

DARBAR NIGHT SERIES 4: “The Ensemble”

7.30pm, Thursday 16th May 2013

Conservatorium Theatre

North meets South. Common Vedic roots stretching back millennia. Distinct traditions, shared heritage. Side by side on stage today. Rarely do we witness a single concert featuring seasoned artists from the North and South Indian traditions. This double bill brings two of the great ensembles from India appearing exclusively for Encounters: khyal star Shubha Mudgal and her ensemble preceded by dhrupad scholar and performer Ritwik Sanyal, and Carnatic percussion legend Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani with Sruthi Laya. Prepare for a night of soaring melodies and exhilarating rhythms, for the meeting of time-honoured traditions with spontaneous improvisation, for a range of expression from profound meditation to exuberant joy.

1. Hindustani classical music.....Dhrupad and khyal

Ritwik Sanyal, *dhrupad voice*
Shen Flindell, *tabla*

Shubha Mudgal, *khyal voice*
Aneesh Pradhan, *tabla*
Sudhir Nayak, *harmonium*

With roots going back thousands of years, the North Indian classical tradition known as Hindustani music has a long and illustrious history across a number of divergent settings. These included courts, places of worship, houses of affluent landowners, salons of courtesans, places of celebration, radio studios, Indian concert halls, Western stages, and a variety of recorded formats. In addition, Hindustani music has interacted extensively with folk music, religious music, and popular music – most notably the infectious and omnipresent songs from the Bollywood film industry which have become the soundtrack to Indian everyday life over the past fifty years.

In spite of a long period of colonization, and considerable challenges in terms of infrastructure, income per capita, and access to education, Hindustani music has remained the principal form of ‘art music’ in the North (as has Carnatic music in the South). At the core of the tradition are raga, the melodic framework that governs both traditional compositions and extempore improvisations, and tala, which structures time in rhythmic cycles. While the absence of harmony and counterpoint may mislead listeners used to European art music into thinking this is a relatively simple tradition, it takes many decades to master the intricacies of moving with conviction and ease within each raga and tala, respecting their close boundaries while exploring their infinite creative possibilities.

While it is sometimes naively (or commercially) represented as a ‘spiritual music’, and certainly has contemplative elements that bear this out, it is much better categorised as a refined court tradition, a *musique savante*, a tradition for connoisseurs. Largely finding its present form in the darbars of the Delhi sultans, Moghul emperors and other courts, the music presupposes a highly knowledgeable audience to appreciate its full scope of legacy, creativity, timbre, variations, improvisations and ornamentations. The tradition is quite unashamedly elitist, although it is also seen as an expression of Indian identity both in the country and in the diaspora.

Today, Hindustani music draws an audience not unlike that of Western classical music: from dozens to house concerts to hundreds for mainstream classical concerts, to many thousands for events featuring star performers. Tonight’s performance rather uniquely features both the predominant virtuoso khyal tradition and its more introverted predecessor dhrupad.

Huib Schippers

— INTERMISSION —

2. Carnatic classical music

Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani, *mrindangan*
Basavaraju Balasai, *flute*
Suresh Vaiyanathan, *ghatam*

While music in the North of India has been influenced by extensive interaction with the (Muslim) countries and cultures to its north, South Indian culture has remained predominantly Hindu. Consequently, while it uses raga and tala as building blocks, the specific ragas and talas, modes in interpretation and improvisation are substantially different, as is the structure of a performance, which tends to feature shorter compositions, improvisations and ornamentations based on the work of four legendary Carnatic composers, with usually only one raga explored in detail and at length.

This performance will focus on rhythmic aspects of the Carnatic tradition, with at its centre the vibrant sound of the mrindangan, a cylindrical drum with a dazzling range of sounds and overtones, the virtuoso use of the clay pot ghatam, and the melody of the small traverse flute venu.

Huib Schippers

Shubha Mudgal (India) was born into a musically dedicated family and has been trained by some of the finest musicians and musicologists in India. Trained by eminent scholar-musician-composer Pandit Ramashreya Jha "Ramrang", she also received guidance from Pandit Vinaya Chandra Maudgalya and Pandit Vasant Thakar. She later learnt stylistic techniques from well-known maestros Pandit Jitendra Abhisheki and Pandit Kumar Gandharva. She also received training in thumri from Smt. Naina Devi. This has made her a versatile and popular performer.

In addition to being a much sought-after performer, Shubha has also won recognition as a composer. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Padma Shri from the Indian government in the year 2000, and the Gold Plaque Award for Special Achievement in Music at the 34th Chicago International Film Festival (1998).

