

Paper Mache for 9-19-25 by David Read

I'm sure I've said it before, but I think it bears repeating. Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture works hard to present music and theater performances that are not otherwise available in Yuba-Sutter. Case in point, the Pulsating Strings Indian classical music concert we hosted last Sunday, but more on that later.

I've been a fan of world music almost since the term was invented, I think. Growing up in Los Angeles, I was able to experience so many types of music from classical to jazz to folk and, of course, the obligatory rock concerts: The Who, Led Zeppelin, Alice Cooper and many more. But then world music came on the scene and local DJs started to promote it and I was hooked. For example, I heard King Sunny Adé and his African Beats perform at the Greek Theater. And then living in Washington, DC for 20 years, the variety of live world music options were abundant. I heard Ravi Shankar and his ensemble perform at the magnificent National Cathedral. Quite an east/west mashup of cultures.

Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture has presented many concerts that fall into the "World Music" category. We have heard the Fenix Drum & Dance Ensemble on several occasions present their special version of African and Caribbean inspired music. Our friends with the Irish band One-Eyed Reilly have come to town regularly for many years. We hosted the duo Larry & Joe in a concert of fusion music featuring a mash up of Venezuelan tunes and Appalachian tunes. Mariachi is a mainstay on this stage and most recently we hosted the all-female orchestra, Mariachi Bonitas led by Dinorah Klingler. We have even helped fund the new youth mariachi orchestra program in Marysville Joint Unified Schools and it is starting up in Sutter County schools as well. All of this is my way of saying we try to do things that aren't regularly done here in town. We want to provide art and music experiences not otherwise available close to home.

Sunday's concert was special because we presented a style of music we have wanted to experience locally for years. We were thrilled when we were contacted by these musicians expressing their interest in performing here. Hailing from Kolkata, India, Abhishek Basu is an internationally acclaimed tabla virtuoso, known for his ability to blend the intricate rhythmic cycles of Indian classical percussion with innovative, contemporary expression. His mastery of the tabla—the hand drums that serve as the heartbeat of Indian classical performance—creates a dynamic foundation that both anchors and elevates the music. He shared the stage with Chiradip Sarkar, a gifted santoor player whose artistry reflects the lyrical beauty of this hammered dulcimer-like instrument. Chiradip carries forward a rich lineage of santoor performance while bringing his own sensitivity and creativity to the instrument. The santoor's shimmering, cascading notes create a soundscape that is at once meditative and vibrant, weaving delicate patterns that flow seamlessly with the tabla's intricate rhythms.

When performed together, the dialogue between the tabla and santoor becomes a dynamic conversation. The santoor lays out sweeping cascades of notes that evoke serenity, devotion, or joy, while the tabla responds with intricate rhythmic improvisations that heighten tension and release. The cyclical nature of Indian classical performance—gradually unfolding from slow, meditative passages to dazzling, fast-paced climaxes—finds new vitality in this pairing. A tabla-santoor duet blends percussive clarity with melodic richness, balancing discipline with improvisation. It highlights the tradition's meditative depth while showcasing virtuosity and spontaneous creativity, offering audiences both a profound spiritual experience and an exhilarating display of musical artistry. I found the performance spellbinding, meditative and transformative. So what other types and styles of music should we try to bring to town next year? Let us hear from you.