



Department of Music  
Presents

VEENA CHANDRA  
80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration Concert

*Internationally Acclaimed Sitarist and  
Skidmore Professor*

Featuring Pandit Rajendra Gangani

Saturday, October 5, 4pm  
Arthur Zankel Music Center  
*Helen Filene Ladd Concert Hall*

# Program

## 1. Sitar & Tabla Performance

Veena Chandra (Sitar)

Accompanied by Devesh Chandra (Tabla)

## 2. Opening Dance Performance

Sanchita Sharma

## 3. Kathak Performance

Featuring Pandit Rajendra Gangani

Accompanied by:

Pandit Fateh Singh Gangani (Tabla/Pakhawaj)

Shivani Joshi (Vocals)

Devesh Chandra (Tabla)

Veena Chandra (Sitar)

# About the Artists

**Veena Chandra** is an internationally renowned sitarist, composer, teacher, and choreographer. She is the founder and director of the Dance and Music School of India in Latham, NY, celebrating 38 years of teaching Indian classical music. A faculty member at Skidmore College since 1990 and Artist Associate in Sitar at Williams College since 2014, Veena has received numerous accolades, including the 2019 NYSCA/NYFA Fellowship in music & sound. In 2024, she was awarded the National Endowment of Arts (NEA) Our Town Project in collaboration with the NY Folklore Society, a city-wide initiative in Schenectady County focusing on arts education and cultural connections. Her performances blend technical mastery with emotional depth, making Indian classical music accessible to diverse audiences.

**Devesh Chandra** has been playing the tabla since the age of 3, learning Indian Classical Music while accompanying his mother, Veena Chandra. His innovative approach to tabla makes his performances captivating to both Western listeners and Indian classical purists. Devesh is an Artist Associate at Williams College and has collaborated with musicians across various genres.

**Pandit Rajendra Gangani** is a renowned Kathak dancer of the Jaipur Gharana, known for his innovative style and technical prowess. Born into a family of hereditary dancers, he began his training at age four under his father, Pt. Kundanlal Gangani. Pt. Gangani's performances blend manly grace with delicacy, showcasing the devotional aspects of the Jaipur Gharana. In 2003, he received the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Award from the President of India for his contributions to Kathak.

**Pandit Fateh Singh Gangani** is a celebrated tabla maestro of the Jaipur Gharana. His mastery of the tabla and pakhawaj has earned him acclaim in the world of Indian classical music, continuing the rich legacy of the Gangani family in the performing arts.

**Shivani Joshi** is a distinguished Portland-based artist celebrated for her mastery in both Indian classical dance and music. Trained rigorously from a young age, Shivani holds multiple degrees from institutions in the United States and India. She continues to captivate audiences with her solo vocal and dance performances across both countries, embodying the rich cultural heritage of Indian classical arts.

**Sanchita Sharma**, a disciple of Guru Rita Sharma and Guru Rajendra Gangani, holds Master's degrees in Kathak and Health Administration. As the co-Director of Rita Dance Academy, A Center of Excellence in Kathak, she has been serving New Jersey and Pennsylvania since 2003, continuing the legacy of the Jaipur Gharana.

# About the Art Forms

## **Kathak: The Art of Storytelling**

Kathak, one of India's premier classical dance forms, derives its name from the Sanskrit word "Kathakar," meaning storyteller. Originally nurtured within the temples as a medium of spiritual expression, Kathak evolved significantly under the patronage of art-loving medieval rulers. These royal courts, particularly of the Mughal and Rajput dynasties, embraced and refined Kathak, blending its traditional narrative elements with intricate rhythmic patterns and expressive movements to captivate elite audiences.

This dance form beautifully intertwines the devotional energy of Hindu temples with the grandeur of royal courts, showcasing its versatility in both spiritual and secular settings. Kathak is also distinguished by its three principal schools or gharanas—Jaipur, Benaras, and Lucknow—each contributing unique stylistic elements that continue to enrich this dynamic art form today.

