

LEELA ANNUAL REPORT

2023





CORE VALUES

ADVANCE

*We advance the universal
value of kathak*



ARTISTS

*We place artists at the
center of our work*



RELATIONSHIPS

*We center our work on
relationships*



ELEVATE

*We elevate the standard
of the art*



COLLECTIVE

*We ground our work in the
practice of collective creativity*



INNOVATE

*We innovate while remaining
grounded in tradition*



TRANSFORM

*We transform the field of
kathak and beyond*



LEELA DANCE COLLECTIVE

In 2023, Leela Dance Collective continued to push the boundaries of kathak dance, advancing it in innovative ways while preserving its core. This year, we began developing a new collaboration that brought kathak dance and Hindustani classical music in conversation with Western contemporary chamber music. At the same time, we remained committed to promoting the traditional kathak solo, celebrating its timeless beauty and depth. Through these efforts, Leela Dance Collective amplifies the voices of a new generation of female artists, ensuring that kathak remains vibrant and relevant for today's audiences while honoring the heart of this rich tradition.

IMPACT

7

cities

8

performances &
digital presentations

24

artists featured

9.5K

audience members reached



February
25th

Vienna, VA

Traditional kathak solo performance by Rachna Nivas at The Barns at Wolf Trap

April
8th

Los Angeles, CA

Encounters With Beauty, work-in-progress
performance at Doheny Mansion

July
5th

Campbell, CA

Leela and Arun Ramamurthy Trio
Collaboration at Ainsley House

August
6th

Venice, CA

Encounters With Beauty, open
rehearsal at Electric Lodge

September
5th

Seattle, WA

Excerpts of Encounters With Beauty,
Hyphen+Asian Showcase at Western
Arts Alliance

October
22nd

Culver City, CA

Leela performs at The Culver Steps

October
21st

Los Angeles, CA

Leela performs at Dance All Day Festival

November
10th

Santa Monica, CA

Encounters With Beauty, preview performance at The Edge at BroadStage

2023 NOTABLE PERFORMANCES

ENCOUNTERS WITH BEAUTY

Conceived and choreographed by Rukhmani Mehta and Seibi Lee
Commissioned in part by Newman Center for the Performing Arts





"With rhythmic spinning and sounds of bells, the gorgeous evening culminated in a dance of intense devotion and joy...What an exquisite evening of brilliant dance and music... This was a gift that needs to be shared"

*– Joanne DiVito,
LA Dance Chronicle*



ENCOUNTERS WITH BEAUTY

Leela Dance Collective in collaboration with Salastina presented *Encounters with Beauty*, a new work exploring the intersection of kathak dance and Hindustani classical music with Western contemporary chamber music. Throughout the year we worked closely with composers Derrick Skye and Reena Esmail, two powerful voices in contemporary music. This creative process involved deep experimentation, blending the evocative sounds of the string quartet with Hindustani vocals and kathak's percussive footwork and dynamic movement. Two preview performances in Los Angeles gave audiences an intimate experience of this cross-genre dialogue.



THE TRADITIONAL KATHAK SOLO

The traditional solo represents kathak at its highest level, showcasing mastery and artistry through unproduced, highly interactive, and improvisatory performances. In a time when the solo is increasingly being replaced by highly produced group choreography, Leela Dance Collective remains dedicated to advancing the kathak solo, ensuring the art form is preserved in its purest and most elevated form. Performed in intimate spaces such as small theaters, museums, and private homes, the solo invites audiences to experience the richness and depth of North Indian classical dance and music in a direct and personal way.



"Indian classical art is...a gateway to deep knowledge. Stepping through that gateway requires commitment, discipline, and time."
– Pandit Chitresh Das

NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION

In 2023, Leela deepened its commitment to world-class kathak training through immersive residencies and retreats. Students had the unique opportunity to train intensively in the dynamic style of Pandit Chitresh Das, under the guidance of Seibi Lee, Rachna Nivas, Rukhmani Mehta, and Sarah Morelli. Leela's educational programs emphasize technical mastery, deep study of music, movement, rhythm, and cultural history while fostering artistic excellence. With pre-professional and professional training for all ages, Leela continued to nurture the next generation of kathak artists across Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and Denver.



