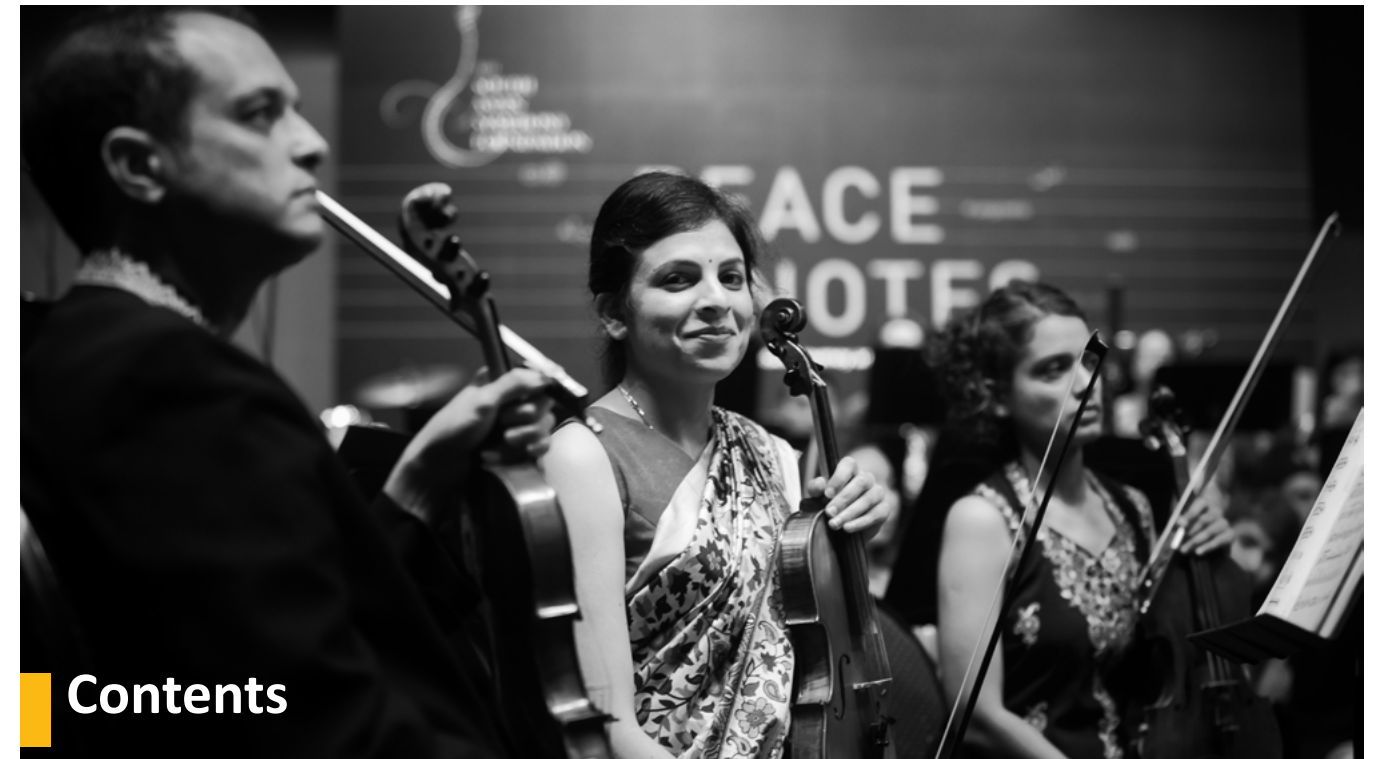




THE SOUTH ASIAN SYMPHONY FOUNDATION

Peace Notes





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The South Asian Symphony Foundation

Diplomacy is, at its essence, about people. We all have it within us to be ‘citizen diplomats’, to reach out across borders and build bridges. The sturdiest bridge is the bridge of music. The love of music touches the very core of human existence, conquering divides, connecting diverse sets of people and nations, creating positive opportunities for human contact and communication, even among apparent adversaries.

The global stage is defined by revolutionary change, often driven by political tensions. The threat of conflict in South Asia has not receded. While it is true that economic growth has lifted millions out of poverty in much of the region, the subcontinent continues to be beset with various sets of woes, from religious radicalism and terrorism to civil war, nuclear tensions, political corruption, environmental pollution and steadily depleting natural resources.

Artificial, man-made barriers create many degrees of separation. The age of information brought new hope, the promise of breaking down physical divides. While it has changed the human race for the better in many ways, insularity is still more the rule than the exception. Ignorance and prejudice towards the ‘other’ continue to persist, perhaps inflamed by the very global platforms that heralded an era of understanding and empathy. The need for a humanitarian agenda for the region, built on closer people-to-people ties and citizen-driven cultural diplomacy is greater than ever.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives constitute South Asia in modern-day maps. Ambassador Nirupama Menon Rao, with her deep and abiding love for music, saw, during her years in service in these troubled nations, the need for a platform to promote dialogue, cultural synergy and friendly understanding amongst the youth of the region.



Thus began the journey of the South Asian Symphony Foundation. The founders, Nirupama and Sudhakar Rao, hope to promote peace in the area through greater cultural integration. The aim is to foster artistic talent and creativity among musicians of the region by holding workshops, masterclasses, lectures and training in orchestral music for young musicians by internationally renowned master teachers. This has led to building Chiragh, the South Asian Symphony Orchestra, comprised of South Asian artists who perform in various cities across India and the subcontinent.



Chiragh – The South Asian Symphony Orchestra

‘Chiragh’ is the lamp that illuminates, as empathy does in a world of insularity. The South Asian Symphony Orchestra has been named Chiragh for this – its aim is to illuminate a path for peace-building in the region.

Transcending race, religion, languages and borders, bound by a single voice, orchestras are vehicles of peace. They are microcosms of the world, as musicians and instruments join together in harmony, walls crumble and differences recede. Cooperation, coordination and self-discipline are their hallmarks.

Friendships are born and taken back home. Over time, Chiragh can be an avenue for greater cooperation. For, to stay together in harmony, it is as important for the musician to listen as it is to play, to balance one’s sound and through each effort, to be part of a larger peace-building process.

NCPA Concert

On April 26, 2019, The South Asian Symphony Orchestra (SASO) gave its debut performance at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai. Over 70 musicians from more than five countries in South Asia and the South Asian diaspora came together for this concert, led by conductor Viswa Subbaraman. Gracing the debut concert of the Orchestra with their presence were the Vice-President of India, Venkaiah Naidu, and the Governor of Maharashtra, C. Vidyasagar Rao.

The concert featured works by famous composers, such as Beethoven, Bizet, Brahms, Mozart, Puccini and Félicien David. Apart from these, Chiragh also premiered compositions by two female composers – the specially-commissioned orchestral work, ‘Hamsafar: A Journey through South Asia’ by Lauren Braithwaite and ‘Bhadke’ by Kamala Sankaram.

The South Asian Symphony Foundation is a registered non-profit trust with 80-G status in India.

A Message from the Founders



Nirupama Rao
Founder Trustee

The mission of The South Asian Symphony Foundation (SASF) is to connect India more closely with South Asia – a shared civilizational and geographical space. We are deeply intertwined with this neighbourhood because the air we breathe, the climate we encounter, the resources we share, the languages we speak and the religions we practise are all linked together. War and peace impact us all, equally, who live in this region.

The South Asian Symphony Orchestra is designed to promote peace-building in the region: an Indian creation, with a heart that is South Asian. Our musicians from India and the neighbourhood, as well as the diaspora of Indian and South Asian origin, play music together, break bread together and rediscover their shared heritage as South Asians. We wish, thereby, to open avenues for public diplomacy.

Orchestras cultivate mutual empathy, and the necessity for us to learn the art of listening to each other. Listening, as has been said elsewhere, is itself an act of love. And, music is our basic human right. The effort is to demonstrate that we, as citizens, can build channels of people-to-people communication and practise cultural diplomacy.

The creation of musical repertoire for orchestra performance based on the folk, classical and popular music of the region is also an important focus of these efforts. Indian musicians and musicians from other South Asian countries are thus able to craft a shared musical identity that brings their region to the world. This creates an image of the subcontinent of South Asia that is rich, composite, and yet plural, and helps the rest of the world see the region in a new light.



