



Zakir Hussain's Percussion Masters of India

Sunday, April 25, 2004, 7 pm
Zellerbach Hall

Zakir Hussain, *tabla*
T.H. Vinayakram, *ghatam*
Fazal Qureshi, *tabla*
Taufiq Qureshi, *percussion*
Vijay Chauhan, *folk drums*

and special guests
Ustad Sultan Khan, *sarangi*
Ganesh and Kumaresh, *violin*
Manipuri Jagoi Marup, *dancing drummers of Manipur*

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The Percussion Masters of India is an outgrowth of Zakir Hussain's renowned *tabla* duet tours with his father, the legendary Ustad Allarakha. It has been presented in the West by Zakir Hussain since 1996, and represents a changing feast of drummers and musicians from India who are both his longtime and recent collaborators. India's most famous percussionist, Hussain has accompanied all of the greatest Indian musicians and dancers of the past 40 years as well as many artists from different musical and performing arts genres. Widely considered a chief architect of the world music movement, Hussain has been at the helm of contemporary music's most eminent and influential ensembles, including Shakti, the Diga Rhythm Band and Planet Drum.

With the Percussion Masters of India, he leads a program featuring a dazzling display of drumming with virtuosos from both the Hindustani (North Indian) and Carnatic (South Indian) classical traditions, including the *sarangi* maestro Ustad Sultan Khan, *ghatam* (South Indian clay pot) maestro T.H. Vinayakram, the young violin masters Ganesh and Kumaresh, Hussain's brother Fazal Qureshi on *tabla* (tuned North Indian concert drums), Vijay Chauhan on *dholak* (North Indian folk drum), Taufiq Qureshi (Zakir's youngest brother) on various percussion instruments, and Manipuri Jagoi Marup, the dancing folk drummers from Manipur (on the Northeast border with Burma).

The performance will include a presentation of the traditional classical repertoire of the *tabla* by Zakir Hussain and his brother Fazal Qureshi. Also featured will be a collaboration between North and South Indian drumming, featuring both classical and folk traditions. The dazzling Manipuri Jagoi Marup will perform ensemble pieces as well as join Zakir and the other percussionists in pieces created for the performance.

North Indian Classical Music

Any performance of North Indian classical music depends considerably on the mood and inspiration of the artists and their rapport with the audience. Therefore, tonight's selection of *ragas* and *talas* will be chosen according to the mood of the evening and announced just prior

to the performance by the artist. Moods from solemn and sad, to romantic and restless are said to be embodied like personalities in the more than 75,000 *ragas* in the classical literature.

Indian classical music is a highly developed musical language that expresses itself entirely through melodic tone rows called *ragas*. Whereas in Western music a major key may be said to symbolize happiness and a minor key sadness, different *ragas* express or symbolize a whole variety of emotions as well as the various times of day and seasons of the year. In Indian music, there is no harmony, so all musical meaning must rest with the interrelation of the notes in each particular *raga*. The octave is divided into the same number of semitones as in the Western chromatic scale, but the intervals are not tempered. Furthermore, most musicians deviate from these intervals in certain *ragas* by sharpening or flattening specified notes microtonally. In North Indian music, such as will be heard tonight, microtonal inflections are used as a means of emotional expression on certain predetermined notes.

Only seven of the 12 semitones have names: *Sa*, *Re*, *Ga*, *Ma*, *Pa*, *Dha*, and *Ni* (equivalent to Doh, Re, Me, Fa, Soh, La, and Ti). The other five are thought to be alternatives for *Re* (second), *Ga* (third), *Ma* (fourth), *Dha* (sixth) and *Ni* (seventh). *Sa* (first) and *Pa* (fifth) are fixed.

