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# EMPOWERING TIMES



## *THINKING ALOUD*

Making Music the Hard Way  
Jay



## *PODIUM*

Anthony Gomes  
Director  
Furtados Group of Companies



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Zubin Mehta: A Musical Journey  
Bakhtiar K. Dadabhoy



## *WONDER WOMEN*

Sudha Sathaye  
Founder - Ultimate Kitchen and  
Furniture, Mumbai



Dear Reader,

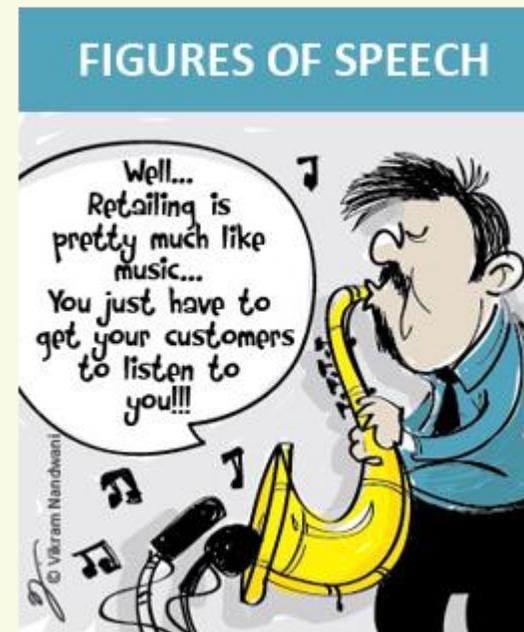
Music has been associated with Indian culture from time immemorial. In the past, one could spot the street side hawker luring customers to the beat of his *bansuri*, *damaru* or a string instrument like the *ektara*. Today, there are many small retail outlets catering to the Indian population offering a plethora of western and Indian musical instruments.

Like any industry, the musical instruments retail sector has been challenged. Ask any professionally owned music business owner and he would agree that the music industry cannot survive on the trendy online or e-commerce format alone. The traditional brick-and-mortar format still exists for customers who would like to try and get a feel of the musical instruments that they are interested in.

This month, we look at the **Music Industry & the Retail Challenge**. The rising popularity of full time music schools for aspiring students and full time university courses for this art are signs that the music industry lives on and is evolving constantly. With the changing times, alternative forms of music have also garnered attention (For example, electronic dance music) with tours and concerts becoming commonplace (Read, the NH7 Weekender festival).

The power of music cannot be underestimated as it has the ability to convey various messages that can influence thought processes and make a social impact. In the words of Bono, "Music can change the world because it can change people."

**Jay**, in the **Thinking Aloud** segment, puts forth his thoughts on the challenges that impact the music instruments retail industry and enlightens readers that the music retail sector has various opportunities to tap.



On the **Podium**, **Anthony Gomes**, Director of the Furtados Group of Companies shares his love for the music industry, his views on the growing trends of this sector, the role of e-Commerce and his family business, Furtados.

In the **We Recommend** section, we go on a musical journey with world renowned western classical musician, Zubin Mehta in his biography, **Zubin Mehta: A Musical Journey** by Bakhtiar K. Dadabhoy.

**Sudha Sathaye**, in the **Wonder Women** segment, an early pioneer in the field of manufacturing & marketing of modular kitchens in India, takes us through her entrepreneurial story in the setting up of her Mumbai based firm, Ultimate Kitchen and Furniture.

In **Figures of Speech**, **Vikram's** toon lures us to his tunes!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Resources section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) & [Google+](#) - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us!

## THINKING ALOUD

### Making Music the Hard Way

- Jay

Can you hear the sound of music at the cash register of the music instruments retail store? Sounds fuzzy, isn't it? Well, there's good reason for this distortion.

While the love for music has not diminished - and one can arguably state that cellphones have made music more available than ever before - has there been a commensurate increase in the sale of musical instruments? While hard data is not easily available, the music instruments retailers are more positive about the future of their business than music producers (where piracy is a perennial problem).

There are different reasons for the positive outlook for the music instruments retail industry in India. First, the sheer size & demographics of the market. With the large number of music loving youngsters, it is but natural that there is always demand for learning music. And, yes, the desire to learn music knows no age boundaries. Even the well-heeled middle-aged person often signs up for music lessons once he is financially secure to give wing to his long held - and often secret - desire! Rising affluence of consumers is likely to create a greater propensity to spend more on expensive and sophisticated musical instruments.