Sudhakar Rao
Founder Trustee



Peace Notes - The Concept

“I have gradually come to look upon music as a means of spiritual development,” wrote Mahatma Gandhi, in a letter dated October 7, 1924. In an address to *Young India* in Ahmedabad in 1926, he said, “In true music, there is no place for communal differences and hostility.” SASF paid fitting tribute, therefore, to the 150th birth anniversary of the Mahatma, through a concert, *Peace Notes – From Gandhi to Beethoven: The Call to Freedom*.

The work of the nineteenth-century German composer, Ludwig van Beethoven, also spoke of breaking barriers between people and celebrating the ideals of democracy. Gandhi and Beethoven were very different people from very different times, with a strikingly similar message. The concert highlighted the message of freedom and non-discrimination manifested in the lives of both these great individuals.

For Gandhi, music crystallised the essence of life. When asked if he was fond of music, he said, “If there was no music and no laughter in me, I would have died of this crushing burden of my work.” Beethoven’s life was also marked by his devotion to creating immortal music that helped him deal with the tragedy of the progressive deafness that overtook him at a very young age.

Peace Notes, which took place at the J.N. Tata Auditorium at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, was conceptualised to highlight the message of these two historical figures that music helps heal even the deepest wounds.



THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

As a Buddhist monk, I do not have much acquaintance with music. However, considering the role of sacred music in Tibetan Buddhist ceremonies as well as the music that is part of Tibetan operatic and folk traditions, I appreciate the general importance of music in society.

Music, songs and chanting are, I feel, artistic ways to communicate certain ideas and attitudes. Used positively they are powerful means to convey a message to a lot of people. Musical events provide an opportunity to promote harmony and understanding among people from different cultural backgrounds. They serve as powerful occasions to foster peace and the growth of fundamental human qualities like love, compassion and forgiveness.

I am therefore pleased to know that Ambassador Nirupama Rao, whom I know well, is spearheading this initiative of conveying Mahatma Gandhi’s important message of freedom and individual rights through a concert titled “*From Gandhi to Beethoven: the Call to Freedom*”. The inclusion of a Western classical music genius like Beethoven only testifies to the universality of the message.

I am additionally pleased to see that this concert will include musicians from several countries, which itself is an important reminder of the oneness of humanity.

Although I am not there in person at this concert, I will be with you in spirit as the concert carries a valuable message to the world as a whole.

With my prayers and good wishes,

27 September 2019

PEACE NOTES



The South Asian Symphony Foundation presents PEACE NOTES,
A Concert, a Project and a Journey of Peace.

From Gandhi to Beethoven - The Call to Freedom

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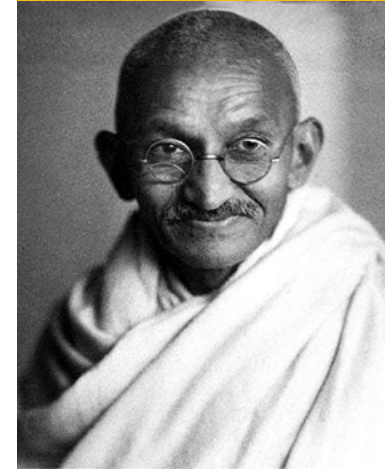
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Mahatma Gandhi



Ludwig van Beethoven

The Repertoire

Curated by Ambassador Rao and Conductor Alvin Arumugam, the *Peace Notes* repertoire featured some of Beethoven's best-loved compositions, including his famous Symphony No. 5 in C Minor and his Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major.

The highlights of the show, however, were the original compositions – the first, 'Ideas of Freedom', written by Anand Antonius Nazareth and inspired by the life of Mahatma Gandhi.

A melancholic, cello solo opened 'Hamsafar', the other original composition and the concert's pièce de résistance composed by Lauren Braithwaite and commissioned by Classical Movements' Eric Daniel Helms New Music Program for the South Asian Symphony Orchestra. A tapestry of traditional and popular musical works from seven countries in the region, 'Hamsafar' celebrates cultural similarities, while it articulates the unique melodies, rhythms and folklore of each country. Nearly all the pieces have lyrics drawn from national poetry.

The suite opens with a soulful melody from Sri Lanka, 'Aiyandiye', meaning 'Elder brother' in Sinhala, played on a cello and later echoed by an oboe. This is followed by 'Allah megh de pani de', a well-known Bengali folk song which, despite its major key and upbeat rhythms, is a plea for rain clouds and water in a parched land. From Bangladesh, we gently float into Nepal with 'Euto manche ko', a lyrical and sweet love song. We then travel on to India with the catchy and evergreen refrain of 'Mera joota hai Japani' which declares that even though my shoes may be Japanese and my trousers from England, my heart will always be Indian. Afghanistan's 'Arsala Khan' is next, which tells the story of a young woman crying out because she is forbidden from marrying the man she loves. On to Bhutan, where we encounter the pentatonic, lilting strains of the traditional song 'Ta zee ling'. The last section presents 'Lal meri pat rakhiyo' from Sindh in Pakistan, with lyrics by poet Amir Khusrau in honour of Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, in a resounding and powerful finale which brings the suite to a close.

Conductor, Composer, Musical Mission

Alvin Arumugam
Conductor

Alvin Arumugam is the Music Director of the Musicians' Initiative and resident conductor at several award-winning wind orchestras in Singapore. He holds a Master of Music in Orchestral Conducting from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory, National University of Singapore.

Alvin has served in the Singapore Armed Forces Central Band as its Concertmaster. He has received training from several notable conductors, such as Jorma Panula, Neil Varon, Douglas Bostock, Mark Heron, Darrell Ang and Andrew Litton, in several master classes and festivals. In 2017, Alvin was selected as one of two conductors to represent Singapore at the International Conductors' Competition at the World Music Contest in Kerkrade, Netherlands.

In 2016, Alvin founded the Musicians' Initiative (formerly known as The Young Musicians' Foundation Orchestra). MI has grown to become one of Singapore's finest orchestras.

The Orchestra

“Ours is a country of war. There is violence every day and no guarantee of survival,” says Amanullah, a 13-year-old violinist from Kabul. Aman (meaning ‘peace’) was part of a prodigiously talented group from Afghanistan, all in their teens, the youngest lot in the 60-member South Asian Symphony Orchestra (SASO) that performed at *Peace Notes*. To Arson Fahim, Alisena Hotak (the youngest musician), Rohullah Stanikzai, Amanullah Noore, Jamshid Muradi and Qamber Nawshad, all from Afghanistan, music is peace amidst a life of conflict and war. The Afghanistan National Institute of Music, where all the Afghan musicians received training, was founded in 2010 by Dr. Ahmad Naser Sarmast, the Afghan-Australian ethnomusicologist who was recently awarded the prestigious Polar Music Prize, the music equivalent of the Nobel.

After an intense search, one that involved researching conservatories, universities and orchestras across the subcontinent, reaching out to them through email, social media, private networks and in-person interactions, SASF brought together an orchestra with members from nine countries – Afghanistan, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Singapore, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Singaporean conductor Alvin Arumugam, the Music Director of the Musicians' Initiative, presided over a full-fledged orchestra made up of four sections – strings with violins, violas, cellos and basses; the wind section comprising flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; the brass section made up of French horns, trumpets and trombones; and the percussion section.

The orchestra created for the show was an eclectic mix, a diverse group of young and old, men and women, each possessing a unique sensibility for music. Some of the musicians in the orchestra are in the midst of receiving

training from world-class institutions like the Yale School of Music, Royal College of Music and UCLA's Herp Alpert School of Music. Many were educators themselves, imparting knowledge to young talent, strengthening the capacity of the orchestra as a whole.

From India came members of the country's first professional orchestra, the Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI), based at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Mumbai. They joined SASO for *Peace Notes*, for both orchestras share a similar vision.

Valuable talent came from Chennai. As anyone familiar with the music scene in Chennai will know, that city has given birth to some of the biggest talents in Western classical music. The seeds for this were sown in the 1960s by the trio, Dhanraj Master, Wilfred Forbes and Johnny Taylor, which made the city a hub for Western classical music. Many musicians from that era made their way into cinema too. One product of this golden era of music in Chennai, Jeronhe Fernandes, who has played with some of the biggest names in the film industry, was part of SASO for the concert.