ARTS EDUCATION

Leela Dance Collective is proud to partner with The Music Center’s Performing Artists in Schools and Neighborhoods program, bringing the rich traditions of Kathak dance and Hindustani classical music to K-12 students across Los Angeles. Through engaging school assemblies and community performances, thousands of students and their families are introduced to these vibrant art forms—often for the first time outside of textbooks or mainstream media. Since joining the program in Fall 2022, Leela has reached over 17,000 students in 27 schools and neighborhoods, raising awareness of Indian arts and culture and nurturing an appreciation for cultural diversity.

Dancers: Ayanna Kannan, Seema Barua, Sasha Salvi, Pallavi Salvi

Musicians: Rajib Karmakar, Ravindra Deo, Chirag Dixit

SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES SERVED

Santa Fe Library
 Red Oak Elementary
 Dayton Heights Elementary
 Oak Hills Elementary
 Santa Susana High School
 Viewpoint Upper Calabasas
 Curtis School
 Dayton Heights Elementary
 St James Episcopal School
 Grape Street Elementary
 Lanark Park

City of El Segundo
 St. Timothy Catholic School
 Lake Balboa College
 Preparatory Magnet
 Van Deene Elementary
 James Foster Elementary
 Pan Asian Pacific Arts
 Festival
 Hollywood Elementary
 School
 Thousand Oaks Library

Mar Vista Elementary
 Balboa Elementary School
 107th Street Elementary
 Ladera Stars Academy
 Beethoven Elementary
 School
 Vena Ave Elementary
 Linwood Howe Elementary
 Caroldale Learning Academy

LEELA YOUTH DANCE COMPANY

Activating the Voices of Young Indian-American Women
Artistic Direction: Rukhmani Mehta





YOUNG VOICES, POWERFUL FOOTSTEPS

The Leela Youth Dance Company (LYDC), champions excellence in kathak dance while empowering young Indian-American women to become cultural ambassadors and leaders within their own communities and beyond. In 2023, the company boasted 16 members and performed for more than 5,000 audience members across the country.

MEMBERS

Anirra Kutty
Avni Madhu
Poorvi Sangli
Tvisha Soni
Mahika Goswamy
Ananya Bhardwaj
Maya Bhatia
Anaya Doshi

Anushka Bettigiri
Pragya Agarwal
Varnika Bhat
Maanvi Dhadoti
Shriya Patel
Prisha Patel
Anvi Joshi
Praajnya Gowder

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Philadelphia Youth Dance Festival at Mandel Theater, March 26th, 2023
Holi: A Music and Dance Celebration, Lanark Park, April 22nd, 2023
The Museum of the San Fernando Valley, May 10th, 2023
LAIMA retreat, August 2023
Diwali Celebration, Rossmoor Event Center, November 11th, 2023
Diwali Celebration, Thousand Oaks Library, November 14th, 2023



LEELA FOUNDATION

Securing a future for India's artistic and cultural heritage

A MILLION REASONS TO DANCE

In 2023, the Leela Foundation reached its first major milestone, having raised \$1 million for its endowment. The endowment represents a significant achievement and a crucial beginning—an indication that our community is ready to invest in the preservation and advancement of India's artistic heritage. The endowment is an important step toward securing the long-term sustainability of Leela's work. We are deeply grateful to our community of patrons and donors for their generosity and support in making this historic achievement possible.

IMPACT

536

donors

\$1M

raised

\$51K

awarded to artists

13

artists supported





ARTISTS SUPPORTED

Since 2020, Leela has been able to disburse \$51,000 to 13 esteemed Indian classical musicians and dancers in California and beyond. We are honored to have been able to support these artists and tradition bearers through artists awards, fees and honoraria for a range of performances and educational activities and creative residencies.

