

OPERATION SOAPBOX SPARKER



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Dancer and choreographer **Gauri Sharma Tripathi** is artist in residence at Southbank Centre. Here she introduces you to Kathak rhythms as a way of sharing your ideas creatively.

History and Background

The classical dance form of Kathak began in the courtyards of villages and temples, with travelling storytellers called *kathakas* who recited or sang stories about gods and goddesses, with some elements of dance.

The traditions of the *kathakas* were passed from generation to generation and it was when the dance reached the Mughal court after the 15th century that Kathak began to acquire its distinctive shape and features. Here it encountered other different forms of dance and music, most especially dancers from Persia. New styles from the north fused with the local talent and gave Kathak a more formal structure. Combining rhythm structures, hand and footwork and lyrical performance with a narrative, it was performed in the Mughal courts, in front of rulers such as Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal. It became more formalised into different styles from the nineteenth century on, with guru teachers who developed different features, and today Kathak often combines tradition with innovation in performances like *Dreaming Now*, a performance choreographed by Gauri at Trafalgar Square in London.

Listen and Try

The name Kathak is derived from the Sanskrit word *katha* meaning *story*. Telling a story can be a very convincing way of getting your point across – it's one of the oldest human forms of communication, and Gauri invites you to tell a story using Kathak rhythms.



The movements and rhythms of Kathak come from daily life and dialogue – the performer brings inanimate objects to life to weave a story without any words. Rhythm opens up communication, as there is no language barrier, and invites the listener to use their imagination.

Gauri has recorded a series of rhythms for you to try out, and some examples of how rhythm can be used to convey a message. Download the audio files and experiment with the four basic grooves, some additional rhythms for spicing up your story, and learn how simple household items can act as musical instruments.

If you want to record your own stories and rhythms, the simplest way is to use the Sound Recorder on any PC computer. If you look at Programs/Accessories you will find the Sound Recorder, and most computers have a built in microphone. We look forward to hearing what you come up with.

Step by Step

Plug in a microphone if your computer doesn't have one. On the File menu, click New. To begin recording, click Record. To stop recording, click Stop. Recorded sounds are saved as waveform (.wav) files. You can play your recording in Sound Recorder or in any other program that supports wav files.

1. Introduction from Gauri
2. Groove of 3
3. Groove of 4
4. Groove of 5
5. Groove of 7

You can print out the cards below and use them to practise the rhythms. These 4 basic grooves can be slow or fast to change your expression – Gauri starts slow and speeds up each of the grooves.

6. Bells (Ghunghru)
7. Cymbals (Manjira)

The bells and cymbals are another way of making the groove rhythms. If you don't have instruments, why not try using spoons, beating on your Soapbox, or shaking a box of cereal.

8. Sample 1 (shaking salt and pepper)
9. Sample 2 (chocopops when you add milk, popping up)
10. Sample 3 (holding the hand of a friend, pulling them towards you)
11. Sample 4 (three friends walking towards the sweet shop, one slow, one steady, one fast)

Each of these samples shows you how rhythms can conjure up the sounds of daily life and create a story without words. Can you invent your own rhythms for your local area?

12. Example 1 (tail of a cow that is thick at the top and thins out as it goes down)
13. Example 2 (playing football in the field)

Gauri gives you some examples of her own rhythmscapes. Can you imagine the football game she describes? Now think about how you could use rhythms to communicate your message – maybe reciting a story with them, or dancing on top of your Soapbox. Are there other kinds of rhythms you could use as well?

Ta kita Dhi kita

3

Ta Ki Ta Dhi Ki Ta
1 2 3 1 2 3

Taka Dimi

4

Ta Ka Di Mi
1 2 3 4

**Ta Ka
Ta Kita**

5

Ta Ka Ta Kita
1 2 1 2 3

**Ta Ki Ta
Taka Dimi**

7

Ta Ki Ta Ta Ka Di Mi
1 2 3 1 2 3 4

Sample 1

**Diga diga diga diga
diga diga ta
Diga diga ta**

Sample 2

**Traka traka
Dhet taa kat**

Sample 3

**Takita takita dha...ta
dha**

Sample 4

**Tita kata gadi gina
dha**