## **Sitar: The Soul of Indian Classical Music**

The sitar, an iconic stringed instrument of North Indian classical music, is renowned for its rich, resonant tones and intricate playing technique. With its long, hollow neck, large gourd resonating chamber, and numerous strings, the sitar produces a distinctive sound that has captivated audiences worldwide. Its origins can be traced back to ancient Indian instruments, but it gained its current form and prominence in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The sitar's ability to produce microtones and its unique sympathetic strings allow for the creation of complex melodies and the exploration of subtle emotional nuances. This versatility makes it an ideal instrument for expressing the depth and intricacy of Indian ragas, the melodic frameworks of classical compositions.

## **Key Concepts in Indian Classical Music**

**Raag (Raga):** A Raag is a unique combination of musical notes that forms the foundation of Indian classical melodies. It is more than just a scale; it's a framework that defines the mood and emotional essence of a composition, providing a structure for both composition and improvisation.

**Taal:** Taal refers to the rhythmic patterns in Indian classical music. It provides the temporal structure within which musicians and dancers create intricate rhythmic variations and improvisations, adding depth and complexity to the performance.

**Improvisation:** From these melodic (Raag) and rhythmic (Taal) structures, artists in Indian classical traditions engage in extensive improvisation. This spontaneous creation allows for personal expression and showcases the artist's mastery of the form while maintaining the essence of the chosen Raag and Taal.

**Sangeet:** Sangeet is a holistic concept in Indian classical arts, representing the harmonious coming together of instrumental music, vocal music, rhythm, and dance. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of these elements, creating a rich, multifaceted artistic experience.

### **The Jaipur Gharana of Kathak**

The Jaipur Gharana is one of the three main schools of Kathak, known for its emphasis on pure dance, complex footwork, and rapid spins. This style is characterized by its strong rhythmic patterns, geometric movements, and intricate compositions. The performances you'll witness today showcase the beauty and precision of this revered tradition.

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### **Photography and Recording**

We kindly request that you refrain from taking photographs or making audio/video recordings during the performance to ensure an undisturbed experience for all attendees and to respect the artists' rights.

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### **Acknowledgments**

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Skidmore College, the Arthur Zankel Music Center, and all the employees, students, and volunteers who have made this event possible. Special gratitude goes to the Sterne Virtuoso Fund for funding this concert.

## Upcoming Events

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Surround Concert Series:<br>Emel Mathlouthi<br>Sunday, October 6, 4:00pm                                            | Skidmania '74<br>Friday, November 22, 8:00pm &<br>Saturday November 23, 8:00pm            |
| Tsou Music Scholar Lecture:<br>Terrance McKnight<br>Thursday, October 10, 6:00pm                                    | Skidmore in Concert: Brass &<br>Woodwind Ensembles<br>Saturday, November 23, 5:00pm       |
| Sustain Film Series:<br>Keyboard Fantasies<br>Sunday, October 13, 2:30pm                                            | Skidmore in Concert: Chorus<br>Thursday, December 5, 7:00pm                               |
| Filene Scholar Celebration Concert<br>Friday, October 18, 7:00pm                                                    | Skidmore in Concert: Orchestra<br>Friday, December 6, 7:00pm                              |
| Schenectady-Saratoga<br>Symphony Orchestra<br>Saturday, October 19, 7:00pm                                          | Skidmore in Concert:<br>Global Music Showcase<br>Saturday, December 7, 4:00pm             |
| Ensemble Connect<br>Friday, October 25, 7:30pm                                                                      | Skidmore in Concert:<br>Concert Band<br>Sunday, December 8, 1:00pm                        |
| Surround Concert Series:<br>Tenzin Choegyal<br>Sunday, November 3, 4:00pm                                           | Skidmore in Concert:<br>Small Jazz Ensembles + Guitar<br>Sunday, December 8, 4:00pm       |
| Flore Laurentienne<br>Saturday, November 8, 7:30pm                                                                  | Skidmore in Concert:<br>String Ensembles<br>Monday, December 9, 7:00pm                    |
| Joseph Alpar & Friends:<br>Aşk: Music, Love, and Mysticism<br>In the Ottoman World<br>Saturday, November 16, 7:30pm | Skidmore in Concert:<br>Guitar Ensemble<br>Tuesday, December 10, 7:00pm                   |
| Sustain Film Series:<br>John Cage: Journeys in Sound<br>Sunday, November 17, 2:30pm                                 | Skidmore in Concert: Big Band +<br>Cuban Music Ensemble<br>Wednesday, December 11, 7:00pm |