



THE
SOUTH
ASIAN
SYMPHONY
FOUNDATION

INDIA
INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE



Friday, November 22, 2024 at 6PM
Fountain Lawns, India International Centre, New Delhi

PEACE

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NOTES

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South Asian Symphony Orchestra
Alvin Arumugam, conductor
Pallavi Mahidhara, piano

Invocation: *Maithreem Bhajata*

Sri Chandrashekarendra Saraswati | Music by Vasant Desai
Surmukhi, vocalist | Suresh Raj, tabla

ARYAMAN JOSHI

Chandrayaan (India premiere)
Suresh Raj, tabla

SAINT-SAËNS

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 22
I. Andante sostenuto
II. Allegro scherzando
III. Presto

BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36
I. Adagio molto - Allegro con brio
II. Larghetto
III. Scherzo: Allegro
IV. Allegro molto

Notes on the Programme

Invocation: *Maithreem Bhajata*

Maithreem Bhajata is a Sanskrit hymn composed by Sri Chandrashekarendra Saraswati, the 68th Shankaracharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. It is a call for universal friendship, compassion, and peace, urging humanity to overcome greed and live harmoniously. Set to music by Vasant Desai, it gained worldwide acclaim through M.S. Subbulakshmi's historic performance at the United Nations in 1966.

*Cultivate friendship to conquer all hearts,
Look upon others as yourself,
Renounce war, forsake competition,
Give up aggression on others.*

*Mother Earth is ready to grant all our desires,
The Lord, our father, is merciful to all,
'Restraint, generosity, and compassion',
People of the World!
May all people be happy and prosperous!*

Aryaman Joshi (b. 2001) *Chandrayaan*

A note from the composer:

Chandrayaan celebrates the successful moon landing, Chandrayaan-3, by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).

The work has 3 sections:

Section 1 introduces the musical motifs and is hopeful in character. Chandrayaan-3 was a proud moment for India, and the main melody that can be heard throughout the piece is in *Raga Desh*, the same raga used in the popular patriotic song *Vande Mataram*. Different sections of the orchestra are featured, in a nod to the teamwork of a project of the magnitude of a rocket launch.

Section 2 uses *Raga Todi* and has an uncertain and anticipatory mood, capturing the mood in the moments preceding the launch. The string section can be heard sliding across notes in a way that is reminiscent of techniques used in Indian Classical violin and the orchestra imitates the rhythms recited by the tabla player.

Section 3 reintroduces the opening theme with a more triumphant mood. This section is to celebrate the success of Chandrayaan 3. Watch out for a big and epic orchestra tutti near the end!

Aryaman Joshi is an Indian composer currently based in Minnesota, USA.

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) **Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 22**

Camille Saint-Saëns was a musical prodigy who dazzled audiences with his virtuosity and brilliance. By the time he composed the Piano Concerto No. 2 in 1868, he was a well-established figure in French music. Written in just 17 days for a concert in Paris—conducted by his friend, the Russian composer-conductor Anton Rubinstein, with the composer as the soloist—the piece reflects both his incredible skill as a pianist and his love for experimentation.

The Piano Concerto No. 2 is one of Saint-Saëns' most beloved works and is a delightful blend of drama, charm, and playfulness. The opening passage almost feels improvisatory, as if Saint-Saëns were exploring ideas at the piano in real time. As the music unfolds, it shifts into dazzling passages full of energy and wit, showcasing both the lyrical and the virtuosic abilities of the piano and the pianist. In fact, the virtuosity of the work challenged even the composer-pianist himself, who found that the schedule of composing and premiering the work all within three weeks did not afford enough time for him to practice what he was writing.

Saint-Saëns once said he wrote music to give pleasure, and this concerto is no exception. It's a vibrant and imaginative work that combines heartfelt expression with moments of pure joy.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) **Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36**

Beethoven composed his Second Symphony in 1802, when his life was at a turning point. Just 31 years old, he was grappling with the devastating realization that the hearing loss from which he was suffering was permanent. Isolated by this condition and overwhelmed by despair, he wrote a heartfelt letter to his brothers, which has come to be known as the "Heiligenstadt Testament," where he confessed his struggles but ultimately resolved to continue creating music.

Counterintuitively, the Second Symphony doesn't reflect the turmoil in the composer's life at the time of its creation. It is a work full of energy, optimism, and humour. Audiences at the time were surprised by its boldness and the vitality it exuded—qualities that hinted at the revolutionary composer that Beethoven was to become.

The symphony opens with a slow introduction reminiscent of the symphonies of Haydn, hinting at the expansive journey ahead. Cheerful themes and dramatic intensity take over, showcasing Beethoven's growing command of the symphonic form which he would come to redefine. The second movement, a serene larghetto, contrasts with the lively scherzo that follows, filled with playful shifts in texture and dynamics. The finale is a spirited exploration of humour and invention, driven by a distinctive "hiccupping" theme.

Though often overshadowed by his later works, this symphony stands as a remarkable creation, showcasing the spirit of resilience and joy that defined Beethoven. It's a celebration of life and a testament to the power of art to overcome adversity.

About the South Asian Symphony Foundation

The South Asian Symphony Foundation (SASF) is a not-for-profit Trust founded by former Indian civil servants Nirupama and Sudhakar Rao in Bangalore in 2018. The purpose and mission of the Trust is to promote dialogue, mutual understanding and harmony among the people of South Asia, especially between India and our South Asian neighbours, as also the diaspora and global community of persons of Indian and South Asian origin. Over the years, the Foundation has expanded its reach to include people from the Global South, thus creating a multi-faceted group of individuals who have built a community of friendship and shared experience that bridges borders and geographies.

