys them. Teachers were nervous about playing them as they did not know how to tune or handle the drums, nor how to play the basic strokes and teach the *taals* (rhythmic patterns that are basic to Indian music), so the drums remained unused. The teachers also expressed a concern about wanting to respect cultural sensitivity and authenticity of the culture, music, and instrument, and so did not want to play or teach it without knowing how to approach this 'correctly'. (Bhamra, 2014).

In addition to schools, Bhamra was also approached by a number of Western classical orchestral percussionists who wanted to learn to play the tabla to add it to their repertoire of percussion instruments, but felt it was not possible for them to do this through the traditional Indian form of teaching known as the *guru-shishya parampara*, or *guru-student* system. In this tradition, students become very closely affiliated to a particular teacher (*guru* or *ustad*) and devote themselves to the teacher and their lineage. The relationship is one of devotion, and the student may spend many years working with their teacher, learning through observation and repetition of the strokes of the drums, and speaking the *bols* or sounds in order to help memorise the patterns. In this way, teaching is done through transmission and a form of spiritual connection and commitment, and the student becomes associated with a particular *gharana* 'house' style and lineage. Learning the instrument is only one aspect of this relationship and teaching process, 'as the student must also develop themselves as a person, show respect to the *guru*, understand the spiritual aspects inherent in the music, and follow prescribed forms of behaviour' (Daboo, 2018: p. 179). Music teachers and orchestral percussionists in the UK expressed to Bhamra that this form of teaching tradition is generally not practical or appropriate for them or their students, and so this limited their access to teaching and playing the tabla as they were uncertain about how to learn and perform on the instrument without following the traditional system. In order to address this, Bhamra decided to develop a new teaching system and set of books using his notation aimed at both schools and professional musicians to enable greater access to playing and teaching the drums. This was not to replace the traditional system, but rather offer an alternative to make it possible for the drums to be more widely taught and played than would be the case if the only access to them was through the *guru-shishya parampara*.



FIGURE 1 – Kuljit Bhamra playing the tabla. Photograph by Jerri Daboo.

Project structure and methodology

Based on our previous collaborations on research projects involving performance and culture in the British South Asian communities, Bhamra invited me to become part of this development. I approached this by creating a practice-based research project with Bhamra to explore the cultural and pedagogical issues which would feed into the writing of the teaching books. In addition to the books and notation system, a related third aspect to the project was the development of a prototype for an electronic version of the tabla. This was created in association with industrial designers Graham England and Phil Eddershaw from Rogue Product, and funded initially by a grant from the Research and Enterprise in Arts and Creative Technology (REACT) awarded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which supported projects between academic, creative artist, and industrial partners. The original intention was to create an electronic version that could be used in schools to be more flexible and durable than the tabla drums, but also replicate the experience of playing so that a student could then transfer to the actual drums. As the new instrument had midi connectivity, it could be linked to a digital notation software programme through a computer which would enable a greater range of possibilities for playing and composition. Bhamra's tabla notation system was based originally in Sibelius, and therefore could be used in this way. After further development of the system, it is now part of Dorico, which is Steinberg's musical notation software, built by Daniel Spreadbury who had been part of the original team that designed Sibelius. As the notation system is also used in the teaching books, the three parts of the project (electronic tabla, teaching books, and notation system) were all interconnected and emerged together as part of the research. Bhamra, England, and Eddershaw formed the company Keda Music Ltd that produced and published the three teaching books, which are now selling globally, as well as the website which contains accompanying videos and further information (keda.co.uk). This article will focus on the two aspects of the teaching books and notation system, as the prototype is still in development with the intention of it going to market next year.

