LAKSHMI SANTRA

Biography

LAKSHMI SANTRA was born in Calcutta in November 1969. Her father was a talented tabla player, hence Lakshmi grew up in an atmosphere of music. She studied Hindustani vocal classical music from 1983 to 1988 at the University of Allahabad. Lakshmi in her infancy was taught by her father, later she was trained by several well-known singers such as Shukla Bandypadadhay, Robin Chakrabarty, Shipra Bose and Arun Bhadhuri. At present, she is under the training and guidance of the well renounded vocalist, Shantanu Bandapadhay.

She sings traditional ragas, along with traditional songs of Bengal, Bhajans and Devotional hymns in Sanskrit. Since about 1985, Lakshmi lives with her husband Bibekananda Santra a recognized painter and their son Sreeman in Pondicherry. In 2000, she was invited and much appreciated at the World Music Festival in Chateau s'Oex in Switzerland. With great skill she teaches the art she loves, in both Pondicherry and Switzerland.

She has given several concerts and workshops in Switzerland, Belgium, Romania, Berlin and France. In the present 2015 Lakshmi performed in Budapest’s Indian Embassy; she also performed in Govedarou Art Gallery, in Greece.

With Lakshmi Santra’s mellifluous voice heard through selected compositions, I am sure you will enjoy an evening of great joy and inner peace.
MY WORK

This is my guidance

Through this infinite learning, listening and searching for our own, profound and true sound... we reach meditation, a deep and spiritual dimension... What a gift!

Discovering our “natural sound”. The natural sound is within everyone. Everyone has it inside... we have to discover it again...

The root to create the sound, the origin, and we learn to develop the tonal quality and precision of our own natural voice. With our different backgrounds, the sounds we have been exposed to, from the very beginning of our life, in our culture, did condition our way of hearing.

Indian music is based on a melodic approach, compared to a harmonic approach in Europe. While flowing through a melody, in Indian music, the way notes are linked to one another is a crucial point. Indian people are used to hearing music using the “natural voice”, which is the original sound of the human being.

We will do it mainly with the OM, the primordial sound in the Universe, to discover, to find again our own Universe. I am teaching how to use micro-tones, how to link the notes, the rounding points, and the different attacks of the notes. I teach how to hold the sounds as straight as possible, looking for long and stable sounds.

Through the exercises, we will go through the sound, the technique, the breath, the tuning, the rhythm, the timing, the mood and the musical sensitivity are trained together, as a whole.

Only after having developed the sounds, having felt them, I will teach more about Indian music structure and its grammatical organization and enter the infinite beauty of the traditional ragas.

Finding our own sound is meeting ourselves!
Introduction about Indian classical music

In India, it is believed that at the origin of creation was the primordial sound, Nada Brahma. Therefore, Nada Brahma is present everywhere: in the heart of humans, in the heart of Nature and in the heart of the Universe. Harmony and music are omnipresent. As a universal language, music transcend all barriers of country, race or religion. It has the power to bring together humans, but even more. It can unite men to God, as music is the language of the soul. Furthermore, it is commonly said that if one wants to enter into the heart of a population or a culture, one should listen to its music. Indian music holds with no doubt the heart of India. Indian classical music takes its origins in the Samaveda, bringing us back to the very beginning of our culture and right down into its roots. It is one of the oldest music known to man, being 3000 years old. It is said that our music, the music of the raga, has emerged from a mythical past, where gods and goddesses were makers of our music, the concept of Nada Bramha.

Melodic approach

Indian music is based on a melodic approach, compared to a harmonic approach in Europe. While flowing through a melody, in Indian music, the way notes are linked to one another is a crucial point. I am teaching how we use micro-tones to link the notes, the rounding points, and the different attacks of the notes. The tuning of the voice is another fundamental aspect, precision and feeling are meticulously developed. Finally, no vibrato is used in Indian music. Therefore, I teach how to hold the sounds as straight as possible, looking for long and stable sounds.
CONCERTS

It is said that if one wants to enter into the heart of a people or a culture, one should listen to their music. And Indian music, no doubt, reflects the heart of India.

My concerts are woven out of different strands and moods and melodies enriching Indian music. It's known that the ambience of Indian classical music transcends and transports the listeners into a deep inner calmness and peace. It is offered always to the Supreme – the creator of all that is beautiful and universal. Because music is an universal language.