Many of the musicians had also played for SASF's inaugural concert, on April 26, 2019, at Mumbai's National Centre for the Performing Arts. The concert was dedicated to the memory of those who lost their lives in the terror attacks in Sri Lanka, just days earlier, on April 21.

Friendships were formed during that concert and have held strong since. Young talents like Nivanthi Karunaratne (a French horn player of Sri Lankan heritage and a student at the Yale School of Music) found herself returning to play for SASO because she is convinced of the urgency of the mission to unify South Asian people.

The Orchestra Principals



Farhad Billimoria
Violin, Concertmaster

Farhad Billimoria has been the First Concertmaster of the Mitteldeutsche Kammerphilharmonie Schönebeck for 17 years now. His vast experience as Concertmaster began during his studies in the USA, where he first took on that role for the Michigan State University Symphony Orchestra.

On graduating with distinction, he continued his studies in Austria, where he was appointed Concertmaster of the J.M. Hauer Konservatorium Orchestra.

Numerous concerts, including one with José Carreras, have taken him to many countries in Europe, as well as to the USA, South Africa, India and Cuba. He has also performed at Sangat, the only Western classical music festival in India, under the patronage of maestro Zubin Mehta.



Geeta Nazareth
Viola

Violist and violinist Geeta Nazareth is a Dasha Shenkman Scholar at London's Royal College of Music where she is currently obtaining her BMus in viola. Daughter of the late Daniel Nazareth, a symphonic conductor from India, and opera singer Wiebke Nazareth, Geeta started training at an early age in her home country of Germany in cities such as Freiburg and Hamburg, as well as at the Konservatorium für Musik in Vienna, Austria.

She has been part of concerts at Carnegie Hall and appeared at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in Southbank Centre, where she performed the entire Ligeti Solo Sonata for Viola. She is currently playing with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House. Taking a break from London, she intermittently joins the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra in Denmark as Second Principal Viola.

Krisanthy Desby
Cello

Krisanthy Desby is an active member of various chamber ensembles and orchestras across North America, Europe and South Africa. Born into a family of musicians, she trained under her mother, Xenia Anton Desby, a keyboard performer, and was influenced greatly by her father, Frank Desby, an oboist, composer and musicologist. Her relationship with India began when she married India-born investor, executive and philanthropist, M.R. (Madhavan) Rangaswami.

In 2016, Krisanthy founded Strobe, the world's only dedicated oboe quartet, consisting of the oboe, violin, viola and cello. Strobe, which received a Zellerbach Family Foundation grant, is commissioning composers to write for them.

She has remained part of orchestras like the Natal Philharmonic Orchestra (now the KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic) formed in Durban, South Africa, Houston Symphony under maestro Christoph Eschenbach, Houston Ballet Orchestra, Houston Grand Opera and Tucson Symphony, and has served as Assistant Principal Cello of both the Napa Valley Symphony and the Santa Cruz Symphony.



Sanche Jagatheesan
Bass



Ever since he represented Singapore in the 25th Asian Youth Orchestra Camp, where he was chosen as the Principal Double Bassist, Sanche Jagatheesan has travelled across the world to play for his country.

A graduate of the Royal College of Music – Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, he graduated with First Class Honours and a Bachelor of Music degree. There, he studied the double bass under the tutelage of Jacek Mirucki. Sanche has also attended lessons and masterclasses from top professors at the Royal College of Music, including Caroline Emery, Peter Buckoke, Enno Senft and Gabrielle Raghianti.

Sanche has represented Singapore in the United States, Russia, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, New Zealand, Japan, China, Netherlands, Germany, India and Malaysia. He has participated in festivals like the Lichfield Music Festival and Cheltenham Music Festival, both held in the United Kingdom, Festival of Lights held in Perth, Australia and the WASBE Conference held in Taiwan.

Meera Gudipati

Flute

Meera Gudipati currently holds the Co-Principal Flute position with the United States Coast Guard Band. She is a graduate of the Yale School of Music with a Master of Music degree studying Flute Performance with Ransom Wilson. In the past, Meera has performed with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra as their Acting Principal Flute for the 2015-2017 seasons.

Her other performances include that with Flux et Veritas Baroque Ensemble based in New Haven, the Austin Baroque Ensemble, the UT Early Music Ensemble and in 2012, she had the pleasure of performing with the Oberstdorfer Orchestra in Southern Germany. An admirer of art, Gudipati performs in many museums in Austin and New Haven with various chamber music ensembles. She also appears on the Hyperion Records CD *Ein Deutsches Requiem* by Johannes Brahms conducted by David Hill. In addition to performing, Gudipati enjoys composing in her spare time and recently published her first commission and recording of 'Ashakiran' for Solo English Horn.



Mezraq Ramli

Oboe

A native of Singapore, Dr. Mezraq Ramli serves as oboe professor at Saginaw Valley State University and Northwestern Michigan College in the United States. He was previously on the faculty at Lubbock Christian University.

Dr. Ramli enjoys a diverse career as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician, administrator and teacher. He has appeared with the Traverse, Great Lakes, Alpena, Lubbock, Ballet Lubbock, Middletown and Holland Symphonies. In the summer months, he performs as Second Oboe and English Horn at the Baroque on Beaver Music Festival. In 2018, he was a featured speaker at the Bay View Music Festival presenting topics on music entrepreneurship. Dr. Ramli received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Texas Tech University, Master of Music from Miami University and Bachelor of Music from Grand Valley State University.



Emerald Chee

Bassoon

Emerald Chee graduated with an MMus from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, before which she received her DipMus at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. She plays with orchestras in Singapore, including the Re:Sound Collective, the Singapore Lyric Opera Orchestra, The Philharmonic Orchestra and Orchestra of the Music Makers.

She has also been invited to play in Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia with the Bandung Philharmonic Orchestra and the ASEAN-Russia Orchestra. As a chamber player, she has done numerous concerts with EDQ, a Singapore wind quintet. EDQ won the Tuomela Award at the International Henri Tomasi Quintet Competition (2013) in Paris.

Ruslan Galilov

Clarinet

Born and raised in Almaty, Kazakhstan, Ruslan Galilov is a graduate of the Kazakh National Conservatory named after Kurmangazy. He has studied the clarinet under the tutelage of well-known performer and professor Zhanat Ermanov. During his time at the conservatory, he won the first and second prize at the Republic competition for students.

Ruslan has remained part of the State Wind Orchestra of the Republic of Kazakhstan for three years. In June 2018, Ruslan moved to India and since then he is a musician and teacher with the Symphony Orchestra of India, based at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai.



Naveen Fernando

Trumpet

Naveen Fernando was the Principal Trumpet of the Philharmonic Players Society in Colombo from 1990-1995. He has also remained the Principal Trumpet of the Symphony Orchestra of Sri Lanka and Chamber Music Society of Colombo. Between 2009 and 2012, he was with the Bombay Chamber Orchestra as their lead trumpet.

He has performed with the Sidcup Symphony Orchestra in 2011 and the Tokyo Wind Symphony in 2016. He is the leader and co-founder of the Colombo Brass Ensemble and Academy. He is also the special instructor and lecturer for the Sri Lanka Air Force and Sri Lanka Navy Bands.



Don Kow

Trombone

Don Kow holds a Master of Music from the Codarts University of the Arts, a Bachelor of Music (Honours) from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music and an Artist's Certificate in Trombone Performance from the Royal Conservatory of The Hague. Don has received scholarships to attend the Animato Foundation Orchestra Academy and the Domaine Forget Music and Dance Academy. Additionally, he has been invited to be the Principal Trombone with the Bandung Philharmonic Orchestra.

Don has also performed in the Dutch National Opera's production of Karlheinz Stockhausen's opera cycle *Aus Licht* for the Holland Festival, where he performed a trombone solo role that was combined with elements of theatre and movement. In Singapore, Don plays regularly with the Orchestra of the Music Makers and the Orchestra Collective.



