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MUSIC SOCIETY

2020 CONCERT SEASON PROGRAM



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raga-mala.com





Rohit Group is proud to support the Edmonton Raga Mala Music Society



RohitGroup.com



Why "Raga-Mala" ?

To say that a 'Raga' is a *scale*, or a set of notes with a prescribed way of ascending and descending, is an understatement.

A Raga is much more vast than this as it encompasses not only melodic structure, but the vibrations created by the combination of these notes. These vibrations have the ability to stir human emotions, and as such each Raga becomes associated with a certain mood that the performer is trying to establish with his listener. Additionally, these moods are more appropriately expressed at certain times of day — beginning with spiritual and devotional in the morning, and moving towards romance and pathos in the evening. Other Ragas are expressed during seasonal changes where some are played during monsoons, and others are played in Spring.

A skilled musician renders a Raga by taking into consideration nature, time, and human emotion to create a musical experience for the listener.

The word 'Mala' literally means a *garland*. In India, when one wishes to pay respect to someone of high esteem, it is not uncommon to offer them a garland of flowers. This gesture can be seen in temples with deities, wedding ceremonies, and other auspicious events.

We, the Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society, take this opportunity to welcome you, our esteemed audience member, with a garland of ragas, known as Raga-Mala.

—Ojas Joshi

Welcome to Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society's 2020 Concert series!

As we begin this exciting 38th anniversary season, we wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to past Executive Board members, volunteers, patrons, sponsors, donors, and advertisers whose continuing support is essential to the long-term vitality of Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society.

We greatly appreciate your comments and feedback towards building a productive dialogue between Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society and our supporters as we share a passion for the same cause – "Love of Music."

I am deeply honoured to be a part of the talented leadership team that will bring you this 38th anniversary season featuring acclaimed international and local artists. Promoting India's rich traditions and culture through classical music and dance strengthens Edmonton as a diverse and wonderful place to live.

Our commitment is to bring you excellence in classical Indian music and dance for your enjoyment. Your commitment to us helps make that happen.

Many thanks,
Devila Mehta-Karkanis
President

In this program:

CONCERT SERIES ARTIST INFORMATION

Each event appears chronologically

2020 CONCERT LISTING - CENTRE SPREAD

SUPPORTER ADS - THROUGHOUT

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ARTICLES

"Edmonton Raga-Mala: A Community"

"The Aesthetics of Tabla"

"An Affair to Remember"

"Why Not Get Involved?"

Cover image by Payal Sahay – www.arthbypayal.com

Local Artist Showcase

Saturday, February 22, 2020

6:30-9:30pm

The Orange Hub – 10045 156 St NW



■ **RAGHAV VAMARAJU** was born and raised in Fort McMurray, Canada. He started singing and performing Hindi (Bollywood) songs since the tender age of 4, and commenced his formal training in Carnatic music at age 10. Since then, he has learned multiple instruments (specializing in keyboard/piano), and sings in multiple languages and genres. Raghav released a CD of his own Carnatic compositions in 2017, recorded in India. By profession, he is a software engineer, working in Edmonton. ♦



■ **KAUSHIK SIVARAMAKRISHNAN** is a disciple of violin vidushi Kalaimamani Smt. Radha Narayan. He started learning violin from the age of 6 and has been giving public performances in India, US and Canada since the age of 11. Kaushik has received many awards for his music in competitions and institutions, the highlight being the Best Violinist award from the prestigious Music Academy, Chennai in 2007. Kaushik has performed for a number of programs in Canada like Mushtari Begum Festival in Vancouver from 2015 to present, part of the fusion band with Dr. Trichy Sankaran in Vancouver in 2018, carnatic concerts for ACTS, Raga-Mala and also is a regular accompanist for Bharatanatyam and Kathak dance forms performed by Naren Ganesan and Usha Gupta ji. ♦



■ **BHUYASH NEUPANE** is a multi-instrumentalist, singer, and rhythmic ensemble composer hailing from Nepal. He has had his Tabla training under Pt. Nishikant Barodekar (Punjab Gharana) and Eastern Classical Vocal training under Smt. Kumudini Mundkur of Bhendibazaar Gharana. As a performer of eastern classical music and a student of Nepalese Folk-music, Bhuyash has been involved in experimental music collaborations happening in and around the city of Edmonton, which he believes will help in popularizing Electro-Folk experimentation. You can find him performing with his band "Holy Drone Travellers" and also featuring regularly in Flamenco, Hip-Hop and Rock performances around the city. ♦



