

# SANGAM

JULY'09, ISSUE I

**PT. SHUBHENDRA RAO & SASKIA RAO-DE HAAS**

Are proud to present their First Newsletter “**SANGAM**”,  
coming together of two music aficionados.

Over the past few years, many admirers and well-wishers have expressed their desire to know more about us, our concerts and festivals, our compositions and about the strides that we have taken in the music world. Sangam is an endeavour to bring you the highlights of our achievements in the recent past and to update you with our forthcoming events. We will be circulating this newsletter every 3 months. Your suggestions are most welcome.

*This newsletter is an easy way to stay connected with us.  
Hope you enjoy it!*



## **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

**HIGHLIGHTS OF 2009**  
**JOURNEY THROUGH 2008**  
**WATCH OUT!**  
**MILESTONES**

### **Standing Ovation at DOVERLANE, Kolkata: Jan'09**

At the prestigious Doverlane Music Conference in Kolkata, Pandit Shubhendra Rao mesmerized the audience with Raga Jogeshwari in which he played Alaap, Jod and Jhala followed by a Bandish in Char Taal Sawaari. He concluded his recital with a scintillating Manj Khamaj. He was accompanied by a well-known Tabla player Subhankar Bannerjee from Kolkata. It was an unforgettable performance that left the crowd in a reverie and was culminated with a standing ovation by the audience.

### **'Unity of Faith' at the Satya Sai Auditorium, New Delhi: Feb'09**

Shubhendra and Saskia ably demonstrated that love and music acknowledge no boundaries on the contrary they transcend them. They created for this occasion the 'Unity of Faith ensemble' consisting of Sitar, Cello, Shehnai (by Sanjiv Shankar), Vocal (by Sonam Kalra), Tabla (by Gyan Singh) and various percussion instruments (by Manoj). The union of poetry, prayers and music from various religions created a magical composition, which awakened the soul and conveyed the message of peace and solidarity.

The audience was mesmerized by the synthesis in their compositions of Rumi's Rubhayat, the music of the Baul, poetry by Emily Dickenson, 'Asatoma Sath Gamaya' from the Vedas and Hindustani and Western music.

### **Captivating Jugalbandi at the Chinmaya Mission, New Delhi: Mar'09**

The Chinmaya mission, New Delhi organized a festival in which each artist performed for an entire evenings concert, thus giving full attention to some of India's leading artists. In the presence of Swami Tejomayananda, Shubhendra and Saskia gave an inspired performance. They started the concert with an in-depth Alaap in beautiful *sandhi-prakash* Raga Purya Dhanashri followed by Raga Mishra Kafi. The audience was awestruck by the sensitivity of the concert in which the accent was on the purity of Indian Classical music and the depth of each instrument. Biplap Bhattacharya from Kolkata accompanied them on the Tabla.

**Shubhendra & Saskia**  
recently  
performed on the Civil Services Day with the  
**Prime Minister of India, Shri Manmohan Singh in**  
**attendance.**



A regular performer on radio and the national television, **Shubhendra's** recent performance on the National Programme of Music for Doordarshan received accolades from viewers and other musicians all over the country.

## Saskia Rao-De Haas Creates History in Amsterdam, Nov'08

Saskia's monumental effort at bridging the Eastern & Western classical traditions with *her very own* Ragamala String Quartet, **Mukhani** premiered at the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, during the Indian festival. Saskia showcased the world a new face of Indian music. The age old concept of String Quartet format in Western classical music was taken to a *new pinnacle by Saskia's revolutionary composition* based on the South Indian Raga, Simendra Madhyam a raga with strong haunting Rasa. A phenomenal achievement as she explored the unrestrained brilliance of the instruments and Indian music.

The quartet also featured brilliant jazz violinist Zoltan Lantos from Hungary who spent over a decade in India learning Indian Classical Music, talented Dutch violinist Lenneke van Staalén, who has specialized in North Indian Classical music and exceptional Canadian jazz violist and composer Tanya Kalmanovitch, who has given jazz viola a new face. Saskia's composition created space for all four musicians to improvise and bring together their knowledge of Indian music with the joy of playing in a string quartet.