Kartik Alan Jairamin

French Horn

Kartik Alan Jairamin holds a Master of Music in Performance from the Royal College of Music, London and a Bachelor's degree in Music from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (2013). Kartik has performed with numerous orchestras namely, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Malaysia Philharmonic Orchestra and Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra, and has performed and recorded with the Philharmonia Orchestra (London) under the baton of Estonian-born American conductor Paavo Järvi and British cellist Steven Isserlis.

He is also one of the founding members of the wind quintet EDQ, the winner of the Composers' Prize at the prestigious 7th International Henri Tomasi Wind Quintet Competition held in Marseilles, France. A strong advocate for chamber music, Kartik is the founding member of Singapore Horn Sounds and Duo Continuum. Apart from recitals, Kartik has participated in orchestra festivals held in Germany, Austria and Scotland, and was a Young Artist with the Britten-Pears Orchestra as part of the Aldeburgh Festival (2015).

Ramu Thiruyanam

Percussion

From Andrea Bocelli to K-Pop group SHINee and popstar Delta Goodrem, Ramu Thiruyanam has worked with a diverse range of musicians. He is also considered by many to be one of the top performers and up-and-coming percussion specialists.

Currently a full-time music faculty member at the School of the Arts Singapore, Ramu, apart from being a widely sought-after performer, is a successful clinician and adjudicator. He is a graduate of the Berklee College of

Music in Boston, Massachusetts, specialising in Music Education and Performance, with a concentration in Child Psychology.

As an instrumentalist, Ramu has had the opportunity to perform with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, the Singapore Lyric Opera, the Metropolitan Festival Orchestra and the Boston Civic Orchestra, amongst many others.



Julian Clef

Piano Soloist



Julian hails from Kerala, India and is a sought-after soloist in Manchester where he currently lives. He began playing the piano at age six and commenced formal piano studies at sixteen with Murray McLachlan at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester. He has studied at the Royal Northern College of Music for a Bachelor of Music (Hons). He has also studied there with Dina Parakhina for a Master of Music degree, and with Ronan O'Hora and Martin Roscoe at the Guildhall

School of Music. He has had masterclasses from Peter Donohoe, Andrei Gavrilov and András Schiff.

As a recitalist, Julian has performed in many venues in the UK and abroad, including Buckingham Palace, Leeds College of Music, St David's Hall in Cardiff, NCPA in Mumbai and the Dvořák Prague International Music Festival. He has appeared as a soloist with the Philharmonia Orchestra at Royal Festival Hall.

Making Their Mark

Anusha Madapura

Violin

A 10th grader based in Bengaluru, Anusha Madapura has been playing Western classical violin for over eleven years and has developed a deep passion for the music and the instrument.

She joined the Bangalore School of Music Chamber Orchestra at the age of nine and has played as a soloist with the Orchestra in multiple concerts. She was selected to attend the BU Tanglewood Institute's Young Artist's Orchestra program in the US for six weeks in 2019. In India, she has had the opportunity to play for chamber music recitals and orchestral concerts under globally acclaimed conductors, and attend and play in masterclasses by world famous violinists like Hilary Hahn. This was a transformational experience for her.

She has played with the South Asian Symphony Orchestra in two concerts in India in 2019. She has also played for the Indian National Youth Orchestra and has attended chamber music and orchestral programs in Mezzano, Italy and at the New England Conservatory, USA. She continues to learn the violin under the tutelage of Gisela Voigts and Joanne Sadler.



Dielle Braganza

Violin, Viola, Piano

Dielle Braganza (LTCL, LRSM) plays the violin, viola and piano, and is a professional musician based in Mumbai, India.

A versatile, experienced and active freelancer in diverse capacities – solo, chamber, ensemble and more – she collaborates and performs varied genres including pop, jazz and the like, besides Western classical music. She also composes, arranges and explores different musical avenues with artists from other non-classical disciplines.

Dielle has much orchestral experience – she has played with the Symphony Orchestra of India, Bombay Chamber Orchestra, been associated with other music projects in Mumbai and major cities, and is a dedicated teacher of the three instruments.

Her ambition is to create more awareness, interest and appreciation, and to raise the bar of Western classical music in India through teaching and performing.

Nivanthi Karunaratne

Horns

An avid chamber and orchestral musician, Sri Lankan-American hornist Nivanthi Karunaratne studies with William Purvis at the Yale School of Music.

Although she studied Neuroscience at Princeton, Nivanthi was very active musically, studying with Metropolitan Opera Principal Horn Erik Ralske, in addition to New Jersey Symphony Principal Chris Komer, faculty at Princeton. During her undergraduate years, she was Principal in Princeton's University and Chamber Orchestras. She also participated in the New York Youth Symphony, through which she made an appearance on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*.

Despite intense academic demands, Nivanthi won admission as a second year student to the Royal College of Music's study abroad program, where she studied with Royal Opera House and London Philharmonia Principals, Simon Rayner and Nigel Black.

In 2017, Nivanthi won the Princeton University Orchestra Concerto Competition. An advocate for new music, Nivanthi has collaborated with decorated, up-and-coming Indian-American composer, Shruthi Rajasekar. During this time, she commissioned the 10-horn piece 'Goddess' and a horn-piano sonata titled 'Bloom'. Nivanthi enjoys playing early horns, and has twice achieved Semi-Finalist status for the Fulbright Program to study Classical and Baroque Horn Performance. A believer in music's ambassadorial power, Nivanthi has performed in nine countries across three continents.

She has played twice for the National Youth Orchestra of the USA, through which she met then US Vice President Joe Biden when invited to the State Department to perform in honor of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Nivanthi first joined the Symphony of South Asia for their performance in Mumbai in April 2019 and was honoured to rejoin them in Bengaluru in October of the same year.



Rohan Ramanan

Oboe

Rohan Ramanan is an oboist and musician from the greater Los Angeles area, of Indian descent. Having studied Western vocal music and piano from a very young age, Rohan began learning to play the oboe in his teens as a passion project and it eventually became central to his musical endeavors.

Rohan received his Bachelor of Music degree (BMus) in Oboe/English Horn Performance with an emphasis in Ethnomusicology from the UC Irvine Claire Trevor School of the Arts. During his schooling, he was the Associate Principal Oboe and Solo English Horn of the UCI Symphony Orchestra. Since then, he has mainly performed as a freelance oboist, participating with groups such as the Orange County Symphony, teaching young students and recording independent session music. He also collaborates with Indian artists by playing oboe with santoor or with violin ensembles for Bharatanatyam dancers.

He has performed in two concerts with the South Asian Symphony Orchestra (SASO) in Mumbai and Bengaluru, on oboe and the English horn.

An avid singer, Rohan teaches and performs Hindustani voice in the greater LA region, having studied Indian classical voice for over 14 years in the Kirana Gharana style. Rohan also had the privilege of singing the invocation 'Vaishnava Janato' for the October 2019 SASO concert.

He is the Executive Director of the Avartan Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to keeping Indian classical music alive in the diaspora for future generations. Rohan aspires to perform, produce and compose music professionally, and to better represent the South Asian community in mainstream music.





Sagnick Mukherjee

Violin, Viola

A violinist and violist from Kolkata, Sagnick is presently in his final year of studies in electronic engineering and music at the University of Glasgow. After this, he plans to continue studies on the violin at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

After his studies with Abraham Mazumder in Kolkata, Sagnick started studying violin and Baroque violin with Gabi Maas and Elita Poulter in Glasgow, performing as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral musician in a number of venues.

He has played with various groups in India and in Scotland, toured the UK with the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, Nevis Ensemble and Kelvin Ensemble among others, and participated in projects by leading organisations like the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Orchestra of the Scottish Opera and the Scottish Ensemble. Sagnick also enjoys exploring a range of musical styles.

Upcoming projects in 2020 include a recital directing a string ensemble at the University of Glasgow, various orchestral performances, chamber music recitals and a series of concert tours.

R. Samyuktha

Violin

A 12th grader at Besant Arundale Senior Secondary School in Chennai, Samyuktha's musical lineage spans six generations and includes two legendary violinists – Thirukodikaval Krishna Iyer and Semmangudi Narayanaswamy Iyer.

At age 10, Samyuktha began participating in talent-spotting competitions like Stop Gap's Young Talent and Budding Brigade series and has given recitals at various music forums.

