

A man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, is shown in profile, playing a Sitar and a piano. The Sitar is a large, ornate stringed instrument with a bulbous body and a long neck with many frets. The piano is a standard upright piano with black and white keys. The background is dark and out of focus.

PRADEEP RATNAYAKE

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His compositions have ranged from orchestral work performed in Europe, to unlikely trios of grand piano, tabla and sitar in New York, or duets with guitar or mandolin, fusion of Sri Lankan drums with the sitar or traditional rock bands, or simply breathtaking solos. Each time he has performed Pradeep Ratnayake has proved why he is considered one of the most exciting composers and performers to come out of Sri Lanka in the last decade. Breaking every known boundary in music, Pradeep yokes together unheard of, unimagined combinations, to produce beautiful music. His latest compact disk was produced by BAJ records in Japan in 2015, where he collaborated with legendary Jazz pianist Masahiko Satoh and created perhaps the first CD in the world, of piano and sitar.

International in vision, Pradeep is also grounded firmly in his own country and his work on the sitar attempts to change its paradigm, in technique and sound, as he attempts to give it a Sri Lankan identity with his playing and

compositions. He is also a highly trained classical musician. Pradeep started playing the sitar at the age of five and gave his first public performance when he was just ten years old, under the tutelage of guru D.A. Devage. Pradeep received his Bachelors and Masters Degrees from the University of Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, studying under Professor Indranil Bhattacharya of the Maihar Gharana. He is honoured to have played with his guru at several concerts in India. For the Bachelor's Degree he received the highest ever marks given for a degree in sitar till then. His prowess on the sitar made a High Commissioner of India in Sri Lanka, Mr. Nirupam Sen, dub him "The Ravi Shankar of Sri Lanka."

Pradeep has his own series of concerts by the name of Pradeepanjalee which has been staged across the globe. Apart from Sri Lanka, he has performed in the United States, the Middle East, Australia, Japan, Geneva, Brussels, Germany and India, appearing in distinguished venues: at Vienna



Musikverein; at BOZAR and the European Parliament; the Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall and Asia Society, New York; Walt Disney Theatre, Los Angeles; Kennedy Center Millennium Stage and the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC; United Nations Office, Geneva; the Markham Theatre of Performing Arts in Canada among others.

In these concerts he performs with world-class musicians – be they the leading musicians in Sri Lanka or the wide array of Western musicians who have played with him.

Performing at Pradeepanjalee concerts have been New York musicians Miranda Cuckson (violin) Ben Waltzer (piano), Arthur Kampela (guitar), Terry Pender (mandolin), Harish Raghavan (bass); Californian musicians Eric Marienthal (saxophone), Freddie Ravel and Mahesh Balasuriya (piano), Hussain Jiffry (bass); French guitarist Thibault Cauvin; German cellist Ramon Jaffe; Australian musicians Joe Chindamo

(piano), Helen Ayres (violin), Daniel Farrugia (drums) and Zoe Wallace (cello) and famous Japanese Jazz pianist, Professor Masahiko Satoh (piano).

Pradeep's latest orchestral work, the Kuveni Concerto – a concerto for sitar, cello and orchestra was premiered by the Neubrandenburger Philharmonische Orchestra in Germany in May 2010, with Pradeep and world renowned German cellist Ramon Jaffe as soloists with Stephan Malzew. It received a rapturous standing ovation from the German audience testifying to the universal power of music, for the concerto was based on a Sri Lankan dance melody to which both the orchestra and the audience could relate. Pradeep performed it again in South Africa with the Kwazulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Yasuo Shinozaki in 2014.

When the Symphony Orchestra of Sri Lanka and the Bombay Chamber Orchestra celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Independence of Sri Lanka and India

together in 1998, a special work, Sitar Concerto, composed for Pradeep by Lalanath de Silva, the associate conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of Sri Lanka, was performed by both Orchestras, in Bombay (at the Tata Theatre) and in Colombo, with Pradeep Ratnayake as soloist. Pradeep was also commissioned by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka to compose a work to celebrate its 50th Anniversary and that symphonic work, Indrakeelaya, was first performed at the opening of its New Headquarters building and resulted in Pradeep's first CD of music.

Pradeep Ratnayake has received the State Award for Music in Sri Lanka in 2002, the Bunka Award from the Japanese Embassy in Sri Lanka and the SIGNIS Award 2012 for the most creative music director in cinema. Pradeep's latest film music was done for the film Sri Siddhartha

Gautama in 2013 and it won the Best Film Award in the World Cinema category in the 2013 Delhi Film Festival. Pradeep has four CDs of his original compositions and two of classical music. He has also made three instrumental CDs in an effort to preserve famous Sinhala songs: one of old Sinhala songs, one of the songs of CT Fernando and one of Premasiri Khemadasa.

Pradeep Ratnayake is a recipient of the United States – Sri Lanka Fulbright Scholarship and worked in the Music Department and the Computer Music Department at Columbia University, New York, from 2008 to 2010. He is now a Senior Lecturer and the Head of the Languages, Cultural Studies and Performing Arts Department in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka.

