



Sunday 6 June, 1pm & 3pm

Royal Spa, Queen's Park

BHRAMA–VISHNU–SHIVA

Aradhana Arts

Sanju Sahai *tabla*

Jaymini Sahai *Kathak dance*

Tofail Ahmed *voice*

Debipriya Sircar *voice, sitar*

Indrani Datta *narrator*

Music composed by **Pandit Vishwa Prakash**

The great poet Rabindranath Tagore's mesmerising poem 'Bhrama, Vishnu, Shiva', exploring the creation, preservation and destruction of the Universe according to Hindu mythology, is brought to life by Aradhana Arts. Bringing together the beauty of poetry, intertwined with Indian Classical music and Kathak dance you will be taken on a magical journey through time and space.

Kathak dance

Kathak is the major classical dance form from the northern part of India. The word Kathak stems from the Sanskrit word Katha meaning story. This dance form traces its origins to the nomadic bards of ancient northern India, known as Kathakars, or story tellers. These bards, performing in village squares and temple courtyards, specialised in recounting mythological and moral tales from the scriptures, and embellished their recitals with hand gestures and facial expressions. It was quintessential theatre, using instrumental and vocal music along with stylised gestures, to enliven the stories. With the advent of Mughal culture, Kathak became a sophisticated chamber art. Patronised by art-loving rulers, the practitioners of Kathak worked at refining its dramatic and rhythmic aspects, delighting elite audiences with their mastery over rhythm and the stylised mime.

When the patronage shifted from the temples to the royal court, there was a change in the overall emphasis, from the telling of religious stories to one of entertainment. It was a profession which demanded the highest standards of training, intelligence, and most importantly, civility.

Indian Classical music

Indian Classical music is categorised under two genres: Hindustani and Carnatic. Broadly speaking, Carnatic music developed in the south of the country, while Hindustani is indigenous to the north.

Hindustani music is based on the raga system. A raga is a melodic scale, consisting of notes from the basic seven known as sa, re, ga, ma pa, dha, and ni. Apart from sa and pa which are constant, the other notes may be in major or minor tone, and this gives rise to innumerable combinations. Ten basic scales or thaats are recognised, and other ragas are considered to have evolved from these. A raga must contain a minimum of five notes.

Depending on the notes included in it, each raga acquires a distinct character. The form of the raga is also determined by the particular pattern of ascent and descent of the notes, which may not be strictly linear. Melody is built up by improvising and elaborating within the given scale. The improvisation is at times rhythm bound and at other times free from any overt rhythm.

Formal compositions (songs or instrumental compositions in a fixed metre) are juxtaposed with the improvised portion. Khyal and Dhrupad are two major types of compositions within the Hindustani genre. Of the two, Dhrupad is an older form and requires rigorous training in rhythm control as well as voice culture. Khyal developed as a more popular alternative as it contains both slow and lively compositions, though it retains its totally classical character.

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Bhrama

In a worldless timeless lightless great emptiness
Four-faced Brahma broods.

Of a sudden sea of joy surges through his heart
The ur-god opens his eyes.
Speech from four mouths
Speeds from each quarter.
Through infinite dark,
Through limitless sky,
Like a growing sea-storm,
Like hope never sated,
His word starts to move.

Stirred by joy his breathing quickens,
His eight eyes quiver with flame.
His fire-matted hair sweeps the horizon,
Bright as a million suns.

From the towering source of the world
In a thousand streams
Cascades the primeval blazing fountain,
Fragmenting silence,
Splitting its stone heart.

Vishnu

In a universe rampant
With new life exhalant,
With new life exultant,
Vishnu spreads wide
His four-handed blessing.

He raises his conch
And all things quake
At its booming sound.
The frenzy dies down,
The furnace expires,
The planets douse
Their flames with tears,
The world's Divine Poet
Constructs its history.

From wild cosmic song
Its epic is formed.
Stars in their orbits,
Moon, sun and planets
He binds with his mace
All things to law,
Imposes the discipline
Of metre and rhyme.

In the Manasa depths
Vishnu watches
Beauties arise

From the light of lotuses.
Lakshmi strews smiles
Clouds show a rainbow,
Gardens show flowers.
The roar of Creation
Resolves into music.
Softness hides rigour,
Forms cover power.

Age after age after age is slave to a mighty rhythm
At last the world-frame
Tires in its body,
Sleep in its eyes
Slackens its structure,
Diffuses its energy.
From the heart of all matter
Comes the anguished cry
'Wake, wake, great Shiva,
Our body grows weary
Of its law-fixed path,
Give us new form.
Sing our destruction,
That we gain new life.'

Shiva

The great god awakes,
His three eyes open,
He surveys all horizons.

He lifts his bow, his fell pinaka,
He pounds the world with his tread.
From first things to last it trembles and shakes
And shudders.
The bonds of nature are ripped.

The sky is rocked by the roar
Of a wave of ecstatic release.
An inferno soars
The pyre of the universe.

Shattered sun and moon, smashed stars and planets,
Rain down from all angles,
A blackness of all particles
To be swallowed by flame,
Absorbed in an instant.

At the start of Creation
There was a dark without origin,
At the breaking of Creation
There is fire without end
In an all-pervading sky-engulfing sea of burning
Shiva shuts his three eyes.
He begins his great trance.

The performers

Sanju Sahai (also known as Vishnu Sahai), is currently one of the finest and most sought after Tabla players of his generation. Belonging to the Benares Gharana (lineage) and being the 6th generation of Tabla players in the lineage, he began playing at an early age. A child prodigy and son of the legendary Pandit Sharda Sahai Ji, he gave his first Tabla solo performance at a major festival in Benares at the age of 9. He gained his Bachelor of Music at 13 and Master of Music at 18.