■ **JACQUELINE KARATHRA** is a Bharatanatyam dancer trained in the Mysore style of Bharatanatyam under Guru Malavika Venkatsubbaiah with Natyam Dance Academy. She is well known for her refined approach to storytelling in dance and for her subtle expressions. As an up and coming dancer, she strives to bring creative flair to her choreography while maintaining the rich traditional roots of the art form. As a part of Natyam Ensemble, she has been part of many of Natyam's productions and performed widely in Edmonton for the Feats Festival of Dance, The Works Arts Festival, and Thousand Faces Festival, in Winnipeg with Manohar Performing Arts, and in Calgary for Natyanjali. Jacqueline is currently pursuing her medical degree at the University of Alberta. ♦

Maestro Shashank Subramanyam

Saturday, April 25, 2020

7:00–10:00pm

The Orange Hub – 10045 156 St NW

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■ MAESTRO SHASHANK

SUBRAMANYAM, (pictured, centre) a Grammy nominated exponent of the Flute, began performing at age 6. Trained by father Subramanyam and vocal maestros R.K. Srikantan and Palghat K.V. Narayanaswami and under Pandit Jasraj in Hindustani Music, he is presently considered one of the best Bamboo Flute artists. With scintillating, primal tones he truly sings through the most organic and ancient of all instruments. His logic-defying virtuosity is the result of a magical innate talent coupled with the training. Shashank has propelled the Bamboo flute into an enviable position by his playing techniques of which “the multi flute transposed fingering technique” and the “dual octave production” have won him world acclaim.

Now with over 30 years of a successful career, Shashank often collaborates with many legendary musicians from India and around the world including Guitarist John McLaughlin, Paco De Lucia, tabla Maestro Zakir Hussain, Ustad Sultan Khan, Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, Pt. Ajoy Chakraborty, to name a few. Shashank has enthralled audiences in India, Asia, North America, Australia and many countries. Shashank is the youngest recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi’s senior award for the year 2017, “A Top” ranking in the All India Radio and TV, and many more prestigious awards. ♦

■ **AKKARAI S. SORNALATHA** is an Indian classical (Carnatic) violinist and vocalist whose soulful music has captivated the hearts of music lovers worldwide. She is the disciple of her father Akkarai Shri S. Swaminathan and she has trained under Shri O. V. Subramaniam, Padmabhushan Shri P. S. Narayanaswamy, and chitravina maestro Shri N. Ravikiran. A child prodigy, Sornalatha began performing by the age of 8, and she and her sister, known together as ‘Akkarai Sisters’, have the unique distinction, and are highly sought-after world wide, as both vocalists and violinists. She has played alongside stalwarts like N. Ravikiran, T.M. Krishna, Shrimushnam V. Raja Rao, and P. Unnikrishnan. ♦

■ **PATRI SATISH KUMAR** was born into a family of musicians. He was initiated into the art of percussion by his mother Padmavathy, a renowned violinist and had his debut at the tender age of 7. Since then he has trained under Sree Ramachandramurthy, V.A. Swami and V. Narasimhan, and continues to evolve a style that is distinctly his own. A fine performer, and composer, his specialization is his precise fingering technique and the fine balance of sounds between the treble and bass heads of the Mridangam. Satish has been enthralled audiences in India, the Persian Gulf, South East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Europe, USA and Canada. ♦

TRADITION MEETS INNOVATION

Pt. Nayan Ghosh + Ishaan Ghosh

WITH DEEPAK PARAMASHIVAN, SARANGI



■ **ISHAAN GHOSH**, at only 19, stands out as one of the prominent and promising tabla players of the younger generation. He is the grandson of acclaimed tabla player, Nikhil Ghosh and the son and disciple of the internationally renowned tabla and sitar stalwart Nayan Ghosh.

Since the age of 8, Ishaan has performed at prestigious venues in Switzerland, France, Spain, USA, UK, Mexico, Hawaii among other countries. Besides accompanying his father's sitar concerts, he has also performed with major figures like Pt. Jasraj, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Pt. Buddhadev Dasgupta, Ustad Aashish Khan, Pt. Tejendra Narayan Majumdar, Ustad Nishaat Khan, N. Rajam, and several other prominent artists. He has regularly collaborated with musicians of various other genres like jazz guitarist Max Clouth of Germany, and Hamidreza Rahbaralam of Iran, Hoo Eouling of China and Raho Langsepp of Estonia.

He was conferred the 'BABA ALLAUDDIN KHAN YUVA PURASKAR' by the Government of Madhya Pradesh, India in 2012. ♦



DR. DEEPAK PARAMASHIVAN began his formal vocal training at the age of 5 under Ms. R. Vasanthalakshmi of Mysore. He received advanced lessons in vocal and Veena in the 'Mysore Bidaram Krishnappa'

style from his father, R. Paramashivan, an eminent Kannada theatre personality. He attained proficiency in the Mysore style of Veena under maestro Vidwan D. Balakrishna. He learned Hindustani vocal and the essentials of Sarangi from Faiyaz Ahmed Khan of

Saturday, June 6, 2020

7:00–10:00pm

The Orange Hub – 10045 156 St NW

■ **PANDIT NAYAN GHOSH** is acclaimed as one of India's foremost musicians, with an unusual expertise in two completely different instruments: the sitar and the tabla. Son and disciple of the famed tabla player Nikhil Ghosh and nephew of Pannalal Ghosh, a legendary flautist, Nayan carries on this rich musical legacy. Since the age of 18, his music has taken him across continents to represent India at some of the most prestigious international music festivals.

