



Electronic Press Kit – Akshara Music Ensemble

Building new forms on the foundations of Indian classical music

Building new forms on the foundations of Indian classical music, Carnatic musician, composer, and educator Bala Skandan formed **Akshara Music Ensemble** in 2008, assembling New York's strongest voices in Indian classical music to explore the crossroads of the traditional and the contemporary. Skandan's original music expresses classical Carnatic (South Indian) ragas and talas through the forms of world music, jazz improvisation, and modern composition, creating music as dynamic and diverse as New York City itself. With an instrumentation ranging from hammered dulcimer, violins, and cello to mridangam, kanjira, and bansuri, Akshara's music utilizes a broad sonic palette that highlights its members' backgrounds in Carnatic, Hindustani, Western Classical, and Folk music. Through agile melody, propulsive percussion, and energetic ensemble interplay, they craft a hybrid music of uncommon beauty and rigor.

Akshara has presented work sponsored by some of New York's leading arts institutions and music venues, including The Rubin Museum of Art, Lyric Chamber Music Society, Cornelia St. Café and Rockwood Music Hall. In addition to their musical performances, Akshara is active in composing and performing new music to accompany classical dance productions, teaching workshops and master-classes to music students, and bringing the richness of Indian classical traditions to audiences of initiates and neophytes alike.

THE ENSEMBLE

Bala Skandan - mridangam (percussion), konakkol (vocal percussion)
Arun Ramamurthy – violin | MaxZT – hammered dulcimer | Jay Gandhi - bansuri (Hindustani flute) | Nitin Mitta - tabla (percussion) | Trina Basu – violin | Dave Eggar – Cello | Amali Premawardhana – cello

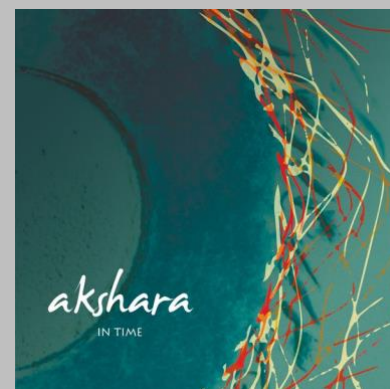
SELECT PERFORMANCES

September 13, 2019 - Chicago World Music Festival, Chicago, IL
November 29, 2018 - Jalopy Theater with Brooklyn Raga Massive, Brooklyn, NY
May 11, 2018 - India Cultural Center (ICC), Greenwich, CT
April 4, 2018 - Symphony Space, New York, NY
October 12, 2017 - "In Time" Album Release Party, New York, NY
August 25, 2016 - Drive East Festival 2016, La Mama's Ellen Stewart Theater, New York, NY
July 20, 2016 - Rockwood Music Hall, New York NY

ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS

[Mohana Blues](#) – a haunting melody based on the popular scale Mohana
[Opus in Five](#) – An intricate piece blending south Indian melody rhythm
[Shadjam](#) – named after the first note in Indian classical music
[Mind the Gap](#) – a dynamic piece that explores silence as part of music
[Urban Krithi](#) – blending urban sounds with a traditional Indian scales

Akshara's Mohana Blues won the 'Best World Traditional Song' award at the 13th Annual Independent Music Awards



Genre

World Music/Jazz/Indian classical

Press

"The music of the Akshara Music Ensemble comes from a place of profound joy." – [Music-News.com](#)

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