



# London Philharmonic Orchestra

**RAVI SHANKAR**  
**SUKANYA**

**DAVID MURPHY** *conductor*  
**LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**

A BBC recording



## RAVI SHANKAR SUKANYA

Anoushka Shankar says she laughed when her 90-year-old father Ravi Shankar said he was going to write an opera. Everything about this great Indian maestro was extraordinary, but one of the most extraordinary things was his ground-breaking determination to bring the musical traditions of East and West into an organic fusion. *West Meets East*, the LP that he released with Yehudi Menuhin in 1967, marked the first time leading classical musicians from different cultures had collaborated on an equal footing. Following that record came three concertos for sitar and orchestra plus a symphony, but *Sukanya* – the opera he left uncompleted, and which the British violinist-conductor David Murphy, with help from Shankar’s wife Sukanya and daughter Anoushka, has now completed – reflects Ravi’s boldest stroke of all.

The inspiration for this work dates back to when Ravi’s mother-in-law came to stay in 1995, and it hinged on the fact that her daughter Sukanya – Ravi’s wife – was three decades younger than him. At one point, her mother commented that she had named her daughter right, and when Ravi asked why, she replied that their situation was like that of a story in the ancient Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* epic. Since he didn’t know the story, he was told it: a young princess named Sukanya marries an older man, who is a sage; twin demi-gods try to

tempt her away from her new husband by making him identical to them; the gods ask Sukanya to choose the one who is her real husband, and she chooses correctly. Thus was the idea of the opera born in Ravi’s mind.

We in the West don’t need telling about the beauties of our classical tradition, but Yehudi Menuhin became the cheerleader for the music of the East: ‘The most moving and exciting quality of Indian music is the innocence of its rapture,’ he said, ‘the ecstatic and spontaneous delight that binds performers and audience alike’. David Murphy, who studied with Yehudi, says: ‘I became fascinated by the whole idea of Indian music, and its holistic philosophy of life. I was also seized with the idea that as the world gets smaller – as globalisation speeds up – musics would meet and merge. I was concerned that they should keep their identity’. One interesting facet of that historic collaboration between Ravi Shankar and Yehudi Menuhin was that neither abandoned his own style – for example, Yehudi kept his characteristic vibrato. Likewise, Ravi absolutely didn’t want the Western singers in his opera to compromise their natural mode of expression – he didn’t want them to imitate Indian singers in any way. But with *Sukanya*, alongside a Western chorus and orchestra, and Western singer-soloists, we also get a five-piece Indian instrumental

ensemble consisting of sitar, shehnai oboe, tabla, plus mridangam and ghatam percussion.

And here there is a huge gulf to be bridged – the tuning. Western music proceeds according to a scale in which seven sharply-defined whole-step intervals constitute an octave; North Indian music is microtonal, proceeding via an almost infinite number of finely-calibrated pitch-gradations from one octave to another. ‘And it’s the journey through the microtones which is the expressive heart of the music,’ says Murphy. ‘Gradually you realise you are hearing all the overtones of a note, so that each note becomes, in effect, a chord’.

This disjunction is indeed a challenge, which Murphy reckons he has met successfully: ‘The singers in *Sukanya* don’t sing microtonally, yet the audience won’t be aware of a clash of tuning systems. But the singers will enter into the improvisations.’ And that’s another can of worms, given that Western musicians find it exceptionally difficult to improvise, while Indian musicians, who don’t work from scores, improvise all the time. Moreover, those improvisations are cast in the form of ragas, and a raga represents a concept that has absolutely no Western equivalent: it’s most accurately described as a map of the melodic terrain that lies between ‘scale’ and ‘tune’, and each has its

own colouring, character, and emotional connotations. These Western singers, coached by both Murphy and Anoushka Shankar, indeed sing Indian ragas, and have the opportunity to improvise as they go.

If there is much that is musically new in this work, it’s because Ravi was still discussing new ideas for it with Murphy as he lay ill for the last time in hospital: he was combining Indian spoken percussion – a kind of scat singing called *konnakol* – with a touch of Western harmony and counterpoint, to explore the Indian rhythms in a way that had never been done before. Meanwhile Murphy and his librettist Amit Chaudhuri have had to marry libretto and music, since the libretto too was far from finished when Ravi passed away. ‘The piece has a complex structure, and amazing drive and energy,’ says Murphy, ‘and my responsibility has been the continuity, filling in the gaps. We would play the ragas together – just sitar and violin – and explore their possibilities, to the point where I would know how he would develop them’.

