

# Influence of Percussion Musical Instrumentation in Vocal Music Enjoyment

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**Abstract**— This study is to find out the level of influence of each percussion musical instrumentation in the enjoyment of vocal music, when comparing with several percussion instrumentation. A Questionnaire survey has been conducted with 50 University Undergraduate music students. The western drum instrumentation gets the highest priority of enjoyment of the audience as the accompaniment for the vocal music. The least priority is given to the vocal music accompanied by only the western keyboard and without any percussion instrumentation. The percentages of the enjoyment levels with different accompanied percussion instrumentation were highly fluctuating from the beginning and throughout the questions up to the last question. This shows that the enjoyment of music is not a fixed phenomenon and it can be changed a lot according to the comparison of different instrumentation and situations. Anyhow, the final outcome of the research as per the results of the last question of the questionnaire shows that the western drum instrumentation gets the highest priority of enjoyment of the audience as the accompaniment for the vocal music. It leads to explain as, the simple performing of percussion instrumentation of tempo with simple and not complexed rhythms is more enjoyable and more supportive to the vocal music performances.

**Index Terms**— Eastern Music, Instrumental Music, Music Instrumentation, Percussion Instruments, Tamil Music, Vocal Music, Western Drumming.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Music is the global language. It is a mass communication media beyond the race, language, country and religion. The vocal Music, produced through the vocal chord is fully natural and while the instrumentation is produced with the help of external music instruments, but the feel of music comes through the instrumentalist is natural. Generally, the vocal music performance on the stage or in the recorded music album, composite of instrumental music as well.

The music instrumentation is classified in to four major categories as brass instruments, percussion instruments, stringed instruments, and woodwind instruments. [1] The brass instruments, stringed instruments, and woodwind instruments are tonal instruments and those are used to produce tones. Those give support to the pitch, note, tune, interval, sound, melody, and harmony. But, the percussion instruments are used to maintain the tempo and rhythm of the vocalization.

3rd century BC, in the Natya Shastra, a theoretical treatise on music and dramaturgy, by Bharata Muni, divides instruments into four main classification groups: instruments where the sound is produced by vibrating strings (*tata vadya*, "stretched instruments"); instruments where the sound is produced by vibrating columns of air (*susira vadya*, "hollow instruments"); percussion instruments made of wood or metal (*Ghana vadya*, "solid instruments"); and percussion instruments with skin heads, or drums (*avanaddha vadya*, "covered instruments"). [2]

A percussion instrument is a musical instrument that is sounded by being struck or scraped by a beater (including attached or enclosed beaters or rattles); struck, scraped or rubbed by hand; or struck against another similar instrument. The percussion family is believed to include the oldest musical instruments, following the human voice. [3]

Percussion instruments are most commonly divided into two classes: Pitched percussion instruments, which produce notes with an identifiable pitch, and unpitched percussion instruments, which produce notes or sounds without an identifiable pitch. [4]

This study is to find out the level of influence of each percussion musical instrumentation in the enjoyment of vocal music, when comparing with several percussion instrumentations.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire Survey Method is used to gather data from the respondents. 12 questions consist of 50 questionnaires has been distributed among randomly selected 50 students who are in their 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year Bachelor of Fine Arts (Music) of the Department of Music of the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. A new creative song line is composed by one of the

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An ancient system of Indian origin, dating from the 4th or

researchers of this article with the lyrics tune and vocalisation, and recorded in a pendrive as mp3. The pendrive is plugged in to good quality mp3 player and played among the respondents. The song with the western keyboard background and without any accompanying percussion instrumentation, played as the first recording. The second recording of vocal with western keyboard background music has been played with the tabla accompaniment. The subsequent recordings were played respectively with the accompaniments of Mruthangam, Thavil, and Drums along with the Vocal with western keyboard background music.

There are around 300 students learning South Indian Classical Music in 5 different streams Vocal Music, Violin Music, Veena Music, Mruthangam Music and Tamil Sacred Music in the department of music of the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. The all students have eight years of previous training in the South Indian Classical Music (Carnatic Music) Vocal, when they were learning in their 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> standards during their schooling. In addition, most of them have passed grade examinations in Carnatic Music Vocal; which is vary from grade 1 to 6, conducted by North Ceylon Oriental Music Society of Sri Lanka. The all 50 respondents returned their filled questionnaires during 13<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 to 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

The questionnaire consists of the following 12 multiple choice questions.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The research is purely based on the responds received from the questionnaire survey. Therefore, beginning discussion from the responses of questionnaire survey one by one is the correct way of research process.