Nayan Ghosh has shared the stage with legendary musicians like Ravi Shankar, Vilayat Khan, Nikhi Banerjee, Buddhadev Dasgupta, Shivkumar Sharma, Amjad Ali Khan, Pandit Jasraj, Halim Jaffer Khan, Rais Khan and L. Subramaniam. He has collaborated with world musicians such as composer Terry Riley, avant-garde pianist Yosuke Yamashita, guitarist Kazumi Watanabe, jazz musicians Kidd Jordan and Henry Butler of New Orleans, Paul Grant, Ross Daly, John Bailey. In 2016, Pandit Ghosh was specially invited along with his talented son, Ishaan Ghosh, by the former US President Jimmy Carter to give a benefit concert for the Habitat For Humanity project and felicitated by the President in Atlanta.

Presently, he is Director of Sangit Mahabharati, a leading music academy in Mumbai, and is a Distinguished Guest Professor at IIT-Bombay, teaching tabla, sitar, vocal and musicology at the Cell for Human Values. ♦

Dharwad, and continued his Sarangi training under the Sarangi virtuoso Pt. Ram Narayan and Grammy winner Late Pt. Dhruva Ghosh. Deepak has performed at international music festivals both as a solo artist and with world renowned musicians such as Ustad Aashish Khan, Pt. Yogesh Samsi, Pt. Birju Maharaj to name a few. He has received the Cultural Diversity in Arts Award from the Edmonton Arts Council, 2017-18 and Izaak Walton Killam Award, for 2015 and 2016. Deepak has a PhD in Energy and Climate Engineering with a gold medal from the Indian Institute of Science, and he has completed his second PhD in Music at University of Alberta. ♦

Mahesh Kale: "Sur Niragas Ho"

(let the music be pure)

SAT
20
JUN



Saturday, June 20, 2020

6:30-9:30pm

The Orange Hub – 10045 156 St NW

Collaboration with
**Dr. Parnerkar
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■ **MAHESH KALE**, is a San Francisco Bay Area-based Indian Classical vocalist renowned for his specialization in Indian Classical (Hindustani), Semi-Classical, Devotional music, and Natya Sangeet. Kale, after winning India's National Film Award as the Best Playback Singer, for classical piece in the film *Katyar Kaljat Ghushli* (2016), has firmly established himself as the face of Indian classical music of the new generation. Groomed in the Gurukul system of learning from the legendary Pandit Jitendra Abhisheki, he has an illustrious pedigree, and his thrilling performances bear this out.

Mahesh maintains an open outlook towards music to reach out to the new generation, while retaining the traditions. He has performed with world percussionists including Zakir Hussain, Trilok Gurtu, and Sivamani, and instrumentalists like Stanley Jordan, Pedro Eustache, George Brooks and

Frank Martin, in fusion and collaborative works, ably demonstrating his versatility as a composer and singer. In an effort to spread awareness and education about Indian classical music in the western world, Mahesh has given lecture-demonstrations and talks at various academic institutions including Stanford University, Harvard University, TEDx, and the Commonwealth Club.

Founder of Indian Classical Music and Arts Foundation, a non-profit organization focused on preserving, nurturing and celebrating Indian Classical Music, Mahesh is also a teacher and an inspiration for a motivated student body of over a hundred fifty students in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is keen on spreading more awareness about the beauty of classical music and hopes to attract more youngsters towards the rich legacy of classical and folk music of India.

His melodious voice, illustrious pedigree and an acute sense of responsibility and vision towards traditional music's role in the contemporary world is his greatest strength and sets him apart as an exceptional Indian musician on a global platform. ♦

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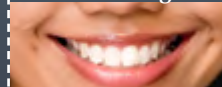
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KATHAK DANCE

Usha Gupta Dance Entourage

"KHOJ" THE SEARCH



Saturday, July 11, 2020

7:00-9:30pm

The Orange Hub

10045 156 St NW

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF USHA DANCE ENTOURAGE

Usha Gupta

CONCEPT & CHOREOGRAPHY

Usha Gupta

ORIGINAL MUSIC SCORE

Praveen D. Rao

DANCERS

Anuj Mishra

Souvik Chakraborty

Ayan Banerjee

Nandini Sharma

Marla Palakkamanil Gill (Canada)

Riya Alike Mittal (Canada)

SINGERS

Usha Gupta

Deepak Paramashivan (Canada)

Varijashree Venugopal

MUSICIANS

Varijashree Venugopal FLUTE

Deepshikha Joshi SITAR

Deepak Paramashivan (Canada) SARANGI

Ojas Joshi TABLA

Kaushik Sivaramakrishnan VIOLIN

Joanne Yu (Canada) CELLO

■ Over the past three decades **USHA GUPTA** worked tirelessly as an artist, teacher, mentor, choreographer, fundraiser, community advocate, and peer supporter. She has greatly influenced the dance community and beyond and is well respected and cherished artist in the Edmonton dance community.

