

Abhay Rustum Sopori **Santoor Maestro & Music Composer**

Versatile is one word that describes Santoor Maestro & Music Composer Abhay Rustum Sopori. He is the youngest classical musician to compose and conduct orchestras and folk & Sufi music ensembles. He has been the youngest recipient of almost all the awards that he has received in recognition of his outstanding contribution & achievements in the field of music, which include the prestigious:

- 'Mahatma Gandhi Seva Medal' - Gandhi Global Peace Award by United Nations accredited Gandhi Global Family, 2020 (J&K)
- 'Top Grade Artist' by All India Radio, Govt. of India, 2019 (Delhi)
- 'Atal Shikhar Samman', 2017 - Presented at the Parliament of India (Delhi)
- 'Dr. S. Radhakrishnan National Media Award', 2017 (Delhi)
- 'State Icon' title by Election Commission of India, 2016 (J&K)
- 'Pride of India Award', 2015 (Delhi)
- 'Madras Music Academy Award', 2014 (Chennai)
- 'Indian Fine Arts Society Award', 2013 (Kingdom of Bahrain)
- 'J&K Government Award' - *Highest Civilian Award of Jammu and Kashmir*, 2011 (J&K)
- 'Glory of India Award', 2010 (United Kingdom)
- 'Best Citizens of India Award', 2010 (Delhi)
- 'Bharat Shiromani Award', 2009 (Delhi)
- 'Sangeet Natak Akademi's first 'Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar', 2006 (Delhi)
- 'Juenjo Korean International Heritage Award', 2005 (Seoul, South Korea)
- 'Kalawant Samman', 2004 (Mumbai), etc. to name a few.
- His name also features in various Biographical-Note Volumes of India & abroad.

A graduate in Management and Computers with Masters in Music, Abhay was born in Srinagar and inherited a profound sense of music from his fabled *Sopori - Sufiana Gharana* of Kashmir, the exclusive traditional Santoor family of the country with its roots spanning over more than 300 years. Abhay learnt music under the traditional *Guru-Shishya Parampara* from his grandfather Pandit Shamboo Nath Sopori ji, the Great Master musician hailed as the 'Father of Music' in Jammu and Kashmir, and also from his father Pandit Bhajan Sopori, the legendary Santoor virtuoso & music composer.

Abhay has carried forward the great legacy of his family and age-old *Shaiv-Sufi* tradition in propagating & promoting the Indian culture globally. He has the credit for creating 'Cultural Revolution' in Jammu and Kashmir and bringing the youth together through music. His efforts & initiatives have been path breaking creating a new generation of music connoisseurs & bringing more recognition to the art and culture of the country. Regarded as a 'Cultural Icon' of Jammu & Kashmir, Abhay has been instrumental in introducing 'Cultural Policy' & also formulating & introducing music as a formal subject in schools, colleges in J&K.

Abhay is the only contemporary composer of India whose composition has been conducted by the legendary maestro Zubin Mehta and performed by the German Bavarian State Orchestra, one of the top most orchestras of the world, together with Abhay's Kashmiri folk ensemble 'Soz-o-Saaz', giving international recognition to *Kashmiri* music & creating history in the world of music. Abhay also has a rare honour to conduct along with maestro Mehta.

His other international collaborations include presentations with the world renowned Austrian Vienna Boys Choir, Moroccan Lute maestro Haj Younis, Iranian Santur Maestro Dr. Darius Saghafi, American Dulcimer player Malcom Dalgish, French Clarinet player Laurent Clouet & others.

Abhay has more than 40 notable releases to his credit and has participated in prestigious festivals across the world. Abhay has composed music for a number of national and international award winning films and also for '*Mahatma*', a film by Govt. of India on Mahatma Gandhi, presented at the 'United Nations' marking the first International Non-violence Day. His compositions have been trendsetters and greatest musical hits of Jammu and Kashmir. His music in the Bollywood film '*Shikara*' has been lauded for bringing authentic sounds of Kashmir in the commercial cinema.

A gifted and prodigious musician, Abhay continues to innovate and experiment with the Santoor further extending its dimension. In keeping with his lineage, he has further established the concept of '*Gayan-Vadan Baaj*' in the Indian classical system and introduced the '*Open String Concept*' and '*Enhanced Sustain Technique*' on the Santoor. He has also invented a new 30-stringed instrument '*Sur Santoor*'. Abhay has revived the old *Sufiana* compositions of his predecessors and adopted them in the *Hindustani* Classical scenario and also composed and introduced new *Khayal* compositions. He has also composed and introduced 2 new *Ragas* named '*Nirmalkauns*' and '*MahaKali*', which have been widely acclaimed by the music connoisseurs and critics.

Some of hallmarks of Abhay's performances are mellifluous playing, lightning tempo, clarity and accuracy of *Raga* exposition and adoption of the '*Sopori Baaj*' (style) the unique format and formal system of playing Classical Santoor created by Pandit Bhajan Sopori. The '*Sopori Baaj*' incorporates the essential technical nuances of both the *Gayaki* (vocal) and *Tantrakari* (instrumental) *Angs* (aspects) such as '*Meend*', '*Gamak*', '*Glides*', '*Krintan*', '*Zamzama*', '*Taan*', '*Bol*', '*Chhand*' and '*Laya*' patterns, which are absolutely essential for the correct rendering of *Raga-Sangeet* in the true Indian Classical tradition. Presentation of *Dhrupad* system along with the accompaniment of *Pakhawaj* is also a special characteristic of his *Baaj*. Another remarkable and unique quality of his presentation is that he sings the composition along with its instrumental rendering reviving the traditional *Shaiv - Sufi Santoor Parampara* of his family.

Abhay has not only established himself as a preeminent musician of the present generation but simultaneously promoted hundreds of upcoming and talented musicians of the country. Further, Abhay has always been in the forefront to raise funds and mobilize resources through his charity concerts for various medical & social causes and also catastrophes like Kashmir earthquake (over INR 10 Million), J&K floods (over INR 8 Million), etc.

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For more details, please visit: www.abhaysopori.com