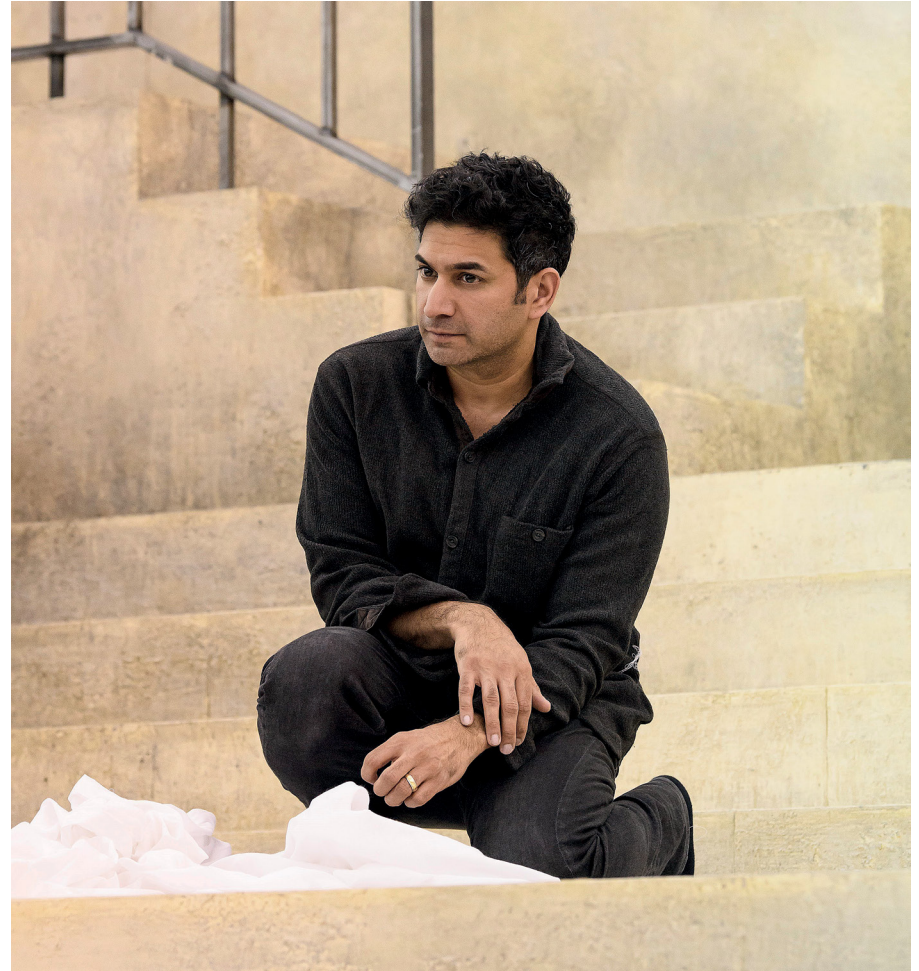
The opera begins with a solo sitar playing an alap, a slow introduction that contains all the main melodic phrases that will run through the work. This moves into a vocal introduction from the Aswini Twins, leading to the overture. Then the action begins, with Sukanya and

her father plus their entourage singing a celebration of springtime, revelling Indian-style in the sheer beauty of their vocal sound.

This is a sound-world in which it is a pleasure to dwell. The vocal lines are simple but gracefully turned, with periodic moments of rich ornamentation, and with Murphy's beat connecting the disparate elements into an organic whole. This recording is taken from the Royal Festival Hall performance of *Sukanya* on 19 May 2017, directed by Suba Das.

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*Michael Church is a music critic and editor of The Other Classical Musics: Fifteen Great Traditions, published by the Boydell Press.*



Alok Kumar as Chyavana, in rehearsal. 2017.  
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## SYNOPSIS

### PART I

## PRESENT DAY INDIA, THE TEMPLE OF THE GODDESS OF LOVE

The Aswini Twins – two beautiful, young demigods, ayurvedic physicians to the gods – break into the temple and sing a song to the Goddess. They celebrate her power and describe love's effects on the human world, including some of the extreme and absurd lengths the lovestruck man can go to. They ask the Goddess to show them love at its most true.

In answer to the Aswini Twins' question, the Goddess of Love transports them through time and space. They witness a young bereaved man named Chyavana meditating in the forest; he is so immersed in his meditation that ants build a nest around him and a huge ant hill is formed. A hundred years pass.

One beautiful spring day King Sharyaati goes to the forest to celebrate the new season, accompanied by his daughter Princess Sukanya, her friend and the royal entourage. An intrepid explorer, Sukanya discovers the ant hill and what looks like two jewels glowing from within. She pokes them with her fan and a cry of agony comes from the mound. The glow fades and storm clouds gather. As Chyavana emerges, now an old man, Sukanya, the King and Court realise what has happened. The King, learning of Chyavana's spiritual stature, promises to make amends, offering Chyavana

Sukanya's hand in marriage. Sukanya accepts this decision, knowing it is for the good of the kingdom but also feeling that some mystical force is at work.

