

FOR RELEASE: 4 May, 2021

Alexandria, VA, USA

Classical Movements and Neeta Helms present

A Concert for India:

A Tribute by Indian-American Musicians

8 Preeminent Indian-American Classical Musicians | Esteemed Collaborators

Streaming Thursday, 6 May, 2021 | 21:00 IST / 11:30AM EDT / 8:30AM PDT



Classical Movements Presents

a concert for india

A Tribute by Indian-American Musicians



A concert offered in solidarity with the resilient and beautiful people of India during a time of extreme hardship and sorrow



In solidarity with the resilient and beautiful people of India during a time of extreme hardship and sorrow, **Classical Movements** presents “**A Concert for India**” a streaming musical tribute on **Thursday, 6 May**.

Distressed to see the worsening, devastating situation in India, Classical Movements’ Indian-born Founder and President **Neeta Helms** reached out to colleagues in the Western classical music community across the United States and invited 8 accomplished Indian-American classical



musicians (some performing with spouses or other collaborators) to offer moving performances of Indian and Western classical music and personal statements as a gesture of comfort.

“Like so many other Indians around the world, I have been horrified by the widespread suffering in India due to Covid-19,” says Neeta Helms. “Wanting to make a difference beyond donations and being in a position at the center of the classical music world for three decades, I reached out to several of the many musicians of Indian origin who are making their mark in the United States and abroad. Knowing the power of music to offer comfort and peace in times of suffering, it is our hope that this will bring some solace to people facing such fear and anxiety.”

The virtual “**Concert for India**” will be streamed on Facebook and YouTube by Classical Movements, the performers and other partners on **Thursday, 6 May at 9pm IST / 11:30AM EDT / 8:30AM PDT**.

Viewers are encouraged to donate to international and Indian organizations supporting efforts to fight the pandemic.

Musical Program

"O Re Piya" (Salim-Suleiman, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan)

Reena Esmail, Piano | Saili Oak, Indian Classical Vocalist

"Piacevole non largo" from Canonic Sonata No. 4 in D minor (Georg Philipp Telemann)

Dilshad Billimoria Posnock, Flute | Jason Posnock, Violin

Bilder aus Osten (Robert Schumann)

Vijay Venkatesh & Eva Schaumkell, Piano

Piano Concerto No. 2: II. Allegro Scherzando (Camille Saint-Saëns)

Vijay Venkatesh, Piano

Jeffrey Kahane, Conductor | Sarasota Festival Orchestra

Alap in Raga Bhairavi (Rohan Ramanan)

Rohan Ramanan, English Horn

Vak for Solo Violin and Taanpoora (Shirish Korde)

Priyanka Venkatesh, Violin



"Pie Jesu" from *Requiem* (Gabriel Fauré)

Sherezade Panthaki, Soprano

Greg Funfgeld, Organ

"Hallelujah" (Leonard Cohen, arr. Reena Esmail)

Vijay Gupta, Violin

About the Musicians

Composer **Reena Esmail** works between the worlds of Indian and Western classical music. Esmail holds degrees in composition from The Juilliard School and the Yale School of Music. Esmail's work has been commissioned by ensembles including the Seattle Symphony, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Kronos Quartet, Imani Winds, San Francisco Girls Chorus, Juilliard415, and Yale Institute of Sacred Music. Esmail is the Los Angeles Master Chorale's 2020-2023 Swan Family Artist in Residence, and Seattle Symphony's 2020-21 Composer-in-Residence. Esmail was Composer-in-Residence for Street Symphony (2016-18) and is currently an Artistic Director of Shastra, a non-profit organization that promotes cross-cultural music connecting music traditions of India and the West.

Vijay Gupta is an esteemed violinist, speaker and thought leader. Gupta served as a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for 12 years, which he joined as the youngest violinist in the orchestra's history, and has appeared as a guest concertmaster with the Philharmonia Orchestra of London and Los Angeles Opera. For his work as the Founder and Artistic Director of Street Symphony, which brings music to people in shelters, clinics, county jails and prisons, Gupta is the recipient of a 2018 Catherine D. and John T. MacArthur grant.