A phenomenal and outstanding Tabla player, he is well known for mesmerising and captivating his audience with his power, virtuosity and complete spontaneity. His meteoric rise in popularity in the field of traditional Indian Classical music has led Sanju to collaborate regularly with different genres such as Jazz, Egyptian, Flamenco, Opera, Western Classical, hip hop, folk, blues music and the world of contemporary music and dance. He has collaborated with international artists including Manuela Carrasco (Flamenco dance), Michael Nyman (British composer), Patricia Rozario (opera), BBC Philharmonic, Naresh Sohal (composer), Pete Lockett (multi percussionist), Yair Dalal (oud), Jason Carter (guitarist), Matthew Barley and Anup Biswas (cellists), Don Li (clarinet), Harp Quartet, Dominique Vellard (Gregorian chant), Gilles Petit (composer and instrumentalist) the acclaimed dancer Akram Khan and Anoushka Shankar.

Sanju is an international artist and performs all over the UK, India, Europe, Middle East, USA, Australasia and the far East. He has accompanied many of India's legendary musicians and dancers such as: Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia (bansuri), Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma and Pandit Bhajan Sapori (santoor), Ustad Vilayat Khan Saheb, Ustead Imrat Khan Saheb, Ustead Shahid Parvez, Pandit Kartik Kumar and Pandit Manilal Nag (sitar), Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt (mohan veena), Pandit Birju Maharaj, Natraj Gopi Krishna and Smt Sitara Devi (Kathak), Ustead Aasheesh Khan and Ustead Amjad Ali Khan (sarod), Pandit Jasraj, Smt Girija Devi, Pandits Rajan and Sajan Misra, Pandit Ajoy Chakraborty and Smt Veena Sahasrabuddhe (vocal) Ustead Sultan Khan and Pandit Ramesh Misra (sarangi), Kala Ramnath (violin) and maestro Umyalpuram Shivraman (mridangam) to name but a few.

Sanju's recent projects and collaborations include: BBC Proms, Sangeet Yatra, Rhythm Xchange, The Raga Taal, Bach to Benares, Ancient Future, Sangam, The Raga Jazz, Encounter, Romali, Pan Jazz, Sacred Beats of Benares, Aakrisht, Gnosis, Medici Edinburgh and Dante String Quartets.

sanjusahai.com

Jaymini Sahai is one of the most exciting artists to emerge from the new generation of UK-based South Asian dance artists. Beginning her Kathak training in the UK in 1983, Jaymini gained her diploma in Kathak in 1995 and since then she has been performing nationally and internationally in both professional productions and community events. She regularly conducts school and community related dance work and has performed for Her Majesty the Queen on several occasions. Jaymini has choreographed for Geraldine Connor's spectacular production of 'Carnival Messiah' which toured the UK and Trinidad and Tobago in 2009.

She set up her company Aradhana Arts in 2010 to present Kathak in its original pure form. In addition to performing and choreographing her own productions, Jaymini is a teacher of Kathak and holds regular classes, lecture demonstrations and residencies. She continues her training with Padamshree Pratap Pawar Ji, and most recently with the incredible and beautifully graceful Vidushi Mamta Maharaj Ji, daughter of the legendary Padma Vibhushan Pandit Birju Maharaj Ji.

Jaymini works full time as an IT Delivery Consultant for Discovery Networks building mobile apps with development teams alongside her dance work.

aradhana.org.uk

Sitarist and vocalist **Debipriya Sircar** (née Das) was born and brought up in London. She began learning music at the age of 4 from her mother and her early gurus were the late Pandit Manesh Chandra Kansara (sitar) and the late Sri Golak Mohan Choudhury (vocal).

Since 2003, Debipriya has been a disciple of Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty, one of the finest exponents of North Indian Classical Vocal music and has received vocal training at workshops conducted in the UK. Debipriya played the role of 'Indian Queen' in the opera pastiche, 'Calcutta', an innovative music and theatre project created by baroque group Ensemble Tempus Fugit, with musical direction by Katie De La Matter.

Based in Stratford (East London) Debipriya combines her music with a full-time job as a Flow Cytometrist at The Francis Crick Institute in London.

Tofail Ahmed is an extremely melodic and versatile Indian Classical Musician, something he has aspired to do since his youth. He originates from Bangladesh where he commenced private music tuitions with Ustad Kamruzzaman on Tabla, and North Indian Classical Vocal with Pandit Anil Kumar Shaha in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 1989. With complete dedication and perseverance, he was awarded the prestigious ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) Scholarship to study North Indian Classical Music in Delhi. He continues to exhilarate his audience with soulful voice and regularly conducts school workshops and vocal residencies.

Indrani Datta performs and teaches Kathak (Kalka Bindadin Gharana), the works of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore and creates her own written commissioned multilingual musicals for venues such as Sadler's Wells Lillian Baylis, Bloomsbury Festival, Nehru Centre London, Science Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Indrani's Kathak Gurus are Guru Sushmita Ghosh, Vidushi Saswati Sen and Padma Vibhushan Pandit Birju Maharaj. She is an alumna of Dakshinee Kolkata in Rabindrasangeet and trains in North Indian classical singing with Shree Anirban Bhattacharyya, a disciple of Padma Bhushan Pandit Ajoy Chakraborty. Indrani's mentor in Indian classical music is Sitar maestro Purbayan Chatterjee of the Senia-Maihar gharana. In spring 2021 Indrani and friends launched London Basant Festival under the banner of Indrani Datta Dance in association with Nehru Centre London.

In her other life Indrani trained as a barrister and is a full time in-house counsel member for one of the largest global corporate law firms in London. She is also in the firm's Diversity & Inclusion Committee.