As the Aswini Twins continue to look on, a wedding is hastily arranged. Sukanya's friend sings a song and all present join in: who can foresee the outcome?



Susanna Hurrell as Sukanya, in rehearsal. 2017.

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## PART II

The Aswini Twins, captivated by Sukanya's beauty, declare their outrage at how events are unfolding and how unworthy man is to love and be loved by a woman. As they spy on the life of the now married Sukanya and Chyavana they comment that things would be different if a woman had the opportunity to love a god.

In the music room at Chyavana and Sukanya's, the couple listen to a recital. Afterwards, Chyavana teaches Sukanya to tune the tanpura while recounting his life as a student musician. Chyavana describes how Indian and Western music differ as they sing the Raag Yaman Kalyan together. Sukanya realises she has found peace and contentment in her marriage to Chyavana, much to the disgust of the Aswini Twins who now decide to burst into the story.

The Twins ask Sukanya why she stays with her aged husband when, young and beautiful as she is, she could be with one of them. The Goddess of Love and her attendants suddenly appear. The Twins think she is there to support them, but Sukanya now realises the depth of her feeling for Chyavana.

Sukanya refuses to talk to the Twins and scorned, they then propose a test: they will restore Chyavana's eyesight and youth, make him look exactly like them,

and she must choose which one is her husband. Chyavana overhears the exchange and accepts the challenge on Sukanya's behalf.

The Twins and Chyavana step outside of the house and walk into a lake as Sukanya anxiously watches. After several minutes submerged in the lake the Aswini Twins and Chyavana emerge as three identical, god-like young men, seemingly in a trance. Sukanya must choose 'the only one who walks on earth'. Knowing her husband's soul, Sukanya immediately and correctly identifies Chyavana and they each sing a song for the other.

As the Goddess of Love looks on, Sukanya's friend, King Sharyaati and the royal entourage celebrate the reunion of Sukanya and the restored Chyavana as they begin their new life together. The Aswini Twins finally return to the Goddess's temple, having witnessed a true and extraordinary human love.

*Score posthumously completed by David Murphy.*

*Libretto by Amit Chaudhuri.*

*The production was originally developed and directed for the stage by Suba Das for Curve Leicester, The Royal Opera and London Philharmonic Orchestra.*





Director Suba Das and Michel de Souza and Njabulo Madlala as the Aswini Twins, in rehearsal. 2017. © Bill Cooper / ArenaPAL.

# LIBRETTO

## PART I

### **The opera opens with this song to Love, sung by the Ashwini twins:**

Goddess! I won't speak your name –  
Enough that I know you stoke passion  
In humans. Oh yes there's Kama,  
Behind branches. You,  
Rarely worshipp'd, have the power  
To disrupt calendars, make politicians  
Pull their pants down, businessmen  
Forget appointments pencilled in diaries,  
To call the tyrant from his rage  
And make a young girl weep; you have the might  
To make a fumble seem more urgent than war.  
A sage turns into a fool, a fool an athlete,  
A grandfather a teenager – at seventy, you catch  
And make him, to the scorn of his hoarse throat,  
Abuse young lays of love: what godlike power  
Hast thou not power upon?  
    In that case, favour  
Me, your proven soldier, who bears your yoke  
As 'twere a wreath of roses, yet is heavier  
Than lead itself, stings more than nettles.  
/ have never been foul-mouthed against your law,  
Never revealed secrets, knowing none; and wouldn't  
Even if I'd kenned them all; never practised  
Upon man's wife (well, not till now) –

Never at festivals or at great feasts  
Sought to betray a beauty, but have blushed  
At simp'ring Sirs that did; I have been harsh  
To large confessors, and have challenged them  
If they had mothers: I had one, a woman,  
And women 'twere they wronged. I knew a man  
Of eighty winters, this I told them, who  
A lass of fourteen bridged. 'Twas thy power  
To put life into dust; the aged cramp  
Had somehow screwed his square foot round,  
Such a one I am,  
And vow that lover never yet made sigh  
Truer than I. O, then, soft, sweet Goddess,  
Give me the victory of this question, which  
Is true love's merit, and bless me with a sign  
Of thy great pleasure.

***The twins are obscured by darkness. Sukanya, her father, and their entourage enter the clearing, not noticing the ant-heap and admiring the trees. They sing all sing a Tarana.***

### **Sukanya:**

These trees are like my sisters. Have I been here before?

