



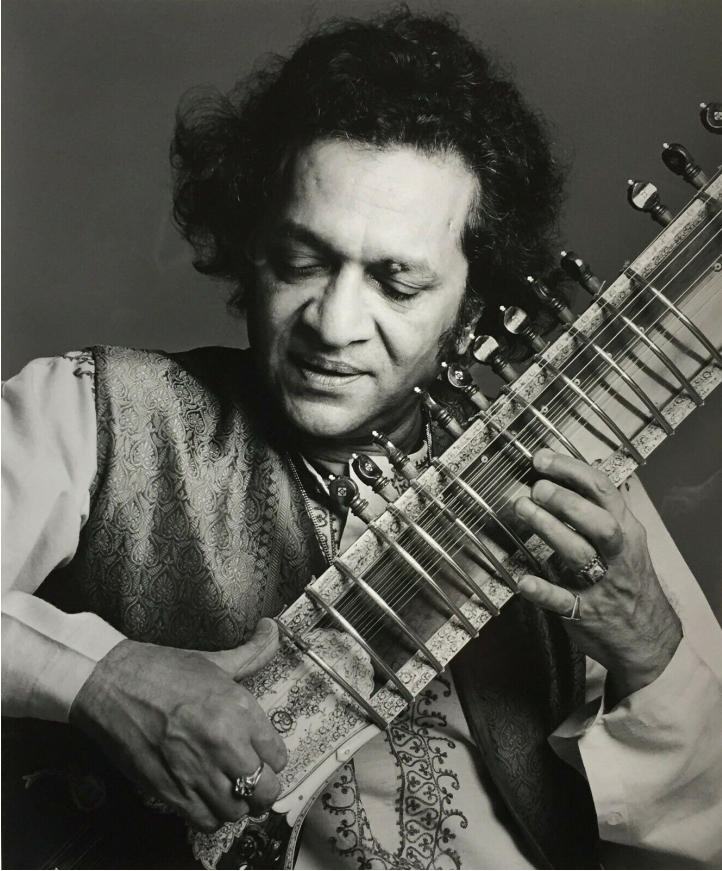
SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE

RAVI SHANKAR

RAGAMALA to ROCKSTAR

A RETROSPECTIVE OF THE
MAESTRO'S LIFE IN MUSIC

EXHIBITION GUIDE



Ravi Shankar by Francesco Scavullo

South Asia Institute, Chicago's dynamic new center for cultivating the art and culture of South Asia and its diaspora, is proud to present the opening of Ravi Shankar: Ragamala to Rockstar, A Retrospective of the Maestro's Life in Music, on view Saturday, November 6, through Saturday, March 5, 2022. The South Asia Institute is located in the city's emerging Motor Row area in the South Loop.

Sitar pioneer Ravi Shankar (1920-2012), whom George Harrison of The Beatles called the "Godfather of World Music," was instrumental in bringing Indian classical music to mainstream audiences in the west. His influence led to Indian musical instruments and styles permeating popular music throughout the 1960s as he toured the U.S. and Europe extensively. Mentoring high-profile artists like Harrison, Phillip Glass, and John Coltrane, Shankar's musical diplomacy brought Eastern music and cultural ideology to mainstream Western culture. Shankar frequently performed at the Chicago Symphony Center from 1933 until his death in 2012.

Ravi Shankar: Ragamala to Rockstar, A Retrospective of The Maestro's Life in Music showcases the legendary musician's groundbreaking career in music through an unprecedented collection of 100+ rare concert posters, psychedelic art prints, photographs, videos, record covers and personal artifacts. As a testament to Shankar's "rock star" status, the exhibition showcases an extraordinary collection of international concert posters created by noted artists including Gary Grimshaw, Mort Drucker, Tom Wilkes, Gunther Kieser, Jan Steward, Dr. Ferdie Pacheco, David Byrd, Steve Sachs, Bill Otterback, Norman Orr, and Eugene Hawkins, in addition to portraits of the musician by famed photographers such as Francesco Scavullo, Elliott Landy, Eric Hayes, Frank Seltier, Yousuf Karsh, and Alan Kozlowski.