In 2016, Usha was inducted into the Edmonton Arts & Culture Hall of Fame and have received many awards locally and abroad. Her positive energy brings people together through artistic innovation, quality and humanity. She is known as an ambassador of cultural diversity in Edmonton and Canada.

Alongside her professional endeavors, Usha can be found volunteering her talents and skills at local festivals and arts celebrations, at hospitals, on national Steering Committees and arts

juries, and much, much more. Usha is a member of the Alberta Dance Alliance, the Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society, the Edmonton Folk Arts Council, the Edmonton Arts Council, the Canadian Conference for the Arts, and the Celebration of Women in the Arts. ♦



Usha Kala Niketan

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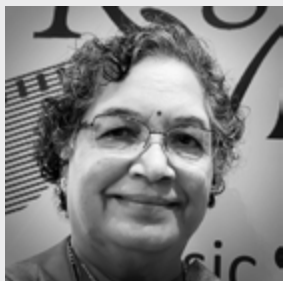


USHA GUPTA

Artistic Director

Edmonton Raga-Mala Executive

2019-2021 TERM



Devila Mehta-Karkhanis
PRESIDENT



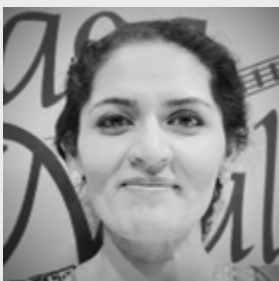
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Ojas Joshi
PROGRAMMING CHAIR



Bhumi Bhojak
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ORGANIZING SECRETARY

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2020 SEASON C

SAT
22
FEB

A FEAST OF MUSIC AND DANCE

Local Artist Showcase

RAGHAV VAMARAJU, KAUSHIK SIVARAMAKRISHNAN, BHUYASH NEUPANE
JACQUELINE KARATHRA

Saturday, February 22, 2020

6:30-9:30pm

The Orange Hub – 10045 156 St NW

SAT
25
APR

CARNATIC FLUTE

Maestro Shashank Subramanyam

AKKARAI S. SORNALATHA, VIOLIN – PATRI SATISH KUMAR, MRIDANGAM

Saturday, April 25, 2020

7:00-10:00pm

The Orange Hub – 10045 156 St NW

SAT
6
JUN

TRADITION MEETS INNOVATION

Pt. Nayan Ghosh + Ishaan Ghosh

DEEPAK PARAMASHIVAN, SARANGI

Saturday, June 6, 2020

7:00-10:00pm

The Orange Hub – 10045 156 St NW

SAT
20
JUN

CLASSICAL VOCAL

Mahesh Kale: "Sur Niragas Ho"

(let the music be pure)

Collaboration with **Dr. Parnerkar Life Management Foundation**

Saturday, June 20, 2020

6:30-9:30pm

The Orange Hub – 10045 156 St NW

TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE

CONCERT SERIES

KATHAK DANCE

**Usha Gupta
Dance Entourage**

**"KHOJ"
THE SEARCH**

Saturday, July 11, 2020

7:00–9:30pm

The Orange Hub – 10045 156 St NW

SAT
11 JUL

SAROD

Debasmita Bhattacharya

SUBHAJYOTI GUHA, TABLA

Sunday, September 13, 2020

3:00–6:00pm

The Festival Place – 100 Festival Way, Sherwood Park

SUN
13 SEP

HINDUSTANI FLUTE

Pandit Ronu Majumdar

SUBHAJYOTI GUHA, TABLA

Sunday, October 4, 2020

3:00–6:00pm

The Festival Place – 100 Festival Way, Sherwood Park

SUN
4 OCT

HINDUSTANI VOCAL

Sanhita Nandi

RAVI MISHRA, HARMONIUM – AQEEL BHATTI, TABLA

Sunday, November 1, 2020

3:00–6:00pm

The Festival Place – 100 Festival Way, Sherwood Park

SUN
1 NOV



raga-mala.com





Edmonton Raga-Mala - A Community

by Vasanthi Murthy

■ When I was asked to write an article about Raga-Mala, I felt like it was a very daunting task. Raga-Mala has been with us for so long it is hard to remember a time when we did not have it. Yet I remember how this wonderful organization came to be part of Edmonton's cultural scene.