### **King:**

We used to come for walks here when you were a child.



You had an elderly maid who had no children of her own. You were always reluctant to climb out of her arms, and she carried you everywhere, poor thing. It's been years since I've come to this part of the forest.

**Friend:**

Remember we watered the trees by the palace?  
It was May. There was no sign of rain.

**Sukanya:**

I do. Now look at *these* branches. Their leaves look ready to fall.

**Friend:**

Which is why we should water them now – an act without consequence is nicer, isn't it, than one that has an outcome?

**Sukanya:**

What pretty words! I feel I already know them... Have you said them to me before?  
What a strange day... I feel as if everything's occurred in an ancient recounting and that something's going to happen.

**Friend:**

Let's go and get some water to give to these trees.

***They wander off, leaving the king.***

**Voices sing:**

A heap of dust...  
'Tis thy power...

**Sukanya:**

There's no water here. The tree gives no shelter.

**Friend:**

Where are you?

***Sukanya cries out. She caresses her right foot.***

**Sukanya:**

Be careful. I have been bitten. What are these swarming the cracked earth?

**Voices sing:**

A heap of dust...

**Friend, bending forward and peering:**

Ants! Step aside, or you'll hit a procession.

**Sukanya:**

So tiny – and so organised. My father would give anything for such battalions.

*She notices the ant-heap.*

What's growing out of this rubbish?

*Her friend approaches.*

Here!

Let me show you something.

*They hover around the ant-heap. Sukanya pokes the mound with a stick. A loud cry.*

**King:**

Sukanya! Where are you?

**Sukanya:**

A cry of agony. Can dust feel?

*The king comes up behind her.*

**Chayavana:**

My bones are old, my skin is sand. These gems were my eyes – now they bleed!

**King:**

We beg forgiveness – we did not see you. Who are you, old man?

**Chayavana:**

Don't ask for forgiveness! I am Chayavana. My history goes way back – my mother and father are history. My sister died in an epidemic. My world no longer exists. Before you came, even these ants didn't distract me from my complete and utter immersion.

**King:**

I'll recompense you, sage. How long have you been here?

**Chayavana:**

Here? You are a courtier – you play your role in history. For ants, a lifetime is a day. In relation to the history of the universe the fifty millennia of man is like two



seconds at the close of twenty four hours.

Ah – these ants!

**Voices:**

‘Tis thy power...

A heap of dust...

**King:**

I don't understand you, I only catch a glimmer of meaning. O wise man let me offer you my daughter Sukanya in exchange for the harm we've done, mistaking you for an anthill, but also so that she might learn from your wisdom.

**Chayavana:**

I had turned to dust, but I'm flesh and blood – a finite mortal.

**King:**

Sukanya – what do you say?

**Sukanya:**

What I say doesn't matter, but I'll say it anyway. Since we've stepped into this forest I've felt a closeness to my

destiny. I didn't know what it was. But I smell it in the air. Who can foresee the outcome?

***The wedding ceremony ensues.***

## PART II

### **Ashwini twins:**

Wonders are many, but none as wonderful as man. Wonderful – or just lucky? Often I feel jealous. Not of his mastery or power, because I have mastery and power over him. Not of his intelligence or courage because I'm clever and braver than he. No, it's the undeserved interestingness of his life that annoys me. Also, how the unlikeliest one will receive the adoration of a beautiful woman. Let me rephrase that observation: wonders are plentiful, but none more wonderful than woman. However, women don't know any better than turning to mortal men for their love. They've no choice in the matter. If they did the world would be a different place.

### **The sage teaches Sukanya to tune the tanpura and the raag Yaman Kalyan while recounting his life as a student:**

It was on an afternoon in August I bought my first tanpura. My teacher had come with us and was living in our house; he was going to sing at a 'conference'. He would practise in the mornings, and take time off to vanish to the Kali temple, returning with a tilak, a great vermilion stain on his forehead, telling my mother, 'Didi, I went to see Ma Kali!' Some evenings we would sing

Yaman Kalyan together, our two voices and styles mingling closely and floating over the other sounds of the house – pigeons, the TV, the distracted noise of servants – his voice sometimes carrying my hesitant voice, and negotiating the pathways of the raag, as a boat carries a bewildered passenger. In the moments of simple imbibing, I would forget my voice was my own and become an echo of his style and artistry. The greater part of a raag consists of a slow, evasive introduction in which the notes are related to each other by curving glissandos, or meends. The straight notes of Western music, composed and then rendered, are like print upon a page; in contrast, the curving meends of the raag are like longhand writing drawn upon the air. Each singer has his own longhand with its own arching, idiosyncratic beauties, its own repetitive, serpentine letters. With the end of the recital this longhand, which, in its unravelling, is a matter of constant erasures and rewritings, is erased completely, unlike the notes of Western music, which remain printed upon the page.

