



SAMITA SINHA

Composer/ Vocalist/ Educator

www.samitasinha.com

For bookings and information:
info@samitasinha.com or 917.498.6916

PRESS QUOTES

ON SAMITA SINHA:

“‘Unique’ has generally come to mean ‘slightly out of the ordinary,’ but Samita Sinha’s voice warrants the true meaning of the hackneyed accolade... mesmerizing. This is fusion... in the best sense: she effortlessly, seamlessly weaves [sounds] yet keeps their distinct flavors intact.”

-Time Out

“Sinha... has an extremely strong stage presence, always exuding a sense of control, both technically and emotionally. Her voice could change from extroverted to vulnerable within one phrase, all while balancing the feel of tune with that of the ecstatic.”

-All About Jazz

“Brilliant.”

-Times of India

“Hot... Sinha [has] a bare and exacting voice.”

-Brooklyn Rail

“Sweet, smoky vocals whose traditional techniques carry a focus and authority.”

-Global Rhythm

ON KAASH’S *Seep* (Sinha’s 2006 release as a bandleader):

“[S]inger Samita Sinha, trained in classical Indian music, makes boundaries disappear with this sometimes jazzy, often ethereal aural adventure.”

-Billboard's Top 5 Hear and Now

“*Seep* is a record that begs to be listened to over and over so the experience of being totally swept away can be repeated. When you listen to KAASH, you enter a world that is not only musical, but also philosophical, spiritual, meditative and sensuous. A fascinating mix and intertwining of East and West.”

-All About Jazz

“Kaash’s tight drum’n bass propulsion sets a hot pace for Sinha’s adroit singing... [she] leads with... teeming phrasing she derives from deep Indian vocal traditions.”

-New York Resident

BIOGRAPHY

Samita's work is both an embrace and an argument with the past. Its effect is to create an up-to-the-minute aesthetic that reflects that transnational, planetary, technologically sophisticated culture of the 21st century. She is a citizen of the world.

—Sekou Sundiata

Samita Sinha is a composer and vocal performer based in New York. She combines tradition with experiment to create her sound, drawing from a deep grounding in North Indian classical music, a penchant for song, and the cadences and inflections of several different languages.

As a composer/ performer and improviser, Sinha uses her voice as her primary instrument, as well as digital and analog electronics. She has performed her solo and ensemble work at PS 1, Roulette, Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concerts, Blue Note, and Issue Project Room, at universities such as UC Berkeley, NYU, Macalaster College, and St. Olaf, as well as abroad in India and the Middle East. Sinha also uses her voice as an improvising instrument in jazz ensembles including Marc Cary's FOCUS and Sunny Jain Collective. She has received awards from NYSCA and Urban Artists Initiative to create and compose new works, from Queens Council on the Arts for community music work, and from the Fulbright Foundation to study Hindustani music in India.

Sinha speaks and sings in several languages including Hindi, Urdu, Braj, Bengali, Sanskrit, Mandarin Chinese, English, and Spanish. Her passion for language has led to collaborations with poets—she is currently working with Fiona Templeton to compose a score for *The Medead*, Templeton's performance epic retelling of the story of Medea. From 2005 to 2007 Sinha toured as a vocalist with the late poet/ griot Sekou Sundiata's music theater work, *the 51st (dream) state*, which appeared at the Melbourne International Arts Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Aaron Davis Hall, and universities and theaters around the country.

Inspired by Sundiata's call to artists to create new public rituals, Sinha's extends her practice into communities by leading Community Sings—events that bring different people together in one room for singing and dialogue—in her own Queens neighborhood as well as in York, Alabama. She teaches music, especially the intersection of music and culture, in NYC public schools through Carnegie Hall and the 92nd Street Y.

Sinha received her MFA in Music/ Sound from Bard, and her BA in Literature/ Cultural Criticism from Yale. She studies Hindustani vocal music with Shubhangi Sakhalkar.