As a practice-based project, the methodology involved co-creation with the project team based in a combination of research and practical exploration. My involvement added a layer of academic research into the cultural and pedagogical issues that have fed into the development of the teaching books, as in turn has enhanced my research and knowledge on areas that I have been researching for fifteen years through the practical nature of the project. As well as studying the histories and practices of teaching the tabla, and the cultural issues involved, I also researched the teaching of non-Western musical forms in schools more widely, and linked this to my work on decolonising the curriculum and teaching non-Western forms of training and practice in theatre and dance. As well as working with the project team, I conducted a number of focus groups with classical Indian tabla players and teachers, Western classical orchestral percussionists, and music teachers, in order to explore the cultural and pedagogical issues associated with the project, and to help develop the teaching books in a way that would be useful and respectful to the various groups and stakeholders. Once the first version of the books was produced, the project conducted a series of workshops with teachers across the country, and a focused year-long research into the use of the books in two music hub services in Portsmouth and Birmingham. This meant we were able to work with the South Asian communities in Birmingham, and the more diverse communities in Portsmouth, with feedback from these groups leading to further development of the books. Thus the research took an iterative approach to test the use of the books, and also to further explore the cultural and pedagogical issues raised by teachers, performers, and members of the different communities that were engaged with the project.

‘Authenticity’ and cultural contestations

The teaching of a form of music or instrument from a different culture in schools in the UK prompts questions about cultural appropriation, authenticity in teaching and playing, and sensitivity towards the relevant communities, as well as religious and ethical considerations connected to the music and culture. Palmer acknowledges some of these questions in relation to the teaching of forms of ‘World Music’ in the classroom:

When a music is transferred out of its original culture, it loses some of its essential qualities. All teachers of world musics, even those highly experienced, are confronted with matters of authenticity and compromise. That compromise may be inevitable is not at issue. The primary question is to what degree compromise is acceptable before the essence of a music is lost and no longer representative of the tradition under study. (Palmer, 1992: 32)

If applied to teaching the tabla, the question is how far to compromise the ‘original culture’ in the teaching and playing of the instrument in order to make it accessible in schools. Based on her work in teaching the Japanese taiko drums in schools and community contexts, Hennessy suggests the following three aspects are necessary in order to introduce a new tradition of music and instrument:

1. Expertise exhibited through high-quality performance practice. This not only becomes the showcase or shop window for attracting interest but also the model which exemplifies the musical practice and generates the expectations and the aspirations of potential participants and learners.
2. A sound and effective pedagogy for teaching principles, techniques and appreciation.
3. The best possible resources in order to give the player the best possible reward, both aurally and physically.’ (Hennessy, 2005: 221)

Our project was similarly aiming to fulfil these three points by being based in the expertise of Bhamra and other tabla players; creating an effective pedagogical approach to teaching the instrument; and producing resources in the form of the teaching books which not only provide the skills in playing the instrument, but also new musical compositions to allow for solo and ensemble playing to offer ‘reward’ and enjoyment to the performer. This approach requires a level of ‘compromise’ discussed by Palmer as it is removed from the *guru-shishya parampara* tradition to adapt it for teaching in schools in the UK. Other practitioners and teachers have been less willing to compromise the tradition, and instead taken what could be labelled as an ‘ethnomusicological’ approach to learning and teaching the tabla and other non-Western instruments. Denise Nuttall travelled to India and studied the tabla in Mumbai, following which she taught tabla to her students in Ithaca College in the United States. She decided to attempt to recreate the experience of learning and playing in India as much as possible in order to see if her students could embody aspects of Indian culture through learning in the original tradition:

My intent in teaching tabla through what could be considered a “performative ethnographic” approach is not to produce percussionists who will go on to create their careers in Hindustani music (although they could if they continued their training) but rather to allow for an anthropological space of engagement with an Indian way of knowing and doing. Performing ethnographically in this case, though it demands a sustained commitment by the learner for a four-month period or one full semester, often leads to an embodiment of another cultural way of learning and skill acquisition, which in my class culminates in a performance given for a larger academic audience or within the Ithacan community. (Nuttall, 2018: 432)

