

PhilharmoniaBaroque Orchestra&Chorale

# SESSIONS

## Bach in Bengal

**Arjun Verma**, sitar and leader

**William Rossel**, tabla

**Tarik O'Regan**, host

**Lisa Grodin**, violin

**Maria Caswell**, viola

**William Skeen**, cello

**Kristin Zoernig**, bass

Friday, January 31 | 8:00 PM

*Osher Recital Hall, Bowes Center,  
San Francisco Conservatory of Music*

## **Arjun Verma, sitar and leader**

With over three decades of performance experience, at venues including the United Nations (Geneva), the Fillmore (San Francisco), Fox Theater (Oakland), Prague Castle (Prague), and on NBC television, Arjun has emerged with a unique voice on the sitar—both within the tradition of North Indian Classical Music, and through his innovative cross-genre collaborations. Beginning with his father, Roop Verma, and continuing with the legendary Maestro Ali Akbar Khan and his son Alam Khan, Arjun's meticulous training has imbued him with a rich musicality. He has developed innovative sitar techniques inspired by the styles of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan and sitarist Nikhil Banerjee. The combination of these influences results in a style encompassing the deeply contemplative as well as the exhilarating elements of North Indian Classical Music, presented in a manner that is fresh and modern while maintaining a high standard of traditional integrity.

## **William Rossel, tabla**

William Rossel, disciple of legendary tabla maestro Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri, is an up-and-coming tabla player and educator in the field of Hindustani music. He began learning at the Ali Akbar College of Music in 2006, and earned a Master of Fine Arts in Hindustani Classical Music from the California Institute of the Arts in 2010, where he also studied with Ustad Aashish Khan.

William has accompanied such prominent artists as Sri Alam Khan, Arjun Verma, Manik Khan, Suman Laha, and Rita Sahai, to name a few. In June 2017, William had the great honor to accompany his Guru, Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri. He has performed at the Ali Akbar College of Music, the Aashish Khan School of World Music in Kolkata, War Memorial Opera House, Fort Mason Center of Arts and Culture, San Francisco Asian Art Museum, UC Berkeley, California Jazz Conservatory, and many other venues across the U.S.

## **Tarik O'Regan, host**

Tarik Hamilton O'Regan is a London-born composer based in San Francisco. In recent years much of his work has investigated and been influenced by his dual Arab and Irish heritages. 24/25 sees performances in many parts of the world, including at Deutsche Opera Berlin, the Wigmore Hall in London, Carnegie Hall in Manhattan, Soundstreams in Toronto, and by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and Vancouver Chamber Choir among others. Also, this season, his writing is featured on the longstanding BBC Radio series, The Essay, and he will be awarded the prestigious Yaddo Artist Medal at a ceremony in New York City.

# SESSIONS

Philharmonia SESSIONS is a guided and deconstructed tour of music, social and political history, and art.

Each program includes dialogue from the stage and incredible instrumental and vocal performances with a casual vibe. Tickets are \$25, with an opportunity to chat with the artists after the show. Come as you are—no experience necessary.

“SESSIONS manifests the Philharmonia core: authenticity, belief that audiences (of all ages) are intelligent, and fascination with the culture and context of classical music”—*San Francisco Classical Voice*

## Bach in Bengal

### **Variations on a Bach Bourrée**

Johann Sebastian Bach and Ali Akbar Khan  
arr. George Ruckert, Arjun K. Verma, Rhiannon Ledwell

### **Indian Classical Raga**

TRADITIONAL / IMPROVISED duet on sitar and tabla, with  
recorded tanpura accompaniment

### **Indian Baroque Suite**

Arjun K. Verma  
arr. Verma / Ledwell

I. Ragamala Variations on a Monteverdi Ritornello

II. Raga Hem Bihag

III. Fasch Lute Concerto & Kirwani Inventions

**PhilharmoniaBaroque**  
Orchestra&Chorale

**Upcoming Concerts**

**Handel's *Alceste***

March 5-8, 2025

San Francisco, Stanford, Berkeley

**Tout de Suite**

April 10-12, 2025

San Francisco, Palo Alto, Berkeley

**Tickets and details at:**

**[philharmonia.org](http://philharmonia.org)**



## **Program Background**

### **Indian Classical Music History**

Originating from the ancient temple traditions of India, Indian classical music is one of the most highly developed forms of music in the world today, and comprises two main traditions: Hindustani / North Indian Classical, which is represented in this project, and Carnatic / South Indian Classical.

This project is based on the music of the particular lineage known as the Maihar Gharana, as taught by the legendary sarode maestro, Ali Akbar Khan, who trained Arjun K. Verma, as well as thousands of other students during his lifetime. This tradition became famous outside of India starting in the 20th century due to the pioneering performance careers of Ali Akbar Khan and Ravi Shankar, who were both trained by Khan's father, Allauddin Khan.

In addition to being one of the world's foremost performers throughout his 73-year musical career, Ali Akbar Khan dedicated himself to carrying on this ancient tradition through teaching, and consequently founded the Ali Akbar College of Music (AACM) in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1967, which is now one of the most respected institutes of Indian classical music in the world. The Ali Akbar College has trained thousands of students to play and sing this music, not only on Indian instruments, but also on guitar, piano, cello, bass, and many others.

Verma and Rossel are both faculty members of the AACM, and are dedicated to sharing this music with future generations.

### **Combining Indian & Baroque Forms**

Whereas many other musical traditions have developed as polyphonic ensemble music, Indian Classical has instead developed predominantly as a soloist art form without the use of harmony, instead exploring the very fine nuances of richly ornamented melody and highly complex rhythm. Therefore, it is very unusual to present Indian classical music with the addition of harmony.

The European Baroque tradition provides a beautiful template for this integration, as it shares a somewhat similar, richly ornamented approach to melody as Indian classical, but also uses harmony in a simple and compelling way without overshadowing the nuances of the melody.

### **Additional Credits**

*Indian Baroque Suite* was commissioned by Mosaic America, a San Francisco Bay Area nonprofit organization that strengthens communities, cultivates belonging, and catalyzes inclusion through inter-cultural and co-created art.

*Variations on a Bach Bourrée* and *Indian Baroque Suite* were arranged for modified string quartet with the help of composer and sitarist Rhiannon Ledwell.