Secondly, the craze for western music in this bracket of youngsters also means that there is constant supply of young enthusiasts. Actually, this craze is not limited to English music alone (though it is often more visible in the press with the visit of international pop stars - think Bieber). The traditional schools of Indian music are also shining, albeit quietly. Added to all this is the rise in the disposable income of middle-class India. Not only do parents today have the inclination to fund music lessons for their child at an early age, there is also a desire to bring up 'well-rounded' children who have a competitive edge in the admissions' market. Hence, the rise of music schools in urban India. Not to be forgotten is the positive contribution & role played by the plethora of music

shows on television. This is yet another lever of growth for the industry as it serves to encourage talent.

Does all this translate into big bucks for music instrument retailers? Not quite, as the old bricks-and-mortars firms are finding out. Their challenges are plenty. First, the retail outlets have traditionally been localized family businesses. While usually they have a reputational advantage, they have not been known to think strategically or plan ahead, a generic ailment that many family businesses have been prone to in various industries. Consequently, the challenge of scale has made them less effective. The good news is that some of these firms have taken remedial steps and have begun the shift from being old-fashioned family business to family-owned but professionally managed firms. This professionalization has led to the introduction of modern business systems (think ERP) combined with good sales, brand building & financial management practices.

The new & bigger challenge to them is the rise of e-commerce. To rage against this change is an exercise in futility. Instead, some of the old retailers are viewing this as an opportunity to create a new store front to reach customers from hitherto unserved markets. The variable element now is pricing. The large e-commerce sites are known to be aggressive discounters. Coping with them requires innovative ideas, both in customer service & fulfillment practices.

Yet another opportunity lies in the introduction of the Goods & Services Tax (GST) from July 2017. Many of the logistical hurdles can now be overcome with better resource planning, thus potentially throwing up one large market where products can freely flow.

In the past, it has been largely assumed that the key factors for success in this business are: having a wide (& expanding) range of products, proximity to key markets, goodwill with old and loyal customers and managing inventory. But there are now other variables. There are newer players in the game who are hungry to succeed and who will challenge the existing paradigms. The time is now ripe to raise fresh capital and think differently to compete. The real question remains: are the old warriors ready to learn new techniques to win the battles of today to survive? This will be a combat worth watching.

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## PODIUM

### Interview with Anthony Gomes Director, Furtados Group of Companies



*Anthony Gomes is the Director of the Furtados group of companies, which is in the forefront of musical instruments retail and distribution, music book publishing and music schools.*

*He is also the Regional Coordinator for Western India for Trinity College London, the international music, drama and language examinations board. The Mumbai Centre of Trinity, under his direct responsibility, is the single largest centre in the world outside of the UK for Trinity examinations in the Performing Arts.*

*Anthony plays the violin and is a former member of the Bombay Chamber Orchestra. He studied at Campion School and St Xavier's College in Mumbai.*

**ET: What are the latest trends that cater to the growing demands of the music industry?**

**AG:** The music industry in India is still evolving and at present is quite small in comparison to other developing and developed markets with large demographics like ours. Several factors have facilitated the development and growth of the industry over the past decade or so. One major contributor is reality shows - however, these are producing singers, as opposed to musical instrumentalists.

The institutionalization of music education - Furtados School of Music, True School of Music, Musee Musical School of Music, K M Conservatory, Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music, to name a few, have made available

quality music education on a larger and more organized scale, including at a professional level, which was otherwise restricted to individuals in the private teaching practice with varying degrees of proficiency.

Mainstream schools, too, are now increasingly incorporating music into their curriculum. Hitherto, a music lesson in school comprised of just singing songs. Many schools now teach music theory and the playing of musical instruments as part of their curricular offering, and this is exposing many new students to the wonders of music, thereby significantly adding to the numbers who then pursue the subject more seriously.

**ET: In the digital economy, has E-commerce played an important role in the retail music segment and what are the challenges of your industry?**

**AG:** E-commerce is playing a significant role. At the present juncture, it is regrettably causing divisiveness and confusion. As in many segments (not just music), marketplaces have enabled all and sundry to sell a variety of products, with price being the over-riding consideration. Traders are indiscriminately discounting to their own detriment, and after mounting losses are unable to sustain their presence even after a few months.

The other challenge is the free returns policy that many marketplaces offer, which regrettably has resulted in rampant abuse of this privilege (as in many other segments), with people using products and returning them used/soiled and even unusable.

Higher value products sell only if they are boxed items (like keyboards and the like) - high-end guitars and other instruments which buyers would like to try and select, sell less frequently for this reason.

