

## Zakir Hussain and Niladri Kumar

Zakir Hussain, the acknowledged master of the Indian tabla, and Niladri Kumar, the young star sitarist, are at the very top of their form, and together represent the very essence of music: rhythm and melody. Their every performance is an opportunity for transcendent flights of musical imagination grounded in one of the world's great musical traditions, Northern Indian ("Hindustani") classical music. What Pandit Ravi Shankar and Hussain's father Ustad Allarakha introduced to America in the 1950s and in particular at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival and at Woodstock—a thousand-year-old tradition of matchless interaction between drummer and melody player—has passed to the best imaginable hands. What they create is why people listen to music.

**Zakir Hussain** is the pre-eminent classical tabla virtuoso of our time and is appreciated both in the field of percussion and in the music world at large as an international phenomenon. A national treasure in his native India, he is one of the world's most esteemed and influential musicians, renowned for his genre-defying collaborations, including *Shakti*, the *Diga Rhythm Band*, *Planet Drum*, *Tabla Beat Science*, *Celtic Connection*, *Sangam* with Charles Lloyd and Eric Harland, in trio with Béla Fleck and Edgar Meyer and, most recently, with Herbie Hancock. The foremost disciple of his father, the legendary Ustad Allarakha, Zakir was a child prodigy who began his professional career at the age of twelve, accompanying India's greatest classical musicians and dancers, and touring internationally with great success by the age of eighteen.

As a composer, he has scored music for numerous feature films and major events and has composed three concertos. The most recent enjoys the distinction of being the first-ever concerto for tabla and orchestra and was premiered in India in September 2015, in Europe and the UK in 2016, and in the United States in April 2017, by the National Symphony Orchestra at Kennedy Center. A multiple Grammy award winner, he is the recipient of countless awards and honors, including Padma Bhushan, National Heritage Fellowship and Officier in France's Order of Arts and Letters. In 2015, he was voted "Best Percussionist" by both the *DownBeat Critics' Poll* and *Modern Drummer's Reader's Poll*. He has taught at Princeton, Stanford, and the University of California at Berkeley, and is the founder and president of Moment! Records, an independent record label presenting rare live concert recordings of Indian classical music and world music. Zakir was resident artistic director at SFJazz from 2013 until 2016, and was presented with their Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017 in recognition of his "unparalleled contribution to the world of music."

Blessed with a lineage of five generations of sitar players, **Niladri Kumar** is a world renowned and global icon to reckon with. Under the guidance and numerous years of training from his father and guru Pandit Kartick Kumar, Niladri, after gaining an in-depth, profound, and sound understanding of Indian Classical Music, went on to revolutionize the style of sitar playing and further invent his own Instrument, the red electric sitar, which he coined as the Zitar. He is hailed as one of the serious exponents of Indian music and has an

uncanny, prodigious style in making this music appealing to the youth and the masses at large. Critics state that he has an unmatched, effortless mastery over the instrument, and it is indeed a unique treat to witness his swift, agile, and magical fingers produce soul stirring, brilliant compositions. He has inspired many to learn the sitar, and through his illustrious career has emerged as a one of a kind cause for national pride. He has been bestowed and recognized with several prestigious awards, valued titles, has released over ten albums. In addition, Niladri has contributed immensely to the Indian film industry. His live performances are known to transpose audiences to another world.