She has performed with the Indian National Youth Orchestra and the Madras Musical Association Orchestra, and was selected by Oscar award-winning Indian composer A.R. Rahman to perform with his music ensemble. She has given a solo recital at the Goethe Institut, Chennai and has played First Violin with the Madras String Quartet in a project combining Carnatic music and Western harmonies founded by her teacher, V.S. Narasimhan.

Samyuktha performed twice in 2019 for The South Asian Symphony Foundation, in Mumbai and Bengaluru. In October 2018, she performed a solo concert comprising both Western classical and Carnatic music at the Arkay Convention Center, Chennai. She looks forward to joining a conservatory to broaden her professional horizons and hopes to become an acclaimed solo violinist on the global stage, playing Western classical music.



Zubin Behramkamdin

Violin

Zubin started learning the violin at the age of seven with Ms. Silloo Panthaki. He passed the Licentiate Examination of the Trinity College of Music, London with distinction, standing first in India that year. He has also participated in workshops and master classes conducted by world-renowned musicians.



Zubin was selected to play in the European Community Youth Orchestra (now the European Youth Orchestra) conducted by maestro Zubin Mehta for its tour, performing in London, Madrid, Rome and cities in India. He has also played with the World Orchestra for Peace, comprising musicians from all over the world, performing in London, Berlin, Moscow, Krakow, Budapest, Tel Aviv, St. Petersburg and Beijing.

Musicians of the Orchestra

VIOLINS

Farhad Billimoria – Concertmaster (India)
 Dielle Braganza –
 Principal Second Violin (India)
 Priyanka Venkatesh –
 Assistant Principal (US)
 Zubin Behramkamdin (India)
 Grace Biswas (India)
 Yogesh Dagoriya (Nepal)
 Averell de Souza (India)
 Jerohne Fernandes (India)
 Sandip Halder (India)
 Alisena Hotak (Afghanistan)
 Nourhe Khate (India)
 Anusha Madapura (India)
 Anirban Mazumder (India)
 Amanullah Noore (Afghanistan)
 Daniel Prakash (India)
 Menaka Sahabandu (Sri Lanka)
 R. Samyuktha (India)
 Pattrasai Tipyananukul (Thailand)
 Meruert Tursunbekova (Kazakhstan)
 Sudhakar Wasti (Nepal)

VIOLAS

Geeta Nazareth – Principal (Germany)
 Sagnick Mukherjee (India)
 Mark Nunes (India)
 Avanti Perera (Sri Lanka)
 Aloise Saldanha (India)
 Mia Simon (India)
 Rohullah Stanikzai (Afghanistan)

CELLOS

Krisanthy Desby – Principal (US)
 Kenzhegul Akshekina (Kazakhstan)
 Saranga Cooray (Sri Lanka)
 Salauat Karibayev (Kazakhstan)
 Vian Pereira (India)
 Michelle Elizabeth Simons (India)
 Onay Zhumabayeva (Kazakhstan)

BASSES

Sanche Jagatheesan –
 Principal (Singapore)
 Lakshmikanth Jhony (India)
 Andrea Leitan (Sri Lanka)
 Debjit Mahalanobis (India)

FLUTES

Meera Gudipati – Principal (US)
 Chanasak Wongweerawinit –
 Assistant Principal (Thailand)
 Jamshid Muradi (Afghanistan)

OBOES

Mezraq Ramli – Principal (Singapore)
 Rohan Ramanan (US)

CLARINETS

Ruslan Galilov – Principal (Kazakhstan)
 Tarun Jayaram (Singapore)

BASSOONS

Emerald Chee – Principal (Singapore)
 Ivy Fung – Assistant Principal (Malaysia)

HORNS

Kartik Alan Jairamin –
 Principal (Singapore)
 Nivanthi Karunaratne –
 Assistant Principal (US)
 Saman Kularatne (Sri Lanka)

TRUMPETS

Naveen Fernando – Principal (Sri Lanka)
 Kalum Gamage (Sri Lanka)

TROMBONES

Don Kow – Principal (Singapore)
 Nishantha Premalal (Sri Lanka)
 Aldwyn Tan – Bass Trombone (Singapore)

PERCUSSION

Ramu Thiruyanam – Principal (Singapore)
 Qamber Nawshad (Afghanistan)
 Ishvinder Singh (Singapore)
 Neomal Weerakoon (Sri Lanka)



The Orchestra Speaks

“ Musicians from different parts of the world learn to work out their differences faster than the politicians from different parts of the world. ”

Alvin Arumugam, Conductor

“ I always felt strange doing one cultural art over the other. The idea of mixing art is difficult but in the end, I think it is made richer. Hence this idea of Ambassador Rao of bringing people of Indian diaspora and South Asian heritage together to make music, that fuses different idioms, is a great one. ”

Priyanka Venkatesh, Violin

“ Musicians tend to be egoistic and self-centred, but musicians in this group have torn down the egoistic side and worked towards a common goal, which is to make the orchestra sound great and the concert enjoyable. ”

Mezraq Ramli, Lead Oboe

“ My greatest takeaway from this experience has been that there isn't just one way of playing music. There are so many traditions. Everyone can come at it their own way and we all can have the same results. ”

Geeta Nazareth, Lead Viola

“ I am usually the only musician of South Asian descent in the Western orchestras that I play for in the United States. Here, with the South Asian Symphony Orchestra, I feel a sense of camaraderie. ”

Rohan Ramanan, Oboe

“ Music is truly a universal language. A musician with a different mother tongue would still be able to read an Italian word on their notes and comprehend when to be soft and when to be aggressive with their musical instrument. This way it becomes a great unifier. ”

Avanti Perera, Viola

“ Everyone is the same, in that everyone has a struggle. But the goal for peace is common. ”

Kartik Alan Jairamin, Lead French Horn

“ When you bring all these different people from different cultures together, by necessity, you are forced to let go of any stereotypes that people might have. This is an incredibly important exercise in diplomacy. ”

Nivanthi Karunaratne, French Horn

Interview with Alvin Arumugam

Q What does Peace Notes mean to you?

A: My favourite musician is Beethoven. He had a tragic life, where he was constantly searching for an answer. In his lifetime, he struggled mentally and physically: he tried to kill himself, he was depressed, he couldn't marry the woman he loved, his nephew, with whom he was very close, was giving him trouble. He was in a rut, unwell physically and financially. He was in a bad place. This struggle was often reflected in his music. Take for example his Fifth Symphony, which starts off with the symbolic 'fate knocking on the door' sound. Throughout the piece, before you hit the C Major, there is a long journey before to find that, through the three movements. And when the C Major chord hits you in the fourth movement – it all makes sense. All the pain and suffering makes sense. The music gave it all meaning. This is exactly what Peace Notes is about.

Q What can one learn from an orchestra such as SASO?

A: An orchestra is a unique beast, an organism, a unique organisation where many things happen at once. One of the most interesting things about orchestras, especially one like SASO, is that it is a festival orchestra, where people of South Asian descent from all over the world come together.

In the first ten minutes of the performance of a piece like Beethoven's Fifth, the orchestra achieves tremendous cooperation, through wordless communication about leadership, fellowship, sound technicalities and so on. Decisions such as 'what the sound should be like', 'who should be taking lead', 'who should be following', 'what would be the timbre, pitch' are taken wordlessly.

This model of an orchestra can be used by people all over the world – people who run companies, CEOs, people who run governments, politicians. They will find it interesting to see how orchestras with language barriers, traditional barriers, make music without words. That is truly the miracle of a symphony orchestra and what one can learn from it.

Anand Antonius Nazareth Composer

Anand Antonius Nazareth began his training at age seven. A concert pianist, he has learned from some of the most brilliant teachers all over Europe – his training took him from Monte Carlo to Rome, Vienna, Amsterdam, Freiburg, Hamburg, and then to New York City.

Nazareth was born in Verona, Italy, into a family of musicians. His father, Daniel Nazareth, was a symphonic conductor from India, his mother, Wiebke Nazareth, a talented singer.

He now lives in New York, where he composes his own music. After attending various music conservatories, he created AVbyte, a YouTube channel on which he created short, musical comedy videos that have collectively garnered over a billion views and more than a million subscribers.