Ravi Shankar

For over eight decades, Ravi Shankar was India's greatest cultural ambassador bringing the East and the West closer through music. A groundbreaking performer and composer of Indian classical music, who brought the music and rich culture of India to the world's leading concert halls and festivals, charting the map for all other foreign musicians to follow. Shankar made it his life's mission to spread understanding and love of Indian classical music. He took up music himself in the 1930s, after touring the world as a dancer in his famed brother Uday Shankar's Hindu Music and Dance troupe. Shankar had a rare gift for making new audiences excited about previously alien music. Renowned for playing at Monterey Pop and Woodstock rock festivals, and creating the first all-star music benefit event, Concert for Bangladesh with friend and student George Harrison of The Beatles. Shankar reshaped the musical landscape across pop, jazz, and classical music with his influence. An acclaimed performer, composer, guru, and author, no one has done as much for Indian music and he remains an icon and a singular name in the field of creativity and performing arts.

EARLY LIFE

Born Robindra Shankar Chowdhury in Varanasi in 1920 and he was trained early on in his life to become a dancer and accompanying musician and member of his older brother Uday Shankar's dance troupe. Like Ravi had done for Indian music decades later, Uday Shankar helped bring Indian classical dance to the international attention and spotlight unlike anyone before him. His tours were widely successful in establishing Indian classical dance. At the age of 19 years Shankar made the difficult decision to give up his dancer life to dedicate himself solely to music. He moved to Maiher to study with Allaadin Khan, who had identified the dancer's musical talents and encouraged him to follow music.

First he played a leading role in its revival in India as a national classical art form; then, from the mid-1950s onward, he took it abroad to the world's foremost concert halls, festival stages and airwaves.

ROCKSTAR YEARS

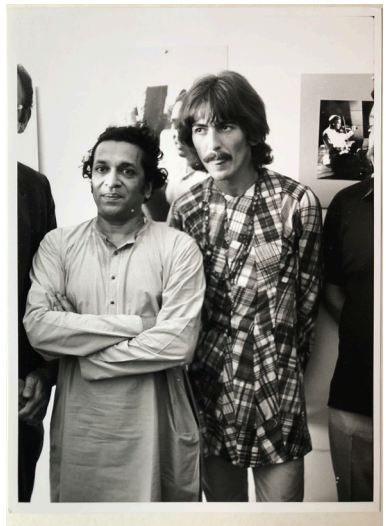
Ravi Shankar was the only musician to perform at all three of the decade's most famous music festivals, Monterey International Pop Festival, Woodstock, and the Concert For Bangladesh and with the last, he helped create the modern day all-star benefit concert. Through Shankar, the music and culture of India were helping influence the biggest names in rock, pop and jazz.

WORLD MUSIC

Shankar must be credited for the introduction of the idea of “world music” where audiences who had not explored beyond their cultural borders began to discover and enjoy other music forms. It is for this reason that Beatle George Harrison has called Ravi Shankar the “Godfather of World Music.”

From the 1970s to the early 21st century, Shankar's fame, recognition and achievements continued to grow. He composed the musical scores for several films. He received criticism for not being a classical purist to which he responded:

“All my experiences were based on Indian ragas. When people discuss tradition, they don't know what they are talking about. Over centuries, classical music has undergone addition, beautification, and improvement—always sticking to its traditional basis. Today, the difference is that the changes are faster.”