She makes her students sit barefoot and cross-legged in front of the tabla, and learn to play through transmission rather than notation. Through this, she claims that ‘the performing ethnographer or student of tabla learns to embody a new musical system, they simultaneously learn to embody cultural and spiritual knowledge in addition to that of the expert skills required as a performer of North Indian classical music.’ (Nuttall, 2018: 434). I would suggest there are problems with this assumption, and that imitating select aspects of the training from India can lead rather to an exoticisation of the instrument and culture, rather than an embodiment or deeper understanding as she implies. In many ways, this kind of approach in teaching students for a short amount of time in order to have some form of connection to the original cultural context fits closer to what Juliet Hess identifies as the ‘Musician-As-Explorer’ model (Hess, 2015: 340). Drawing on Chandra Mohanty’s three stage model of the introduction of women’s studies into the Western curriculum, Hess adapts this to the teaching of non-Western music in the classroom in Canada,

suggesting that the dominance of Western music in the curriculum acts as a coloniser and reinforces hegemonic power structures in the ways that non-Western music is taught. The first of the three models is the 'Musician-as-Tourist', where forms of 'World music' are taught as 'add-ons' to the 'normal' curriculum, in which for example there is one class on African music, one on Latin American, and so on. This 'touristic' approach to music 'would most likely simply be presented as a "fun" activity. Students would be thrilled with their "taste of the exotic," as would their parents at the obligatory end-of-term concert. There would be no attempt to integrate this unit with the rest of the curriculum or open up discussions or comparisons' (Hess, 2015: 339). The 'Musician-As-Explorer' model is an extension of this, which

may go deeper contextually into so-called "other" musics, but its exclusion of the Western classical "home" music normalizes it and reinforces dominant power relations [... The music] is generally removed from the present context. While this model may touch on musics that relate to genres that are relevant to and popular with the students, connections are not drawn either between genres and movements of music or to the students' present realities, musical and otherwise. (Hess, 2015: 340)

In other words, this approach continues the power structures by reinforcing the 'otherness' and exoticising the 'other' through the brief attempt to imitate the way that it is practised. Whilst this may be done with the intention of providing students with an appropriate knowledge of the original cultural context, to suggest that they can then connect to and embody this context through the playing, or have a greater understanding of the complex philosophy behind it, becomes problematic. As Farrell states,

Although description and analysis in ethnomusicology has contributed enormously to our knowledge of the structure of diverse musics and their cultural context, the process of utilizing such knowledge in the field of music education remains a complex and problematic area. [...] How far does the understanding of any music rely upon a knowledge of its cultural background? [...] T] there remains a gap between the philosophy of intercultural or transcultural music education and the practical strategies intended to implement such concepts. (Farrell, 1993/4: 165)

This raises the contentious issue of 'authenticity', and the concern that some teachers may have to offer an experience to students which is 'authentic' to its cultural origins. However, it is important to question this idea of a singular, inherent 'authenticity' associated with playing the tabla, and to instead appreciate that there are many different approaches to teaching and playing the drums, and these have evolved and changed over time, and even the drums themselves have adapted in their form and structure, therefore which of these approaches can justifiably be labelled as 'authentic'? As Tess Buckland states in relation to forms of traditional dance, authenticity is 'more often than not, a speculation' (Buckland, 2001: 2). The notion of authenticity can itself be another means to exoticise and maintain a musical form and instrument as 'other' through having a fixed sense of a singular 'authentic' approach. Classically-trained Indian players and teachers may well talk of there being an 'authentic' method based in their particular experience, but as these will

differ across teachers and *gharanas* or schools, the idea of 'authenticity' when transferred to a Western classroom becomes much more ambiguous.

