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**Alonzo King's Lines Ballet
Fall Home Season
November 3–5, 8–11**



Photography: Christine Alicino
Dancers: Maurya Kerr and Brett Conway

The Fall Home Season features two San Francisco Premieres: *Sky Clad*, performed with live music; and the US Premiere of *Migration*, a moving meditation on the evolution of forms. The music for *Sky Clad* will be performed live by Hindustani vocalist Rita Sahai, accompanied by Debopriyo Sarkar on tabla and Rachel Unterseher on violin. The lighting design is by noted designer Robert Wierzel, who has won several awards for his work with Bill T. Jones and Phillip Glass, among others, and the costumes are designed by Robert Rosenwasser. *Migration*, which premiered during the Movimentos Festival in Wolfsburg, Germany, features costumes by Robert Rosenwasser and local couturière Colleen Quen, with lighting by innovative designer Axel Morgenthal. The music for this piece is composed by Miguel Frasconi and Leslie Stuck, who have collaborated on previous award-winning pieces with Alonzo King's Lines Ballet.

HOME SEASON: November 3rd – 5th, 8th – 11th
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
700 Howard St at 3rd St, SF

Performances at 8 pm, except Sunday Nov 5th at 7 pm
Post-performance Q & A with Alonzo King: Wed, Nov 8th

Tickets: \$50, \$35, \$20

Tickets Online: www.linesballet.org

Box Office: 415.978.2787, from 11 am – 6 pm

Sky Clad (Fall 2006)

Reverent and reflective, this piece is set to the ragas of Northern India: sometimes quiet and golden; sometimes full of fervent percussive energy. Renowned Hindustani vocalist Rita Sahai, accompanied by violin and tabla, sends her voice soaring towards the divine, and the dancers seem to hover in sustained reaches. In classical Indian music, there are two types of sound—"struck" sound, which can be heard aloud by the human ear; and "unstruck" sound, called anahata, which is a vibration of the universe echoed by the heart. In this piece, the dancers are moving to both forms of music, and creating a third harmony themselves.

Migration (Spring 2006)

The hierarchical migration of birds and mammals

A breath stirs in the body; a tiny crack appears in the shell; the dance begins with the moment of emergence. This piece explores the awakening of complex bodies, and the beauty of their constant evolution into new forms. A fossil is made because time, writing on bodies, turns them into stone. Yet the stone is made from the same substance as the eggshell, the snail's shell, and the seashell.

Alonzo King evokes the feeling of home that is born into us, the one that guides us wordlessly back to our wondrous origins. For an instant, we remember that moment when the eggshell trembles and cracks, or when the intricate pattern of a chambered nautilus has finally been engraved entirely in stone, and disappears. There is a feeling that the dancers' exquisite lines are part of a beauty that we know by heart, if we could only let ourselves remember.

Alonzo King's choreography is a call to the spirit, and also an intimate form of listening for the spirit's response.

Sky Clad MUSICIANS

Rita Sahai was born in Allahabad India, and accepted at the age of nine as a disciple of renowned vocalist, Pandit Rama Shankar Mishra, who groomed her in the romantic Benares Gharana style. After coming to the United States Rita continued her studies under the world-famous sarod master Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, training in the Seni Allaudin Gharana style, known for its creativity and purity of ragas. Impressed by her talent and passion towards music, Khan Sahib has given her the title "Gayan Alankar" (Jewel of Music). Rita Sahai tours extensively throughout the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and India. She is also in demand at recording studios at home and abroad where she graciously lends her voice to many diverse musical projects, including laying down vocal tracks for Grammy Award winning blue grass artist Bela Fleck and performing in Alonzo King's Sacred Texts, which won the Isadora Duncan award for music excellence. Her solo album has also been nominated for a Grammy Award.

Rachel Unterseher (violin and viola) began her study of North Indian classical instrumental and vocal music under the legendary Maestro Ali Akbar Khan at the Ali Akbar College of Music in 1990. During this time she also learned violin technique from two master violinists from India, Satyadev Pawar and Sisirkana Chowdhury. She has also studied tabla under Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri. In 1998 she received her Bachelor's of Arts degree in violin performance from Mills College where she studied under David Abel. She performs frequently around the Bay area both as a soloist and as an accompanist to vocalists including Rita Sahai, Sweta Jhaveri, and Santanu Banerjee.

Debopriyo Sarkar (tabla) is a talented young tabla player from Kolkata. He has been performing in the classical Indian music scene for many years, accompanying many great artists; he is also an avid experimenter in many forms of music. Born in Jalpuiguri, North Bengal, in 1971, Debopriyo has displayed a love of music since his earliest years. Debopriyo is a disciple of Pandit Anindo Chatterjee. Since 1997, he has been performing in the international arena, playing concerts in the U.S.A., Japan, India, the Middle East, Canada and Europe. Debopriyo has collaborated with various artists of many fields of music, including folk, light classical, jazz, hip-hop, films, dj-dance-funk, and western traditional, and has made his own drum/bass groove creations. Debopriyo lives and teaches in the San Francisco Bay Area and performs throughout the world. He possesses an excellent temperament for accompaniment with his clear, sweet tone and intuitive melodic responses. His aesthetic balance between sensitive tonality and rhythmic power creates moods of deep and pure musical celebration.

