



Divine Moments – Pt. V.M. Bhatt and Pt. Subhen Chatterjee, ArtServe, Ft. Lauderdale, September 18, 2022, by Dr. James E. Cunningham.

This intimate concert featuring Grammy award-winning musician Pandit V.M. Bhatt on *mohan vina* (North Indian slide guitar) and Pandit Subhen Chatterjee (*tabla*) was a divine expression of Indian classical musical virtuosity. V.M. Bhatt, who is the inventor of the instrument (an original adaptation of the Hawaiian guitar) did not disappoint those in attendance at ArtServe in Ft. Lauderdale on September 18, 2022.

The intimacy of the small concert hall was enhanced by the relaxed approach of the artists, who spoke between pieces to the appreciative audience of Indian classical music aficionados and young students, creating an atmosphere that was equally expressive, entertaining, and educational. At the beginning of the concert, Pt. Bhatt announced that he was deviating from his intended *raga* based on the “feeling” he received from the audience as he entered the venue. His *raga* selection for the evening was *Puriya Dhanashree*, a lesser-known *raga* with a distinctive six-note ascending pattern (omitting the 5th ‘pa’) and a “crooked” descending line revolving and resolving around “ri”, the 2nd *svara*.

During the ethereal *alap*, the lyrical expressions of the *mohan vina*, acoustically reminiscent of the singing tones of a virtuosic vocalist, were enhanced by Bhatt’s brilliant phrasing and complex improvisations. The intimate interaction of the *mohan vina* and *tabla* in the *gat* sections of the concert were evidence of the long-term partnership and intimate musical communication between both instrumentalists. Pt. Chatterjee provided a masterful rhythmic grounding for Bhatt’s flowing melodic explorations. The concluding question-and-answer session with the audience was capped by an inspired performance of folk songs that featured interactive singing accompaniment by all present.

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