Significant Performances

Samita Sinha (solo vocal performance/ sound artist and ensemble leader)

The Stone	New York, NY	December 2010
Vital Vox Festival @ Issue Project Room	Brooklyn, NY	November 2010
Anthology Film Archives (<i>Cipher</i> screening)	New York, NY	October 2010
PS I	New York, NY	April 2010
Carnegie Hall Concert at Drom	New York, NY	February 2010
CNMAT at UC Berkeley	Berkeley, CA	November 2009
Macalester College Art Gallery	Minneapolis, MN	November 2009
St. Olaf College, The Pause	Northfield, MN	November 2009
Sangati Center for Indian Classical Music	San Francisco, CA	November 2009
Issue Project Room	Brooklyn, NY	September 2009
Millay Colony Summer Fete	Austerlitz, NY	July 2009
Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concert	Queens, NY	June 2009
Roulette	New York, NY	April 2009
Carnegie Hall's Global Encounters*	New York State	March-May 2009
Rubin Museum benefit	New York, NY	October 2008

**conducted lecture/ performances on Hindustani music in 20 high schools*

with ANATOMY (Hindustani/jazz/electronic music project w/ Marc Cary)

Le Poisson Rouge	New York, NY	March 2010
Zinc Bar	New York, NY	October 2009
Lower Manhattan Cultural Council benefit	New York, NY	April 2009
The Kitchen (commission)	New York, NY	October 2008
Brooklyn Museum of Art	Brooklyn, NY	June 2008
Trane Studio	Toronto, CAN	December 2007
National Gallery of Art	Washington, DC	August 2007
New York University	New York, NY	September 2007

with Marc Cary's FOCUS Trio

San Francisco Jazz Festival	San Francisco, CA	November 2009
Earshot Jazz Festival	Seattle, WA	October 2009
Monterey Jazz Festival	Monterey, CA	September 2008
Columbia/ Harlem Global Jazz Festival	New York, NY	September 2008
The Iridium	New York, NY	March 2008
Dizzy's, Jazz at Lincoln Center	New York, NY	January 2008
Charlie Parker Jazz Festival	New York, NY	August 2007
Museum of Modern Art	New York, NY	July 2007

with KAASH, ensemble led by Samita Sinha

NJ Performing Arts Center	Newark, NJ	July 2006
Blue Note	New York, NY	June 2006
Joe's Pub	New York, NY	May 2006
Queens Museum of Art	Queens, NY	August 2005

with poet Sekou Sundiata's music-theater work, *the 51st (dream) state*

Bucknell College	Lewisburg, PA	February 2008
Miami-Dade College	Miami, FL	November 2007
The New School	New York, NY	April 2007

University of Texas	Austin, TX	February 2007
University of Maryland	College Park, MD	February 2007
University of North Carolina	Chapel Hill, NC	January 2007
University of Michigan	Ann Arbor, MI	January 2007
Zeiterion Theater	New Bedford, MA	November 2006
BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music)	Brooklyn, NY	November 2006
Melbourne International Arts Festival	Melbourne, AUS	October 2006
Dodge Poetry Festival	New York, NY	September 2006
Walker Arts Center (residency)	Minneapolis, MN	March 2006
Aaron Davis Hall (residency)	New York, NY	January 2006
Bates College	Lewiston, ME	December 2005
Cathedral of Saint John the Divine	New York, NY	October 2005

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

CIPHER

by Samita Sinha

In this solo performance piece, which sound artist Marina Rosenfeld called “phenomenal” and poet Anselm Berrigan deemed “pure prosody,” composer/ vocalist Samita Sinha excavates stories from *tarana* sounds using the range of her voice and body. Drawing from her deep grounding in *khayal* (contemporary north Indian classical singing; literally means “thought” or “imagination”), Sinha employs improvisation within structure in *Cipher*, and communicates intention via a single melodic line. She ventures far beyond the inflections and forms of Indian classical music, however, adding electronic elements and drawing inspiration from early blues and panchori to create a new form, entirely her own, that combines tradition and experiment.