TIMELINE



- 1920** Born in Varanasi, India. Mother Hemangini Devi and Father Shya Shankar Chaudhuri.
- 1932** Left for Paris where he went to school and traveled to the rest of the world as a dancer and a musician.
- 1938** Returned to India and lived in Maihar and studied sitar with Baba Ustad Allaudin Khan.
- 1939** Debut of nine decade long career at Sitar Recital at the Allahabad Music Conference.
- 1944** Moved to Mumbai to start a music career.
- 1945** Composed his first and second film scores for "Dharti ke Lal" and "Neecha Nagar."
- 1954** First foreign travel as a sitar player, to Russia and several other countries representing the Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs.
- 1956** Traveled to Europe and US as a master musician, performer, composer and Guru. Composed score for Satyajit Ray's first film Pather Pachali, followed by four others. Performed with Yehudi Menuhin at the UN, winning his first Grammy award.
- 1966** Met George Harrison.
- 1967** Performed at the Monterey Pop Festival.
- 1968** Started filming for 'Raga', a documentary of his life and music.

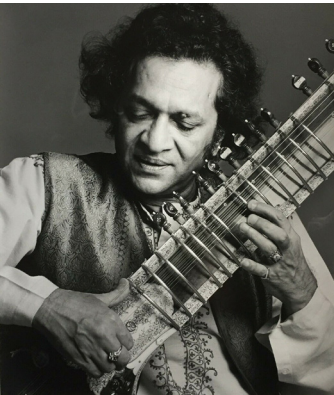


- 1969** Performed at Woodstock Festival
- 1969** Authored his biography: 'My Music, My Life.'
- 1971** Organized "Concert for Bangladesh" the first ever musical benefit. Made history as the only musician to perform at all three super events – Monterey Pop, Woodstock and Concert for Bangladesh.
- 1975** Composed Music for the Hindi Movie 'Meera' by Gulzar.
- 1979** Birth of daughter, Norah Jones.
- 1981** Birth of daughter, Anoushka Shankar.
- 1981** Composed music for Richard Attenborough's film, 'Gandhi' and is nominated for an Oscar.
- 1989** Married Sukanya Rajan Shankar.
- Death of son, Shubho Shankar from his first wife Annapurna Devi, in California.
- 2002** Composed music for George Harrison's Memorial "Concert for George", performed at the Royal Albert Hall, London, U.K. alongside Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, Eric Clapton, Jeff Lynn and others.
- 2012** Performed his last 2 concerts: the 1st in Bangalore India in February and the last in Long Beach California in November.
- December 11th. left his mortal body in San Diego, California, USA.



Ravi Shankar by Alan Kozlowski

This is the cover image from the 1986 album *Incredible Ravi Shankar: Raga Charukauns*. It was taken on Venice Beach, California by Alan Kozlowski, in June 1979, during the first of Kozlowski's many photo and filming sessions with Shankar over the next 33 years. Alan Kozlowski (1948–2020) was an accomplished photographer, cinematographer, musician and music producer, and became a music disciple of Shankar, sometimes playing tanpura on stage for him. He first saw Shankar perform in San Francisco in 1965, a life-changing event for this lifelong spiritual seeker. They met in 1978, and when Kozlowski founded a production studio in 1983 his first commission was to create a multimedia slide show for Shankar's show *Uday Utsav* in Delhi. Kozlowski credits him with turning his life around: he was broke at the time, but fifteen years later his company, POP, had 300 staff and three Oscars on the mantelpiece, and he put it down to the blessings of the man he called Guruji.



Ravi Shankar by Francesco Scavullo

This beautiful study of Shankar by the fashion photographer Francesco Scavullo appears in his 1977 book *Scavullo on Men*, which also features a concise but revealing interview with Ravi Shankar. Scavullo persuaded him to open up about women, travel, death and reincarnation. 'I feel that I am, as an Indian, as a Hindu, more of the past than the present,' Shankar told him.

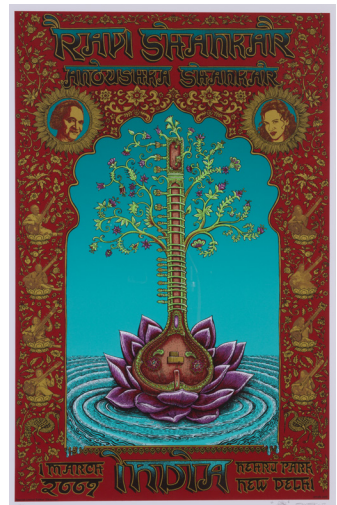
New York-based Francesco Scavullo was a legendary fashion and celebrity portrait photographer who shot covers of *Cosmopolitan* for 30 years, as well as numerous other publications, movie posters, album covers and Broadway shows. As a young man he had assisted Horst P. Horst at *Vogue*. At 19 he shot his first cover for *Seventeen* magazine before subsequently opening his own studio. He published a number of books of his works, among them *Scavullo on Men* (1977).

