



Priyagītah (2004)

Liner Notes

Steve Gorn and Benjy Wertheimer

[www.benjymusic.com](http://www.benjymusic.com)

## **Tracks**

### **Rag Desh**

1. Part One (Alap) 8:35
2. Part Two (Gat in Rupak Tal) 4:50
3. Part Three (Gat in fast Etkal) 3:04

### **Rag Madhuvanti**

4. Part One (Gat in slow Etkal) 23:17
5. Part Two (Gat in fast Tintal) 9:25

### **Rag Bhairavi**

6. Part One (Alap) 3:19
7. Part Two (Gat in Rupak) 6:16

### **Priyagitah**

8. The Nightingale 11:41

## **Notes**

Although Steve Gorn and Benjy Wertheimer had not yet met, they'd been hearing about each other for nearly 20 years. Finally, in January of 2001, Krishna Das invited them both to Los Angeles to record on his CD, "Breath of the Heart." During breaks in the recording schedule, they instantly began to play together. Music without words... esraj and flute weaving the melodic contours of a raga... flute and tabla meeting in a spontaneous rhythmic dance. It was clearly the beginning of a deep and powerful musical relationship.

The bond and mutual respect grew as they toured the Northwest in 2002-03, and culminated with this recording of Indian ragas, along with an original piece for esraj and clarinet.

## **About the Ragas**

The musical form at the heart of traditional Indian classical music, the raga or (or "rag," in modern Hindi/Urdu), has its roots in the Sanskrit "ranj," which means "to color."

It is sometimes said, "that which colors the mind is the raga." A raga defies simple definition. More than a scale, mode, tune or melody, it is a combination of elements- such as the modal structure, including the ascending and descending movement; the

emphasis or avoidance of certain notes; the characteristic movements and motifs (the heart of the raga); the time of day or season; and the moods of the raga.

These improvisational pieces were recorded live in the studio. To honor the form, they were improvised within the specific musical structure of each raga.

#### Rag Desh:

Traditionally played at night, Rag Desh (which translates to “country”) is also known as a rainy season raga. The primary moods expressed are devotion, romance, and longing.

#### Rag Madhuvanti:

The word “madhu” means honey, and the sweetness of honey flows like a river through this raga. Rag Madhuvanti belongs to the group of late afternoon ragas, and was most likely created in the 1920s. The crimson colors of sunset and the coming evening give the raga an urgency and sense of longing. Unfolding slowly in “vilambit ektal” (a slow 12-beat cycle with each beat subdivided into four), this raga creates a mood that is settling, yet filled with expectation. It concludes with a faster section in teental (16 beats).

#### Rag Bhairavi:

Named in honor of the Goddess Bhairavi, this beloved raga embodies her qualities of devotion and compassion. The consort of Bhairav, (also portrayed as the God Shiva), Rag Bhairavi expresses feelings of romance and longing. Traditionally a morning raga, it can also be played any time of day or night. It's often the final raga in an Indian classical concert.

#### Priyagitah/The Nightingale:

The Sanskrit name for nightingale, “Priya” means “beloved” and “gita” is usually translated as “song.” The two words together can mean both “one who sings to the Beloved” and “song of the Beloved.” This dialog between the clarinet and the esraj represents the musical flight of yearning for the One-the connection of the musician and the music.