Saili Oak, Indian Classical Vocalist, is a senior disciple of Dr. Ashwini Bhide Deshpande, a leading vocalist of the Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana. Saili completed her Sangeet Visharad from the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal and has earned awards including the prestigious Pt. Jasraj Yuva Award, Pt Vasantrao Deshpande Yuva Award, and the Gaanwardhan Award. Known for her work in the Indian/Western Classical music crossover space, she has performed with notable western music ensembles including the Albany Symphony Orchestra and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. She has been featured on several albums including 'Beyond', 'American Mirror', 'Sing about it' and 'KALA'. Saili serves as the Programs Director of a non-profit organization 'Shastra' and as a Mentor for the Street Symphony.

Sherezade Panthaki, Soprano, enjoys ongoing collaborations with many of the world's leading interpreters including Nicholas McGegan, Masaaki Suzuki, Mark Morris, Nicholas Kraemer, Matthew Halls, Paul Agnew, and Lawrence Cummings and appearances with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Bach Collegium Japan, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, The Boston Early Music Festival, The San Francisco Early Music Festival, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Houston Symphony Orchestra, Music of the Baroque (Chicago), Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. Born and raised in



India, Ms. Panthaki began her musical education at an early age. Following intensive study and earning national distinction as a young pianist, she turned to singing and found a more personal and expressive means to connect with audiences. She holds an Artist Diploma with top honors from the Yale School of Music and the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, where she was the winner of multiple awards of distinction.

Dilshad Billimoria Posnock, Flute, studied at the Royal College of Music, London and the Carnegie Mellon School of Music for a Master's Degree, where she studied with Jeanne Baxtresser –former Principal Flute of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, under Maestro Zubin Mehta. Dilshad has returned to India to perform several times at the NCPA in Mumbai and in other Indian cities. Dilshad is Principal Flute of the South Asian Symphony Orchestra (SASO). She is a freelance performer and teaches flute and World Music at the Brevard College.

Jason Posnock, Violin, has performed regularly in such prominent American ensembles as the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Concertmaster of the Asheville Symphony Orchestra since 2007, he also serves on the faculty of Brevard College, and is the Vice President & Chief Artistic Officer at the Brevard Music Center.

Rohan Ramanan, English Horn, is a musician with a background in Hindustani vocals, Western oboe, and composition and plays oboe and English horn in the South Asian Symphony Orchestra. In addition to his performance activities, Ramanan serves as Executive Director of the Avartan Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting Indian Classical arts by the next generation of musicians.

German pianist **Eva Schaumkell** has established a major international presence as Gold medalist in the 2018 International James Ramos Piano Competition and has appeared in recital at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Steinway Hall London, Luton Music Club, Buckingham Palace, the City of London Festival, Stadthalle Weilburg, Kurhaus Bad Schwalbach, Coselpalais Dresden in Germany, and the MusicAlp Festival in Courchevel, France.

Priyanka Venkatesh, Violin, received a Doctorate (D.M.A) in Violin Performance from UCLA has won numerous concerto competitions and received multiple scholarships and summer fellowships, including at the Atlantic Music Festival, a new music festival in Maine. As a Fulbright Scholar studying Indian classical music in India, she is versed in both Western and Indian classical music. Through the initiative of the SASO, she travels to India to foster peace in the region through musical performance.