Transadaptation and the Development of the Teaching Books

In order to address the issue of compromise that Palmer suggests is necessary in to teach tabla in the classroom, and avoid a 'Musician-As-Explorer' approach that could further exoticise and 'other' the instrument, the project developed the new teaching books using the notation system in a process for which I use the term 'transadaptation'. This term originated in translation studies, and subsequently used in cultural and media studies to describe a process of adaptation and translation of a text or practice into a new context. This translation is not only one of verbal or written language, but also translating and adapting cultural references to make the new version accessible for the target audience (Gambier, 2003: 178). 'Transadaptation' has been used to examine films which have been adapted from a primary source that have been transferred to a new physical or cultural location, and require shifts in cultural references and symbols as well as language. Applying this idea to the tabla project, I suggest that we were attempting a similar process of transadaptation by translating and adapting the approach to teaching and playing the tabla in India to be suitable and useful to the target audience of schools and musicians in the UK. This process can still respect the original cultural context, and acknowledge this as part of the teaching, but also accepts that the new context is different. In this way, the act of transadaptation, or 'compromise' to use Palmer's term, is not only necessary but also appropriate as an alternative to the classical Indian tradition. Instead of imitating aspects of 'how it would be taught in India', or to maintain a spiritual component that is not necessarily relevant to the new context, the tabla is taught as an instrument in its own right, based in the musical tradition of India, but located in the new cultural situation of the UK.

The histories of imperialism and colonisation that connect Britain and India may account for some of the complexities of teaching Indian music in the UK in contrast to music from other cultures. The same issues do not seem to apply to the use of forms such as samba, and instruments including bongos or congas, or even gamelan or taiko (Hennessy, 2005: 219). For Hennessy, the process of teaching taiko in the classroom is also one of transadaptation, acknowledging the need to adjust teaching methods that requires careful understanding of both contexts:

A fine balance is needed between creating a diluted 'school' taiko style, and an evolved 'English' interpretation of taiko which does not seek merely to replicate Japanese playing styles. Concerns about superficiality and tokenism are placed against the evident accessibility, intense engagement and enjoyment which such music making engenders in people of all ages.' (Hennessy, 2005: 217)

This 'fine balance' was one we sought to embed in the teaching books through holding focus groups with both Indian tabla players and teachers, and Western percussionists and music teachers. The discussion in these groups centred around the transadaptation of the teaching and notation system, and the changes from the *guru-shishya parampara* to a method that could be utilised by teachers who had not been trained in Indian music and culture. Some of the Indian tabla players felt that

the depth of connection and learning when working with a *guru* could not be found in a different approach, and should not be separated from the process of learning the instrument: 'To learn tabla initially is something that is not taking up an instrument and learning it. There's a whole system behind it where there's a way of respecting one another, respecting the instrument, respecting the tradition' (Focus Group, December 2015). In other words, he believed that learning the drums could not be separated from the cultural experience and context that is more than learning the music, but also developing the person on a spiritual level. The Western teachers and percussionists, while respecting this approach, also expressed that this tradition is problematic in the context of the UK where this type of devotion to a teacher is not seen as a common practice, and also not widely available. This raises the question about whether the music and instrument ought to be separated from its cultural and religious context. The Indian tabla players and teachers we worked with were mainly from the Punjabi Sikh communities, for whom the music has an interconnected aspect of spiritual development, and needs to be taught and understood in this context. Therefore to place it in a more secular teaching arena and method could be perceived to be sacrilegious and offensive, so this is potentially a reason that Western teachers have been reluctant to teach this themselves in the classroom, and instead relied on musicians such as Bhamra to conduct workshops with students, resulting in the 'Musician-As-Tourist' model discussed earlier. The challenge for the project was to create the teaching books in a way that was both accessible to the teachers in schools for them to be able to engage meaningfully in teaching the instrument, whilst also respecting the original Indian context, through the process of transadaptation.