The first Raga-Mala show I attended was in 1983 I think. At that time "Raga-Mala" was more of an idea than an organization. I remember receiving a phone call from someone informing me that a Hindustani vocalist from India would be giving a concert. I was told that this concert would be one of many - going forward - as a new music society was being established. I was being asked to come on board and support the new venture. Arriving at the lobby of the Citadel theatre, I recall standing amongst a handful of people, wondering when the rest of the crowd would show up. After standing around for a few minutes I realized - there would be no crowd; not a large crowd - not even a small crowd - just a few individuals (mostly organizers).

Then, one of the organizers gave a short speech. I came to understand that the organizers had a vision. This concert would be a spark that would flourish into a vibrant scene for classical Indian music and dance for many years to come. They saw this tiny crowd growing into a full house of art lovers. The one solo vocalist would soon be a line-up of the best and brightest talent from around the world!

From the modest turn out and simplicity of the first show, I couldn't help but feel a little skeptical. Little did I know then that the volunteers who held this vision were resilient, resourceful, dedicated and determined to bring their vision to fruition. They sought out members who would commit to attending the concerts, they applied for numerous grants and solicited sponsorship - pouring in an endless number of hours to grow the fledgling organization. As a result, Raga-Mala

has been able to attract some of the most eminent artists in Indian classical dance and music - artists that many of us would only dream of seeing live. Slowly, the handful of attendees at the first concert grew into a dozen, and then a few dozen and over the years, hundreds of people have enjoyed what Raga-Mala has to offer.

At the most recent concert (more than 35 years after my first one), I was struck by how things have changed. Instead of a small handful of people, there was a crowd of hundreds. A big-name sitar player and his ensemble were being showcased. Where a few organizers had pulled off a tiny show, a full team of volunteers were keeping things running smoothly. But most importantly, I saw a formidable community. When I looked at the crowd, I could not say I knew everyone individually, but it felt like I was coming home. The show gave me a chance to reconnect with cherished friends. After being away from Edmonton for a couple of years, I felt excited and very touched to see all the familiar faces that have kept this organization going strong for so many years.

Every year we eagerly wait for the Raga-Mala season to start after the winter break. We come to Raga-Mala concerts to quench our thirst for classical music and dance. We look forward to browse through the brochure to see the concert line-up. We get excited not only with anticipation of attending the concerts, but also seeing our friends and catching up with the community news.

Raga-Mala has become an integral part of the Edmonton Arts scene. We are lucky to have the dedicated volunteers who keep it growing and flourishing. Over the years hundreds of volunteers have spent thousand hours to build and nourish this cherished organization. We can see that it is a labour of love. May we enjoy many more seasons together!! ♦

SAROD

Debasmita Bhattacharya

WITH SUBHAJYOTI GUHA, TABLA*

Sunday, September 13, 2020

3:00-6:00pm

The Festival Place – 100 Festival Way, Sherwood Park



■ **DEBASMITA BHATTACHARYA** started learning sarod from her father, Pandit Debasish Bhattacharya. Later, she attended the ITC Sangeet Research Academy (Kolkata) and trained with late Pandit Buddhadev Dasgupta of the Senia Shahjahanpur Gharana.

Debasmita has featured at some of the most prestigious music festivals in India such as the Varanasi Music Festival 2017, Dharwad Music Festival, and the Dev Gandharva Prempriya Sangeet Samaroh (Vadodara). As a solo artist, Debasmita has been invited to perform at some of the most prestigious international festivals held across the globe.

These include Chhayanat Sangeet Sammelan, (Dhaka), Ravenna Festival (Italy), Darbar Festival (London), Holland India Festival (The Hague), Muscat Classical Music Festival, Edinburgh Music Festival and World Music Festival (Shanghai).

Debasmita has also collaborated with various international filmmakers by directing or contributing music to their documentary films. She is currently on the panel of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and has also been associated with Spic Macay since 2014 where she has been conducting numerous music workshops and classes for youth. ♦

**See Subhajyoti Guha info, next page.*

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Pandit Ronu Majumdar

WITH SUBHAJYOTI GUHA, TABLA



■ **PANDIT RONU MAJUMDAR** is a major Indian flautist of this era. He is a style maker who renders a raga with a fine mix of 'dhrupadi gayaki' and 'laykari'. He has been credited for making flute a popular musical instrument amongst young musicians. American composer and musician Ry Cooder has rightly said 'Ronu is definitely the Dr. Feelgood of the Indian flute.' Ranendra Majumdar, popularly known as Ronu

Sunday, October 4, 2020
3:00-6:00pm

The Festival Place
100 Festival Way, Sherwood Park

Majumdar, began playing the flute under the guidance of his father Dr. Bhanu Majumdar, late Pt. Lakshman Prasad Jaipurwale, and Pt. Vijay Raghav Rao. In terms of schools, Ronu Majumdar belongs to the Maihar Gharana which has given us Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and Pt. Ravi Shankar.

