

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 12 July 2025
3.00pm

Bach and Raga

Amaan Ali Bangash sarod
Ayaan Ali Bangash sarod
Jennifer Pike violin
Anubrata Chatterjee tabla

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) Preludio from Partita No. 3 in E for solo violin BWV1006 (1720)

Afternoon Raga

Amjad Ali Khan (b.1945) The Brightest of Stars (2017)

Romancing Earth (2019-20)



The artists are grateful for the support of hospitality partner Taj 51 Buckingham Gate Suites and Residences.



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Afternoon Raga

Amaan and Ayaan present the afternoon Raga Bhimpalasi. Raga Bhimpalasi (ascending) C-Eb-F-G-Bb-C (descending) C-Bb-A-G-F-Eb-D-C.

This Raga reminds us of a minor Pentatonic ascending and the Dorian scale descending. The compositions will be in 10 beats and 16 beats time cycles.

The Brightest of Stars (based on Raga Durga)

The Brightest of Stars is rendered in Raga Durga by composer Amjad Ali Khan in a 16-beat rhythmic meter. The composer makes his own very plaintive call to us all to recognise human universality in his choice of Raga. Durga is perhaps the most well known pentatonic Raga in Indian music. The pentatonic scale is perhaps the most recognisably universal musical artifact that human beings have created in every corner of the known (and probably unknown too) world. The Alaap opens with what appears to be a typical examination of the notes by the sarod but closer listening reveals hints of folk music from the East of India – snippets, almost like threads of the folk traditions of Bengal and Assam appearing in a larger tapestry of classical utterance. The violin responses likewise contain hints of threads this time from the European folk traditions. The intimacy of the violin and sarod, gently interrupting each other's statements while one or the other is still playing, is perhaps as powerful a reminder that peaceful coexistence is not always about giving each other absolute space to speak alone but to invite partner and fellow human beings to share in our own utterances too. As the main body of the work unfurls, the sarod reminds us of its extraordinary ability to sing the fantasy of the repeated note, now dulcimered percussively, now fiercely agitated, now shaded with remarkable legato, finding in the violin the ideal partner to plumb the depths of meaning in the repeated note. Sarod and violin finally blaze across the sky in a fierce seven-beat cadential pattern to ring the curtain down on their astral display.

Romancing Earth (based on Raga Pilu)

Romancing Earth, composed by Amjad Ali Khan based in Raga Pilu, often described as a peaceful Raga, is associated with the second quarter of night. Amjad Ali Khan's melody is a profoundly vocal idiom that shares much with the North Indian classical music classics and latter day Bollywood. This performance is shaped as a binary structure with an extended introduction or Alaap. The Sarod opens the seven-part introduction with an ethereal descent of the notes of the Raga, as it emerges from the accompanying Shruti or drone. Already the main melody of the 2/3 piece is more than hinted at by the sarod. The sarod and violin exchange improvised embellishments of the raga as well as the melody. Close listening will reveal how the violin portamento at the critical cadential moments before passing the line back reveals its kinship to the *gamakas* (slides in Indian classical music). As the introduction ends, and the main body of the melody begins, the percussion enters. But it is the violin playing pizzicato (plucking the strings) who introduces the tabla onstage and together they become a unique rhythm section. The main tune now arrives in all its glory via the sarod, then is taken up in kind by the violin, her entrance here signaled by the tabla with the characteristic descending melodic flourish announcing key structural moments in this music. The two now join in a radiant declaration of the tune blossoming into a unique contrapuntal fantasy where sarod and violin alternate with virtuoso improvised arabesques on the tune, while the other intones the notes of the Raga below in the very same spirit as the *cantus firmus* styles of Medieval and Renaissance European musics. This is an important moment as it proposes, if not establishes, that counterpoint is not necessarily counter to the spirit of Hindustani music. Triumphant cascades in unison of Raga and melody bring this radiant romance to a glowing close.

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