The SASF Trust utilises music as a medium to promote its mission of peace. It's musicians are drawn from across the region and the world to create the South Asian Symphony Orchestra. The Orchestra's repertoire is not only western classical music but importantly, music of the people of India and her neighbours.

Over the last five years, the Trust has held four concerts—one each in Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai and New Delhi—to promote its mission and has received a positive and enthusiastic response from audiences for the work it has been doing. These concerts in New Delhi—on 22nd and 23rd November at the India International Centre and the Baha'i House of Worship Auditorium, respectively—mark the next step in the journey of the South Asian Symphony Orchestra. The musicians come from India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, China, Greece, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Spain, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Mexico. These concerts are called Peace Notes emphasizing the core message of SASF.

The Trust is entirely financed by contributions from within India.

Alvin Arumugam, conductor

Alvin Arumugam, Music Director of the Musicians' Initiative (Singapore), has garnered international acclaim through his dynamic leadership and innovative programming. His career, marked by a series of prestigious appointments over the past three years, includes his role as Music Director of the South Asian Symphony Orchestra.

Arumugam earned a master's degree in conducting from the Royal College of Music, London, a top-ranked global conservatoire. During his studies, he regularly conducted the college orchestra and assisted esteemed visiting conductors such as Martyn Brabbins, Antonio Pappano, and Vasily Petrenko, honing his craft. He also holds a Master of Music degree from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore.

Arumugam's engagements include serving as assistant conductor to Martyn Brabbins and the BBC Symphony Orchestra for the world premiere of Iain Bell's *Beowulf* in

2023. He was also the assistant to Toby Purser, Head of Conducting at the Royal College of Music, for the 2022 production of *Così fan tutte* at the Vienna Opera Academy. In 2018 and 2019, he led the Musicians' Initiative in collaborations with The Opera People, staging *Il re pastore* and *Der Zwerg*, respectively. Arumugam made his debut as assistant conductor to Darrell Ang with the Manila Symphony Orchestra in its 2015 production of *La Cenerentola*. His collaborations with distinguished artists such as Kanon Matsuda (Deutsche Grammophon) and Neil Varon (Eastman School of Music) further attest to his versatility and artistic excellence. His appointment as Music Director of the Musicians' Initiative in 2017 has seen the orchestra rise to prominence, renowned for its innovative and bold programming that challenges conventional musical boundaries. His role as Music Director of the South Asian Symphony Orchestra (SASO) in 2021 was a significant milestone, appointed by the former foreign secretary of India, Ambassador Nirupama Rao.

In 2024, Alvin won first prize at the third edition of the Orchestra's Conductor Competition in Oradea, Romania, triumphing over more than 200 international candidates. With a career marked by artistic brilliance and a commitment to pushing musical boundaries, Alvin Arumugam continues to inspire audiences and musicians alike, solidifying his place as a visionary conductor in the world of classical music.

Pallavi Mahidhara, piano

Indian-American pianist Pallavi Mahidhara made her orchestral debut at the age of 10, performing at the Ravinia Festival in Chicago. She is the Second Prize winner and Young Audience Award winner of the 69th Geneva International Piano Competition, and of the VI International Prokofiev Competition in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

She has appeared in solo and orchestral concerts across five continents, and has performed at important festivals including the Gstaad Menuhin Festival, Marlboro Music, and Verbier Festival. The Klavier-Festival Ruhr in Essen released a live performance recording of her recital from October 2021, available on Spotify.

Pallavi is the executive producer, writer, and host of *The Conscious Artist*, a podcast designed to promote mental health awareness for performing artists. Aside from her private studio, she is regularly invited to give masterclasses and workshops at Universities and Summer Programs.

Pallavi holds degrees from The Curtis Institute of Music and Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler, and studied with Dimitri Bashkirov at the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía. As the first female Indian pianist to attend these institutions and host a podcast on mental health in Western classical music, she fervently embraces her role as cultural ambassador, artist, and mentor.

Pallavi Mahidhara is a Steinway Artist.

South Asian Symphony Orchestra
Alvin Arumugam, Music Director

Violin I

Omiros Yavroumis, Concertmaster
Marty Jackson, Assoc. Concertmaster
Bobur Muzaffarov
Earl Joseph Vasanthakumar
Gabriel Mari
Chanasorn Chantarapaoraya
Anirudh Gnanadhandayuthapani

Violin II

Lim Jae Sern, Principal
Martha Placeres, Asst. Principal
Vivek Dinesh
Martina Charles
Pattaraporn Denkesineelam
Samyuktha Rajagopal

Viola

Aibek Ashirmatov, Principal
Joy Peter
Nasr Ali Sheikh
Jann Minn

Cello

Christine Kralik, Principal
Carolina Lopez
Alan Asenbayalan
Isaac Chan

Double Bass

Wei Wei, Principal
Andrea Leitan
Loewe Lim

Flute

Dilshad Billimoria, Principal
Meera Gudipati

Oboe

Mezraq Ramli, Principal
Damrih Banawitayakit

Clarinet

Bharat Chandra, Principal
Anoushka Divekar

Bassoon

Anjali Pillai, Principal
Kittima Molee

Horn

Nivanthi Karunaratne, Principal
Chuta Chulavalaivong

Trumpet

Daniel Venglar, Principal
Aidyn Torekhanov

Timpani

Christian Borres, Principal

Percussion

Neomal Weerakoon

Piano

Jeremiah Christopher

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