

Williams College Department of Music



Guest Artist

Pandit Tarun Bhattacharya, santoor

Williams Artist Associate

Devesh Chandra – tabla

Selections will be announced from the stage.

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

7:30 p.m.

Chapin Hall

Williamstown, Massachusetts

Please turn off cell phones.

No photography or recording is permitted.

Pandit Tarun Bhattacharya's santoor style is highly distinctive, borrowing from the melodic inclinations of many other instruments. In his youth he learned guitar, piano, organ, sitar, and tabla with Rabi, his father, and Dulal Roy, master of the jaltarang (tuned water bowls).

Despite obvious talent he did not take to music instantly, but his perspective changed after his first public performance as a child: "The audience appreciated my performance and as a token of appreciation, I was rewarded with chocolates. I liked the gesture of gratitude...From that day onwards, I started training sincerely".

He devoted himself to his art fully after completing a degree in Commerce and entering professional life, aided by a chance meeting with Pandit Ravi Shankar in a studio. He describes the encounter: "I requested to play my santoor specially for him, to which he readily agreed. We decided on a specific date and time".

"Unfortunately...I was late by 20 minutes for the meeting. My tardiness infuriated him and he expressed his unwillingness to listen to my santoor anymore. However, after some pleading and persuasion, I finally managed to convince him...After the session concluded, Pandit Ravi Shankar was very impressed and accepted me into his fold".

They commenced a long association, working hard to adapt the intricacies of the Maihar gharana's sitar style to the santoor's more rigid framework: "Pandit-ji taught me the intricacies of the raga, how to make mathematical calculations with rhythmic cycles and so on. He would teach with the sitar and I would try it out".

Tarun later modified his instrument, thickening the strings for a deeper tone, adding a string which can be bent, and adding mankas – fine tuners which allow for easier switching between ragas. Today he tours the world as well as teaching students for free at his Santoor Ashram in Kolkata, and is renowned for focusing on ethical issues outside music.

Devesh Chandra has been learning the Tabla since the age of 3. He has learned Northern Indian Classical Music by accompanying his mother, Veena Chandra. Devesh, the youngest of six children, grew up immersed in Indian music. His first spoken words were the syllables of tabla -Dha Dha Tita. Immersed in music at a young age, Devesh is fortunate to have grown up surrounded by iconic figures of Indian Music. Devesh accompanied his mother on her visits with the late Ustad Vilayat Khan. Ustad Vilayat Khan grew to be a grandfather to Devesh. He has been greatly affected by this close relationship.

Devesh is a sought after tabla player and educator. In addition to tabla solos and playing with Indian Classical Music, he has collaborated and worked with musicians across a broad range of musical genres from Western Folk and Western Classical to Flamenco and Jazz as well as Latin Music and Japanese Taiko. Devesh has collaborated with notables such as Susie Ibarra, Tarun Bhattacharya, Brian Mellick, Alex Torres. He has performed at a wide array of music festivals in both the US and abroad including Wanderlust and Friendly Gathering. Devesh regularly visits schools and colleges and teaches students of all ages from elementary school to college students about Indian Classical Music and Tabla. He is an ambassador for Tabla and Indian Classical Music for his generation and makes the music relatable and accessible to a wide audience. In addition to this, Devesh and Veena Chandra conduct a yearly community arts project which exposes the public at large to Indian Classical music. Devesh and Veena Chandra together run The Dance & Music School of India which Veena Chandra founded over 30 years ago. Devesh has been teaching and in charge of running many of the school's initiatives since 2005.

Devesh's innovative and imaginative approach makes his performances enthralling to both Western listeners and Indian classical purists. His approach to the tabla is the confluence of all the unique influences of his upbringing. Devesh believes the tabla has the rare ability, as a percussion instrument, to very accurately convey a wide range of emotions.

Devesh Chandra is Artist Associate in Tabla at Williams College.