Jayanta Banerjee
Joanna De Souza
Ravindra Deo
Chirag Dixit
Jay Gandhi
Gretchen Hayden
Rajib Karmarkar

Ben Kunin
Satyaprakash Mishra
Salar Nader
Debashish Sarkar
Madhuri Devi Singha
Shivam Sudame

ENDOWMENT PERFORMANCE

Portfolio Snapshot

(Jan. 1, 2023 - Dec. 31, 2023)

	Jan. 1, 2023	Dec. 31, 2023
Invested Funds	\$779,616.69	\$1,171,444.76
Cash	\$91,666.00	\$3,767.00

Endowment Payout*

\$19.6K

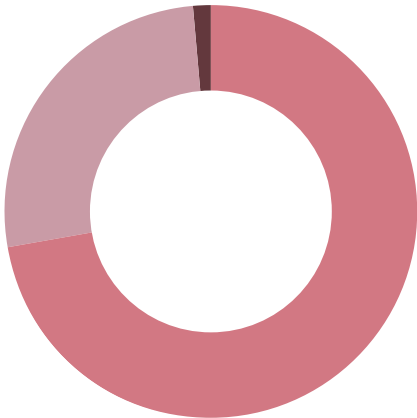
Annualized Rate of Return

27.03%

Asset Allocation

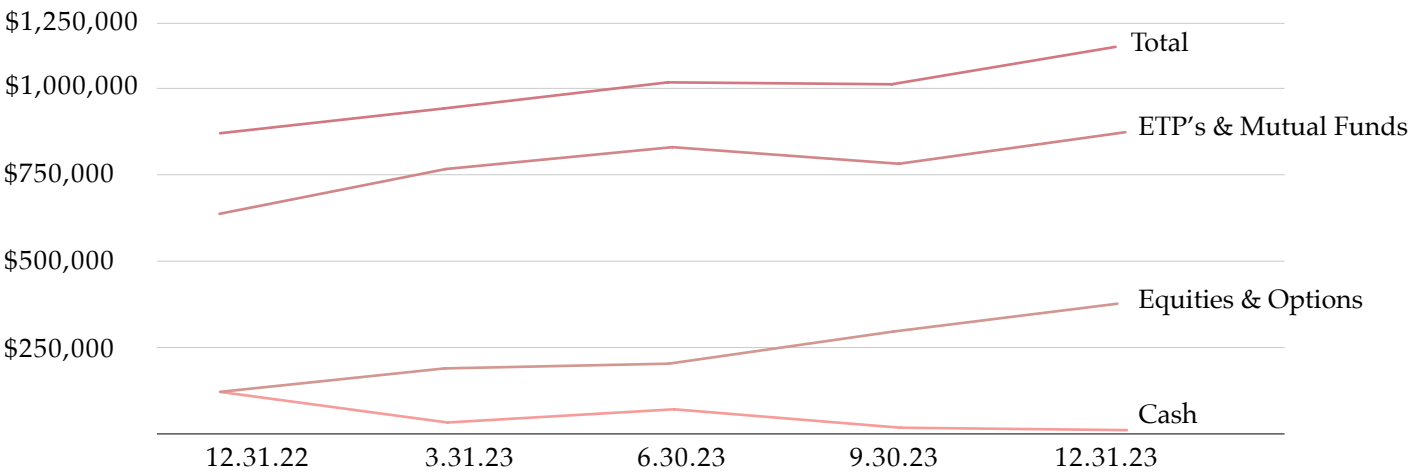
(as of December 31, 2023)

- ETP's & Mutual Funds - 72.9%
- Equities & Options - 26.7%
- Cash - 0.3%



Portfolio Performance

(Jan. 1, 2023 - Dec. 31, 2023)