That afternoon, we took the car to Rashbehari Avenue. My guru was dressed as usual in a loose white kurta and pyjamas. It must have been six or seven years before his death, and he must have just turned

forty. The oil he had put in his hair before he combed it smelled sweet. We walked to the shop, no bigger than a room, called Hemen and Co. Outside, the pavement was broken, its edges blue-grey with ash from charcoal stoves; mosquitoes hung in the air. Ascending the three steps, we saw unfinished tanpuras and sitars, long patient necks and the comical but gracefully distended round urns; some instruments hung upside down from the ceiling like bats; and a man was planing a piece of wood. My tanpura was ready with its four new strings; I remember the tentative shyness with which I touched it.

Later, we sat on the floor in my room, and my guru taught me to tune the instrument. The tanpura can be held vertically on the lap or next to the upraised knee as it is played, when it looks male and perpendicular, or laid horizontally on the ground before one, when, with the surrendering slope of its long neck and the stable fullness of its urn, its mixture of acquiescence and poise, it looks feminine. The four strings provide only two notes as a background to the song; *sa*, or *shadja*, the first, the mother-note, from which all other notes come, with which one's relationship is permanent and unambiguous, and the second note, depending on the raag, the father-note, circumstantial but constructive.

To tune the tanpura, you must turn the keys on its upper end, keys which are huge, ornate, and antique, like the doorknobs of a palace. That afternoon my guru and I, like patient surgeons tuned the tanpura till the room filled with the notes *shadja* and *pancham*.

### **The Ashwinis appear and court Sukanya:**

We bring the message of youth!  
We're restless, we're odd...  
We're slightly uncouth!  
We bring the message of youth!

We tear down fences,  
And admit to offences.  
Oh like the fragrance  
Of the ashoka we spread,  
Piercing storm clouds  
Like a bright lightning-thread:  
We bite your flesh like a tooth!  
We bring the message of youth!

We make mistakes!  
But never hit the brakes –  
We plunge in the deep end



And scramble to shore.  
Whenever we're summoned  
In peacetime or war,  
We're there, as blunt as the truth!  
We bring the message of youth!

**Sukanya:**

My husband's eyes don't shine like the sun. If the shiuli is white, he is the dark branch from which it hangs. If hair is dead grass then it's dead grass that hangs from that head. I've seen lotuses floating in a pool in my father's garden. He is no lotus. There is no perfume to his body but the shallow, familiar smell of age. I like to hear him speak, although I know at times he wavers, dries up suddenly. What are the gods like? I have no clue. My husband's no god. He walks on earth.

**Ashwini:**

Why stay with him? You've paid your dues.  
You're too young.

**Sukanya:**

I can't explain. I told you.

**Ashwini:**

Sukanya, he's neither god nor man. You may as well have wedded the ant-heap.

**2nd Ashwini:**

Choose one of us. What we've felt for you watching you from Indra's house is more than adoration or love. It's longing.

***Sukanya turns away.***

Then why not play a game? Let's see how marvellous he really is.

**Sukanya:**

I have no interest in games.

**Ashwini:**

A test, then: since we are doctors to celestial beings, we can restore your husband's eyesight and his youth if you can spot him among us after we've made him look exactly like ourselves: a third twin.

**Chayavana:**

I've been listening to you – our days are so still, our

world so small, that it's quite a welcome diversion.

**Ashwini:**

The sage speaks and listens though he can't see.

**Chayavana:**

I say yes to your challenge on her behalf.

***The three go into a pool, and emerge identical.***

**Sukanya:**

One face, one voice. Three persons.

***They approach her.***

How did you make a division of yourself?

***She points at Chayavana.***

It's you! You are no god. You're the only one who walks on earth.

**Chayavana:**

Sukanya, I have no twin. I had a sister, whom, long ago, an illness put to end. What kin are *these* to me? What

countryman? What parentage? There is only you.

**The king and the friend celebrate the reunion of wife and husband:**

You've set these two adrift  
On the high tide of love –  
Destroy their shackles now,  
Now, now, now.

We'll have no hesitation,  
We'll cast no backward glance –  
Raise the mast now,  
Now, now, now.



Director Suba Das and members of the cast, in rehearsal. 2017. © Bill Cooper / ArenaPAL.