A *raga* selects five, six, or seven of the named notes or their variants, and in some cases both alternatives of a note are used. The ascending and descending lines of a *raga* need not necessarily use the same notes nor the same structural sequence, as a *raga* is not just a scale. Rather, a *raga* implies elements of melodic shape that are brought out by omitting certain notes, by placing more emphasis on one note than another, by certain zig-zag shapes, and by end notes, on which characteristic cadences may rest. Often these are the inflections mentioned earlier. These inflections, also called *Gamak*, give the performer tremendous scope for expression and variation of interpretation during his performance.

The most important note in any *raga* is the tonic, around which the development of the *raga* evolves. It must be pointed out that in Indian music, once the instrument has been tuned, the tonic never changes, as opposed to

Western music where the tonic may change frequently during a work by way of modulation and harmonic development. Indian music is entirely melodic, firmly rooted in its tonic, and any apparent harmony is a matter of coincidence rather than intention. However, if a prominent note is stressed particularly in a passage, a Western listener could possibly imagine this as a change of tonic—or key.

Indian Percussion

In both the North Indian (Hindustani) and South Indian (Carnatic) musical traditions, percussion plays a major part. In both systems, the rhythmic aspect is known as *tala*. Just as there are many thousands of *ragas* that determine the melodic content, there are many *talas* that define the rhythmic cycle. Some of the most commonly used *talas* are *Tintal* (16 beats: 4+4+4+4), *Rupak* (7 beats: 3+2+2), *Jhaptaal* (10 beats: 2+3+2+3), *Ektal* (12 beats: 2+2+2+2+2+2), and *Dhamartal* (14 beats: 5+2+3+4).

Improvisation on a composition must follow the exigencies of both the *raga* and the *tala*. Just as the melodist improvises on the *raga*, the drummer too will improvise, calling on the hundreds of small set patterns he has learned through long training, rearranging them, modifying them with variation technique, inserting longer and more complex patterns at main divisions in the musical architecture. There is an exchange of improvisation. While the soloist is developing melodic and rhythmic complexities, the drummer will keep a relatively simple pattern that outlines the origins of the *tala* by contrast of timbre produced with different strokes of the hands and fingers. There is, in fact, a particular orthodox stroke pattern to show the structure of each *tala*, called *theka*. Sometimes the soloist will repeat the composition in its simple original form, at which time the drummer may introduce rhythmically complex improvisation. When both improvise simultaneously in cross-rhythms, the audience listens attentively to see that they both arrive at the end of their patterns on the *sam*, or first beat of the *tala* cycle. When they do, the response is often vocal, for the audience is deeply involved.

In North Indian music, there is usually only one percussion instrument, the *tabla*, or, for the ancient form of *dhrupad*—the

pakhawaj. By contrast, in South Indian music, two or more percussion instruments may be used. The *mrdangam* is always the major accompanying instrument. Often the *ghatam* and *kanjira* are added and sometimes the *morsing* or jews-harp.

THE INSTRUMENTS

The *sarangi* is one of the oldest bowed instruments of India. As a folk instrument, it is popular throughout the northern provinces of the Indian subcontinent, in particular Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Sind (Pakistan). It is related to other Indian bowed lutes such as the *sarinda* and the *cikara*, as well as to the Kashmiri *sarang*. In the classical North Indian repertoire, it was traditionally the major accompanying instrument for vocalists, although Western instruments such as the violin, viola, and harmonium have tended to displace it in many instances. Over the past 25 years, it has taken its place alongside the *sitar* and *sarod* as a solo instrument. The name *sarangi* means "instrument of a hundred singing colors." Held like a small cello, the *sarangi* is played with a heavy convex bow. The strings are stopped by the fingernails in contact with the side of the strings, permitting greater flexibility than the Western method of pressing the string onto the fingerboard.