*The audience was astounded by the unique creation exhibited by the artists and their performance was applauded with a standing ovation in a packed Concertgebouw.*



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*Another milestone composition: Shubhendra & Saskia's 'An ode to India's Independence' for NDTV, got more than 90.000 hits on MSN India in just two days.*

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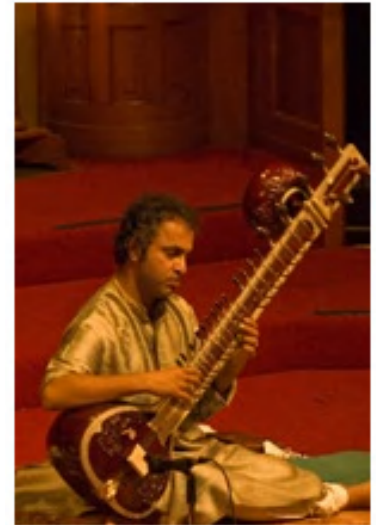
### Shubhendra's Concert at Carnegie Hall, Apr'08

After his successful stint at the **Broadway** the previous year, Shubhendra was back in New York to make his debut at one of the most prominent concert halls, The Carnegie Hall, joining ranks with the greatest musicians of today. He composed for and collaborated with Chinese Pipa master, Gao Hong.

A sublime composition and performance left the audience wanting more.

**Shubhendra and Saskia** were commissioned to compose music for a production of the leading dance company Ragamala Music and Dance Theatre, Minneapolis. Their moving composition "Yathra" (Journey) explored the intricacies of the human journey - from the dawn of birth to the twilight of life. The piece followed the time-theory of North Indian Classical Music, in which each raga represented the emotion evoked by a specific time of day. The instrumentation followed a new concept; it created a full range of the sound spectrum, from intimate chamber music to a symphonic sound. The music represented a confluence of different cultures, both in instruments, the cello and sitar as well as in the compositions. The introduction of polyphony in an Indian Classical setting added a new dimension. The audience was taken on an introspective journey.

An exquisitely layered artistic rendering followed rave media reviews.



### AROUND THE WORLD

#### Tour of USA, Europe and Canada:

Shubhendra and Saskia divulged some brilliant compositions, taking their music the world over.

The tour included a concert at the Pau Casals auditorium in Barcelona known for its exceptional acoustics.

Shubhendra displayed his artistic gift at The Maui Arts Centre & The Kuai Performing Art Centre in **Hawaii**.

The tour also included performances in **Mexico, Thailand** and **Australia** absorbing the audience with his exhilarating performances.

*“Yathra” is a quietly moving, beautifully oblique piece, one that any American audience can grasp intuitively.”*

*Minneapolis/St Paul Magazine*

### Shubhendra & Saskia in Florida

June '08

Association of Performing Arts of India (APAI) provided an important service to the community by bringing the highest quality Indian classical music to South Florida, both in an entertainment and educational context. The husband and wife team of Shubhendra Rao on sitar and Saskia Rao-de Haas on cello (accompanied on tabla by Biplab Bhattacharya) offered a comprehensive weekend program, beginning on Friday, June 6, 2008, with an afternoon radio performance at 91.3 WLRN-FM's Arts Beat show with Ed Bell, which was well attended by an invited exclusive studio audience, and enjoyed by radio listeners both locally and worldwide on the Internet. Later that evening, APAI arranged for the performers to give a special lecture/demonstration at the Broward County Library that was free and open to the public, allowing the musicians to speak extensively to the audience and take questions, with author Peter Lavezzoli as moderator. The following evening on Saturday, June 7, the proper concert took place, again in the Library Auditorium, with a high turnout of listeners who were enthralled by the exquisite interactions between Shubhendra's sitar and Saskia's cello. As a couple, Shubhendra and Saskia are the living embodiment of "East Meets West." In every sense, the entire weekend of events was a success.

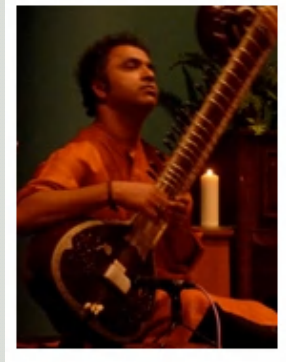
*The quality of the music was exceptional. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I didn't expect the cello and the sitar to blend so harmoniously and complement each other...*

*Karen Smith, Broward County Cultural Division*

Coming soon:

*Solo album by SASKIA RAO-DE HAAS*

*Watch Out!*



**Pt. Shubhendra Rao to perform at the prestigious SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE On 31<sup>st</sup> Oct'09.**

**Saskia & Shubhendra at the famous Fringe Edinburgh Festival Aug'09**

**Pt. Shubhendra Rao, to go Solo at XVII VILJANDI MUSIC FESTIVAL,**

**Theme: Solo, displaying the most important skills of musicians-the ability to play alone and capture the audience!**

**Estonia. 23<sup>rd</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> July'09**

**Tour of AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND & SOUTH KOREA this winter!**

*Look out for our new websites ...  
Coming soon.*

*THANK YOU.*

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