Shubha has also been closely involved with several projects related to music education in India. Currently a member of the Central Advisory Board of Education constituted by the Indian government, Shubha also chaired a focus group discussing the need for introducing an arts education program in mainstream school education during the National Curriculum Framework (2005).

Sudhir Nayak (India) received training from the Harmonium maestro and Guru Pandit Tulsidas Borkar and the noted vocalist, composer and Guru Pandit Jitendra Abhisheki in the nuances of Raag Sangeet. Primarily trained in the Hindustani Music tradition, Sudhir has also been studying various other genres of music.

Sudhir's musical performances are regularly featured on Indian television and commercial recordings. He has also performed in the USA, the UK, Canada, Mexico, Europe, Australia, the Far Eastern and the Middle Eastern countries. He is equally at home with harmonium solo renditions as he is with accompaniment and has composed music for many musical productions which have been recorded and published commercially. He also participates in cross-cultural collaborations, being a member of the ensemble 'Koshish'.

Sudhir is actively involved in managing the activities of the Village Music Club based in Thakur Village of Kandivali East. He has been conferred the 'Saath Sangat Pravin Award' instituted by the Rajeev Goenka Academy under the auspices of The Music Forum, Mumbai and ITC- SRA. He has also been awarded the 'Saraswat Yuva Puraskar' for excellence in the field of culture at the GSB Yuva Sammelan in Mangalore.

Aneesh Pradhan (India) is one of the leading members of the younger generation of tabla players whose skill, artistry and scholarship show promise of maturing into mastery. A disciple of Pandit Nikhil Ghosh, Aneesh has inherited from his guru a considerable repertoire of traditional tabla solo compositions from different styles: Delhi, Ajrada, Lucknow, Farrukhabad and Punjab gharanas.

Greatly appreciated by both connoisseurs and lay listeners as a soloist and accompanist, Aneesh Pradhan is the recipient of several major awards. A popular performer at many prestigious concerts and festivals throughout India, he has travelled widely and performed overseas at major events. He has recorded widely for national and international record labels, accompanying a host of vocalists and instrumentalists. His first tabla solo album *Tabla: the solo tradition* was recorded in concert in 1997 and released in 2004, was followed by *Tabla solo: a continuing tradition*, a studio recording made in 2006. Aneesh also broadcasts regularly as an 'A' grade artist on Indian radio and television.

Apart from his work with classical Indian music, Aneesh Pradhan is also a frequent participant in cross-cultural musical collaborations as both performer and composer. Drawn equally towards melody and rhythm, Aneesh's compositions range from pieces composed for tabla solo to melodic and text-based compositions that are based on traditional vocal and instrumental forms of North Indian classical music. Through his compositions for film, television, theatre and dance projects, he is keen to expand the boundaries of musical genres in experimenting with sound and music.

Aneesh has been a keen researcher of trends in performance, music education and patronage that unfolded in the late 19th and early 20th century, a period that continues to fascinate him. He writes frequently on music for newspapers, journals and other publications in India and elsewhere and is also deeply involved in creating and developing educational material related to Indian music.

Aneesh is the Director of Underscore Records Pvt. Ltd, an independent online record label that he established with vocalist Shubha Mudgal. With Shubha, he also co-curates an international music festival called Baajaa Gaajaa: Music from 21st Century India.

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Ritwik Sanyal (India) is one of the virtuosos of dhrupad, the most ancient genre of the North Indian classical vocal music still in existence, and

Ritwik was born in Katihar and trained in the dhrupad style of the Dagar tradition, descendants of Haridas Dagar, the 15th century guru who trained the legendary Tansen. Between 1963 and 1975, Ritwik received his training in dhrupad under Ustad Mohiuddin Dagar and Ustad Zia Fariddudin Dagar in Mumbai.

Ritwik received an Master of Arts degree in Philosophy from Mumbai University and a Master in Music degree from Banaras Hindu University, securing the gold medal. He completed his Ph.D. in Musicology from the same University in 1980 under the supervision of the legendary Professor Prem Lata Sharma. Ritwik Sanyal now serves as Professor of Vocal Music at Banaras Hindu University where he also served as Head of the Department of Vocal Music and Dean of the Faculty of Performing Arts.

An outstanding dhrupad singer, guru, writer, professor and academic, and composer of dhrupad lyrics, during the past 33 years Ritwik Sanyal has contributed a great deal to the propagation of dhrupad in almost every part of India and the world.

Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani (India) was born at Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, in 1945. He is the son of late Sri. T. Ramanatha Iyer and Smt. Pattammal. He stepped into Carnatic music at the age of 3. Although he commenced with vocal training, very soon he realized his special interest was in Percussion and switched over to mridangan, which he would master to near legendary heights.