Interview with Anand Nazareth



Q What has this journey meant to you?

A: I grew up in many countries around Europe – Italy, France, Netherlands, Austria, Germany – post which I moved to America. I never had a sense of home and have no idea what that means, home country. One of the things that coloured the writing of the piece, 'Ideas of Freedom', was my upcoming visit to India. Coming here was a lifelong dream because of my father, who was from India. Upon my visit, I found millions of people who reminded me of my father – through simple things like the manner of speaking, ways of acknowledging, etc. Coming to India, I sensed that there could be a home.

Q What are you conveying with the piece and how does it relate to peace and freedom?

A: The piece is complex and difficult to put together and in performing it, you have to make peace with the rest of the orchestra. I wanted to show that in the act of performing it, one was engaging in an act of peace.



Arson Fahim Keynote speaker

SASF's musical mission is guided by young musicians like Arson Fahim, who is a 19-year-old Afghan pianist, composer and conductor. He grew up in a refugee camp in Pakistan and due to his family's financial struggles, he later lived in an orphanage. The organization that operated the orphanage (The Afghan Child Education and Care Organization) was able to get Arson a scholarship to study at the Beaconhouse School System where he studied until grade 6 before his family decided to move back to Kabul to be part of the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

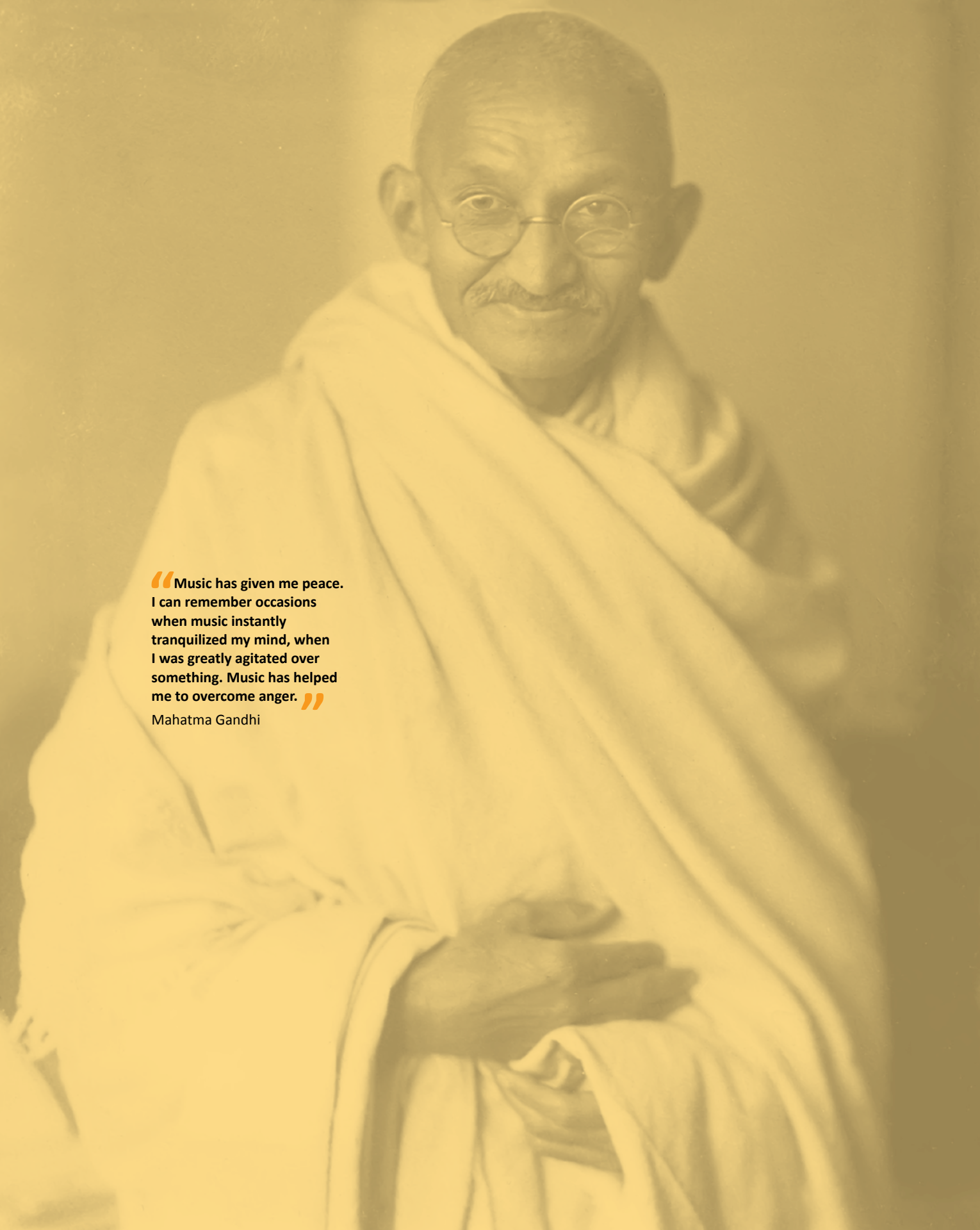
In Kabul, he started fulfilling his dream of learning the piano. He immediately fell in love with it. After a few months of studying piano at a learning centre operated by 'The Afghan Child Education and Care Organization', he was introduced to the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) which is the only music school in the country.

He has now been studying at ANIM for nearly eight years. He has conducted the Afghan National Symphony Orchestra and has written music for solo piano, voice and orchestra which has been performed nationally and internationally.

He released his solo piano piece at the concert *Peace Notes*, which was in remembrance of Farkhunda, a 27-year-old Afghan woman who was killed in Kabul, on March 19, 2015. About the piece, he said:

“Innocent people die every day. It doesn't just concern Afghans, it concerns the whole world. One person suffering is the whole world suffering.”

He talked about how music can be an enabler for peace by bringing people together. He shared how music has given him power in his confrontation with the struggles of his country. The medium gave him the means to share his emotions with the world and what started as an escape from reality has helped him face it instead.



“Music has given me peace. I can remember occasions when music instantly tranquilized my mind, when I was greatly agitated over something. Music has helped me to overcome anger.”

Mahatma Gandhi

Journey of the Orchestra

“In the United States, many assume that I am foreign; in Sri Lanka, unconscious Americanisms instantly mark me as an outsider. In India, however, people asked me if I am from Kerala. It’s my first time experiencing the assumption that I belong to a country.” Nivanthi Karunaratne, a student at the Yale School of Music, has always been ‘different’. In fact, she has never encountered a person of her ethnicity in the many orchestras she has been part of during her career. Her uniqueness set her apart – a female French hornist of Sri Lankan heritage is unusual. With SASO, her experience was one she had never had before. Here, she belonged.

Members of the South Asian Symphony Orchestra arrived at the Radisson Blu Atria in Bengaluru one week before the concert. With rehearsals due to commence, they had a busy few days at hand. They were a diverse set of musicians too – of different ethnicities, nationalities, genders, ages and languages. In the week they spent together, they swapped stories, explored a new city and understood a little about the worlds their fellow musicians inhabit.

Needless to say, there was hardly a quiet moment at the rehearsal hall! When they weren’t practising, they shared notes and exchanged music, or told each other stories about their lives. An orchestra that wishes to succeed must find its soul and for SASO, that soul resided in its diversity. The musicians found a sense of belonging in diversity, in the company of new friends hailing from strikingly different cultures, finding resonance in each other and in the country where they had come to perform.

This time together proved hugely nurturing to young Indian talents like Anusha Madapura, who wants to heal people with her music. In SASO, her talent was recognized, as her music benefited from the cultural exchange and exposure to professional skill. Here, she thrived. “I like to talk to my peers because even though we don’t speak the same mother

tongue, we are able to relate to each other and talk about our favourite composers and our favourite music. When I play in rehearsal, when we have a loud part, I feel happy inside, because I realise we are all coming together. It is just more than notes. It is about a feeling of togetherness and collaboration and working towards a purpose of peace.”

For many musicians, the project was part of a continuous dialogue, within the discourse of the importance of orchestral music in terms of leadership and team building. Krisanthi Desby Rangaswami never passed up an opportunity to engage with her fellow cellists, many of whom she had met for the first time, hoping to better interpret the music. The language barriers did not deter her, the music was binding enough.

