



SHUBHENDRA & SASKIA RAO PRESENT

Silence Concerts

“Movingly meditative.”

THE NEW YORK TIMES

GUIDED MUSICAL MEDITATION · SITAR & INDIAN
CELLO

“While tuning the tanpura, the artist tunes his
own soul.”

HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN · SUFI MASTER, 1882–1927

FROM THE ARTISTS

In our years of performing Indian classical music, we found that a concert reaches people when they can turn toward the music with little pulling at them from outside. Sometimes that has been a spiritual centre, sometimes the open air, sometimes an ordinary concert hall. The place matters little. What decides everything is the state of mind — the audience’s and ours. The Silence Concert began as our way of setting that state deliberately.

— Shubhendra & Saskia Rao

THE CONCEPT

We have been taught **not to listen.**

The modern concert has trained its audience to consume music, not to receive it — to clap on cue, film the stage, and move on. Every listener has been dulled by it. A Silence Concert is curated the other way.

With the noise around us, we have forgotten how to listen and how to sit with silence. Music lives in the movement between the two. A Silence Concert is a hundred meditations in one. It asks for no skill and no prior knowledge of the music — only an hour of the listener's undivided time.

The essence of Indian classical music is not difficult, nor is it only for the few. In its undiluted form it belongs to everyone, as meditation belongs to everyone. What we add, from a lifetime of performing, is the way in — the sequence, the pacing, the framing we have learned opens a listener. A short presentation precedes the concert; a sharing session follows it.

For more than twenty years, in every hall, this has changed the people who sat in it — and the two of us who played.



Kailasa Temple, Ellora · UNESCO World Heritage Site

MUSIC & SILENCE

“When you are listening to music, what really touches your heart is not the sound but the gap between two sounds. How to bring that gap to your heart is the whole art of music.”

OSHO · 1931 – 1990

“Music is the silence
between the notes.”

CLAUDE DEBUSSY



“A painter paints his
pictures on canvas;
musicians paint their
pictures on silence.”

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI

A raga unfolds by leaving space — a note sounded, then held, then let go, so the silence after it carries as much as the note itself. The secret of hearing music is to build silence around it. That is what a Silence Concert is designed to do.

“As the sound of a gong dies away into silence, so the seeker lets sound dissolve into the silence. For that in which the sound fades away — that is Brahman.”

BRAHMAVIDYĀ UPANISHAD · KRISHNA YAJURVEDA

WHERE IT WORKS

Infosys. IIM Shillong. Microsoft.

We have led Silence Concerts for corporate leadership teams, for students, and at retreats. This is not a facilitator speaking about presence; it is two performers of Indian classical music transmitting it directly, using what twenty years on stage has taught us about how attention opens. What a room takes away maps onto the things every organisation asks for: focus, listening, and the capacity to connect — with oneself, and with one another.

At IIM Shillong, students walked in certain that classical music was not for them. Most had never sat with it before. They walked out with tears on their faces, closer to themselves than when they arrived.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, SHILLONG

Today's concert format has dulled every listener, not only the reluctant one. A Silence Concert reverses that. What it leaves behind:

- i Concentration and sustained focus
- ii Sharper listening, and with it, empathy
- iii Connection with self, and with surroundings
- iv A settled mind; the senses refreshed
- v A window into the act of improvisation

WHAT IS A SILENCE CONCERT

The only sound that reverberates is music.

The audience and the artists set down their masks at the door. No one has to respond, in word or gesture, to anything outside the music. There are no introductions, no ceremonies, no speeches, no applause between pieces. Lit low, seated close, the room turns toward one thing. The music is played for the listener rather than the gallery, and it carries long after the last note has gone.

“The perfect audience is a spotless mirror of the performer.”

ABHINAVAGUPTA · KASHMIR, C. 950–1020

Audience and performer meet in the same attention. A short presentation opens the concert; a sharing session, with a worksheet, closes it, so that what happened travels home.

FORMAT One hour · sitar and Indian cello · groups of 20 to 2,000 • **SETTING** your auditorium, office, or retreat · floor or seated · can be recorded and live-streamed • **FOR** leadership offsites · wellbeing and retreat programmes · universities and schools



THE ARTISTS

Pandit Shubhendra Rao & Vidushi Saskia Rao-de Haas

Pandit Shubhendra Rao

A master performer of Indian classical music and one of its most original voices on the sitar. A disciple of Bharat Ratna Pandit Ravi Shankar in the Maihar gharana, he is among the few artists worthy of carrying his Guru's lineage forward, and leads the Ravi Shankar Ensemble. He has performed on the world's great stages and composed across cultures, always with a voice rooted in tradition and unmistakably his own.

Vidushi Saskia Rao-de Haas

A master performer and one of the most original voices in Indian classical music, and the creator of the Indian cello — an entirely new instrument. A disciple of Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, of whom he said simply, "She has been taught by God." In 2025 she was knighted by the Dutch monarchy for her contribution to music and to cultural diplomacy between India and the Netherlands.

TOGETHER, THEY HAVE PERFORMED AT

The United Nations General Assembly · Carnegie Hall · Sydney Opera House
· the Kennedy Center · Sawai Gandharva Bhimsen Mahotsav

TO ARRANGE A SILENCE CONCERT

productions@sangeet4all.com

saskiarao.org · shubhendrarao.com · sangeet4all.com

"When I am silent, I fall into the place where everything is music." — Rumi