Songs Like Dreams

An Interview with Rita Sahai

“Music is part of me,” says Rita Sahai simply. “Sometimes I’m sleeping and music comes into my head—and it’s so beautiful. I think that I am writing it down, and then I wake up in the morning and I have only been sleeping.” Born into a musical family in Allahabad, India, Rita Sahai began training as a vocalist when she was nine years old. She studied first with Pandit Rama Shankar Mishra, a renowned singer in the Benares Gharana style who happened to live in her town. Even at that age, her gift for Hindustani music was recognized. When she asked her teachers for guidance, they all replied with the same advice: “Don’t give up. Just keep singing.”

Years later, after the sarod master Ustad Ali Akbar Khan has named her a “Jewel of Music,” and her album of Hori Festival songs, titled Rangamalika, has been nominated for a Grammy Award, Rita Sahai continues to dedicate herself to music. She practices several hours a day in her home in Berkeley, singing classical and light classical ragas from North India. She enjoys Hindustani (or North Indian) music in particular, she explains, because the vocalist is “free to create,” while the tabla player who accompanies her keeps the rhythm. “With a tabla player, I am free, I let go of the beat, and he is keeping the rhythm for me,” she says, “Then I can come home again, because the tabla is like coming home in a song.” She often works with musicians whose instruments compliment her voice “like a shadow,” especially tabla, violin, harmonium, and flute. “Sometimes with a shadow, depending on the angle and where it falls, it becomes very long or very short, or even very hazy—but it follows me!” she says with a smile.

Her first experience working with Alonzo King and LINES Ballet came in 1996, on the ballet Sacred Text, which won an Isadora Duncan Award for music. Remembering her feelings about performing with LINES Ballet, Rita Sahai recalls being struck by Alonzo King’s spontaneity and creativity. In fact, during the sound check, she was humming a different song than the one intended for the score of Sacred Text, when Alonzo King came up to her and began to listen. “Yes, do this one!” he said, and so the raga she had casually chosen—just a song she felt like singing, while the theater crew fine-tuned the sound system—was integrated into the score, which went on to receive that year’s “Izzie” Award.

Rita Sahai describes the feeling when her inspiration arrives as “something special, coming from my heart. When a writer writes a book, it is because he has something to say; it is the same with music for me.” When she begins to develop songs for a piece with Alonzo King’s LINES Ballet, the musical process is intimately related to the choreographic one. “I need to see the dance first,” she says thoughtfully. “Even a little bit of it. Then I can create.” In addition to giving concerts of ragas of many different styles—devotional thumri, political and popular bhajans, monsoon-inspired classical songs, romantic and seasonal ragas, etc.—she teaches Hindustani vocal music to a broad range of students, including those in the Ethnomusicology graduate program at UC Davis. “I like to teach my students: true feelings,” Rita Sahai explains. “It’s very heart-warming, heart-touching, to feel the music. You must fall in love with each note... and then these notes will come dancing to you.”

The Breath and the Heart

Understanding the Classical Music of India

In Indian music, there are two different types of sound: audible music (ahata), which is a temporary vibration of the air made by a plucked string or a note sung aloud, and the kind of music (anahata) that is a vibration of the ether, something that can’t be heard by human ears. The second type of music—analogue to the Pythagorean concept of the music of the spheres, in Greek philosophy—is thought to be a constant manifestation of existence. Anahata literally means “unstruck sound” in Sanskrit, and Vedic writings describe how it is produced by the inherent harmony of the celestial realm. Anahata is also the name of a chakra, or physical energy center in the body: it is located at the heart.

Classical music in India has its origins in some of the earliest written texts, the Vedas, which form the basis

of Hindu belief. The music of North India, called Hindustani, was influenced by Persian music in the 13th century, in contrast to the Carnatic music of southern Indian. Both southern and northern forms are based on a melodic structure (raga) and a rhythmic structure (tala). The word raga designates a distinct group of notes that “please the mind,” by forming a scale to be elaborated upon by vocalists and musicians. The tabla is a drum that provides rhythm, while the sarod is a fretless lute, most commonly made with 25 strings. The harmonium and violin are both late additions to Indian music, introduced to India by French missionaries and British colonialists respectively.

There are several schools (or Gharanas) of Hindustani music, each with its own style and specialization. Since ragas give the performers a structure, within which they have freedom to improvise and create, a song may sound very different when performed by vocalists and musicians from different regions and schools. Ragas themselves fall into several categories—ranging from bhajans and kirtanas, which are religious popular songs, to love-songs of Persian origin, called ghazals, to lively thumri, which lend themselves to dancing.