

Music and Poetry from the Pamir Mountains Musical instruments

Pamiri musicians have a strong preference for plucked stringed instruments, i.e., short and long-necked lutes. The wood from mulberry, apple, or apricot trees is used to build the instruments, while the skin and gut strings are mostly from goats or sheep.

Most specific for Tajik Badakhshan is the *rubab*, a long-necked lute with a bowl-shaped belly covered with skin. Five gut strings are attached to the wooden pegs and another one to a peg in the side of the neck. The strings are plucked with a thick wooden plectrum (*zakhma*).



 [play sample](#) [1]

Widespread too is the *tanbur*, a long-necked lute with and an oval lower soundboard covered with skin. Seven gut strings are attached to the peg-box and tuned with wooden pegs. The strings are plucked with a wooden plectrum.



 [play sample](#) [2]

The *sitar* is a long-necked lute with nylon and steel wire strings. The wooden belly is oval-shaped and pierced by a number of sound-holes in a decorative pattern. The sitar is plucked by a thimble-like metal plectrum worn over the forefinger of the right hand and produces a clear sound.



 [play sample](#) [3]

The *nay* is the main wind instrument. It is a small (30 to 40 cms long), conical, longitudinal flute with six holes. It is held vertically and produces a penetrating sound. According to the players, several sounds produced on the *nay* are imitations of the sounds of nature and birds.



 [play sample](#) [4]

The *tar* is a long-necked lute and has a deep curved body with two bulges, shaped like the figure 8, covered with skin. The strings are plucked with a wooden plectrum. The *tar* is held horizontally against the upper chest.

 [play sample](#) [5]

The *qomuz*, used exclusively by the Kyrgyz in eastern Tajik Badakhshan, has three thin steel wire strings which are plucked by finger or by plectrum in quick, light strokes. It produces a clear, penetrating sound. The decorated wooden belly is pear-shaped.

 [play sample](#) [6]

The only bowed instrument in Tajik Badakhshan is the *ghijak*, a spike fiddle with three or four gut strings and a resonator (in most cases, a tin-can). Held vertically, it produces a trembling, whining sound and is often highly decorated. The bow is made of horsehair and tied to a curved stick.

 [play sample](#) [7]

The most widespread percussion instrument is the *daf*, a circular-frame drum with a diameter of usually 50 cm or more. It consists of a wooden frame, covered with skin on one side. When played in groups (mostly women), it is held in the left hand and beaten with the flat of the right hand. In accompanying religious or folk songs, it is played in a sitting position, held between the legs and beaten with the index and second fingers.

 [play sample](#) [8]

Apart from these typical Pamir instruments, modern instruments such as the accordion are frequently used in folk songs and the *ghijak* is sometimes replaced by the violin.

[Return to Gallery Page: Music and Poetry from the Pamir Mountains](#) [9]

Source URL: <https://iis.ac.uk/library/music-and-poetry-pamir-mountains-musical-instruments>

Links

[1] <http://cms.iis.ac.uk/SiteAssets/video/g05.mp3>

[2] <http://cms.iis.ac.uk/SiteAssets/video/g04.mp3>

[3] <http://cms.iis.ac.uk/SiteAssets/video/razuj.mp3>

[4] <http://cms.iis.ac.uk/SiteAssets/video/instrum06.mp3>

[5] <http://cms.iis.ac.uk/SiteAssets/video/instrum12.mp3>

[6] <http://cms.iis.ac.uk/SiteAssets/video/instrum09.mp3>

[7] <http://cms.iis.ac.uk/SiteAssets/video/instrum11.mp3>

[8] <http://cms.iis.ac.uk/SiteAssets/video/instrum05.mp3>

[9] <https://iis.ac.uk/ContentLink.asp%3Ftype%3Dcont.currentlang%26amp%3Bid%3D106046>