***The Leela Endowment's payout is based on an annual spending rate of 4%. Endowment funds support artist salaries, fees, residencies, and fellowships.*

PATRONAGE MATTERS



*"I think the more people
can engage with art forms
like this... there's more
connectedness and more
joy. It's important to
support that."*

– Shruti Mahajan
Deorah

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Unlike many Western arts organizations that benefit from robust funding and infrastructure, Indian arts organizations are often under-resourced and lack long-term financial security. Most operate on a hand-to-mouth basis, with limited patron investment, making it nearly impossible to plan for strategic growth or professionalize their operations. In order to raise the profile and value of Indian art and culture on the world stage, we must invest in institutions that are preserving and advancing these traditions. Without this type of long-term financial support, these rich art forms risk being marginalized or lost all together.



	San Francisco Symphony \$301,999,893
	Los Angeles Philharmonic \$280,528,058
	New York City Ballet \$220,770,500
	San Francisco Ballet \$127,218,080
	Alvin Ailey \$66,755,374
	Los Angeles Opera \$22,914,919
	The Leela Endowment \$1,000,000

**Numbers are taken from 2017 and 2018 publicly available data.*

A MILESTONE REACHED, A LEGACY TO BUILD

Reaching the \$1 million mark is a significant milestone—it's the foundation that will pave the way for the long-term sustainability of Indian classical arts. However, \$1 million provides only \$40,000 in annual support—an amount that doesn't even cover the salary of a full-time staff member. While the endowment has allowed us to begin supporting artists and tradition bearers, our impact and scale remains limited. Our vision goes much further. To make significant, field-wide impact and ensure the advancement and global recognition of India's artistic traditions, we aim to grow the endowment to \$5 million. With your support, we can turn this vision into a reality.



DONORS AND PATRONS

Patron's Circle, Gold

Shruti Mahajan and Kashyap
Deorah
Tarsadia Foundation

Founder's Circle (\$50,000+)

Anonymous
Shaila and Dinesh Mehta
Bina and Yogesh Nivas
Dr. Irma and Dr. Ushakant
Thakkar

Leaders (\$25,000+)

Gita and Subramaniam
Janakiraman
Prakash Janakiraman and Rachna
Nivas
Ann and Leslie Petersen
Leah and Gary Schoolnik
Vinita and Amar Singh

Advocates (\$10,000+)

Uma and Avadhesh Agarwal
Anonymous
Neelima and Milind Bhat
Pratima and Navin Doshi
Poonam and Prabhu Goel
Minoo Gupta and Vikram Joshi
Seema Kantak and Shreeraj
Karulkar
Meera and Jasvant Modi
Preetha and Hari Nair
Jyotsna and Sharad Patel
Indira and Yalamanchilli Rao
Seibi Lee and Joel Schoolnik
Aruna and Dinker Shah
Nalini and Uka Solanki

Ambassadors (\$5,000+)

Shobhana Gandhi Chokhawala
The DasGupta Family
Gita and Mukesh Desai
Bindu and Kumar Koneru
Meena and Jitu Mehta
Geeta Mehta
Chandrika and Sumant Patel
Narmada and Chunilal Patel

Sarah Morelli and Stephen
Scaringe
Robyn Friend and Neil Seigel
Kinna and Nitin Shah
Evanthia Spanos
Kusum and Harkishan Vasa
Rita Singhal and Swamy
Venuturupalli

Supporters (\$1000+)

