

India at Victoria Hall: Zakir Hussain's Tabla with Honours

Only Indians this Thursday evening at Geneva's Victoria Hall! We are attending the [Symphony Orchestra of India's](#) first concert in Geneva, conducted by [Zane Dalal](#), and with tabla soloist [Zakir Hussain](#), a veritable star in India, whose reputation has circled the globe now for several decades.

From the very moment the orchestra enters the stage, one is surprised to see a large number of musicians, who visibly hail from this enormous country with the age-old culture. This young ensemble was founded in 2006 and is the first professional outfit in the country dedicated to upholding India's cultural heritage, and at the same time promote contemporary music, as well as stimulate and develop the musical potential among young Indians, and guide them towards professional careers.

It is a delicate silhouette that walks to the front of the stage and bows, hands folded together in a sign of devotion to the Gods before the show: Yes, we have in front of us a soloist, who is venerated in India - son of the legendary tabla player Alla Rakha, touring from the age of 11, yet permeated by an undeniable modesty as he faces his audience.

After a short introduction in the orchestra, the solo violin engages in a sombre dialogue with the solo horn... and then, enter the tabla of Zakir Hussain... His right hand delivers sharp rhythms, while the left hand is more aquatic, his palm gliding on the surface of the tabla, evoking sounds reminiscent of the human voice. Infinite rhythmic diversity, and his art of touching - whether dry, soft, or suave - is nothing short of enchanting. What dexterity and what musicality! The phrases intertwine with the different solos - oboe, bassoon, violin, flute - with impeccable accuracy and immaculate cohesion: Although the work is unknown here, it works marvellously, and it is a pleasure to time and time again follow the dialogue between the soloist and the musicians in the orchestra.

The orchestra does not show itself unworthy: very cohesive strings, admirable woodwinds, extremely cohesive brass, and very sensitive timpani... The ensemble tackles the different works with extreme composure, and proffer a fresh and striking vision of the overture to the *Bartered Bride* by [Smetana](#), as well as the *Concerto for Orchestra* by [Bartók](#). The clarinet solo was nuanced, the bassoons delightfully gritty, and the balance between the strings and the winds intact.

As you may have gathered, this concert was enchanting: Discovering Zakir Hussain and his art of the tabla, as well as this beautiful orchestra whose potential for the future was evident.

So hats off to the Indian sub-continent, which strengthened by its heritage and culture opens up towards ours, and offers us intoxicating fusion music. It seems to be in the cards, that this first tour will not be the last...