“Playing in an orchestra is the best way to learn teamwork. There is no waiting around to be part of the action – with music, one is part of it, all the time. One must learn to play with others. If you are in an orchestra, you don’t have time to think whose ancestors won a war against whom. You play on a beat and the markings are there and that’s what we are there for. I think that is why it is considered a universal exchange.”

The Orchestra overcame various challenges, some of which stemmed from the diverse background of the musicians and the vast array of talent, age and experience. Overcoming this difference was one of the greatest challenges for the Orchestra, and during rehearsals one could find the conductor Alvin Arumugum leading by example. “In an orchestra, it is not only crucial to do, but also to listen. The conductor really listens and hears what the orchestra has to offer. We take what is in the offering and balance it with what we have to offer.”

Each member of the Orchestra imbibed this message and journeyed through the seven days learning valuable lessons of peace.



Young musicians Anusha Madapura and Alisena Hotak rehearsing with the Orchestra.

Networking Activities

After the day-long rehearsals, the musicians were encouraged to explore Bengaluru and experience the culture and traditions of the city, including heritage buildings, community spaces and Bengaluru's versatile, world-class cuisine.

Friends of the Foundation arranged for the Orchestra to visit Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath (CKP), a visual art complex with 18 galleries, located in the city. Filled with paintings, sculptures and a variety of folk arts, CKP was a treat for its eager visitors.

To give the musicians an opportunity to bond with each other outside of rehearsals, the Foundation hosted a gala night at the Bangalore Golf Club. The evening included local musicians of repute, and folk musicians who were invited to perform Kannada folk songs and dances. The Orchestra partook in the festivities and took to the stage to share their talents. Many musicians sang, some danced and a special member – 13-year-old Afghan violinist Alisena Hotak – rapped for the crowd. The evening drew the Orchestra together and valued friendships were forged.



Members of the Orchestra made lasting friendships.



Nirupama Menon Rao in conversation with conductor Alvin Arumugam and Afghan pianist Arson Fahim at Bangalore International Centre.
Photo courtesy: Neranjan de Silva

Prelude at the Bangalore International Centre

On October 4, 2019, a day before the concert, the Foundation hosted an event at the Bangalore International Centre (BIC) to present the mission of the project and a musical performance by the Orchestra.

The discussion was anchored by Nirupama Rao, with Arson Fahim and Alvin Arumugam joining in to talk about how music had played a role in their lives and the future of peace building in South Asia. Fahim shared the experiences of young Afghan musicians, especially young female musicians, who fight every day to keep their dreams alive. He gave the example of 'Zohra', Afghanistan's first all-female orchestra, which has left an indelible mark on global audiences.

The talk was followed by a performance by the Orchestra's woodwind quintet, who played the 'Overture for Woodwind Quintet' from the opera *The Barber of Seville* by Gioachino Rossini. This was followed by the performance of the ballet piece 'Dance of the Blessed Spirits', from the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* composed by Christoph Willibald Gluck. The evening concluded with a Bollywood Medley arranged by Rex Isaacs, with songs like 'Hai Apna Dil To Awara', 'Dil Deke Dekho' and 'Baar Baar Dekho'.

The Concert

It was a Saturday evening, October 5, 2019, three days after the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The J.N. Tata Auditorium, housed within the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), was packed to the brim with Bengaluru's music-loving community. There were many in the audience who flew down to Bengaluru to witness the much-anticipated event.

Assisted by the staff at IISc and volunteers, the SASF team welcomed the guests for the concert. The halls adjacent to the auditorium were fitted with screens projecting a live feed of the concert for walk-ins and students. The Orchestra members were dressed in colourful traditional attire that represented their countries.

The programme commenced with the Gujarati bhajan 'Vaishnava Janato', made famous by Mahatma Gandhi, in the voice of Rohan Ramanan – a trained Hindustani vocalist and oboist of the Orchestra. The bhajan carries the philosophical message of the 15th-century Gujarati poet Narsinh Mehta – empathy, which is the ability to identify with the suffering of another human being. It epitomised the evening for the audience and shaped the message of the concert. Young Afghan composer and pianist Arson Fahim gave the keynote speech to share the vision of young musicians in conflict regions.



Hamsafar



The bhajan was followed by 'Hamsafar' – a musical journey through South Asia – composed by Lauren Braithwaite and commissioned by Classical Movements' Eric Daniel Helms New Music Program for the South Asian Symphony Orchestra.

The piece, sewn together as a tapestry of traditional and popular musical works from seven countries in the South Asian region, has become similar to an anthem for the Orchestra.

'Hamsafar' simultaneously celebrates the shared characteristics of the seven countries whilst also highlighting the unique melodies, rhythms and folklore of each nation.

Beginning in Sri Lanka, the suite opens with the melancholic melody 'Aiyandiyee' emerging from a solo cello, and later echoed by a solo oboe. 'Allah megh de pani de' ('Oh God give us cloud, give us water') is a well-known Bengali folk song which is a plea for rain in a parched land. Drops of rain finally come before the musical traveller continues on to Nepal, India and Afghanistan to hear stories of human love. 'Euta manche ko' from Nepal, describes the difference a person's love can make to one's life. The words of 'Mera joota hai Japani' from India say, "Despite my clothes being from other countries, my heart is always Indian". Afghanistan's 'Arsala Khan' tells the story of a young lady crying out because her family will not allow her to marry the namesake of the song. 'Ta zee ling', a traditional song from Bhutan, follows. The suite ends with 'Lal meri pat rakhio' from Sindh in Pakistan, written by poet Amir Khusrau in honour of Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. The rhythm and melody come together in tutti to bring the ebb and flow of the suite to a powerful climax.

Songs of Peace

Pianist Julian Clef accompanied the choir for the opening song, a musical rendition of Langston Hughes' 'I Dream a World' by 23 students from The Harmony Chorus based in Bengaluru. The work of poet, writer and activist, Langston Hughes, which portrays the lives of working-class African Americans, is filled with stories of their joys and struggles.

This was followed by SASF co-founder Nirupama Menon Rao's composition 'Peace Is My Dream', inspired by the words of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, freedom fighter, Gandhian and Ambassador to the USSR, US and UK, who once famously remarked in an address before the United Nations, "The more we sweat in peace, the less we bleed in war."

Henry Francis Lyte's 'Abide with Me', one of Gandhi's favourite hymns, was next, and then the evocative, 'Lord, Make Me an Instrument of Thy Peace' by St. Francis of Assisi.

The chorus concluded with Rabindranath Tagore's famous Bengali song 'Ekla Chalo Re', one of the 22 protest songs written during the Swadeshi period of the Indian freedom



movement. It exhorts the listener to stand by what is right always. "With the thunder flame of pain ignite thine own heart, And let it burn alone."

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58

Movements: Allegro moderato, Andante con moto, Rondo (vivace) **Soloist:** Julian Clef



The next item on the programme was Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4, performed by the soloist Julian Clef, who was accompanied by the Orchestra. Performed first in private at the home of Count Lobkowitz, a patron of Beethoven, the Concerto received its official premiere in Vienna in 1808, and along with the Fifth Symphony, its popularity has remained constant over the years.

Words like 'heavenly' and 'serene' are often used to describe the piece. The soloist delivered the opening of the first movement of the Concerto in a contemplative and lyrical style.

The dialogue between the piano and the orchestra in the second movement, draws the picture of a virtual Orpheus taming the furies at the gates of Hades with his lyre, a description first suggested by Beethoven's biographer Adolf Bernhard Marx in 1859. The concluding rondo returns a lyrical quality to the piece, with elements of mischief, wit and high spirits infused into the music.

Zane Dalal, Associate Music Director of the Symphony Orchestra of India, writes, "The creative process through which Beethoven churns, is more spirited and adventurous, more spontaneous and whimsical, and allows for more real experimentation in his piano works than in other forms. One can look to the piano sonatas for the line of creative spirit and find that the symphonies and quartets chart the same ebb and flow. There is something singularly poetic about this work, an inherent femininity and pathos" (Dalal, 2011).