Nevertheless, e-commerce affords unrestricted reach to the whole population and with the prospect of improved and seamless logistics (with the advent of GST) enables our industry to reach consumers far and wide. This is particularly beneficial to the music retail industry as the number of brick-and-mortar shops/showrooms are concentrated only in Tier 1 and 2 cities/towns and that too with relatively low density.

[www.furtadosonline.com](http://www.furtadosonline.com) is an important vertical for us and provides the entire Furtados catalogue throughout the length and breadth of our country. We are constantly investing and enhancing this e-commerce platform, as we fully appreciate that this is the way forward, now and in the future.

**ET: It is believed that the boundaries between traditional music and electronic music are blurred. With electronic/digital music taking center stage, what is the future of the music industry, in your opinion?**

**AG:** The traditional music industry continues to thrive. While electronic music in Bollywood has put paid to the "orchestra" and rendered many musicians out of jobs, opportunities have opened up in education and live performances. As more and more young people learn musical instruments (this is a noticeable and an undeniable trend), there is a dramatic increase in live performances at school and college festivals, private and corporate events and public performances.

Traditional Indian music continues to enjoy good patronage among the middle-aged and senior generation, but it is true that there are concerns for the future as many youngsters do not consider learning a traditional Indian instrument as enticing and exciting as the comparative western equivalent - i.e., *sitar* vs guitar, *tabla* vs drum set.

**ET: As a family business, Furtados has come a long way. What are the benefits and challenges of handling a business that has been passed on from one generation to the other?**

**AG:** While Furtados is very much a family-owned business, it is now as professionally run and structured as any mid-sized corporate. As it is for any family, it was a challenge to make the move from a family-run set up to a professional corporate set-up and to relinquish micro-control and responsibilities. Some of the changes were forced upon us due to our expansion and growth in size and operations.

Our greatest asset is our brand value which the family has carefully nurtured and supported without compromise. Music is an industry and a business in which personal relationships are of paramount importance. Successive generations of the family have upheld this tradition and much of our goodwill stems from the strong personal contact we have with performers, teachers and parents who themselves have frequented our shops and transacted/interacted with us for generations.

This is also a challenge. As we expand and grow, we simply cannot replicate or clone ourselves in all territories and outlets. Training therefore assumes importance as we empower senior and mid-management to engage similarly with clientele in all our locations. Retention of human resources assumes greater significance because our team needs special training however experienced they may otherwise be in the retail sector, as knowledge of

musical instruments and proper advice is crucial in the creating and sustaining of personal relationships with customers. Although the internet today provides a wealth of information, our customers still want balanced advice and support from us, and this training is vitally important. I do not deny, we are regrettably sometimes found wanting in this respect.

**ET: Can you please tell us more about your chain of Furtados music school?**

**AG:** Furtados School of Music - FSM ([www.fsm.net.in](http://www.fsm.net.in)), was launched in June 2011 and is today the largest instrument music education provider in the country. Within 6 years, we have over 15,000 students learning piano, keyboard, guitar, drums and singing across 50 K-12 schools and 9 standalone centres.

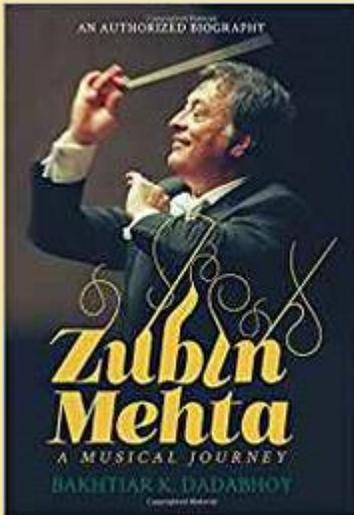
The bedrock of the quality education provided by FSM is our exclusive international curriculum which helps impart lessons in a fun and motivating manner. FSM has recently ventured into the digital education business with its "High" mobile app which helps customers avail private lessons at home at their convenience with Furtados-trained and certified teachers. With our pioneering "Music Buddy" technology every child can now practise and get online digital assessment on how s/he is practising and/or playing.

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WE RECOMMEND

## Zubin Mehta - A Musical Journey

- Bakhtiar K. Dadabhoy



Bakhtiar Dadabhoy's biography is a musical journey of world renowned musician, Zubin Mehta. The book was released on the musician's 80th birthday last year.

Mehta was born in a musical family and it is said that he learnt to sing and speak at the same time. A young Zubin gave up the thought of becoming a doctor for his love for music. He largely owes his inspiration to his father, Mehli Mehta, who founded the Bombay Symphony Orchestra at a time in India when western classical music was not given its due importance.