## DAVID MURPHY *conductor*



David Murphy was born in Pembrokeshire, trained as a violinist at the Purcell School and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, and performed widely as a soloist and chamber musician. He subsequently taught at Wichita State

University, and trained as a conductor with Jay Decker, Gustav Meier, Seiji Ozawa and Léon Barzin. He then became assistant conductor to Sir Charles Mackerras and began collaborating with Pandit Ravi Shankar. He has conducted orchestras including the London Philharmonic Orchestra (with whom he gave the world premiere of Ravi Shankar's *Symphony*, recorded for the LPO Label), Scottish Chamber Orchestra (including the world premiere of Amjad Ali Khan's sarod concerto *Samaagam*, recorded for Harmonia Mundi), the Residentie Orkest (including the European premiere of Holst's *Indra*), London Sinfonietta (including Holst's *Savitri*), Philharmonia Orchestra (including the London premiere of *Indra*), the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Britten Sinfonia. He has been Musical Director of Sinfonia Verdi since 1990 and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

## NJABULO MADLALA *Aswini Twin*



Born in Durban, Njabulo Madlala studied at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and at Wales International Academy of Voice. He is a former Britten-Pears Young Artist, a Samling Artist and in 2010 won the Kathleen

Ferrier Award. His operatic appearances include roles in *The Nose* and *How the Whale Became* for The Royal Opera, Jim (*Porgy and Bess*) for English National Opera and Dutch National Opera, Don Giovanni for Mid Wales Opera, Schaunard (*La bohème*) for English Touring Opera and Opera Holland Park, Bartolomeo (*Il furioso all'isola di San Domingo*) for English Touring Opera, and Mel (*The Knot Garden*) at the Montepulciano Festival. Notable concert appearances include Beethoven's *Symphony No.9* (Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra), *Messiah* and *Belshazzar's Feast* (Philharmonia Orchestra), and Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (London Philharmonic Orchestra). He has performed internationally in recital with accompanists including Julius Drake, Roger Vignoles, William Vann and Simon Lepper, and released a debut CD, *Songs of Home*, for Champs Hill Records.

## MICHEL DE SOUZA *Aswini Twin*



Michel de Souza studied at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, becoming an Emerging Artist for Scottish Opera, where roles included Forester (*Cunning Little Vixen*) and

Escamillo (*Carmen*). He joined the Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at ROH Covent Garden, singing such roles as Schaunard (*La Bohème*), Angelotti (*Tosca*) and Baron Douphol (*La Traviata*)

He went on to sing Schaunard (*La Bohème*), Leuthold (*Guillaume Tell*) and Starveling (*Midsummer Night's Dream*) for Grand Théâtre de Genève, High Priest (*Samson et Dalila*) and Sonora (*Fanciulla del West*) for Grange Park Opera and Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*) for Teatro Argentino de La Plata. He appeared as Figaro (*Il Barbiere*) and Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*) for Teatro Municipal de São Paulo. His concert engagements include Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music* (BBC Proms), Beethoven's Symphony No.9 with Orchestre National de Lyon, Handel's *Messiah* and Bernstein's *Mass* with Orquestra Municipal de São Paulo.

## ALOK KUMAR *Chyavana*



Born in India, Alok Kumar lives in New York City. He trained at the Peabody Institute, the Shepherd School of Music and Boston University Opera Institute. He has appeared with opera companies including Santa Fe Opera, Florida Grand Opera

and Michigan Opera Theatre, at the Domaine Forget and Spoleto festivals, with the Boston and Cincinnati Pops Orchestras and at Boston Symphony Hall, Carnegie Hall, Hong Kong City Hall and Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Recent appearances in opera include Don José (*Carmen*) for Michigan Opera Theatre, Florida Grand Opera and in Hong Kong and the Duke of Mantua (*Rigoletto*) for Palm Beach Opera. His other opera repertory includes Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Macduff (*Macbeth*) and Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*). His concert appearances include the world premiere of Thomas Cabaniss's cantata *My Song is a Fire* and works by Beethoven, Dvořák, Mahler and Verdi. In addition to his singing career he is a licensed attorney.

## KEEL WATSON *King Sharyaat*



Keel Watson studied at Trinity College of Music. His operatic appearances include Doctor Bartolo (*The Marriage of Figaro*) and Aye (*Akhnaten*) for English National Opera, Creon (*Oedipus Rex*) and Zuniga (*Carmen*) for Teatro de São

Carlos, King of Egypt (*Aida*) for Bregenz Festival, Lawyer Frazier (*Porgy and Bess*) for Opéra de Lyon, Iago (*Otello*), Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) and Don Pizarro (*Fidelio*) for Birmingham Opera Company, Speaker of the Temple (*The Magic Flute*) for Opera North, Usher (*Trial by Jury*) at the BBC Proms, and numerous roles for Opera Holland Park and English Touring Opera. He has performed in contemporary operas including Caterpillar (Will Todd's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*) for Opera Holland Park and at the Royal Opera House, Luke Bedford's *Seven Angels* for The Opera Group, Mark-Anthony Turnage's *The Country of the Blind* for Aldeburgh Festival and Jonathan Dove's *Palace in the Sky* for ENO Baylis. Notable concert appearances include *Carmina Burana* (Royal Festival Hall), and *A Child of Our Time* (City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra).

