

**Calcutta to Canada:  
Women and North Indian  
Music**

**Sitar and Tabla Concert**

featuring

**Amelia Maciszewski - sitar**

**Uday Ramdas - tabla**

and

**Video Screening of**

**"Our Stories, Our Songs: Musical  
(Auto)biographies of North Indian  
Women"**

**Monday, April 2, 2001 at 8:00 pm**

**Studio 27, Fine Arts Building**

**University of Alberta**

**DONATIONS WELCOME**

Presented by University of Alberta

Centre for Ethnomusicology

**Program**



Department of Music  
University of Alberta

## Program

This multi-media, multidisciplinary performance continues the work of ethnomusicologists as cultural bridge builders among communities, disciplines, and media by celebrating women and performance. In the first half of the program, sitarist Amelia Maciszewski will perform selections from the repertoire in which courtesan women specialized. She is accompanied by tabla player Uday Ramdas. The second half, features a screening of Maciszewski's ethnographic video "Our Stories, Our Songs: Musical (Auto) biographies of North Indian Women," filmed on location in several cities and towns in India.

"Our Stories, Our Songs," filmed on location in several cities and towns in North India, presents autobiographical/musical vignettes of ten Asian Indian women between the ages of 10 and 88. Featured in it are examples of singing and dance performance, as well as interviews in their homes/salons. All these women belong to lineages of hereditary professional musical specialists having low social status, termed *baiji-s* or *tawaif-s*, whose work and place in society is comparable to that of geishas in Japan. They live in conditions ranging from abject poverty to relative middle-class comfort. Each woman possesses the knowledge of a particular Hindustani (North Indian) performance repertoire, which combines with her lineage and life history to comprise her distinct identity. While most documentary films on musicians in India focus on famous personalities, this work showcases the stories and songs of several women and one girl who, although highly skilled in their craft, are not famous. Moreover, each of them have lived, and some of them continue to do so, at the margins of society. These women's distinct histories and performance repertoires risk being forgotten, and it is as much their wish as mine that they be told.

Sitarist and ethnomusicologist Amelia Maciszewski has dedicated half her life to the study and practice of Indian music and culture. She has trained under eminent sitar Professor Suresh Misra, sarode maestro Aashish Khan, and distinguished vocalist Girija Devi, in addition graduating from Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's university, Santiniketan, in India. She has performed in three continents and has received several civic awards for performance outreach in the U.S. She is a Killam Postdoctoral Fellow at U of A's Music Department, where she co-directs the Indian Music Ensemble and is working on print and audiovisual publications about women musicians in India, in addition to pursuing outreach opportunities in the community as a performer and instructor.

Edmonton is privileged to host tabla virtuoso Uday (Ramdas) Deshpande from Pune, India. He is a disciple of tabla maestro Ustad Allah Rakha. In addition to his mastery of classical Indian tabla, he is also a composer who has directed and collaborated with a number of world music and popular music ensembles in India and the west.

**“Our Stories, Our Songs: North Indian Women's Musical Autobiographies”**

Camera and Concept by Amelia Maciszewski

Edited by Amanda Moore and Anjali Malhotra

Cenozoic Studios, Austin, TX, November 1999-May 2000

Additional postproduction at University of Texas Instructional Technology Center, Oct. 2000

Approximate running time: 45 minutes

"Cast," in order of appearance:

In Bowbazaar, Calcutta -

Madhuri Devi

Ali Akbar Khan - sarangi player

Ravishankar Misra - harmonium player

Darshan Kumar Misra - tabla player

Lalita Devi\*

Chhunnu Khan - sarangi player

Puran Kumar - tabla player

Hira Khan - harmonium player

Stills and audio of:

Shanti Devi

Mankit and Sharansa Gupta (Shanti Devi's grandsons, Ananda Gupta's sons)

Ananda Gupta (Shanti Devi's son)

In Muzaffarpur -

Bijli Bharati, Shalini ("Baby", Bijli's cousin)

Aruna Devi (Bijli's mother)

Sajjan Bharati - qawwali singer, Aruna's current instructor)

Mohammed Chisti Khan- harmonium player and co-instructor

Kali Dasi Devi (Aruna's mother, Bijli's grandmother)

Mammo Khan - harmonium player (other accompanists present but not shown in segment)

Daya Kumari and granddaughter

Braj Bala Devi

Virendra Kumar Verma - tabla player

In Tikamgarh -

Kudrat (Asgari Bai's guru's granddaughter)

Asgari Bai

Asgari Bai's students

In Delhi -

Mustari Bai\*\*

\*Camera by Aashish Khan

\*\*Camera by Aloke Dutta