The language material used in *Cipher* comes from tarana, a type of composition in Hindustani classical vocal music in which certain words and syllables based on Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit phonemes are sung at a fast speed. According to legend, tarana was created by Amir Khusro in the 13th century as a fusion of the different musical forms that existed in medieval India. It is generally believed today that tarana is a composition of meaningless syllables, though other stories indicate that these sounds encode mystical meanings. One legend, for example, says that Sufi mystics invented this language as a way of speaking the truth in disguise, so as not be persecuted—while initiates received the meaning, the uninitiated believed tarana to be, simply, a meaningless song.

Sinha accompanies her voice with 3 microphones and 3 boxes, including electronic tabla and electronic tanpura, instruments that have trapped a centuries-old tradition of acoustic finery into convenient, portable boxes. Together with Line 6 and a range of microphones, Sinha uses these boxes as instruments in their own right, creating soundscapes that collapse past, present and future, and adding layers of meaning to the palimpsest-like sounds of tarana.

For bookings contact Samita Sinha at info@samitasinha.com or 917.498.6916.

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EDUCATION

Bard College, M.F.A. in Music/ Sound, *with honors* May 2011
Yale University, B.A. in Literature/ Cultural Criticism, *cum laude* May 2000

AWARDS

New York State Council on the Arts (2010) Commission to compose score for poet Fiona Templeton's *The Medead*, a performance epic retelling of the story of Medea.

Queens Council on the Arts (2009) Grant to lead a Community Sing in Jackson Heights, Queens, to bring together different parts of a diverse community, and perform my work in the community.

Urban Arts Initiative (2007) Grant towards *Naked Nayika*, a multimedia music performance exploring the trope of the female heroine in Indian arts.

Fulbright Scholarship (2002-2003) for one year's study of classical Hindustani vocal music with Dr. Alka Deo Marulkar in Goa, India.

Light Fellowship (Yale, 1999) for a semester's study of language and culture in Beijing.

RESIDENCIES

The Coleman Center (2010-2011) A 3-term residency over 2 years to work with an ensemble of singers from two church choirs (one predominantly white, one predominantly African American) to compose and perform a series of 'fused' songs that combine different idioms/ versions of the same song (Amazing Grace), folk songs with contemporary sounds as well as with Indian raga.

Millay Colony for the Arts (2007) Residency for composition.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Carnegie Hall Weill Institute, *Performing Artist, Educator* 8/08-present
Perform neighborhood concerts through NYC, and interactive Hindustani music concerts at high schools. Co-wrote Global Education curriculum NYC high school students learning about Indian music.

92nd Street Y, *Teaching Artist* 9/06-present
Prepare NYC public elementary school students to experience four concerts, each from a different world tradition.

St. Olaf College

11/09

In conjunction with a solo performance, held a colloquium for Music/ Asian Studies students on how performance related to the theme of migration.

New York University, Tisch College, Guest Artist

3/09

Lectured on the history and culture of North Indian Music in a class taught by DJ Rekha entitled "Bhangra, Bollywood, and Beyond."

DANCE/ FILM/ INSTALLATION***Parijat Desai Dance Company***

Desai, a choreographer who blends Bharatnatyam with contemporary dance, choreographed to two of my compositions in "Make Space," performed at Tribeca Performing Arts Center.

Backwaters (2005): Composed vocal component of score for Prashant Bhargava's short film, screened at S.F. International Asian American Film Festival.

Three Muses (2006): Composed and performed vocals for Jaishri Abichandani's multimedia installation. Exhibited at Exit Art and Queens Museum of Art.

PANELIST/ JUROR

For Millay Colony (2007, 2008), Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts (2010), Queens Council on the Arts (2010), Con Edison Musicians' Residency (2010)

WRITINGS

Reflected in Water: Writings on Goa (Penguin India, published 11/06)

Contributed creative essay entitled "Malkauns in Summertime" about studying classical Hindustani music as an Indian American in Goa. Edited by Naresh Fernandes, Jerry Pinto.