Megha Agrawal
Vikram Gore and Vidula Bapat
Santanu and Susan Barua
Lauri Bortz
Robert and Shital Chatwani
Anonymous
Chhandam Youth Dance Company
Neil and Minal Doshi
Rajani Dinavahi and Abizer
Gaslightwala
Ronda Berkeley and Mel Green
Salman Zaheer and Inji Z. Islam
Meenakshi Kalpathy
Anurag Wadehra and Reena
Kapoor
R. and Bala Krishnamurthy
Deepesh Rai and Santrupti Margad
Babu and Madhu Mehta
Seema Mehta
Mitali and Hitesh Mehta
Shobha and Nitin Mehta
Dayton and Naheed Misfeldt
Shilpa Murthy
Vasundhara and Pramod Nirmal
Kanan and Sanjay Panchal
Babita Panwala
Mallika Parulekar
Amit and Seema Patel
Saroj and Gordhan Patel
Jyoti and Jagdish Patel
Pravin Patel
Pallavi Phene
Ruchi Mathur and Mark Pimentel
Valarie Kaur and Sharat Raju
Suresh and Marna Ramnath
Monika Ramnath
Shelly Mahendra and Lakshman
Rao
Manoj Rawat
Pallavi Salvi

Chirag Shah
Chandrika and Manu Shah
Salimah and Shaheed Shamji
Kunal and Hetal Sharma
Ashley Gold and SeanJay Sharma
Harpreet and Raminder Singh
Khalil and Sonali Somani
Usha and Sudesh Sood
Chandana Srinivas
Poonam Narkar and Ram
Subramanian
Keerthy Sunder
Sonal and Govind Vagashia

Friends (\$100+)

Akhtar Abbas
Sanjay Almeida
Gargi Amin
Suresh Babu
Doli Bambhania
Shobha and Sudhir Banker
Alex Le and Seema Barua
Monica Batra
Arvind Bhambri
Bhanu
Reena Bhatia
Kumar Bhatia
Swati and Vijay Bhatt
Sunita and Mahesh Bhuta
Jeffrey Bramble
Niccolo Castania
Shaila and Vijay Chauhan
Madhu and Vijay Chheda
Priyanka Chheda
Hima Chintalapati
Suma Chunduru
Edward Clark
Debra Cronin
Gar Culbert and Anna Cross
Samuel Culbert
Oscar D
Marzieh Daneshwar
Nilima Dave
Dhaval and Ami Dave
Khushali Dave
Preeti and Nalin Desai
Heena and Indravadan Desai
Nirmit Desai
Mrinal Deshmukh
Dinesh Dhawan
Prashanthi Docca

DONORS AND PATRONS

Reena Esmail
Rashid Razavi and Mandy Fazeli
Jyotsna Fotedar
Aniruddha Gadgil
Vinata Gangolli
Oleg Gorelik
Samta Gupta
Deepa Gupta
Nootan and Arvind Halani
Puneet Hariharan
Kusum Hegde
Edythe Heus
Suresh Iyer
Vahinidevi Jaganath
Achal Mehta and Bindiya Jain
Divya Jain
Neha Jain
Yogita and Ishwar Jasuja
Thomas and Carrie Jennings
Candace Jennings
Rehana Jiwani
Bandita Joarder
Piyush Jogani
Neelesh Soman and Priyanka Joshi
Sandip Panigrahi and Ritu Joshi
Zini Joshi
Priya Joshi
Sangeeta Jukar
Rajiv K Jain
Manish Kalathil
Kiran and Seema Kamat
Anjana and Vikram Kamdar
Kumud and Suren Kapadia
Tarala and Pravin Kapadia
Karin Karpin Kothari
Sumedha Khanna
Neha Kher
Manpreet Komal
Mona and Rupesh Kotecha
Abhijit Kulkarni
Preeti Kumar
Sonali Lakhani
Kala Lansberg
Don and Michele Linn
Kari Lopez
Andy Luu
Mallika Madakasira
Satyajit Mahale
Kanaiya and Bharti Mahendra
Sabrina Mamun
Manas

