

London **Philharmonic** Orchestra

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA TO GIVE ONE-OFF PERFORMANCE OF RAVI SHANKAR'S ONLY OPERA *SUKANYA* TO CELEBRATE SHANKAR CENTENARY

Part of Southbank Centre's *Shankar 100* centenary celebrations



A starry cast of singers, dancers and musicians celebrate Ravi Shankar's 100th birthday with a one-off performance of Ravi Shankar's final work and only opera with the London Philharmonic Orchestra

Wednesday 15 January 2020 | 7:30pm | Royal Festival Hall, London

On 15th January 2020, the London Philharmonic Orchestra is joined by a stellar multicultural cast for Ravi Shankar's only opera *Sukanya* to launch Southbank Centre's *Shankar 100* centenary celebrations marking the life and legacy of Ravi Shankar. The opera brings together music, dance and theatrical traditions of India and the West to create a stunning musical spectacle, encapsulating Shankar's unique ability to combine diverse global traditions through art.

Hailed by the Telegraph as "*a charming evening of pure escapism*" at its world premiere performance in 2017, this lavish opera tells the tale of the beautiful princess Sukanya, who must marry for the sake of her kingdom. The plot includes an ancient sage, a pair of meddling Gods and an unlikely love story. With a libretto by **Amit Chaudhuri** taken from the famous Sanskrit texts of the Mahābhārata, the opera is choreographed to combine traditional Indian instruments, Western orchestra, singers and a dance ensemble. The performance will be semi-staged, directed by **Suba Das**, featuring the London Philharmonic Orchestra supplemented with Indian instruments, a choir, a troupe of dancers.

Called 'the godfather of world music' by George Harrison, the legendary Ravi Shankar was composing *Sukanya* - his final work - up until the final days of his life. **David Murphy** - who

worked closely with Shankar throughout his life and completed this landmark work after his passing, with the help of Ravi Shankar's daughter Anoushka and also conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra in the world premiere of the opera in 2017, returns to conduct this one-off performance. This opera was described as 'a gift of love to his young wife' **Sukanya Rajan**, who Shankar married in 1989, and shares her name with the Princess Sukanya from Hindu mythology - the subject of this work.

Sukanya Shankar said, "*My husband, an enigmatic genius, was a cluster of energy, creativity, love and inspiration who never ceased to surprise me in all our time together and has done it again! This opera is a standing testimony to the ultimate in the amalgamation of East meeting West as natural as can be.*"

The London Philharmonic, working in partnerships with The Royal Opera and Curve, gave the hugely successful world premiere performances of this opera in 2017 in a tour met with critical acclaim and multiple award nominations, including for 'Outstanding Achievement' at The Asian Awards. The Guardian called it 'sublime'. WhatsOnStage named it '*The year's most unexpected delight...awash with colour...and with radiant performances*'. The Times praised conductor David Murphy's insight and work on the opera, calling it '*a joyous epilogue to a joyous life*'.

This performance at Southbank Centre, the Orchestra's London home, sees the return of many of the cast and crew from the opera's premiere in 2017. **Suba Das**, who was nominated for a Breakthrough Artist in UK Opera Award from WhatsOnStage for his original work on *Sukanya*, will also direct this celebratory centenary production. British soprano **Susanna Hurrell** returns to sing the title role alongside Indian-born American tenor **Alok Kumar** as Chyavana, and Brazilian baritone **Michel de Souza** and South African baritone **Njabulo Madlala** return as the Aswini Twins. Joining the cast is New Zealand born Samoan **Jonathan Lemalu**, who will take the role of King Sharyaati. The commercial CD release of the 2017 performance will also coincide with this performance in January 2020.

Timothy Walker, Chief Executive and Artistic Director of the LPO, said "*The LPO has long championed the work of Ravi Shankar, an inspirational figure in bringing Eastern and Western cultures together. It seems only fitting that we give audiences another chance to experience this incredible final work in celebration of what would have been his 100th birthday year.*"

This performance heralds the beginning of *Shankar 100*, a year-long celebration of Ravi Shankar at Southbank Centre with concerts and events planned throughout the calendar year. **Anoushka Shankar**, Southbank Centre Associate Artist, will perform twice with the LPO in 2020. In April 2020 Anoushka revises her solo part in Ravi Shankar's *Symphony*, ten years on from the world premiere with David Murphy and the LPO in 2010. In November 2020 Anoushka will also perform Ravi Shankar's Sitar Concerto No. 1 (Raga-Mala) with Indian conductor Zubin Mehta leading the LPO – more details to be announced in the new year.

