

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 9 January 2023
7.30pm

Tribute to Mahatma Gandhi

Amjad Ali Khan sarod • Amaan Ali Bangash sarod • Ayaan Ali Bangash sarod
Jiaxin Lloyd Webber cello • Anubrata Chatterjee tabla

Refugee Orchestra Project

Alev Gökçe Erem violin
Sabina Torosjan violin
LJOVA viola
Valeriya Sholokhova cello

Monica McCarron flute
Harry Penny clarinet
Francesca Carpos bassoon
Sabina Rakcheyeva violin
Ruth Funnell violin
Adéla Peguerová violin

Richard Cookson viola
Daisy Spiers viola
Bozidar Vukotic cello
Magda Pietraszewska cello
Fabián Galeana double bass

Raga Desh

Amjad Ali Khan (b.1945)

Singing Angels (2016)

Interval

Amjad Ali Khan

Samaagam (2011) *arranged by David Murphy*

*Ganesh Kalyan • Subhalakshmi • Swar Samir •
Maarva • Durga • Malkauns • Kaushik Dhvani •
Kalavati • Basant • Megh • Khamaj • Bhupali • Bhairavi*



The artists are grateful for the support of official airline partner Vistara and hospitality partner Taj Hotels. Vistara – brought to you by TATA and Singapore Airlines



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Tonight's concert will be a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi and to his message of non-violence. Gandhi insisted that 'each of us must be the change we wish to see in this world'. Resonating with that ethos, the artists tonight musically try to convey this philosophy, to let us all work together to recreate and be soulfully motivated by his enthralling symphony of Truth, Love, Non-Violence and Peace.

One wonderful and strange mystery of Indian classical music is the fact that one can spend a lifetime trying to obtain knowledge and perfection and still feel that one has only touched a mere drop of an ocean. The learning never stops along the journey of searching and discovering.

Tonight's concert is divided into two segments. The concert starts with a duet by Amaan Ali Bangash and Ayaan Ali Bangash, both well-known sarod virtuosos. They present a traditional raga called *Desh* set to various rhythmic time cycles. *Desh* is a very beautiful and romantic raga which is equivalent to one of the standard major modes in Western classical musical, the Mixolydian scale. They will be accompanied by Anubrata Chatterjee on tabla. An interesting aspect of Indian Classical music is that here you have four people on stage, none of whom know what the other is going to do next and yet who have to perform like a rehearsed orchestra! Therefore, our role as performers is really that of three people: the performer, the composer and the conductor. Three in one! Along with the sarods and the tablas, there will be a drone box tuned to the true tonic.

We are then delighted to be joined by Jiaxin Lloyd-Webber for my piece *Singing Angels*. Based in *Raga Charukeshi*, the sarod *alap* or introduction brings us the sound of searching the void (or perhaps the cosmos) for a melody that will coalesce out of the notes of the elusive raga. The cello then joins the search, stringing together triads of notes like a garland. One might imagine the inchoate outlines of 'angel' or 'spirit voices' at the edge of one's hearing gradually becoming more prominent.

After the interval, we present *Samaagam* - my sarod concerto, played by the Refugee Orchestra Project which is under the artistic direction of conductor Lidiya Yankovskaya. We appeared together for the first time on the historic UN Day in 2018 where we paid homage to Father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, at the United National General Assembly Hall, where the theme was Traditions of Peace and Non-violence.

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Samaagam comes from a Sanskrit word meaning 'confluence' or 'flowing together'. In realising this work from Amjad Ali Khan's singing and playing, we have aimed to preserve the essence of both Indian and Western traditions so that they can flow into each other without artistic compromise. I have used the orchestration of Indian ensemble music in the pre-Bollywood era as inspiration and have also looked back to the ancient (i.e.

pre-equal-temperament) Western tradition incorporating elements which, because of their antiquity, do not violate the rules of Indian music. The aim is through this process to joyfully explore the common musical 'DNA' of both traditions.

Amjad Ali Khan has remarked: 'every raga has a soul, and every musical note is the sound of God'. In *Samaagam* 12 different ragas are presented. Some will make only a fleeting appearance; others will be explored for longer.

Samaagam is structured in three sections:

I. *Ganesh Kalyan - Subhalakshmi - Swar Samir*

II. *Medley of Ragas: Maarva - Durga - Malkauns - Kaushik Dhwani - Kalavati - Basant - Megh*

III. *Khamaj - Bhupali - Bhairavi*

The ragas in the first section were all conceived and developed by Amjad Ali Khan, who feels that these ragas have been invoked rather than created. His sons Amaan and Ayaan have written: 'New faces (ragas) come to his mind and ask him their names; as they have no names Abba names them and they become new ragas. Listening to most of Abba's ragas, one feels that they are traditional ragas which were born thousands of years ago, but for some reason, not discovered.'

Ganesh Kalyan made its first appearance at the Ganesh Festival in Pune in 1992. In Indian mythology, Ganesh, the elephant god, is the remover of obstacles and bringer of good luck. Also first presented in 1992, *Subhalakshmi* is a tribute to Mrs Subhalakshmi Khan, Amjad Ali Khan's wife. *Swar Samir*, played here with a seven-beat time cycle, made its first appearance in 1964, at the Harballabh Music Festival in Punjab. It is inspired by two traditional ragas: *Raga Rageshri* and *Raga Joge*.

The *Medley of Ragas* features seven traditional ragas in quick succession, showcasing a concertante group from within the orchestra in solo and group improvisation. Indian ragas are designed to be played at different times of the day, and different seasons of the year. The majority of the ragas in *Samaagam* are evening or night-time ragas; however *Maarva*, which opens the *Medley*, was originally conceived to be played at sunset, and *Megh*, which closes it, during the rainy season. If performed expertly enough, it is said to induce rain!

The closing section initially explores the popular and sensual *Raga Khamaj*, which is said to 'turn the flower red with passion'. This is followed by a glimpse of *Raga Bhupali*, described as a woman 'in expectation of her lover, nervously putting on her bracelets and moving hither and thither like a swing'. *Samaagam* finishes with an exploration of *Raga Bhairavi*. *Bhairavi* is perhaps the most popular raga in Indian music. It is traditionally a morning raga, played at the conclusion of an all-night concert. Due to its popularity (and the contemporary lack of nocturnal musical marathons!) it is accepted that *Bhairavi* can be performed at any time of the day or night.

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