Among his many accomplishments Pandit Ronu Majumdar has composed music for India's first IMAX film, "Mystic India", and conducted a concert of 5,378 flautists on one stage called 'Venu Naad' under the banner of 'Art of Living'.

Among his many awards are the Aditya Vikram Birla Award (1999), Lifetime Achievement Award by Sahara India (2001), Lifetime Achievement Award by Navbharat Times, National Kumar Gandharva Award (2006), and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his contribution to Indian instrumental music (2014). He also received a Grammy nomination in 1996. Films Division of India has produced a documentary film on Pt. Ronu Majumdar called 'Bansuriwala'.

For those who are interested in learning more, there is a free Android app, 'Ronu Majumdar Flute' which is also available on Windows and iOS. ♦



■ **SUBHAJYOTI GUHA**, a senior disciple of Pandit Sankha Chatterjee, is a much sought-after tabla player from Kolkata, India. He performs regularly in India, USA, Canada and Europe and with well-respected and best known musicians from India, such as Ustad Aashish Khan, Ustad Shahid Parvez Khan, Pandits Vishwamohan Bhatt, Buddhadev Dasgupta, Tejendranarayan Majumdar, Ronu Majumdar, among others. Through his frequent visits he has also established a strong connection with many jazz musicians in USA and Canada and has his own Indo-Jazz band, AMEYA, based in Toronto. Holding a Master's degree in Applied Mathematics, music is surely his primary passion and profession. ♦

We would love to hear your feedback!
Please feel free to contact us at
www.raga-mala.com/contact

Sanhita Nandi

WITH RAVI MISHRA, HARMONIUM – AQEEL BHATTI, TABLA

Sunday, November 1, 2020

3:00–6:00pm

The Festival Place – 100 Festival Way, Sherwood Park

■ **SANHITA NANDI**, a prominent exponent in the Kirana Gharana, has received ample recognition and reviews on her mastery over the delivery of pitch, tonal precision, use of microtones and tone-fragments, the main characterization of this school of music. She has performed at premier classical music festivals and concerts such as the Tansen Sangeet Samaroha in Gwalior, Sawai Gandharva Sangeet Sammelan in Pune, Annual Saptak Sangeet Sammelan in Ahmedabad, the Shree Baba Harivallabh Sangeet Sammelan in Jalandhar, National Music Festival in Dharwad, and many other venues as a virtuoso singer. Overseas, she has performed at the Annenberg Centre (Philadelphia), Chhandayan (New York), Learn Quest Classical Music Conference (Boston), World Music Festival (Chicago), Arohi Classical Music festival (Toronto), Philadelphia CrossRoad Music festival, Bahamas Classical Music Festival, as well as for Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society. ♦



■ **RAVI MISHRA** started his music training at the age of 9 under the tutelage of Pt. Kinnar and Payal Seen and later under the guidance of Pt. Ajay Jha. Ravi has had the honor to accompany various artists such as Pt. Anindo Chatterjee, Pt. Kumar Bose and others. He has also worked with award-winning producers and artists such as Bashiri Johnson, former producer and director for Whitney Houston, Norah Jones, daughter of Pt. Ravi Shankar, and many others. Ravi

continues to travel, indulging and serving the vibrations of music and sharing his love with music to the world one note at a time. Currently Ravi is learning classical vocal music from Vidushi Sanhita Nandi, a prominent exponent from Kirana Gharana. ♦



■ **AQEEL BHATTI** is a disciple of Khalifa Irshad Ali, of the Punjab Gharana. Since 2005 he is a faculty member at University of Pennsylvania teaching tabla in the Department of

South Asian Studies. Aqeel maintains an active concert schedule, accompanying many renowned vocalists and Kathak dancers from both India and Pakistan. ♦

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The Aesthetics of Tabla

by Ojas Joshi

■ In this article, I'll discuss two aspects of tabla playing to consider when listening to, or attending a live performance of Indian music.

Tabla Solo and Tabla Accompaniment are two very separate applications and one can discern a good tabla player by his ability to understand the difference. It may seem quite obvious but more than the names suggest, it does require some maturity, humility, and deep musical knowledge to do justice to both styles.

In Tabla Solo, the main instrumentalist is the tabla player who will be accompanied most commonly on the harmonium, or sometimes the sarangi. In this case, the accompanist will play a repeating melody known as "lehera" or "nagma", which is a time-keeping melody comprised of the same number of beats as the rhythm cycle the tabla player has chosen to present. A complete tabla solo will include four movements: Peshkar, Kaida, Gat, and Rela and I will very briefly describe each.