The use of a notation system to learn and play the instrument also caused consternation amongst the Indian tabla players, as the music is taught orally through a process of transmission in the *guru-shishya parampara*. This is a long-term process that leads to a great depth of embodiment of the music, and trains an exceptional level of memory in the musician. One tabla player in our focus group felt that the notes on a page could not capture the essence of the music, and so was a betrayal of the tradition. After much discussion with the Western musicians, it was acknowledged that this was partly due to an unfamiliarity of the tabla players when faced with reading a notation system, as much for the Western performers in learning through the sounds of the *bhols*. The tabla player who expressed doubts was astonished when he saw musicians who had never played the tabla being able to perform a *taal* through reading the notation in a few minutes, where it would have taken many months to learn this with a *guru* through working on one sound a time. However, we agreed that there are strengths in each approach. The *guru* system can result in a depth of learning and playing that leads to a musician of great skill and expertise in performing Indian music as a soloist or accompanist. The teaching books are not able to do this, but nor are they intended to. Instead, they offer a means to being able to learn and play the drums in a range of contexts, enabling it to become part of the pantheon of percussion instruments available in the classroom and orchestras. The notation allows for new music to be written for the tabla, creating possibilities for performing the instrument, and a lasting repertoire of music outside the Indian context. Whilst this does not resolve all the cultural issues, it acknowledges them, and the process of transadaptation that enables the tabla to be taught in the classroom. As Farrell notes:

It was also evident from the research that a certain amount of confusion existed as regards teaching methodology, notation, and other pedagogical issues around Indian music in the context of the British education system. There appeared to be little agreement on what exactly was being taught, how to approach the teaching material, or how this level of music teaching functioned within the field of general music education. Indian music teachers were basically left "to do their own thing" seemingly in the unspoken assumption that, because this was primarily a cultural gesture rather than an integrated dimension of music education, things would find their own level and somehow work out.' (Farrell, 1993/4: 167)

Drawing on Bhamra's extensive experience of both Indian and Western music and teaching meant that the notation system and teaching books were created in a way that could establish a bridge between the cultural contexts. For example, as well as including the notation symbol for each drum-stroke, we chose to also include the relevant *bhol* or spoken sound associated with the stroke, so students could learn this in both systems. The notation system was created originally in Sibelius using the two-stave programme for bongos. Bhamra adapted this by carefully assigning a series of different symbols to represent each of the complex set of open and closed sounds for the drums, both individually and combined. When this was transferred to Dorico, a special Indian percussion clef was designed by Satpaul Bhamra that draws visually upon the look of the two heads of the tabla with the black discs, which is also found in other forms of South Asian percussion instruments, and has been used in a subsequent set of teaching books produced by Keda Music for the dhol drums.

We looked through many teaching books for percussion instruments such as the congas to examine how they set out a teaching method, and held discussions with both Indian tabla players and Western musicians to establish the best way to set out the books so they built on the techniques of learning the drums in the most helpful way for teachers and performers to learn. The first book explains the cultural context and origin of the drums, and some exploration of aspects of Indian music and the ways that it is taught in India. It then offers diagrams for different options of sitting or standing with the instrument, which can include being cross-legged on the floor, but not limited to this. Subsequently, the book moves through the basic strokes and sounds on each drum, offering diagrams of the hand position, and related notation, with a piece for practice of these sounds. The related website offers videos and recordings of the strokes in order to offer additional support.

Large Drum Open Sound **Ge**

In this book, we will cover two types of open sounds on the large drum. The first of these is called **Ge** and is a lightly muted open sound. **Ge** is pronounced like the first part of the word get.

Follow these steps to play **Ge**:

- Adopt the **resting position**.
- Raise your fingers by flexing your wrist and arc your hand as if holding an invisible tennis ball above the black spot.
- Bring your arched hand downwards so that the tip of your middle finger strikes the drum on the skin above the black spot. Allow your finger to bounce off naturally.
- Immediately roll your heel off the drumhead by rotating your wrist away from you. This enables the drum to resonate.

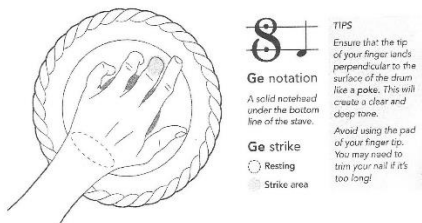


FIGURE 2 Example from Book 1, introducing the stroke for sound of **ge**, along with the tabla clef and notation symbol. (Bhamra, 2017: 18)

A unique feature of the books is a series of specially-composed ensemble pieces designed to be used in the classroom that include the tabla along with other instruments that are readily found in schools, such as the tambourine, glockenspiel, and recorder. This enables the tabla to become an integrated part of an ensemble of other instruments, and offers teachers a way into considering how to write a tabla part into their ensemble arrangements, so that the drum becomes another instrument in the classroom, rather than remaining as 'other'.