3.1 Do you enjoy Carnatic Music, Cinema Music or any other Music every day?

92% of the respondents answered as YES for this general question. Motive of the question is to open up their mind before asking the specific questions and to identify the strength of the responds for the specific questions. In other word, to increase the validity of the responses, the above question is asked. 92% of the respondents enjoy music. Therefore, the answers for the following questions will be having high validity for this research.

3.2 Do you enjoy Carnatic Music, Cinema Music or any other Music at least once in a week?

100% respondents answered as YES and none of them answered as NO. This question is asked the data to be used as a supplement for the 1<sup>st</sup> question, if sufficient responses are not received for the 1<sup>st</sup> question only. But, for the 1<sup>st</sup> question, 92% respondents answered as YES. Therefore, the response for the 2<sup>nd</sup> question is validating the 1<sup>st</sup> answer.

3.3 What is your preferred accompanying instrumentation while enjoying a vocal music?

06% respondents prefer to enjoy vocal music accompanied by a tonal instrumentation and 10% respondents prefer to enjoy vocal music accompanied by a percussion instrumentation. 26% respondents prefer to enjoy the voice of the vocal music and 16% respondents prefer to enjoy meaning of the song lyrics. 30% respondents prefer to enjoy the tune of the vocal music. The motive of this question is to ensure that the audience answer all following questions genuinely.

3.4 What is your priority order of the percussion instrumentation to enjoy with vocal music?

66% respondents prefer to enjoy vocal music accompanied by a mruthangam instrumentation and 26% respondents prefer to enjoy vocal music accompanied by a tabla instrumentation. 02% respondents prefer to enjoy vocal music accompanied by a drum instrumentation and none of the respondents prefer to enjoy vocal music accompanied by a gatam instrumentation. 02% respondents prefer to enjoy vocal music accompanied by a dholak instrumentation and 04% respondents prefer to enjoy vocal music accompanied by a thavil instrumentation. None of the respondents prefer to enjoy vocal music accompanied by a conga-drum, udukkai or paRai instrumentation. The motive of this question is also to verify the validity of their responses to the following questions.

The following questions are based on the vocal music the respondents enjoy through the mp3 player without and with various accompanied percussion instrumentations.

3.5 The first recording has been played, only with the vocal with western keyboard background music.

3.5.1. Is the tune of the song familiar to you?

24% respondents answered as yes and the 76% of them answered as no. The motive of this question is to warmup the respondents' listening skills.

3.5.2. Do you enjoy the song?

90% respondents answered as yes and the 10% of them answered as no. The motive of this question is to warmup the respondents' listening skills.

3.5.3. Do you think, the song will be more enjoyable, if it is accompanied by percussion instrumentation?

86% respondents answered as yes and the 14% of them answered as no. The motive of this question is to findout whether the respondents prefer to enjoy the vocal music with or without the percussion accompaniment.

3.6 Is the lyrics familiar to you?

06% respondents answered as yes and the 94% of them answered as no. The motive of this question is to warmup the respondents' listening skills.

3.7. The second recording has been played, with the vocal with western keyboard background music, accompanied by tabla instrumentation.

3.7.1. Do you feel that the first recording or the second is more enjoyable?

This question is the backbone is this research. The answers of the respondents clearly show the reality of the music enjoyment of audience. 04% respondents answered as first and the 96% of them answered as second. The vocal accompanied by the tabla instrumentation gets the highest priority of audience. The percussion instruments generally don't disturb the vocal and the pronunciations, thus the accompaniments of percussion instruments get the priority of the audience.

The tonal instruments are usually played along with the vocal, repeating the vocal and mostly this type of instruments is used to follow the vocal. Therefore, there are higher possibilities to interfere, distort or distract the clarity of the vocal, pronunciation and the meaning of the lyrics. These can be the reasons for the least priority is given to the tonal instruments by the audience. [5]

3.7.2. What would be the accompanying instrumentation in the second recording?

94% respondents answered correctly as tabla and 06% of them answered as mruthangam. The motive of the question is to warmup the respondents in between the true questions for the research.

3.7.3. Do you prefer to enjoy the first recording or the second?

04% respondents answered as first, 92% of them answered as second and aother 04% of them answered as neither first or second.

3.8. The third recording has been played, with the vocal with western keyboard background music accompanied by mruthangam instrumentation.

3.8.1. Do you feel that the first recording, the second or the third is more enjoyable?

02% respondents answered as first, 50% of them answered as second and 48% of them answered as third.

3.8.2. What would be the accompanying instrumentation in the third recording?

80% respondents answered correctly as mruthangam, 08% of them answered as tabla, 04% of them answered as drums and 08% of them answered as thavil. The motive of the

question is to warmup the respondents in between the true questions for the research.