In mid-May 1967 Ravi Shankar moved to Los Angeles, just in time for the Summer of Love. His main project was to open a Californian branch of his Indian music school, Kinnara, and on May 19 he held the inaugural press conference on the premises. Two days later he played in the main hall at the Music Center. Wilkes, who designed the posters for both events, was also the art director of the Monterey Pop Festival – which Shankar played four weeks later – and subsequently of the Concert for Bangladesh album. Kinnara lasted just two years in Los Angeles. It helped spread interest in Indian music but running this kind of school did not really suit Shankar, and in later years he focused his teaching efforts more on direct teaching of disciples and running masterclasses.

Ravi Shankar had three children: his son Shubho Shankar (1942–1990) and his daughters Norah Jones (b. 1979) and Anoushka Shankar (b. 1981). Anoushka, his daughter by his second wife, Sukanya, is today his best known musical disciple, a sitarist, composer and producer who occupies a genre-defying position between the classical and contemporary scenes. She began learning sitar from her father at the age of seven, made her solo debut at thirteen at Siri Fort, New Delhi, and released her first album in 1998. She has since been nominated for seven Grammy awards. Alongside her solo career, she continued to accompany her father in concerts for the rest of his life, assisting and duetting on sitar. The 2009 concert for which the artist Emek created this poster took place outdoors in Nehru Park, New Delhi, India, shortly before his 89th birthday. Emek is an American artist who specialises in hand-drawn, hand-silkscreened illustrations for concert posters as well as creating album covers for artists including Neil Young, Pearl Jam and Erykah Badu. Inspired by the great poster artists of the 1960s counterculture, he combines their psychedelic imagery with post-industrial iconography, adding humor, social commentary and fantasy.



Kinnara Indian School Of Music Los Angeles Poster, 1967 by Tom Wilkes:



Poster for concert w/Anoushka at Nehru Park, New Delhi, 1 March 2009 by Emek

About the Curators:

Gaurav Mazumdar met Ravi Shankar 1985 and was inspired by him to study the sitar. A Grammy-nominated virtuoso of the sitar, Mazumdar is committed to expanding the art through cross-cultural exchanges and educational initiatives. Having lived and studied with the maestro for many years, he remains a close friend of Sukanya and the entire Shankar family.

Brian Keigher is a music and performing arts consultant. He has been a devoted follower of Ravi Shankar from an early age and is a close friend of Sukanya Shankar and the members of the Shankar family. His collection of Shankar ephemera is currently on exhibition at South Asia Institute. He has also contributed to the Ravi Shankar Foundation and Archives.

About South Asia Institute

South Asia Institute cultivates the art and culture of South Asia and its diaspora through local and global collaboration, curated exhibitions, innovative programs and educational initiatives that aim to engage diverse communities. Artistic production by emerging and established artists is supported and cultural appreciation for the South Asian diaspora is fostered and the complexity of South Asian voices is explored, all the while staying connected with the larger human family. At South Asia Institute ethnic differences are celebrated not ignored, cultures are appreciated not misunderstood and people are uplifted through the power of the arts.

Although the first immigrants from South Asia arrived in the United States late 18th Century and now number over 3 million, very little of their history, art and culture is represented in mainline museums. Art and cultural expression bring together diverse peoples in a shared experience resulting in a better understanding and greater tolerance for ethnic differences.

At the Institute the common heritage and identity of the South Asian Americans is showcased while celebrating the common connections and values that are shared with the universal community at large.

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