## SUSANNA HURRELL *Princess Sukanya*



© Harry Livingstone

Susanna Hurrell is highly regarded as one of the most versatile singers of her generation. Since her critically acclaimed debut with the Royal Opera House as Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*) in 2016, her pure, clear tone and warm stage presence

have garnered praise from audiences and critics throughout Europe and the UK. Recent highlights include Micaela (*Carmen*) for the ROH, Mélisande (*Pelleas et Mélisande*) for the Norwegian National Opera and Gretel (*Hansel and Gretel*) for the English National Opera / Regent's Park Open Air Theatre.

Equally at home with contemporary repertoire, she sang Isabel in the Russian premiere of George Benjamin's *Lessons in Love and Violence* at the Mariinsky Concert Hall, and in Philip Venables' *4.48 Psychosis* for the ROH, Prototype Festival in New York and Opéra national du Rhin, a role she originated in 2016. On the concert platform, Hurrell has performed, among others, Mahler Symphony No. 4 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and the world premiere of David Oppenheimer's *Deborah* with the Southbank Sinfonia.



## ELEANOR MINNEY *Sukayna's Friend*

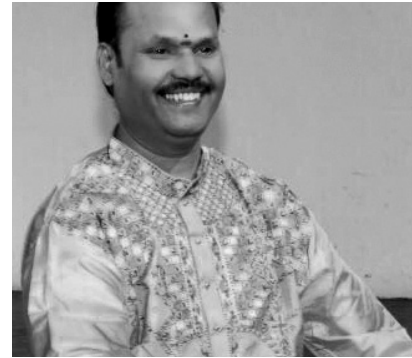


Eleanor Minney studied at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music, London, where upon graduating was recipient of the Wilfred Greenhouse Allt prize for Cantata and Oratorio for her performance in JS Bach's St. John Passion.

Concert highlights include Bach's B Minor Mass with the Academy of Ancient Music, St. Matthew Passion and Magnificat with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the English Baroque Soloists, St John Passion with Britten Sinfonia, Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (Proserpina) and *Vespers* (1640) with I Fagiolini, Copland's *In the beginning* with The Sixteen, Schumann's *Paradise und die Peri* with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and Bach's *Erbarme Dich* which she performed for the highly acclaimed BBC documentary *Bach: A Passionate Life*.

Eleanor is also a busy consort singer and enjoys performing a wide variety of repertoire with the BBC Singers, The Monteverdi Choir, I Fagiolini and Tenebrae.

## M BALACHANDAR *mridangam and konnakol*



From a musical family, he began his mridangam studies at the age of nine with Coimbatore N. Ramaswamy Pillai. He works in many different genres of dance and music including Carnatic classical music, Bharatanatyam, Kathak,

Hindustani classical music, jazz and fusion. 'Bala' (as he is known in the music fraternity) has performed at many prestigious festivals worldwide and appeared on international television and radio with noted Indian musicians and dancers including Pandit Ravi Shankar, Dr. M Balamuralikrishna, Prof. TV Gopalakrishnan, Pandit Jasraj, TH Vikku Vinayakram, Dr Padma Subramaniam, Alarmel Valli and Saswati Sen. He has been the resident mridangam teacher at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London, since 1995. He has won many prestigious awards and was awarded a Fellowship of Trinity Laban Conservatoire in 2005.

## RAJKUMAR MISRA *tabla*



Pandit Rajkumar Misra, one of the most renowned tabla players in Indian Classical music, studied with his father Pandit Ramgopal Misra and with Pandit Jnan Prakash Gosh. He has performed with leading artists in India and

around the world, including Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Pt VG Jog, Ustad Rashid Khan and Pt Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, and performed in the UK with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, and at Buckingham Palace for HM The Queen. Rajkumar is a Fellow of Trinity Laban Conservatoire and is the resident Guru at The Bhavan.

## PARIMAL SADAPHAL *sitar*



Parimal Sadaphal is a senior disciple of the world-renowned sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar, with whom he studied from the age of seven. He has travelled and performed extensively as a soloist

and with Pandit Ravi Shankar. In addition to his musical career, Parimal has a Masters Degree in Agricultural Engineering and is a senior consultant for international development organisations such as the World Bank and UNDP.