His gurus were Karaikudi Sri Rangu Iyengar, Sri T R Hari Hara Sharma and Sri K M Vaidyanathan. At the age of 8. He made his first stage performance at Karaikudi. Thereafter, his dedication and hard work to excel in the chosen field resulted in the Karakudi Mani Bhani (Style), which endeared him to many young percussionists and others all over the world. He is well known as 'Master Mani' in southern India, where he has shared the stage and performed with many local artists and won many rewards and gold medals.

Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani's inherent desire to propagate the highly sophisticated structure of South Indian rhythm and present innovative rhythmic ideologies led him to create the Sruthi Laya percussion ensemble. This was supported by a large orchestra. He gave importance to taalavadya concerts and released a number of important CDs. With these unique ensembles, the talavadya instruments and thani avartanam concerts gained respect and elevated Mridangam to a much higher level of public awareness and proficiency. This awareness inspired many contemporary artists to bring out audio and CD albums.

Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani was the pioneer in bringing Mridangam to the centre stage of the performance of Indian music. He also gave a new dimension when he combined Mridangam with other traditional instruments such as Thavil, Chendai, Tabla and Pakhwaj. He has also extended the rhythmic repertoire in the classical dance, along with renowned Bharathanatyam dancer Smt Rajeshwari Sainath, who is Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani's niece and student. He has introduced new concepts (rare varnams, innovative jathi's, and rare thalams) in dance. Performed by Smt Rajeshwari Sainath, he has produced dance programmes which combine melody, rhythm and dance the likes of which have rarely been encountered before.

DARBAR NIGHT SERIES

The DARBAR headline series of evening concert focuses on the constituent parts of music - rhythm, melody, texture - with illustrations from Western and Indian traditions, as well as new fusions of the two. Special attention is directed towards Western (and particularly Australian) composers who have drawn inspiration from Indian Music, and vice versa. The series culminates with two concerts that celebrate the essence of all music tradition. In THE ENSEMBLE we celebrate the centuries-old tradition of communities making sound and music together. In THE GURU, we celebrate the leaders or gurus who by their stature and achievement stand as models for future generations of creators/composers and practitioners/performers.

7.30pm, Monday 13 May: THE DRUM

Drumming from India, California and Australia will pulsate through the opening DARBAR concert, as Aneesh Pradhan demonstrates the poise and virtuosity of a North Indian tabla solo, while Queensland artists Tunji Beijer represents the South. Special tribute will be paid to Terry Riley, the American guru-composer who drew our ears and imaginations to the intricate glories of Indian music. Iconic works will be introduced by the composer himself in a video conversation, and then performed by Topology and every percussionist at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University.

7.30pm, Tuesday 14 May: THE VOICE

Glorious melodies from several traditions and eras soar through the second DARBAR concert, with soprano superstar Patricia Rozario joined by Indian dhrupad singer Ritwik Sanyal, khyal star Shubha Mudgal, and much loved Brisbane singers Heather Lee and Margaret Schindler.

7.30pm, Wednesday 15 May: THE DRONE

That 'prince of the cello' Rohan de Saram is the central figure of the third DARBAR concert, as he leads the sumptuous sound of a cello orchestra. Our 'carpet of cellos' will perform music from India, London and Australia, much of it especially written for Rohan. Into this we add a tanpura, a sitar, a dancer and from Australia the didgeridoo, the oldest known drone in the history of sound.

7.30pm, Thursday 16 May: THE ENSEMBLE

Two leading ensembles representing the twin traditions of Indian music present the fourth DARBAR concert. From the north (Hindustani) come the khyal singer Shubha Mudgal and her ensemble, and from the south (Carnatic) come the venerable Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani and his musicians. In separate halves of this historic evening, they represent both traditions at their most magnificent, with breath-taking spontaneous improvisations intersecting with moments of profound introspection.

7.30pm, Friday 17 May: THE GURU

The final DARBAR concert celebrates our 'guru', the Australian composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks in her centenary year (she was born in Melbourne in 1912 and died in Sydney in 1990). In a male-dominated composing world, Peggy styled herself "PGH" and her music encompassed the traditions of ancient Greece and India, as well as that of post-war New York City. With slides and film and an array of live performances, including several world premieres, two close friends from her final years in Sydney, guest composer Ross Edwards and artistic director Vincent Plush share their repertoire of "PGH-stories" and introduce a sampling of the extraordinary breadth of her music.

Presented in partnerships with the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, the DARBAR series brings together the twin traditions of India, as well as its diaspora on both sides of the Pacific.

ENCOUNTERS: INDIA

13 - 19 May, South Bank Brisbane
encountersfestival.com.au

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