The *tabla* consists of a pair of single-headed tuned kettle drums. The left-hand drum, *banya*, is made of an alloy of copper and silver with a goatskin membrane and provides a bass note of indefinite pitch. The right-hand drum, *tabla*, has a hardwood body and the membrane is stretched by a number of thongs and eight wooden blocks, which are used for tuning the drum to the keynote *Sa*. In the center of the membrane, there is a small black circular area composed of a dried paste made from flour, iron, and manganese filings and other ingredients. This increases the resonance of the drum considerably. The drums are struck with the fingers and flat of the hand while the heel of the palm is used to provide pressure on the membrane, thus varying the pitch. Pitch and timbre are also varied by striking the drum at different points on the membrane. Each drumstroke has

its own particular name: *Na, Ta, Dha, Dhin, Triki*, and so forth, and the rhythmic patterns are transmitted orally through these onomatopoeic names.

The *ghatam* is a large clay pot used as a musical instrument since ancient times. Known as the *noot* in Kashmir and *mudki* in Rajasthan, where it is used to accompany folk songs, the *ghatam* has become a sophisticated percussion instrument in Carnatic music, usually used in combination with the *mrdangam*. The pot, which varies in size according to pitch, is of baked clay with portions of brass or copper and iron filings; the bonding agent is egg used in considerable

quantity. In South India, the performer places the instrument on his lap, with the mouth towards his belly. The pot is struck with the fingers, wrists, and sometimes fingernails, while the mouth is kept very close to the belly and forced out. Sometimes, to vary the timbre, the performer will strike the neck of the instrument with the mouth facing the audience and occasionally, during *thani avarthanam*, he will throw the instrument high in the air and catch it, keeping perfect time with the *tala*.

The *dhholki* is a cylindrical folk instrument from the west coast of India used primarily by fishermen.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Zakir Hussain (*tabla*), a classical *tabla* maestro of the first order, has made unprecedented strides in bringing his instrument to a global audience. Widely appreciated as an international phenomenon, his consistently brilliant and exciting performances have established him globally as one of India's most renowned cultural ambassadors. The favorite accompanist for most of the greatest classical musicians and dancers of India, Zakir has also been a chief architect of the world music movement with his prodigious, incomparable, and historic collaborations. The foremost disciple of his father, the legendary Ustad Allarakha, Zakir was a child prodigy who began his professional career at the age of 12 and was already touring internationally with great success by the age of 18. Zakir has been the recipient of many awards and honors, including the Padma Bhushan, awarded on January 26, 2002; the Padma Shri; the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award; and the 1999 National Heritage Fellowship Award, the highest award in the United States for masters in the traditional arts. His playing is marked by uncanny intuition and masterful improvisational dexterity, founded in formidable knowledge and study. Zakir's career includes much work as a composer. He has written music for many film scores and, most recently, the music for the opening ceremonies of the '96 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. He also performs and records on a dazzling array of percussion instruments and has

won a Grammy Award (1991, Best World Music Album) for his part as performer, composer, and co-producer of Planet Drum, an ensemble with which he tours regularly. His album *Saturday Night in Bombay* with his band Remember Shakti was nominated for a World Music Grammy in 2002. Most recently, he received a special commission to compose for the Silk Road Project, which he performed live with cellist Yo-Yo Ma for the Mark Morris Dance Group.

T.H. Vinayakram (*ghatam*) is perhaps the greatest living master of the *ghatam* and an international celebrity renowned for his imaginative drumming. Son of the noted and talented musician and percussionist, Kalaimamani T.R. Harihara Sharma, Vinayakram was a child prodigy, starting his concert career at the age of 13. He has accompanied not only the great musicians of yesteryear and recent times, but has displayed his creative genius in various contemporary collaborations, most notably with Shakti and Planet Drum. In these, his dazzling solos and duets with Zakir Hussain have captivated international audiences. In the world of Carnatic music, "Vikku" is renowned for the crispness of his tone and his thorough knowledge of *tala* (rhythm). He alone is responsible for the universal recognition of the *ghatam* as a major percussion instrument. Currently, he is the founder/principal of Sri Jaya Ganesha Thala Vadya Vidyalaya Percussion School in Chennai.

