

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 8 January 2023
7.30pm

Sarod to Guitar

Amjad Ali Khan sarod
Amaan Ali Bangash sarod
Ayaan Ali Bangash sarod
Sean Shibe guitar
Anubrata Chatterjee tabla

Amjad Ali Khan (b.1945)

Midnight Tenderness (2022) *arranged by Kyle Paul*

By the Moon (2015) *arranged by Kyle Paul*

Interval

Music from the 13th and 15th centuries
(Raga Bahar and Raga Miyan Ki Malhar)

Amjad Ali Khan

Peaceful Circle (2022) *arranged by Kyle Paul*



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We are so thrilled to perform with maestro Sean Shibe, one of the most versatile guitarists performing today whose innovation and approach to his instrument have been so brilliant and boundary-breaking.

I cannot remember a particular day on which I was initiated into the world of music. It was a part of me from as early as I can remember. Indeed, I cannot think of a moment when music has been separated from my life. My father, the legendary sarod maestro Haafiz Ali Khan, lived for music. Today, a wise man does not allow his son to become a classical musician, because of the uncertainty and insecurity of the livelihood. That is why in the past only sufi saints and faqirs could dedicate their lives to music or to God. For my father, though, there was no question of a life outside music. Life itself was Music and Music was Life. And so I came to inherit from him the legacy of five generations of musicians as naturally as a bird taking to the air. Music is the greatest wealth that I inherited from my forefathers; one that I am constantly sharing with my disciples.

For me, there are only two types of music. One is pure sound (which is the purest form); the other is based on the literature, text, lyrics, story, etc. There is an old saying, 'language creates barriers'. Through pure sound of the instruments or voice one cannot lie or abuse a person. Music has to be felt and experienced. I personally admire and respect the beautiful poetry or the messages of the great Saints. But I live in the world of sound. It is only through sound that I feel the presence of (God) the Supreme Being.

I treat every raga like a living entity. A mere scale is not a raga. A scale is more like a skeleton. Even though the literal meaning of a raga is improvisation within a set framework of ascending and descending notes, I feel a raga has to be invoked. Compositions, on the other hand, were created to preserve a raga. Since my childhood, I always wanted my instrument, the sarod, to be able to express the entire range of human emotions; to sing, shout, whisper and cry. All the emotions! It has been a long journey so far and by the benevolence of the heavens, the sarod has become far more expressive than it was many years ago.

Midnight Tenderness

The sarod ponders a harp-like introduction before embarking on the notes of *Tilak Kamod*, a late night raga. The exposition of this piece testified to the sarod's ability to swing between sonic colours, especially that shadowy *pianissimo* on the threshold of audibility. The guitar completes the *alap* with a final survey of the notes with coy perspectives from the upper and lower neighbour tones of each. Now the table raises the curtain on the first joint guitar-and-sarod statement, as the solo instruments entwine in garlands of intensely sweet thirds, consummating this meeting in matching slides. The sarod has one final flirtatious nod and wink, worthy of any Bollywood hero, in the pre-dawn moonlight before the two instruments merge in thirds once again and melt into a single lambent flame of ecstasy.

By the Moon

Raga Bihag uses the same notes as the natural scale, or the C-mode (Ionian), with the addition of a sharp fourth in

certain phrases within the prescribed ascending and descending shape of the raga. A dialogue commences, exchanging short *alap* phrases with Amaan before he launches into a longer improvisation. A *jor* section (recognisable from the sense of a pulse and faster movement) leads into the *gat*, which is a composition set to a rhythm cycle, in this case of 16 beats at a fast tempo in the most common of all North Indian *talas*, known as *Teentaal*, starting as a dialogue before the two artists join in unison for the statements of the composition. Just over halfway through this section with tabla accompaniment the first *gat* gives way to a much faster *gat*, also in *Teentaal*, allowing the music to accelerate to a thrilling climax.

Music from the 13th and 15th centuries (Raga Bahar and Raga Miyan Ki Malhar)

Amjad Ali Khan presents a *Tarana* in *Raga Bahar*. *Tarana* is a type of composition in Indian classical vocal music. Developed in the 13th Century by Amir Khusrau, it represents the urge to move away from song text and into the realm of instrumental music. It uses syllables like *dere*, *naa*, *deem*, and *tana*. These syllables, therefore, are used as a musical language tied in with melody and rhythm, allowing musicians to be unfettered by the restrictions that literal language may pose.

Raga Miyan Ki Malhar is said to have been created by the musician Tansen (fl. c.1545). Tansen was the 16th-century court musician of India, in the court of Mughal Emperor Akbar. Both *Bahar* and *Miyan Ki Malhar* are 'seasonal ragas.' Many ragas have been associated with seasons, evoking the changing moods of Mother Nature.

Peaceful Circle

Peaceful Circle is laid out by its composer **Amjad Ali Khan** in one of the most universally well-known ragas, *Bhairavi*, in a six-beat metric cycle. *Bhairavi*, related to the Western Phrygian mode, has spread its influence on artists from the Carnatic Trinity of the Thanjavur School to the Kronos Quartet, the Beatles and John Coltrane. The introduction or *alap* unfolds as a conversation between the sarod and violin in five verses. Already in the first verse, the sarod begins to hint at the melodic contours to be unveiled shortly. During this exchange there again appear hints of Amjad Ali Khan's groundbreaking concerto for sarod and orchestra *Samaagam*. The tabla appears at the end of the introduction, and with a flourish, tears the veil off the melody which the sarod now unfurls – a kind of cross-rhythmic waltz or sarabande, a favorite gesture of Amjad Ali Khan's with this raga. Guitar and sarod rejoice in the joint exposition of this radiant dance frequently slipping out of the tonal confines of the melody to throw in the odd exotic accidental to spice up the proceedings. A hocketing duet (where the melodic line is completed by the partner) emerges next and sails to its joyous conclusion with a typical cadential *hemiola* (two-against-three cross rhythm) draped with startling exuberance over the primary pulse.

Introductory notes © Amjad Ali Khan

Midnight Tenderness and Peaceful Circle © Neil Sorrell

Music from the 13th and 15th centuries © Subhalakshmi Khan

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