

## The Just Alap Raga Ensemble

### Pandit Pran Nath 95th Birthday Memorial Tribute

#### Three Evening Concerts of Raga Darbari in the MELA Dream House

Saturdays, October 26, November 2 and 9, 2013, 9 pm

La Monte Young, voice

Marian Zazeela, voice

Jung Hee Choi, voice

Naren Budhkar, tabla

*The Tamburas of Pandit Pran Nath* from the Just Dreams CD

MELA Foundation Dream House

275 Church Street, 3rd Floor, between Franklin & White Streets in Tribeca

Admission \$36. MELA Members, Seniors, Student ID, \$28.

Limited seating. Advance reservations recommended.

Info and reservations: 212-219-3019; [mail@melafoundation.org](mailto:mail@melafoundation.org)

Three Evening Concerts of *Raga Darbari* in the contemporary *Kirana gharana* (style) of North Indian Classical Music will be performed by La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela with The Just Alap Raga Ensemble in a memorial tribute in honor of Pandit Pran Nath's 95th birthday, Saturday Evenings, October 26, November 2 and 9, 2013, at 9 pm in the MELA Foundation *Dream House* light environment, 275 Church Street, 3rd Floor.

**PLEASE NOTE: To prepare for the scheduled concerts the Dream House will be closed after October 12; we will reopen on Thursday, November 14.**

La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela and Jung Hee Choi, voices; with Naren Budhkar, tabla; will be accompanied by *The Tamburas of Pandit Pran Nath* from the Just Dreams CD. The Just Alap Raga Ensemble will perform Pandit Pran Nath's special arrangement of "Hazrat Turkaman", a traditional *vilampit khayal* composition set in *Raga Darbari*.

In 2009, with deep respect for Pandit Pran Nath's arrangement of this great composition, Young composed two-part harmony for the *'sthayi* and for the *antara*. Similar to his previous concerts with The Ensemble, Young introduces drones in two- and three-part harmony, and even counterpoint in the pre-composition part of the *alap*, and, as in his earlier composition "Raga Sundara" set in Raga Yaman Kalyan, the harmony line for these compositions in *Raga Darbari* comprises the introduction of two-part harmony into Indian classical *khayal* composition, contributing a new element to Indian classical music. The harmony for the *'sthayi* of "Hazrat Turkaman" is dedicated to Jung Hee Choi and was composed as a present on her birthday, November 1, 2009; the harmony for the *antara* is dedicated to Pandit Pran Nath and was composed on his 91st birthday, November 3, 2009.

Young considers The Just Alap Raga Ensemble to be one of the most significant creations in the development of his compositional process in that it organically merges the traditions of Western and Hindustani classical musics with the knowledge of acoustical science to embody complementary forms in an encompassing evolutionary statement. Pandit Pran Nath has said, "*Alap* is the essence of Raga. When the *drut* [faster tempo] begins, the Raga is finished." With The Just Alap Raga Ensemble, Young applies his own compositional approach to traditional raga performance, form and technique: a *pranam* (bow) of gratitude in reciprocation for the influence on his music, since the mid-fifties, of the unique, slow,

unmetered, timeless *alap*, and for one of the most ancient and evolved vocal traditions extant today. The Ensemble features extended *alap* sections, sustained vocal and instrumental drones, two- and three-part harmony and counterpoint in just intonation over tamburas. Young, Zazeela and Choi premiered The Just Alap Raga Ensemble on August 22, 2002 in a memorial tribute to Ustad Hafizullah Khan, the Khalifa of the Kirana Gharana and son of Pandit Pran Nath's teacher, Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan Sahib.

Pandit Pran Nath virtually introduced the vocal tradition of North Indian classical music to the West in 1970. His 1971 morning performance at Town Hall, New York City, was the first concert of morning ragas to be presented in the U.S. Subsequently, he introduced and elaborated to Western audiences the concept of performing ragas at the proper time of day by scheduling entire series of concerts at special hours. Many students and professional musicians came to him in America to learn about the vast system of raga and to improve their musicianship. In 1972, Pran Nath established his own school in New York City under the direction of his disciples La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, the Kirana Center for Indian Classical Music, now a project of MELA Foundation. Over the years Pran Nath performed hundreds of concerts in the West, scores of them in New York City, and in Fall 1993, he inaugurated the MELA Foundation Dream House with three *Raga Cycle* concerts. He continued to perform here annually during his remaining years and on May 12 and 17, 1996, his two concerts of Afternoon and Evening *Ragas* in the *Dream House* were his last public performances before he passed away on June 13, 1996.