SPECIAL GUESTS

Ustad Sultan Khan (*sarangi*) is one of the foremost *sarangi* players of India, renowned for his extraordinary technical and melodic control over this difficult stringed instrument. A representative of the Indore *gharana*, Sultan Khansahib is the grandson of Ustad Azim Khan, a renowned *sarangi* player of his time, and the son of Ustad Ghulab Khan, who is both an acknowledged *sarangi* player and a vocalist. Sultan Khansahib began his initial training with his father and, at the age of 11, gave his first solo performance at the All-India Musical Conference. In 1974, he joined Beatle George Harrison and Pandit Ravi Shankar's "Dark Horse" tour. Since then, he has been taking his music to concert halls around the globe, has recorded widely, and has gained increasing popularity among classical and world music audiences. He has a longstanding creative relationship with Zakir Hussain; the two have performed, toured, recorded, and composed together for more than 20 years.

Ganesh and Kumaresh (*violin*) made their entrance into the world of Carnatic music at the tender ages of 7 and 5. Born into a musical family, they received training under their father, Sri Rajagopalan. In 1983, they were recognized by the government of Tamil Nadu as State Artists and many other awards soon followed. They are renowned as soloists as well as accompanists to the great Carnatic vocalists of our time. As a violin duo, they have taken the music world by storm, offering a strikingly original style.

Manipuri Jagoi Marup (*dancing drummers of Manipur*) is one of India's premier performance troupes, combining dance, drumming, and martial arts in its repertoire. Dedicated to the rejuvenation of traditional folk and classical Manipuri dance styles, the ensemble was established in 1963 by the late Guru Padmashri Amubi Singh. The group has performed thousands of concerts in India, and has enjoyed many successful international tours. Known for their dynamic athleticism and proficiency as well as their unique-sounding drums, the artists dazzle their audiences with their acrobatic choreography.

Vinayakram has published two books, *Art of Mridangam* and *Mridanga Pada Bhodhini*.

Fazal Qureshi (*tabla*) began his training early, under the keen eye of his father and guru, Ustad Allarakha. With encouragement and inspiration from his elder brother, Zakir Hussain, Fazal has developed a style distinguished by a fine sense of rhythm, versatility, and eloquence. He has performed both as a soloist and as an accompanist in the prestigious Sangeet Sammelans in India, as well as at major festivals abroad. The remarkable ease with which Fazal accompanies veteran as well as young Indian classical instrumentalists, vocalists, and dancers, as well as Western instrumentalists, speaks to the discipline and dedication with which this talented artist has pursued music.

Taufiq Qureshi (*percussion*) is Zakir Hussain's youngest brother, one of today's most sought-after rhythm programmers and percussionists in the world of studio recordings. His guru and primary inspiration remains his illustrious father, Ustad Allarakha. However, while learning the rudiments of the *tabla* from his father, he was drawn from a very young age to the wider world of percussion as he watched and listened to Zakir's fusion experiments. He has performed as a percussionist with a host of international luminaries, including Zakir Hussain, Jeremy Spencer of *Fleetwood Mac*, Sivamani, Louis Banks, Pandit Vishwamohan Bhatt, T.H. Vinayakram, and Ranjit Barot. He has participated in international jazz festivals, and regularly composes music for films, television serials, and theater pieces.

Vijay Chauhan (*folk drums*) is one of the foremost exponents of the *dhholki* (this premier folk percussion instrument of Maharashtra has been played in his family for generations). His mother, Sulochana Shamrao Chauhan, is the greatest exponent of the famous Marathi folk singing style, *lavani*. Besides *dhholki*, he plays other folk instruments, such as the *duff*, *chanda*, *halgi*, and *dafali*. Chauhan is a much sought-after musician and plays regularly for famous composers of Hindi, Marathi, and Tamil films. He has also toured England and Australia with the great folk artist Gurdass Mann.