Vijay Venkatesh has been recognized on three continents as a pianist with profound musicianship, sparkling pianism and an innate sense of partnership. Vijay has rapidly established a major international reputation as top prizewinner in the San Jose, Seattle, Zimmerli, World Piano, and Waring International Piano Competitions and has been named a Davidson Fellow Laureate at the Library of Congress and Grand Prize Winner of the Los Angeles Music Center's Spotlight Awards. Mr. Venkatesh has performed as soloist with the symphony orchestras including Seattle, Vienna, Sarasota, Redlands, Roanoke, collaborated with preeminent conductors such as Jeffrey Kahane, Ludovic Morlot, David Lockington, David Stewart Wiley, Toshiyuki Shimada, Ken Lam,



Michael Repper, Frank Fetta, and performed at Merkin Hall in New York, Chicago's Dame Myra Hess series, and at the Aspen, Brevard, Banff, Newport, Redlands Bowl, Sarasota, and Vienna Music Festivals. An active chamber musician, Venkatesh has appeared eight times on Le Salon de Musiques at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles and tours as the Viennese Piano Duo with his wife and pianist, Eva Schaumkell.

Classical Movements in India

Growing up in India, Neeta Helms's family was involved in many major western classical music institutions: the Delhi Music Society, Delhi School of Music, Delhi Symphony Orchestra and Paranjoti Chorus number among them. Neeta organized her first tours to India before **Classical Movements**, with tours for American composer and pianist **Robert DeGaetano** in 1987 and 1988. When **Classical Movements** began touring **India** in 2000, sharing Indian culture with touring groups and bringing Western classical music to young, interested Indian musicians – including the highly acclaimed multi-city tour of the **Yale Institute of Sacred Music** and **Juilliard** in March, 2017.

In 2017, Classical Movements also launched the **India Choral Fellowship** to provide choral music workshops and clinics for Indian choirs, helping lay the foundation for both interpreting choral classics and creating new works that represent India's new musical traditions. Classical Movements has presented the **Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Choir**, **Madras Youth Choir**, **Chennai Children's Choir** at the **Serenade! Choral Festival** in Washington, D.C. Additionally, Neeta Helms has served as Artistic Advisor for the **South Asian Symphony Orchestra** founded by **Ambassador Nirupama Rao** and Classical Movements' Eric Daniel Helms commissioned a world premiere musical work for the first concert.

About Neeta Helms

Since founding Classical Movements in 1992, Indian-born **Neeta Helms** has pioneered a model of concert touring for orchestras and choirs that emphasizes cultural exchange with local communities in 145 countries, with particular focus on frequently overlooked destinations. Under her leadership, Classical Movements has been the driving force behind ground-breaking projects in Russia, Cuba, South Africa, Vietnam, Iraq and elsewhere – and since 2020, the first live classical concerts in the United States since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. For her vision and commitment to transformative projects, she has been awarded the 2014 BCA10: Best Businesses Partnering with the Arts in America award, named one of Musical America's 2017 Movers & Shapers and received the 2019 ArtsMatter Award from the New Orchestra of Washington. After her Bachelor's at Delhi University and MBA at XLRI, Neeta moved to New York in 1986 through her job with the Tata Administrative Service.

About Classical Movements

The premier concert tour company for the world's great [orchestras](#) and [choirs](#), **Classical Movements** creates meaningful cultural experiences through music in **145 countries**. An



industry leader for **three decades**, **Classical Movements** organizes more than 60 tours every year, producing some 200 concerts every season. Producer of two international choral festivals—**Ihlonbe!** in South Africa and **Serenade!** in Washington, D.C.—and the **Prague Summer Nights: Young Artists Music Festival**, in addition, **Classical Movements' Eric Daniel Helms New Music Program** has commissioned 95 works from Grammy, Oscar and Pulitzer Prize-winning composers. Winner of Americans for the Arts' BCA10: Best Businesses Partnering with the Arts Award, since its founding in 1992, as a truly global company, **Classical Movements** remains committed to facilitating **cultural diplomacy** across the world—promoting peace through the medium of music. During Covid-19, Classical Movements has continued to lead the way with innovative projects representing a pivot towards domestic touring and international tours for individuals and small groups, as well as presenting the first live chamber concerts in the United States since the pandemic and the unprecedented virtual Inauguration Fanfares in honor of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

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