

# SALUTING ZAKIR HUSSAIN

BY MABEL PAIS

"If people all over the world would consider interacting with each other the way musicians and artists all over the world interact with each other, we would have a much more peaceful planet."

- Zakir Hussain in an interview with *India Today* magazine

A memorial tribute to the legendary Ustad Zakir Hussain was hosted by The Asia Society, New York, in collaboration with Sneh Arts, New York and Sound Traditions, New Jersey. 'A Life In Rhythm' celebrating the maestro was held on February 1 at The Asia Society (725 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021 - (212) 288-6400) at 4 p.m.

The event brought together an extraordinary gathering of cultural leaders, admirers and local musicians who celebrated his unparalleled legacy through stories, shared memories, and music.

## PROGRAM

The program commenced with inspiring opening remarks by Rachel Cooper (Asia Society's Director of Global Performing Arts and Cultural Initiatives), Sunny Thakkar (Founder, Sneh Arts & Sneh Arts Foundation), and Shruti Rawoot (Co-Founder, Sound Traditions). Their reflections set the tone for an evening of deep gratitude and admiration for Ustad Zakir Hussain's monumental contributions to music and culture.

The opening musical offering was a deeply spiritual moment, featuring a harmonious blend of:

*Shruti Rawoot's serene rendition of 'Dhrupad Bandish.'*  
*Amira Dvorah's moving Islamic prayers.*

*Deepak Kumar's soul-stirring Sanskrit peace prayer accompanied by the tanpura.*

A curated video tribute captured key milestones of Zakirji's illustrious career, evoking emotions among the



Rachel Cooper of Asia Society speaks at the Memorial for Maestro Zakir Hussain. Credit: Sneh Arts

audience as they witnessed his journey through sound and artistry.

## COMMUNITY REFLECTIONS

The memorial brought forth heartfelt reflections from esteemed members of the community. Speakers shared personal anecdotes and professional insights into Zakir ji's life, influence, and enduring impact.

Robert Browning, Founder-then Executive Director of the World Music Institute (WMI) said of Zakir Hussain, "He brought a musical genius to all his endeavors. He was someone who had the strongest respect and empathy for people from so many cultures. He exuded joy, innovation & a deep appreciation for all life. He made us feel that we were all part of a family of music lovers and adventurers. No matter how dull or trying your day may have been, you came away from a Zakir Hussain concert with a feeling of exaltation."

Gaby Sappington, current Executive Director of WMI

said, "He will always be an inspiration to all of us at WMI. His service as an honorary Board member added prestige and credibility to our small but mighty non-profit organization. Zakir brought the soul of Indian music to collaborations with a wide variety of international artists such as George Harris, Ben Morris, Bill Laswell, Mickey Hart, John McLaughlin, and Bela Fleck... just to name a few."

## MUSICAL TRIBUTE

The tribute continued with mesmerizing performances by:

*Avirodh Sharma (tabla) and Rohan Misra (sarangi) in a special dedication to Zakirji.*

*Amira Dvorah shared some personal funny stories and music with a moving flute performance.*

The program concluded with a final video of Zakir ji speaking about being one with his instrument and the magic that happens when their spirits meet. It created a powerful closing moment that resonated with all in attendance.

Watch a video of the event: [youtu.be/bs73jvsGU80](https://youtu.be/bs73jvsGU80)

## SNEH ARTS

Sneh Arts (@snehartsny): A New York-based arts organization founded by Sunny Thakkar, dedicated to preserving and promoting Indian music, dance, and culture.

## SOUND TRADITIONS

Sound Traditions: Co-founded by Shruti Rawoot, promoting "Baithak Style" concerts and sparking cultural innovation through Indian classical music.

## ASIA SOCIETY MUSEUM

Asia Society Museum: A leading institution fostering global understanding through arts and education.

