



The Wizard of Rhythm: Remembering Ustad Zakir Hussain

Description

“My father said, don’t worry about being a great master or guru, just try to be a great student. As long as you are a great student, the well of knowledge will not dry up.”

Ustad Zakir Hussain

On December 15, 2024, the world bid farewell to a true maestro, as Ustad Zakir Hussain passed away at a hospital in San Francisco, succumbing to complications from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Born as the eldest son of the renowned tabla virtuoso Ustad Alla Rakha, Zakir Hussain’s journey was nothing short of extraordinary. From the tender age of 12, his fingers danced across the tabla with unmatched precision and grace, captivating audiences worldwide. It was as though the drumhead itself came alive under his touch, producing rhythms that transcended borders and spoke to the soul. His artistry not only carried forward his father’s legacy but also redefined the role of the tabla in contemporary music.

His father had a great influence on Ustad Hussain, serving as an inspiration and also as a *“guru”* to him in the world of music. He collaborated with numerous artists of different genres, including George Harrison, John McLaughlin and Yo-Yo Ma. He co-founded the fusion Shakti band in 1973, which combined Indian classical music with jazz elements. Hussain won five grammy awards and was honoured with Sangeet Natak Academy Award, Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan, by the Indian government. He was awarded by the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship of the US government.



Zakir Hussain Passes away at 73

Ustad Zakir Hussain's efforts in popularising music is notable. His efforts in the Global Drum Project album of Mickey Hart, brought light to instruments like Dholak and Duggi to the common Indian people. The New York Times quoted his elegance in the words: *"blur of his fingers rival the beat of a humming bird's wings."* He composed soundtracks for several movies and even performed and acted as a music advisor in the notable film, Vanaprastham. Hussain was also among the founding members of Bill Laswell's world music supergroup Tabla beat Science.

English guitarist John McLaughlin described him as *"the king, in whose hands, rhythm became magic"*. Although the legend has passed away, his creations continue to resonate in the hearts of music lovers as magic, transcending time. As the world mourns his loss, it also celebrates the luminous life of an enlightened learner whose music will echo through time.

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