Gillian Moore CBE, Director of Music, Southbank Centre, comments: "*Ravi Shankar did more than any other musician to bring Indian Classical Music to audiences and musicians around the globe. His virtuosity and artistic curiosity meant that he collaborated with musicians from jazz, popular and western classical traditions, as well as remaining a supreme exponent and innovator in the great Indian Classical tradition. Southbank Centre is thrilled to be celebrating Ravi's centenary in 2020 with a year of performances and events. Starting with this colourful and joyous production of Sukanya the opera couldn't be a more appropriate tribute to this great guiding light of music.*"

Ravi Shankar's *Sukanya* takes place on 15 January 2020 at Royal Festival Hall. Tickets are available at the Southbank Centre website: <https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/130360-sukanya-2020>

Cast and Creative Team

London Philharmonic Orchestra

David Murphy conductor

Susanna Hurrell *Sukanya*

Alok Kumar Chyavana

Jonathan Lemalu King Sharyaati

Michel de Souza Aswini Twin 1

Njabulo Madlala Aswini Twin 2

Synergy Vocals

Suba Das director

Gauri Diwakar choreographer

Other LPO *Shankar 100* events

22 April 2020

London Philharmonic Orchestra; Karen Kamensek conductor; Daniel Hope violin; Alban Gerhardt cello; Anoushka Shankar sitar

The London Philharmonic Orchestra performs three genre-defying works from 2010 by Ravi Shankar, Philip Glass and John Corigliano, with a special appearance from Anoushka Shankar, who returns to reprise her solo part in her late father's *Symphony*.

18 November 2020

London Philharmonic Orchestra; Zubin Mehta conductor; Anoushka Shankar sitar

On sale in February 2020 as part of the 2020-21 classical season; further details to be announced.

For more details about *Shankar100* events, please visit the Southbank Centre website: <https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/festivals-series/classical-season/shankar-100>

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#shankar100

For further information or press tickets, please contact Tessa Deterding at Premier:
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Notes to Editors

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

One of the finest orchestras on the international stage, the London Philharmonic Orchestra balances a long and distinguished history with its reputation as one of the UK's most forward-looking ensembles. As well as its concert performances, the Orchestra also records film soundtracks, releases CDs and downloads on its own label, and reaches thousands of people every year through activities for families, schools and local communities.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra was founded by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1932, and has since been headed by many great conductors including Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In 2017 Vladimir Jurowski celebrated his tenth anniversary as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor. Edward Gardner is currently Principal Conductor Designate, and will take up the position when Jurowski's tenure concludes in September 2021.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra has performed at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall since it opened in 1951, becoming Resident Orchestra in 1992. As well as its London home, it also has flourishing residencies in Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden, and each summer plays for Glyndebourne Festival Opera, where it has been Resident Symphony Orchestra for over 50 years. The Orchestra also tours internationally, performing to sell-out audiences worldwide.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra broadcasts regularly on television and radio. It also works with the Hollywood and UK film industries, recording soundtracks for blockbusters including the Oscar-winning score for *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. In 2005 it established its own record label, which now numbers over 100 releases all available on CD and to stream or download.

In summer 2012 the London Philharmonic Orchestra performed as part of The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant on the River Thames, and was also chosen to record all the world's national anthems for the London 2012 Olympics. In 2013 it was the winner of the RPS Music Award for Ensemble.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra's dynamic Education & Community programme provides first musical experiences to children and families; offers creative projects and professional development opportunities for schools and teachers; inspires talented teenage instrumentalists to progress their skills; and develops the next generation of professional musicians.

The Orchestra's work at the forefront of digital technology has enabled it to reach millions of people worldwide: all its recordings are available to download and stream and, as well as a YouTube channel and podcast series, the Orchestra has a lively presence on social media.

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre and one of the UK's top five visitor attractions, occupying a 17 acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day.

The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to four Resident Orchestras (London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) and four Associate Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain). www.southbankcentre.co.uk/shankar-100

SHANKAR 100

2020 marks 100 years since the birth of seminal Indian musician, composer, educator and Sitar maestro Ravi Shankar. Few musicians can claim to have a truly global impact but Ravi Shankar's influence spanned continents, generations and genres, and introduced Indian classical music to countless new audiences.

Shankar's association with Southbank Centre goes back more than 60 years. From his first performance in Royal Festival Hall in 1958, Shankar established a lifelong relationship with the venue, including several performances and significant premieres over the years. To celebrate his awe-inspiring life and legacy, Southbank Centre presents *Shankar 100*, a special programme of concerts and projects throughout his centenary year, developed in consultation with his wife Sukanya and daughter Anoushka Shankar, who takes a central role in celebrations as a Southbank Centre Associate Artist.

Highlights across the year include performances and events featuring Norah Jones, Olivia Harrison, Zubin Mehta, Nitin Sawhney, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Akram Khan Company, and BFI Southbank. Alongside the performances, *Shankar 100* features free events across the public spaces including an archive exhibition, a specially-commissioned film and a Schools Day comprising interactive music workshops and performances for primary schools. The centenary of Ravi Shankar's birth will also see the publication of Oliver Craske's biography *Indian Sun: The Life and Music of Ravi Shankar* (published by Faber on 2 April 2020).