# WHARTON ARTS' YOUNG MUSICIANS CREATE GIANT MUSICAL PARTY AT JERSEY GARDENS MALL

BY MABEL PAIS

Wharton Arts will bring the joy of music to the mall at The Mills at Jersey Gardens on Sunday, March 16 from 12:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. located at 651 Kapkowski Road in Elizabeth.

Families and audiences of all ages are invited to Jersey Gardens for a day of creativity, community, and inspiring performances. Wharton Arts welcomes guests to experience the performing arts up close with free participatory music-making stations and performances by over 700 young musicians from the New Jersey Youth Chorus, New Jersey Youth Symphony, Paterson Music Project, and Performing Arts School. All are encouraged to celebrate the festivities!

## WHARTON ARTS DAY SCHEDULE

Center Court

12:00 p.m. Performing Arts School

1:00 p.m. Paterson Music Project

2:00 p.m. New Jersey Youth Chorus

4:00 p.m. New Jersey Youth Symphony PLAYATHON

## POP-UP STAGE NEAR SAKS OFF 5TH

1:00 p.m. New Jersey Youth Symphony Fortissimo Flutes

1:30 p.m. New Jersey Youth Symphony Clarinet Ensemble

2:00 p.m. New Jersey Youth Symphony Jazz Program including the Jazz Orchestra, Big Band, and Jazz Workshop

## KIDS ZONE NEAR CENTER COURT

12:00 - 3:15 p.m. Instrument Petting Zoo, Art Activities, and more!

## KIDS ZONE (ZONA INFANTIL) SCHEDULE

12:00-12:45 PM Paper Violin Craft (Manualidad de Violín de Papel)



Wharton Arts Music Schools perform. Credit: WhartonArts.org

12:45-1:00 PM Drum Circle #1 (Círculo de Tambores)

1:00-1:45 PM Hosophone Activity (Actividad de Instrumento con Manguera de Jardín)

1:45-2:00 PM Drum Circle #2 (Círculo de Tambores)

2:00-2:45 PM Make your Own Pan Flute (Haz Tu Propia Flauta de Pan)

2:45-3:15 PM Drum Circle Finale #3 (Círculo de Tambores)

Helen Cha-Pyo, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor, said, "Wharton Arts Day is like a giant musical party at the mall! There's nothing more exciting than filling the space with the energy and passion of over 700 young musicians. From movie soundtracks to jazz grooves, and even the chance to conduct a 500-piece orchestra, there's something for everyone. We invite the community to experience the joy of live music, engage in hands-on

activities, and witness the incredible talent of our students. This event not only showcases the powerful impact of music education but also reinforces our commitment to making the performing arts accessible to all."

The New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS) returns to 'The Mills at Jersey Gardens,' New Jersey's largest outlet and value retail center, for its annual Playathon as part of the 2025 Wharton Arts Day. Over 500 talented young musicians will entertain shoppers with pops favorites, including symphonic highlights from 'Harry Potter,' 'The Lord of The Rings,' and 'Star Wars.'

Audience members can bid on a chance to conduct the 500-piece orchestra and the crowd favorite 'Stars and Stripes Forever' at 5:15 p.m. In addition to the festival orchestra performance in Center Court at 4:00 p.m., an additional stage will feature NJYS jazz and woodwind performers beginning at 1:00 p.m.

## PLAYATHON & MUSICARES

As the youth orchestra program's largest fundraiser, Playathon helps provide financial assistance for students who would not otherwise be able to participate in NJYS, as well as ensures the continuation of programs that support excellence in music education for all. This year, 20% of donations made to the Playathon on March 16 will go to support MusiCares' fire relief effort to support music professionals impacted by the Los Angeles wildfires. For more information, visit [musicares.org](https://musicares.org). To learn more or donate to the NJYS Playathon, visit [playathon.givesmart.com](https://playathon.givesmart.com).

**Wharton Arts' Mission & Vision & Arts Education**  
Learn more at [WhartonArts.org](https://WhartonArts.org)

(Mabel Pais writes on *The Arts and Entertainment, Spirituality, Social Issues, Cuisine, and Health & Wellness*)