

Basic Detail Report

Rudra vina

Date

1900-1930 ca.

Description

Tubular body of cane or bamboo with twenty frets attached with a mixture of resins and beeswax. Four strings over the fretboard and three drone strings. The rudra vina was one of the main instruments of Hindustani music from the 16th to the late 19th century and examples are depicted in iconography as early as the 5th century. It is said that the vibrations of the strings penetrate deeply into the player's body and, according to Tantric-Yogic symbolism, the stick and frets represent the human spine and a cosmic axis. The gourds are said to symbolize either the breasts of Shiva's wife, Parvati, or of Saraswati, the goddess of the arts and learning, while the shape of the pegs represent lotus blossoms. It is especially suited to playing Dhrupad, a slow, meditative style of music. Also known as bin, it can be considered the northern Indian equivalent of the saraswati vina. Traditionally, the sound of the rudra vina is quite soft, as it has only the hollow neck and gourds to amplify it. For this reason, the music of the rudra vina is often referred to as contemplative or for intimate audiences. This instrument was owned by Ustad Osman Khan (1915- ca. 1976), court musician to the Maharaja of Indore, also known as Khansahib. He brought it to the United States during a concert tour in the late 1970s.