Group Piece 4

Kuljit Bhamra

♩ = 120

FIGURE 3 Page from Book 1 showing an example of an ensemble piece including the tabla part. (Bhamra, 2017: 60)

It is made very clear in the books that this is an alternate approach to the *guru-shishya parampara*, and that students can choose to learn through that tradition should they want to. Interestingly, in the workshops with teachers in Birmingham in 2018, the Director for World Music and Percussion at Services for Education, Harjit Singh, was keen on teachers using the books because he felt that the younger generation of South Asians would respond better to the books than the *guru* system, and therefore be more likely to want to learn the tabla rather than Western instruments. The students' parents were concerned that they would lose contact with their musical heritage, and therefore if the books were the means to keep them connected to this, it was acceptable. Despite this, there were several other Indian teachers who also objected to the books and notation system, insisting that the *guru* system was the only appropriate way to learn. Whilst respecting this view, it does also limit the ability of the tabla to be taught and played more widely. When the books were launched at the Music and Drama in Education Expo in London in 2017, teachers who took part in a workshop using the books stated in written feedback that they felt very positively towards feeling able to teach the tabla using the teaching system:

“[At my school, the sets of tabla drums] are all sitting around looking enticing, but nobody knows how to play them”; “[My school students] already get their fair share of Western music so it'd be nice to broaden their experience.”; “I never knew there was a method for learning it”. “[The books are an] excellent resource! Will be using in future.”; “Looks really accessible and very helpful.”; “Yes. The notation system is clear and would be useful for upper KS2 pupils. The combination of instruments is comprised of those which are accessible.” (Questionnaire responses, 9 February 2017)

This demonstrates that the approach to learning and playing the instrument in this way can overcome the hesitation teachers have in being able to teach the tabla because they see it as being too difficult or shrouded in mystery due to cultural issues. Bhamra explains that his mission is to ‘demystify’ Indian music, by which he means to make it accessible as a form of music, rather than ‘exotic’ or ‘other’:

My main aim is to demystify the tabla, because although it looks difficult, I think it looks more ‘foreign’ than it is actually ‘difficult’ in comparison to learning some Western instruments. (Bhamra, 2014)

The teaching books and notation system are intended to help music teachers in schools see the tabla as being an instrument that they are able to teach, and to incorporate in their classroom context and ensemble as much as they would any other instrument. Based on requests from teachers, Keda Music has now also produced a similar teaching book for the Indian dhol drum, which uses the tabla books as a template to create a similar system of teaching and notation in the series ‘Read & Play Indian Drums’ (<http://keda.co.uk/products/tuition-books/>). The cultural issues involved are still present and complex, however the process of transadaptation or ‘compromise’ means that this can create an open discussion about these issues with respect, rather than the instrument and music remaining ‘other’, invisible, unheard, and unlearnt in a wider context. This perhaps relates to Hennessy’s suggestion at the beginning that in this way, music can create and

reflect a multicultural society where performing together leads to an ensemble of different voices and cultures, distinct and yet in harmony.

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NOTES

ⁱ I have placed the term 'World Music' in quotation marks to acknowledge the problems with this term as making all non-Western music into an essentialised 'other', thereby maintaining Western music as

the 'norm' or dominant. This also applies to terms such as 'World Dance', 'World Food', 'World Culture' etc.

ii There are two main forms of music in India, North Indian or Hindustani, and South Indian or Carnatic. Each system has its own set of *ragas* and *taals*. For the project, we focused on the North Indian system of *taals* and *bols* for the tabla, whilst acknowledging in the books that the South Indian forms are different.

iii I am using the term 'Western' in this context whilst acknowledging the problems with this term as both essentialising and creating a duality of 'Western' and 'Eastern'.