Pran Nath's majestic expositions of the slow *alap* sections of ragas combined with his emphasis on perfect intonation and the clear evocation of mood had a profound impact on Western contemporary composers and performers. Following Young and Zazeela, minimalist composer Terry Riley became one of his first American disciples. Fourth-world trumpeter Jon Hassell, jazz allstars Don Cherry and Lee Konitz, composers Jon Gibson, Yoshimasa Wada, Rhys Chatham, Michael Harrison and Allaudin Mathieu, Sufi Pir Shabda Kahn, mathematician and composer Christer Hennix, concept artist and violinist Henry Flynt, dancer Simone Forti, and many others took the opportunity to study with the master.

In The Hindustan Times (2003), Shanta Serbjeet Singh wrote:

"[Young and Zazeela] would create works like the "Just Alap Raga Ensemble" which would amaze musicians of the caliber of Bhimsen Joshi, Pandit Jasraj or the Gundecha brothers were they to hear it. In fact I wish they would hear it and savour their own legacy of Indian classical music in two new ways, one, by way of the Youngs' immense sadhna and two, by way of the fact that today the great art of Hindustani *Shastriya sangeet* has actually become so much a part of the world of music. Did not the ancients say: *Vasudeva Kumutbhakam*? the world is a family? A work like "Just Alap Raga Ensemble" actually proves it."

The 2005 article, "TALES OF EXEMPLARY GURU BHAKTI / PRAN NATH, LA MONTE YOUNG AND MARIAN ZAZEELA," in "The Eye," quarterly magazine of SPIC MACAY (Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Amongst Youth), it is noted:

"He [Young] is a master of Hindustani classical music. La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, founders of the MELA Foundation Dream House in New York are responsible for having single-handedly introduced vocal Hindustani classical music to America. In 1970 when they brought renowned master vocalist Pandit Pran Nath of the Kirana Gharana to the U.S. and became his first Western disciples, studying with him for twenty-six years in the traditional *gurukula* manner of living with the guru, Americans and Westerners only had a nodding acquaintance with Indian music, that too, only instrumental music through the performing tours of Pandit Ravi Shankar. Also some introduction to Indian rhythm techniques through the charismatic playing of Pandit Chatur Lal, the tabla player who always accompanied Ravi Shankar through the sixties. But the deep, unfathomable intricacies of *Khayal Gayaki* and of the whole cosmos of Alap were totally unknown to them. Indeed, as

his many American *shishyas*, most of them practicing musicians themselves, would say later, even unimaginable. ... Young and Zazeela, who taught the Kirana style and performed with Pandit Pran Nath since 1970 in hundreds of concerts in India, Iran, Europe and the United States, have continued their Guru's work in the most exemplary manner. In June 2002, shortly before he died, Khalifa Hafizullah Khan Sahib, Ustad Wahid Khan Sahib's son and a great sarangi master, conferred on Young the title of *Khan Sahib*."

*American Music*, Winter 2009, reviewed the Ensemble's March performance at the Guggenheim Museum:

"After the introductory *alap*, the musicians initially presented the text of the composition proper in traditional monophonic fashion against the drone. Later on, however, the ensemble revealed its most striking innovation: in another bold deviation from traditional North Indian monophony, they rendered the composition in two-part harmony. ...in the context of raga performance, this harmonization, combined with the ethereal polytonal quality of Raga Yaman, lent the ensemble a breathtakingly lush quality with each return of the refrain."

In his LA Times Blog, critic Mark Swed wrote of the Ensemble's performance of the Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra in *Raga Sindh Bhairavi*:

"Frankly, what made me drop everything and fly to New York at the last minute for the [Merce Cunningham] memorial was the announcement of the music lineup, which was a once-in-a-life-time gathering. La Monte Young, the otherworldly inventor of Minimalism, began the program singing a welcoming raga with Marian Zazeela and Jung Hee Choi, which was pure vibratory magic."

Concert admission is \$36 / \$28 MELA members; seniors; students with ID.

**Limited seating. Advance reservations recommended.**

For further information and reservations, email [mail@melafoundation.org](mailto:mail@melafoundation.org) (or call 212-219-3019) or visit [www.melafoundation.org](http://www.melafoundation.org) .

**PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT THE CONCERTS WILL BE RECORDED LIVE. AIR CONDITIONING WILL NOT BE USED BECAUSE OF THE NOISE IT PRODUCES ON THE RECORDINGS. THE CONCERTS IN THE DREAM HOUSE CAN BE VERY HOT AND HUMID BECAUSE OF THE LIGHTS. PLEASE DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR THE HEAT.**

MELA's programs are made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency, and generous contributions from individuals and MELA Members.