3.8.3. Do you prefer to enjoy the first recording, the second or the third?

02% respondents answered as first, 40% of them answered as second and 58% of them answered as third.

3.9. The fourth recording has been played, with the vocal with western keyboard background music accompanied by thavil instrumentation.

3.9.1. Do you feel that the first recording, the second, the third or the fourth is more enjoyable?

04% respondents answered as first, 32% of them answered as second, 30% of them answered as third and 34% of them answered as fourth.

3.9.2. What would be the accompanying instrumentation in the fourth recording?

86% respondents answered correctly as thavil, 12% of them answered as tabla, and 02% of them answered as drums. The motive of the question is to warmup the respondents in between the true questions for the research.

3.9.3. Do you prefer to enjoy the first recording, the second, third or the fourth?

02% respondents answered as first, 34% of them answered as second, 36% of them answered as third and 10% of them answered as fourth.

3.10. The fifth recording has been played, with the vocal with western keyboard background music accompanied by western drum instrumentation.

3.10.1. Do you feel that the first recording, the second, the third, the fourth or the fifth is more enjoyable?

02% respondents answered as first, 32% of them answered as second, 20% of them answered as third, 10% of them answered as fourth and the 36% of them answered as the fifth.

3.10.2. What would be the accompanying instrumentation in the fifth recording?

90% respondents answered correctly as western drum, 08% of them answered as tabla, and 02% of them answered as mruthangam. The motive of the question is to warmup the respondents in between the true questions for the research.

3.10.3. Do you prefer to enjoy the first recording, the second, the third, the fourth or the fifth?

None of the respondents answered as first, 36% of them answered as second, 26% of them answered as third, 08% of them answered as fourth and 30% of them answered as the fifth.

3.11. Whether the vocal music played on the above five recordings are the same or different?

94% of the respondents answered as they are the same, 06% them answered as they are different and 06% of them answered as they are not sure. The motive of the question is to warmup the respondents in between the true questions for the research.

3.12. Whether the western keyboard music played on the above five recordings are the same or different?

78% of the respondents answered as they are the same, 06% them answered as they are different and 16% of them answered as they are not sure. The motive of the question is to warmup the respondents in between the true questions for the research.

## 4 CONCLUSION

This research has found the level of influence of the percussion instrumentation in vocal music enjoyment, which are used in the Music in the Tamil Audience's purview, taken by a Questionnaire survey from randomly selected 50 students, who are in 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year Bachelor of Fine Arts (Music) from the Department of Music, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

Finding out the level of influence of the percussion instrumentation in vocal music enjoyment in the South Indian Classical and Cinema Music in the Audience's purview can be obviously show the music directors that which percussion musical instruments can be used and which can be avoided to minimize the cost and in the same time increasing the productivity and appreciation. It will help the audience to get more efficient music productions and in also will help the music directors to increase sales. It will also cause too lift-up their popularity among the audience.

The answers of the respondents clearly show the reality of the music enjoyment of audience. The western drum instrumentation gets the highest priority of enjoyment of the audience as the accompaniment for the vocal music as 36%. The least priority is given to the vocal music accompanied by only the western keyboard and without any percussion instrumentation as 0%.

The mruthangam instrumentation gets the second priority of enjoyment of the audience as the accompaniment for the vocal music as 30%. The tabla instrumentation gets the third priority of enjoyment of the audience as

the accompaniment for the vocal music as 26%. The gamam instrumentation gets the fourth priority of enjoyment of the audience as the accompaniment for the vocal music as 08%.

The percentages of the enjoyment levels with different accompanied percussion instrumentation were highly fluctuating from the beginning and throughout the questions up to the last question. This shows that the enjoyment of music is not a fixed phenomena and it can be changed a lot according to the comparison of different instrumentations and situations.

Anyhow, the final outcome of the research as per the results of the last question of the questionnaire shows that the western drum instrumentation gets the highest priority of enjoyment of the audience as the accompaniment for the vocal music. It leads to explain as, the simple performing of percussion instrumentation of tempo with simple and not complexed rhythms is more enjoyable and more supportive to the vocal music performances.

The research finding is limited to South Indian Music and to the Tamil speaking respondents. There are high possibilities for this research finding with based on the purview of the audience who are educated with music already. This finding might not be fit to the music enjoyment of the layman audience in music. Also, the research finding is limited to the purview of the Tamil audience who live in Sri Lanka.

Further research can be extended or replicated with different audience with other nations, with different audioequipment and tools, with other languages and general music lovers who are layman in music. Also, further research can be conducted using other research methods like experimental or action research to test the results of this research finding.

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