Peshkar can be considered the equivalent of "alaap" in an instrumental recital. Where an "alaap" gradually unveils the notes of the raga, the peshkar introduces the listener to the rhythm cycle, the tabla phrases, and the manner in which the tabla player will approach his repertoire. In fact, it is during the peshkar section that the soloist is able to establish his artistic identity and the listener can become familiar with his style, creativity, and depth as a musician. In each of the other movements, the tabla player pays homage to his lineage and musical influences by playing themes and improvised variations on those themes.

Kaida sections are presented by demonstrating specialized compositions, most commonly in the form of rhyming couplets. These couplets are then expanded, dissected, and re-arranged to highlight the improvisational skill of the soloist. Additionally, the Kaida will always represent the Gharana, or style of playing, that the tabla player has learned.

The Gat section is easily recognizable as the compositions are first recited, or sung, to show their rhythmic beauty and poetic phrasing, before they are reproduced on the tabla.

The finale, or Rela section is identified by the high tempo, and the continuous drum roll-like finger movements involved in its presentation. As such, in a tabla solo perfor-

mance, the tabla player has total autonomy and he can decide everything from the pitch of the tabla, tempo, volume, dynamics, and length of performance.

Tabla Accompaniment is a completely separate dimension of tabla playing where the tabla player does not have any autonomy whatsoever. He must accommodate the needs of the main instrumentalist, vocalist, or dancer. It is essential that he understands the temperament of the main artist and also be familiar with their repertoire in order for him to appropriately accompany them and give full justice to their performance. A good tabla player will also understand the emotional content of the piece, whether it is a devotional bhajan, a romantic thumri, or a light classical folk melody, and tailor his playing accordingly to bring out the necessary characteristics of the rendition. In Tabla Accompaniment, it is not only important to know when and what to play, but also when and what *not* to play. At the core, it is his job to play a solid "theke" or rhythm cycle for the main performer to feel comfortable enough to perform at their best ability. Imagine that the tabla player is laying a path for others to travel on, if the ground is not smooth and stable, it will be an uncomfortable ride for all on the journey. A good accompanist will not overstep his role and take liberties with rhythmic ornamentations or short solos, but instead he will wait for his cue from the main artist to showcase his talent. Even in these moments, he will improvise based on what has already been established by the main artist and continue in the same vein in order to make his musical statement relevant to that moment. He will also keep his solo very short and sweet, wrapping up his statement within two, or a maximum of four rhythm cycles before shifting the spotlight back to the main artist. It is said that a good tabla accompanist must be able to keep his ego in check, because he understands that the performance is not about him, it is about the music.

Some of the greatest tabla players, Ustad Alla Rakha, Pt. Kishan Maharaj, Pt. Swapan Chaudhuri, Ustad Zakir Hussain and many others have understood this distinction clearly, and it has made them some of the most respected musicians of all time. Edmonton has been very fortunate to have seen many of these artists grace our Raga-Mala stage! ♦

THANK YOU, RAGA-MALA VOLUNTEERS!

MANY HANDS MAKE *DELIGHT* WORK.

PHOTO BY TIM MARSHALL ON UNSPLASH

Why not get involved?

Here are only a few of the benefits of volunteering for Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society's exciting new 2020 season!

- Explore India's rich traditions and culture through classical music and dance!
- Meet your favorite performing artists at concerts and private receptions!
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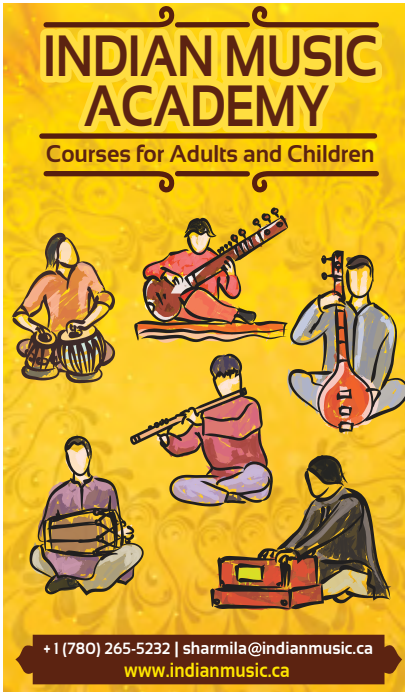
Raga-Mala is a volunteer organization committed to promoting classical Indian music and dance. Opportunities include:

- Performing Artists' Volunteer (e.g. backstage, hosting, chauffeur, reception)
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- And many more!