The book highlights Zubin's journey from Mumbai to Vienna where he learnt how to conduct, to Los Angeles, Tel Aviv and the United States. Mehta had grabbed every opportunity to grow in his art, and his love for conducting music eventually gave him the break to be a part of world famous orchestras like the Vienna Philharmonic and the Berlin Philharmonic; he was the youngest to conduct these orchestras. Zubin was also the first to simultaneously conduct the Montreal Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic - two major North American orchestras. The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra appointed him as Music Advisor in 1969 and then as Music Director in 1977 and Music Director for Life in 1981. Apart from the association with music, Dadabhoy does not forget to mention Zubin's love for cricket and his dear childhood friend, Dr Yusuf Hamied, the Chairman of pharmaceuticals company Cipla.

The biography celebrates Mehta's fascination for various musicians - Mozart, Haydn, Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schonberg. It also throws in some analysis of how Zubin approached composers like Johannes Brahms, Richard

Wagner and Igor Stravinsky, and talks of how he was influenced by Toscanini and Furtwangler's contrasting styles of music. It describes his close friendship with pianist Daniel Barenboim, violinist Pinchas Zukerman, conductor Karlheinz Bohm, *sitar* maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar, among others, and their musical relationship with Mehta.

Bakhtiar Dadabhoy throws some light on Zubin's personal life and peppers the read with glimpses of the musician's life through some photographs. The book is a must read for anyone who loves music. The musician's biography is beautifully written and requires some basic understanding of the music world.

Dadabhoy's book, Zubin Mehta - A Musical Journey took eight years to conceptualize. He has authored five books in the past which includes a Dictionary of Dates, a coffee table book on JRD Tata, a collection of detailed profiles of prominent Parsis of India and the critically acclaimed Barons of Banking: Glimpses of Indian Banking history.

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## WONDER WOMEN

### Sudha Sathaye

#### Founder - Ultimate Kitchen and Furniture, Mumbai



Sudha Sathaye is the Founder of Ultimate Kitchen and Furniture, a venture which began over 20 years ago. Her love for interior designing led her to design her first kitchen in her own home at a time when modular kitchens as a concept was completely unthinkable. Since then, there has been no looking back. Realizing the untapped opportunity and her desire that Indian women should deserve the comfort of a well-equipped, customized and beautiful kitchen which adhered to international standards, she drove herself to start her company.

From displaying a modular kitchen concept in a supermarket chain in Mumbai to showcasing it at building and construction exhibitions (with demonstrations), she acquired the patent for designing kitchens by the Indian Government and soon Ultimate Kitchen and Furniture was incepted. In the last 20 years, she has designed kitchens for many customers ranging from a kitchen size of about 2.5 ft to an industrial size kitchen of about 3,500 ft! From kitchens, Sudha moved on to designing furniture, with the company's tag line - 'Kitchen on Wheels and Furniture of Steel.'

Sudha owes her success to the people she deals with - the Indian skilled workers and good technicians. Prior to setting up her business, she worked for a bank and while dealing with many business customers, she was inspired to do something on her own. The initial capital requirements, place, time, and labour concerns were a challenge as the concept of a modular kitchen then was new. Her advice to entrepreneurs is to keep yourself updated of what the customer's choices and requirements are which will ensure long term success in any business venture. According to Sudha, since women have family obligations, it is important to balance every responsibility and learn to multi-task.

Mentoring and ISB's Goldman Sachs programme had empowered her. It was here that she could devise futuristic business plans. Currently, Ultimate Kitchen and Furniture manufactures and designs modular kitchens, stainless steel kitchen trollies and furniture as per requirements. Sudha plans to manufacture and set up modular kitchens for the masses, including for homes under the Slum Rehabilitation Authority's scheme.

Here's wishing Sudha the very best for her future plans!

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## THROUGH THE LENS



Talented photographer **Rupesh Balsara** spots the **Rufous-bellied Woodpecker** at Pangot, near Nainital, Uttarakhand. Principally to dig for food or to excavate holes for shelter, these woodpeckers use their bills to hammer through or break up tree barks in order to find and eat insects living in the tree. The population of this species is trending downwards because of the clearing of deciduous forests necessary for its survival.

Empowered Learning Systems Pvt. Ltd.

<http://www.empoweredindia.com>

101, Lords Manor, 49, Sahaney Sujan Park, Lullanagar, Pune – 411040, Maharashtra, India

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