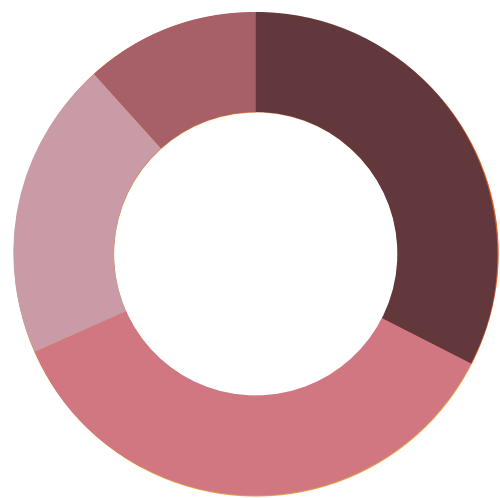
Roopa Maniar
Vandana and Kaushik Master
Gaurav and Prerna Mathur
Hem and Maya Mathur
Sathiyani Kutty and Lavina Mehta
Geeta and Nishat Mehta
Nila and Arvind Mehta
Rama and Jayant Mehta
Rukhmani Mehta
Mahesh Mehta
Meeta Mehta
Purnima Mehta-Taylor
Van Meyer
Nicholas Miles
Veena Mirpuri
Surekha and Hasmukh Modi
Timothy Moore
Lata and Maruti More
Janet Morton
Arun Bharath and Purnima
Mudnal
Ahana Mukherjee
Basabi Mukherjee
Linda Murray
Padmaja Murtinty
Nicholas Myers
Aishwarya Nagarajan
S Nagle
Sheila and Kishore Naik
Vineet Nair
Sameera Nandiyala
Kavitha Padmanabhan and
Murugu Navaneetha
Koji Oka
Santhosh and Shuba Panicker
Deepti Panuganti
Choudhary Patel
Deepa Patel
Raj and Mitula Patel
Sharda and Mahesh Patel
Hetali Patel
Sudhir Pendse
Pritam Pewekar
Praveena Pewekar
Pranav Popat
Purnima and Jyoti Prakash
Priya Prasad
Bijoy Purushothaman
Radha Radkar
Rajesh Raghunathan
Anisa Rahim

Shyam Ramanathan
Rekha and Ratan Rege
Alka Sabherwal
Manohar and Shoba Samat
Amrutha Sampath
Jairaj and Chhaya Samtani
Mayuresh Saoji
Vandana and Bhanu Sardesai
Sonali and Shishir Saxena
Cheryl Schuhmann
Sujoy Sen
Nirmal and Tara Sethia
Seema Shah and Pankaj Shah
Anang Chokshi and Tejal Shah
Chokshi
Seema Shah
Surabhi and Ajeet Shah
Aalap Shah
Suraj Shantakumar
Ashvin and Meenaxi Sheth
Anis Sheth
Shravida Shetty
Ravi Mahalingam and Leepi
Shimkhada
Sandra Shimoda
Aruna and Manohar Shinde
Medha and Parikshit Shinde
Shipra Shukla
Vikram Sikand
Bhavya Singh
Varinder Singh
Pratibha Singhal Kumar
Anjana Sivakumar
Salma and Shabir Somani
Arathi Srinivas
John Swieringa
Cheryl Templeton
Brinda Thomas
Raghu and Durga Toppur
H.P. Trivedi
Umang and Vibha Vanjara
Surekha Vashi
Sakthivel Venkatesan
Tamanna Verma
Jean Von Berg
Sarah Wong
Rebecca Yeatman

OPERATING FINANCIALS

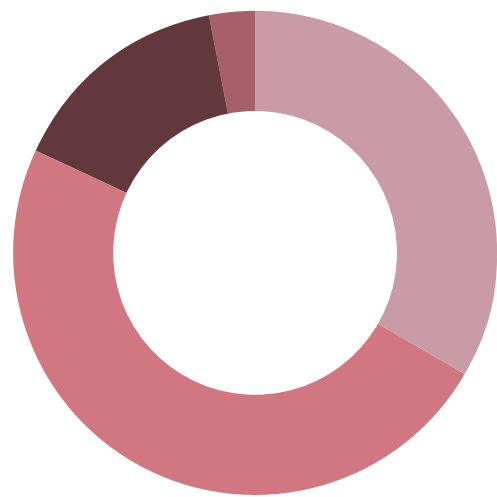
Expense by Program Area

- Performances & Artistic Development - 32.7%
- Training & Youth Education - 35.9%
- Administration - 19.9%
- Fundraising - 11.5%