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For more information, contact any of our friendly executives or visit raga-mala.com

—Kirsten Oates



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PHOTO BY ROBERTO LOPEZ ON UNSPLASH

An Affair to Remember

■ My love affair with Raga-Mala started in earnest some twenty years ago when I returned to Edmonton after a five year hiatus. Prior to that I attended Raga-Mala concerts randomly.

Once I took out my first membership I was hooked. One could say I sort of became a permanent fixture on the Raga-Mala scene. After becoming a member, I also started volunteering for Raga-Mala. The presidents and volunteers would try interesting experiments to welcome and increase our audience. One of the things we did was to try and decorate the front reception to make it more welcoming. I remember bringing my Indian brass pots with flowers from my garden and old silk saris to use as tablecloths for the front table! As volunteers we were also given sets of members lists to make personal phone calls to remind them of upcoming concerts. Some of these ideas evolved with time, newer boards and presidents. We started to participate in casinos for better financial health of the society and we also took better advantage of technology. Thanks to the hard work of the executives over the years I have seen the popularity of Raga-Mala grow in leaps and bounds.

I learned so much about Indian classical music through Raga-Mala. Be it vocals or dance, Carnatic or North Indian music, or the variety of dazzlingly different Indian music instruments, there was, and is, always so much on offer. I feel tremendously lucky to have heard renowned maestros through Raga-Mala – ones whom I would never have heard but for Raga-Mala's untiring efforts, and now some of them are no longer with us. Now I am introduced to the younger maestros coming from India and gaining steady popularity on the world stage. Even when I attended concerts by artists I was

unfamiliar with, I would leave the hall saying "Raga-Mala has delivered yet again"! It would suffice to say I have never been disappointed. Not only have I enjoyed the famous ones coming out of India but also those who were born in Canada and got involved in the Indian classical tradition and have shown they are no less talented than their Indian counterparts whether coming out of different parts of Canada or from our own Edmonton backyard!

I love the simplicity and intimacy that reigns in the Edmonton Raga-Mala concerts. Even when I go to hear concerts in India – this intimacy between the audience and the artists is hugely lacking and I leave with a feeling that Raga-Mala concerts are so much better!

I will also look back on all the other diehard members of Raga-Mala who I got to know over the years with great affection. We obviously had the same tastes in Indian music! On a personal note I must add that I introduced my then teenaged son to Raga-Mala and he was absolutely starstruck! The concerts really moved him! He couldn't believe for such reasonably priced tickets we got to hear such fantastic music. I feel really good about it as an Indian mother.

As I get ready to leave Edmonton to start a new chapter of my life in Surrey, BC, I salute the Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society for enriching my life in more ways than one. I wish you continued success and envy the Edmontonians who will continue to enjoy this beautiful gem we call Raga-Mala. I hope to come back on and off and take in concerts whenever I can.

Sincerely,
Asma – one of many Raga-Mala fans ♦

Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society's well-wishers, supporters and volunteers.

First and foremost, we sincerely thank our audience who regularly attends our concerts which encourages the committee to do what we do. Please savour the joy of music, and help us share it with others!

The Executive Team would like to express our deepest gratitude to the following Raga-Mala volunteers for donating their time, offering their homes for hosting the artists, preparing meals for the artists, hosting artist's receptions, providing transportation, helping backstage, in the control room and the front of house.

Jayant Acharya	Shreela Chakrabarty	Jayant Kumar	Kala Ravishankara
Yogashree Bharath	Rahul Chauhan	Roshni Rajiv Kumar	Payal Sahay
Ravi Bhyrajois	Bharat Jobanputra	Aanand Mehta	
Gomathi Boorada	Subhash Karkhanis	Vasanthi Murthy	
Brad Bowie	Mukund Krishnan	Radha Padmanabhan	

Our sincere thanks to our casino volunteers, as funds received from AGLC help us to remain sustainable and bring internationally renowned artists to perform on the Raga-Mala stage:

Chintan Acharya	Jayant Kumar	Ishwar Thaleshwar	Natwarlal Zilka
Jayant Acharya	Sanjay Mathur	Anantha	Nilam Zilka
Kumud Acharya	Sharmila Mathur	Venkataramana	
Raksha Acharya	Devila		
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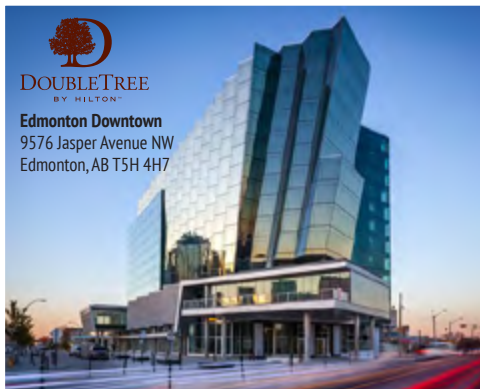
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