Through my concerts I perform Indian pure Classical ragas in Hindusthani style, Bhajans, Mantra and Chanting, Devotional songs, Kirtans and Bengali songs. Since the beginning of 2000 I have been performing throughout Europe. I have given concerts in Switzerland, France, Germany, Greece, Rome, Romania, Hungary. I have given concerts throughout the Indian states.
Training the voice in order to be able to produce the Nada

When I started teaching Indian classical music, I realized that the center piece of my work was to make feel and understand what is Nada. Lord Brahma said about Nada: “There is no song without the Nada, nor music without it, without Nada there is no dance, indeed the whole creation itself is Nada”. Now the question is: what is Nada? The word of Nada means “sound”, the sound that is heard by the human ear. There are two types of Nada. First, the sounds that are pleasant to the ears, or musical, and second the sounds that are dissonant and non-musical. Nada is the sound produced through the regular and constant vibration of some object in space. Through my years of teaching and my experience as a singer, I developed a way to train the voice in order to be able to produce the Nada, the sound. Which is essential, because without knowing how to produce the sound, how can we create music?
Training the voice in order to be able to produce the “natural” sound

One of the big difference between Indian classical music and European classical music, in a technical matter, is the way the voice sounds. Indian classical music uses what I call “natural sound”. Vocabulary used to describe what we are talking about is a big issue not to lead to misunderstanding through different interpretations, even more between different cultures. What I mean by natural sound can be compared with what is sometimes called in Europe “mix voice”. In comparison, European classical voices use what I call the “soprano sound”, or sometimes called “head voice”. This sound is not used in the Indian classical music. So another part of my teaching to European people is guiding them in discovering their “natural sound”. The natural sound is within everyone, everyone has it inside of him or her, the key is to know how to discover it. In my understanding, this difference comes from our different backgrounds, and especially from the sounds we have been exposed to, from the very begging of our life. Indian people are used to hear music using the “natural sound”, which is for me the original sound of the human being, while in the European classical culture the “soprano sound” is more present. So when teaching to European people, the first technique I am teaching is how to produce the “natural sound”.

In my teaching, I use different vowels, which are related to different chakras of the human body, or cosmic sounds, like the Om. These chakras’ sounds will help to energize the human body to get the vital power necessary to train the voice. At the same time, we’re finding the root to create the sound, to develop the voice, and to develop the tonal quality and precision of the voice. By doing this, we are also opening all the chakras. I am looking for a sound that comes from the root chakra, without pushing, coming out naturally, keeping the connection, free and flowing. After many years of teaching, my experience showed me how it has benefited for all people, and particularly to European people.

Only after having developed the sounds, having felt them, I will teach more about Indian music structure and its grammatical organization.

The whole process is called Nada Yoga. As the Asanas (physical postures in yoga) are used to make the physical body flexible, this is our way to make the voice flexible.
Indian music is an oral tradition. The learning process is based on listening, hearing, and repeating. In the tradition, the guru (the master) sings and the student repeats what he is hearing. No texts, books or papers are used, everything is transmitted by ear. Sitting together with the student, the teacher sings as many times as needed the musical phrases with the student, taking the time to base the skills. This way of learning differs a lot from western countries where written and visual support are predominant. It is an excellent way to develop ear training.

Compared to a more mental approach, Indian music teaching is based on the perception, the sense, the feeling and the experience. It’s learning process doesn’t separate and isolate its different components. Through the exercises, the sound, the technique, the breath, the tuning, the music theory, the rhythm, the timing, the memory, the ear training, the lyrics, the feelings, the moods, and the musical sensitivity are trained together, as a whole. In a deeper and even spiritual dimension, everything being connected, linked, and having a meaning.

For indian musicians, through this infinite learning, there is no need of practicing separate meditation, as music is the most important meditation.
Music can connect people around the world. It has become more at ease with the advent of online modes of teaching. We have all adapted the online method of acquiring knowledge, since the last two years, after the advent of Covid. Online method of teaching has proven to be as effective as the one on one classes and group classes. It also gave me a way to connect with various people all around the world. I have been giving Online Classes/ Workshops and Concerts since the last ten years on a daily basis.

CONTACT

To contact me

Mail :  laxmisrantra@gmail.com
Phone :  +91 9944 9452 62
Skype :  lakshmi.santra
Published albums

Links of Concerts and Workshops

Europe

https://www.indeaparis.com/chant-hindoustani-lakshmi-santra

http://www.taichido.ch/cha_ind/cha_ind_program_fr.html


https://www.canalalpha.ch/play/le-journal/topic/5696/a-la-decouverte-de-lart-vocal-indien-de-lakshmi-santra

India

https://www.aurovilleradio.org/indian-devotional-music/