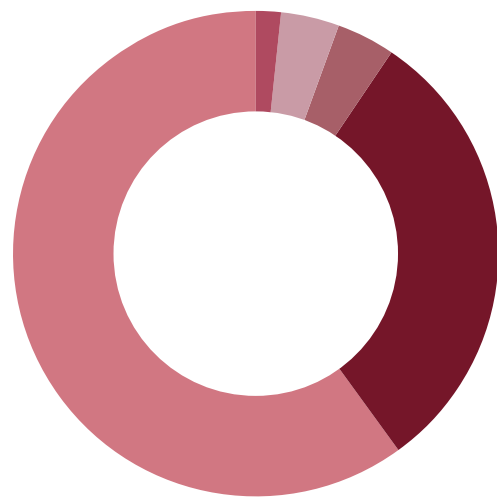
Income by Program Area

- Performances & Artistic Development - 33.6%
- Training & Youth Education - 48.4%
- Administration - 15.1%
- Fundraising - 2.9%



Income by Type

- Earned Income - 30.5%
- Endowment Distribution - 3.8%
- Individual Donations - 4.0%
- Corporate Support - 1.8%
- Foundation & Government Support - 60.0%



OUR TEAM

Board of Directors

Harkishan Vasa, Chair
Ronda Berkeley, Secretary
Dinesh Mehta, Treasurer
Nitish Shah
Swamy Venuturupalli
Anna Cross
Dinker Shah
Sarah Morelli
Bina Nivas
Evanthia Spanos
Minoo Gupta

Artistic Direction

Seibi Lee
Rachna Nivas
Rukhmani Mehta

Soloists & Faculty

Joanna Meinl
Sarah Morelli

Ensemble Dancers & Faculty

Sonali Toppur
Ahana Mukherjee
Carrie Jennings
Ria DasGupta

Apprentice Dancers & Faculty

Ayanna Kannan
Sasha Salvi
Seema Barua

Faculty

Poonam Narkar
Pallavi Salvi
Shilpi Nikhil
Katrina Yoshida
Neha Tummala

Resident Musicians

Jayanta Banerjee, Music
Composition & Sitar
Ben Kunin, Sarod
Satyaprakash Mishra,
Tabla & Pakhawaj

Bookings and Company Management

Carrie Jennings

Marketing

Shreya Mehta

Administration

Lavina Mehta

Investments

Saurin Munshaw

Funders & Sponsors

The Annenberg Foundation
Association of Performing Arts
Professionals
California Arts Council
Culver City Performing Arts
Dance Resource Center
Esper A. Petersen Foundation
Ford Theatre Foundation
Grants for the Arts
Los Angeles City Department
of Cultural Affairs
Los Angeles County
Department of Arts & Culture
MAP Fund
MidAtlantic Arts Foundation
National Endowment for the
Arts
New Music USA
San Francisco Arts Commission
Sarva Mangal Trust
Tarsadia Foundation
University of Denver
Walter & Elise Haas Fund
William & Flora Hewlett
Foundation
Zellerbach Family Foundation

Corporations

Adobe Inc.
Amgen
Aparigrah Foundation

Atlassian
Bank of America
Blue Shield of California
Blue Snap
Boeing
General Electric
Google
Intel
Live Ramp
Medtronic
Monali Jain Foundation
Palayam Foundation
PDG Consulting
Salesforce, Inc.
Satya Tax Financial Reporting
Inc.
The Progressive Insurance
Upaya
US Bank Foundation
VISA Inc
Wells Fargo

Photo Credits

Margo Moritz
Jay Hamilton
Catherine Heath
Nitish Adla
Robert Orsa
Monk Turner