## ASHWANI SHANKAR *shehnai*



Ashwani was born into a family of musicians specializing in Banaras gharana, shehnai and flute. He initially trained with his grandfather Pandit Anant Lal and his father Pandit Daya Shankar, later working

with the world-renowned sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar. He has performed at numerous music festivals in India and worldwide.

## PIRASHANNA THEVARAJAH *ghatam, morsing and konnakol*



Pirashanna Thevarajah is a senior disciple of Mridanga vidwan Sri. M. Balachandar. He performs on various Indian percussion instruments including the mridangam, kanjira, ghatam and morsing and is also proficient in

the art of konnakol (Indian spoken rhythm). He has collaborated and performed with many of the world's foremost Indian classical and contemporary musicians, including the late Pandit Ravi Shankar, Anoushka Shankar, Mandolin U. Shrinivas, Talvin Singh and Sivamani. He has appeared at many venues and festivals across Europe, India, the USA and Canada, and featured on many albums and film soundtracks including Anoushka Shankar's Grammy nominated albums *Traveller*, *Traces of You* and *Land of Gold*.



## BBC SINGERS



The BBC Singers are one of the UK's finest choirs, performing an unusually wide range of music. Recent concerts have featured works by composers from Victoria, Schütz and Handel to Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Sir James MacMillan, John Rutter, Julia Wolfe, Bob Chilcott and Laura Mvula, alongside creative collaborations with South-Asian dance company Akademi and world-music fusion band Kabantu. The BBC Singers' expertise in contemporary music has brought about creative relationships with major composers and conductors of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Britten, Poulenc and Judith Weir (Associate Composer of the BBC Singers and Master of the Queen's Music).

The group makes appearances at the BBC Proms each year; concerts this season include the First and Last Nights, the CBeebies Proms, a reimagination of Duke Ellington's Sacred Concerts and 20th-century English

choral music in the 'Musicians' Church' (Holy Sepulchre London, where Proms founder-conductor Henry Wood is buried), conducted by Chief Conductor Sofi Jeannin. The BBC Singers perform a series of concerts at Milton Court Concert Hall in London each season. The 2019–20 season offers a typically wide range of music with a concert curated by and featuring a world premiere by Judith Weir, a festive concert of big-band classics from the 1940s and 1950s with jazz singer Clare Teal, a concert for families and an evening of 17th- and 18th-century music for royal occasions.

Based at the BBC's Maida Vale Studios, the choir also gives free performances at St Paul's Knightsbridge and other venues. The BBC Singers also make regular appearances at major festivals across the UK and beyond, with most of their performances broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

# LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the world's finest orchestras, balancing a long and distinguished history with its present-day position as one of the most dynamic and forward-looking ensembles in the UK. This reputation has been secured by the Orchestra's performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, trail-blazing international tours and wide-ranging educational work. Founded by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1932, the Orchestra has since been headed by many of the world's greatest conductors, including Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. Vladimir Jurowski was appointed the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor in March 2003, and became Principal Conductor in September 2007.

The Orchestra is based at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall in London, where it has been Resident Orchestra since 1992. It has a long history performing music from beyond the Western tradition, among others with its *Roots Classical Fusion* series and performances at *Alchemy* festival, as well as giving the world premiere performances of Ravi Shankar's Symphony, only opera, *Sukanya* and the European premiere of his Second Sitar Concerto.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra made its first recordings on 10 October 1932, just three days after its first public performance. It has recorded and broadcast regularly ever since, and in 2005 established its own record label. These recordings are taken mainly from live concerts given by conductors including LPO Principal Conductors from Beecham and Boult, through Haitink, Solti and Tennstedt, to Masur and Jurowski. [lpo.org.uk](http://lpo.org.uk)



**RAVI SHANKAR (1920–2012)**

**88:34 Sukanya**

**CD1 40:09 Part I**

- 01 07:21 I. Prelude: Aswini Twins' Song to Love
- 02 05:07 II. Overture
- 03 04:36 III. Tarana
- 04 03:17 IV. The Forest
- 05 02:26 V. Ants!
- 06 05:51 VI. Discovery
- 07 11:31 VII. Marriage

**CD2 48:25 Part II**

- 01 02:28 VIII. Prelude
- 02 05:47 IX. Tilak Kalmud
- 03 12:52 X. Yaman Kalyan
- 04 06:39 XI. Arrival of the Aswini Twins
- 05 04:46 XII. The Test
- 06 04:28 XIII. The Lake
- 07 05:39 XIV. The Choice
- 08 05:46 XV. New Life

**DAVID MURPHY** *conductor*

**LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**

**Vesselin Gellev** *leader*

Recorded live at *Southbank Centre's* **ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL**, London