

Legendary Indian instrument to go on display for the first time anywhere at British Museum

Press images: <https://tinyurl.com/matnvca2>

In a world first, the *tabla* used by legendary Indian musician Us. Alla Rakha will go on display at the British Museum. The *tabla* were used during his European tours and have been held safely by his daughter before she generously donated them to the Museum.

The *tabla*, the only instruments of his held in a museum anywhere in the world, will be on display in the Hotung Gallery until early 2023. At which point, they will then go on loan to the Manchester Museum South Asia Gallery, a British Museum partnership gallery.

Us. Alla Rakha was one of the most important and respected *tabla* players of his generation, working with the All India Radio in the 1930s and composing music for the film industry in the 40s. He regularly played with the world-renowned sitar player Pt. Ravi Shankar and together they popularised traditional Indian music around the world. Devoted fans were delighted by the improvised musical dialogue between the *tabla* and sitar during their *savaal-javaab* (question-answer) exchanges.

From the 1980s onwards, Us. Alla Rakha performed all over the world with his son, Us. Zakir Hussein, who, like his father, is widely regarded as one of the greatest *tabla* players of all time. Together they spread Indian classical rhythm, influencing jazz and rock music.

The *tabla* on display, dates to the early 1980s and were used during his UK and European tours. Us. Alla Rakha asked his daughter to keep them safely at her home in London so that he could use them during his concert tours. These *tabla* are particularly precious as, at the time, there were few makers of Indian instruments in the UK.

The *tabla* will sit alongside Ravi Shankar's sitar in the South Asia section of the Hotung Gallery and is currently on display until late 2022.

Dr Sushma Jansari, Tabor Foundation Curator: South Asia Collections, said: "It is truly a privilege to be the first museum in the world to display these iconic instruments. Us. Alla Rakha and his legacy to Indian Music is something we're proud to display and it's so exciting to be able to reunite Pt. Ravi Shankar and Us. Alla Rakha together through their instruments."

Mrs Khurshid Aulia, daughter of Us. Alla Rakha, said: "The idea of donating the *tablas* came to me when we were celebrating my father's hundredth birth anniversary, which fell on 29 April 2019. Since my father put the *tabla* on the global stage, I wanted his *tablas* to have their rightful place in the world. I decided to donate them to the British Museum so that future generations can remember his contribution to the world of rhythm and classical music."

Note to editor:

The South Asia Gallery, developed in partnership with the British Museum, will bring extraordinary objects from the British Museum to Manchester, to be displayed alongside the very best of Manchester Museum's own South Asian collections, including the natural sciences and giving visitors the opportunity to see these spectacular objects in a different context. The visually stunning gallery will welcome visitors with beautiful displays and a dynamic contemporary take on South Asian and British Asian culture and will open in 2023.



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Further information

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