



Sunday 26 June, 3pm  
Royal Spa, Queen's Park

## THE DAKSHA YAGNA

### Aradhana Arts

Sanju Sahai *tabla*

Jaymini Sahai *Kathak dance*

Debipriya Sircar *voice, sitar*

Raaheel Husain *voice, sitar*

Jonny Bunyan *narrator*

A rich King. A grand ceremony. A sacrificial fire. A reincarnation.

A powerful mythological story from the ancient Hindu scriptures about Sati, who married the ascetic Lord Shiva much against the wishes of her father, King Daksh. Uninvited, Sati attends a lavish ceremony, arranged by her father. On arrival, she is faced with an unimaginable situation...

### 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.

## 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 (soprano), BBC Philharmonic, Naresh Sohal (composer), Pete Lockett (multi percussionist), Yair Dalal (oud), Jason Carter (guitar), Matthew Barley and Anup Biswas (cello), 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, Ustaaad Imrat Khan Saheb, Ustaaad 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), Ustaad Aasheesh Khan and Ustaad Amjad Ali Khan (sarod), Pandit Jasraj, Smt Girija Devi, Pandits Rajan and Sajan Misra, Pandit Ajoy Chakraborty and Smt Veena Sahasrabuddhe (vocal) 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 a Kathak artist based in the UK. She is passionate about performing and teaching dance as well as creating new innovative dance projects.

She 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 under the guidance of Nilima Devi Ji, Jaymini gained her diploma in Kathak in 1995 and since then she has performed nationally and internationally in both professional productions and community events. She regularly conducts school and community-related dance work.

Jaymini has taken further training in Kathak with Padamshree Guru Pratap Pawar Ji and most recently is under the guidance of the beautifully graceful Vidushi Mamta Maharaj Ji, daughter of none other than the world renowned Pandit Birju Maharaj Ji.

In 2010 she set up Aradhana Arts, which aims to preserve the traditions of Kathak dance in the UK.

**aradhana.org.uk**

**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.

**Raheel Husain** is one of the leading Indian Classical musicians of his generation in the UK. He started his musical training at the age of 8 and since then he has been awarded scholarships to study in India and perform at prestigious venues and festivals around the UK and abroad. He has had the privilege of performing for Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall and the late sitarist Pandit Ravi Shankar, as well as accompanying world-renowned dancers including the legendary Pandit Birju Maharaj and the critically acclaimed Akram Khan.

Raheel has been the conductor for SAMYO, UK's national orchestra for Indian music, and more recently has composed for film and podcasts. Throughout his music career, Raheel has trained with various teachers from different Gharanas (schools of music) and through his music aims to represent the rich heritage they all have to offer.

**Jonny Bunyan** is a broadcaster and radio presenter who has worked with the BBC and ITV and regularly presents a show on Maritime Radio in Greenwich. He also spent over a decade working as a marketing director in the theatre, arts and culture sector where he worked on many West End and UK touring productions. He is co-founder and executive producer of Pardon Our French, a video and podcast production company which specialises in marketing-led videos for a variety of clients. In his spare time, he plays piano and is a big fan of musical theatre, from where he will draw inspiration for today's performance.

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