Ideas of Freedom

'Ideas of Freedom', composed by Anand Antonius Nazareth, was inspired by the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Many of Gandhi's favourite pieces found their way directly into this composition, such as the hymn 'Lead, Kindly Light' and the bhajan 'Vaishnava Janato'. Elements and ideas from other music, songs and hymns beloved by the apostle of nonviolence, also figured in this composition.

Mirroring Gandhi's own life, the music ebbed and flowed through moments of calm, of serenity, and moments of excitement and even outright pain. Soloists, playing the oboe, horn, sitar, or viola within the Orchestra, expressed ideas that were subsequently challenged or absorbed by the Orchestra as a group, highlighting the values of community consensus building.

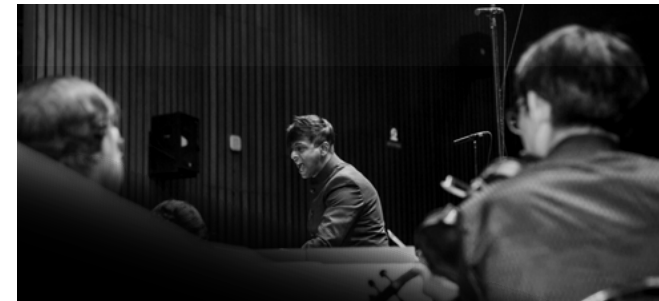
Creating harmony through music was presented as a gateway to a better understanding not just of others, but of oneself. The piece also aimed to musically represent



something Gandhi once said: "Music has given me peace. I can remember occasions when music instantly tranquilized my mind, when I was greatly agitated over something. Music has helped me to overcome anger."

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67

Movements: Allegro con brio, Andante con moto, Scherzo: Allegro, Allegro



It is said that Beethoven's passion for the ideals of freedom and emancipation fuelled the creation of the Fifth Symphony. The exuberant first four notes of the Symphony, once heard, are never forgotten and are often described as 'fate knocking on the door'. Conductor and musicologist Zane Dalal described the piece as the "creative genius [of Beethoven] bubbling like a cauldron of molten gold".

Premiered in Vienna in December 1808, Beethoven presented the Symphony with an orchestra which had rehearsed it only once. However, the Symphony's greatness was not lost on critics like E.T.A. Hoffman who spoke of the music as "radiant beams shooting through the deep night"

and "gigantic shadows rocking back and forth, leaving a pain of endless longing". The opening to the Symphony has a rhythmic tautness, with a 'Herculean' show of muscle, full of rough edges that recall the composer's own childhood in abject poverty, his alcoholic father and his 'breadwinner' status at age 19. At the time when the Symphony was premiered, Beethoven was already suffering from the strong debilitation of progressive deafness.

One can sense an ever-present, underlying sense of struggle and anguish in the composition. The ferocity and fury, interspersed with beauty and softness, made for a galvanizing influence on all composers after him and expressed the humanity of Beethoven. Many analysts feel the underlying message in this composition is Beethoven's sympathy for the ideals of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity.

This argument is reaffirmed by the similarity between the first movement of the Symphony and some French revolutionary songs. When it was premiered in Paris, the audience recognized this similarity and embraced the music wholeheartedly. It remained a firm favourite thereafter. The soaring final movements reaffirm the capacity of humanity to overcome the slings and arrows of fortune.

Bollywood Medley

Bringing the curtain down on the concert was an encore that brought the best of Bollywood's old Hindi songs, such as 'Baar Baar Dekho', 'Dil Deke Dekho', 'Kabhi Aar Kabhi Paar' and 'Hai Apna Dil To Awara', into a dramatic fusion. The Bollywood Medley was arranged by Chennai-based musician Rex Isaacs.



Donors, Partners and Volunteers

The South Asian Symphony Foundation was supported by various donors and partners at this concert. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), New Delhi, was a prominent partner. CII works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering industry, government and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, the Executive Chairperson of Biocon Limited, a biotechnology company based in Bengaluru, supported the Foundation.

Furtados, the largest retailer of musical instruments in India, assisted the Foundation by supplying the musical instruments used by the Orchestra. Radisson Blu Atria Hotel,

Bengaluru, provided accommodation at reasonable rates to the Orchestra.

Other supporters and partners were the Brigade Group, leading property developer in South India, and Titan Company Limited, an Indian consumer goods company.

To make this concert a success, the Foundation was joined by a team of 20 volunteers from Bengaluru who worked to arrange accommodations, catering, transportation for the Orchestra, stage management and ushering.

The success of the concert was ensured by the goodwill of the city of Bengaluru and the Indian Institute of Science, which remained extremely supportive throughout.



The concert in October 2019 sought to encapsulate a vision of South Asians working together in peace and mutual empathy. The musical repertoire performed drew together various strands of concepts and principles associated with peace and non-violence, expressing various shades of joy, the urge to rise above war and divisions, and to work for the common good of a shared humanity. This has also been a voyage of discovery for musicians of the Orchestra and lasting friendships have been forged through this process. The Foundation feels that music is a great unifier.



Public Response

“ We were deeply touched and appreciated your most meaningful event on Saturday at the Tata auditorium, Bengaluru. ”

Sakuntala Samuelson, Bengaluru

“ We really enjoyed yesterday’s concert which was quite outstanding. The diversity of the programme was most interesting, and the talent showcased quite exceptional. ”

Cecil and Brinda Abreo, Bengaluru

“ Heartiest congratulations to all participants! A self-fulfilling prophecy. ”

Rupa Chakravarti, Kolkata

“ Noble way to serve the community! Good luck and best wishes. ”

Subash Razdan, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

“ Amazing people gathered in this orchestra yes ... would love to hear them. ”

Brina Torkar, Ljubljana, Slovenia

“ Brava! With best wishes for success. ”

Máximo Flügelman, Washington DC, USA

“ Happy to be a part of it and go hand in hand. ”

Rajkumar Shrestha, Kathmandu, Nepal

“ As a “Gandhi Bakht” who has dedicated over two decades of his retired life to reviving and promoting Gandhian ideals, I also offer you my heartfelt thanks for raising him to epic proportions in the music field and positioning him alongside the gigantic Beethoven. ”

Alan Nazareth, Ambassador of India (Retd), Managing Trustee, Sarvodaya International Trust, Bengaluru

“ I enjoyed every minute of the concert. Wouldn’t have minded if it even went on forever. Mr. and Mrs. Rao have chosen a noble cause to invest their energies in. ”

Diana Saldanha, Bengaluru



Members of the audience write messages for the Foundation.



Notes of praise for the Orchestra



The success of the concert reflected in the smiles of the Orchestra members.

The Afghan team arriving at the Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru.



Young members of the Orchestra enjoying a dip in the swimming pool.



Meera Gudipati, Principal Flute, with local children in Bengaluru.



Nirupama Menon Rao with members of the Orchestra and the Conductor, Alvin Arumugam.



A light moment shared by the wind section of the Orchestra.



A loud cheer for the members of the Orchestra and the SASF team.

In the Media

“ The orchestra transcends language, culture, religion and nationality, thereby becoming a doorway between worlds and cultures. ”

The New Indian Express, ‘Orchestrating a fine tune, the Nirupama Menon Rao way’

“ Bengalureans got a chance to witness a message of peace that was carried out through the medium of music, thanks to a performance by the South Asian Symphony Orchestra. ”

The New Indian Express, ‘High note: Former diplomat promotes peace through music in Bengaluru’

“ Description of music as an ‘enabler’ of peace and togetherness – took on new meaning. ”

Deccan Chronicle, ‘Gandhi to Beethoven’

“ Gandhi’s life will find expression through the timeless symphony of the 19th century composer Beethoven. ”

The Week, ‘Gandhi-Beethoven’s song for peace’

“ Their music melted territorial barriers, and in the process melded into a harmonic peace concert. ”

The Telegraph, ‘The South Asian Symphony Orchestra offers a philharmonic paean to peace’

“ [Ambassador Rao] grew up immersed in the recounting of Gandhi’s life and legacy ... a former diplomat who is ... convinced that music is a potent peace agent. ”

The Telegraph, ‘Gandhiji would have supported initiatives to rediscover our common humanity: Nirupama Rao’



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📍 <http://symphonyofsouthasia.org>