

THE ALAYA PROJECT

Rohan Krishnamurthy
Prasant Radhakrishnan
Colin Hogan

Oakland, CA



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BIO

The Alaya Project is the essential bridge between the intricate Carnatic style of Indian classical music and contemporary jazz and funk. Born in the cultural bastion of Oakland, California, The Alaya Project explores new textures and perspectives built over two decades of friendship, dialogue, and musical immersion across genres and continents. The driving hybrid kit grooves of Indian percussionist and drummer, Rohan Krishnamurthy, the soulful Ragas and melodies of Prasant Radhakrishnan on saxophone, and the harmonic bedrock of Colin Hogan embodies the permanence of a changing soundscape.

Acclaimed a “musical ambassador” and “pride of India” by The Times of India, Indian-American percussionist and educator **Rohan Krishnamurthy** imagines new musical intersections to bridge diverse cultures and communities. Rohan’s cross-genre artistry draws from his formal study of south Indian classical Carnatic music, at once propagating the ancient tradition and expanding it across global genres.

Having received initial training on the mridangam with Damodaran Srinivasan in his hometown of Kalamazoo, Michigan, he continued advanced training from legendary maestro Guruvayur Dorai in Chennai, India for over a decade. Rohan’s prolific artistry also explores the intersections of Indian percussion and contemporary jazz and funk drum set. He studied drum set with Alan Hall at the California Jazz Conservatory. His new hybrid kit bridges drum set and Indian percussion, and stick and hand drumming more broadly.

Rohan has performed internationally since the age of nine as a distinguished soloist and collaborator in diverse music and dance ensembles. Rohan has had the honor of sharing the stage with leading artists of Indian classical music, including M. Balamuralikrishna, T.N. Krishnan, N. Ramani, Chitravina N. Ravikiran, T. M. Krishna, and Ranjani and Gayatri. He has spearheaded numerous cross-genre collaborations with orchestras, jazz ensembles, and global musicians. He premiered Rohan, a concerto for mridangam and percussion ensemble written for him by Payton Macdonald, at The Juilliard School in New York City and San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Since 2017, he has toured “Written in Water” with the Ragamala Dance Company and jazz trumpeter/Iraqi vocalist and santur artist Amir ElSaffar, including performances at the Kennedy Center, Harris Theater, and NYU Abu Dhabi.

His latest work includes The Alaya Project, an Indo-jazz-funk experiment with world jazz luminaries Prasant Radhakrishnan (saxophone) and Colin Hogan (keyboard/accordion). Built over two decades of friendship, dialogue, and musical immersion across genres and continents, The Alaya Project features driving hybrid kit grooves, soulful Ragas and melodies, and a jazz-infused harmonic bedrock embodying the permanence of a changing soundscape.

A celebrated educator, Rohan received a Ph.D. in musicology from the Eastman School of Music as a Provost’s Fellow. He has presented rhythm institutes, clinics, workshops, master classes, and academic courses at renowned institutions, including Eastman, Harvard, Berklee College of Music, A.R. Rehman’s K.M. Conservatory of Music (India), National Institute of Design (India), Munich Conservatory (Germany), Kyoto University, Society for Ethnomusicology, and Percussive Arts Society International Convention. He directs the award-winning RohanRhythm Percussion Studio, which has attracted dozens of students of all ages from around the globe.

Rohan is the recipient of prestigious international awards and grants from the San Francisco Arts Commission, Zellerbach Family Foundation, and Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA). Rohan recently received grants from ACTA and the Ali Akbar College of Music to undertake a cross-genre endeavor with tabla maestro Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri to study extended techniques on tabla, and adapt Carnatic and Hindustani rhythmic repertoire across mridangam and tabla. An innovator, Rohan designed and patented a new drumhead tuning system that is now available worldwide.

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Prasant Radhakrishnan is a versatile saxophonist steeped in both South Indian Classical (Carnatic) and jazz disciplines. The unique vocal texture of his sound on saxophone, noted for its expressive complexity and rhythmic ingenuity, reflects Prasant's continued study of tradition, constant innovation, and vast concert experience over the past fifteen years.

The foremost disciple of Carnatic saxophone pioneer, "Padmashri" Dr. Kadri Gopalnath, Prasant began developing his music over the course of nearly a decade of intensive musical training under his guru, much of which took place in the traditional gurukulam format of complete immersion. Waking at 5am each morning in his teacher's home and practicing through the day under his guidance, Radhakrishnan was initiated into the world of Carnatic music in a format seldom available today in India, much less in his native Arizona. The rigor of this training, followed by the privilege of accompanying his teacher on stage in hundreds of concerts in subsequent years, fostered a deep understanding of Carnatic music.

In his solo Carnatic endeavors during those years, he has had the privilege of performing with luminaries and stars of the younger generation. At age 17, Prasant released his first album, *Swara Sudha* (2000), featuring some of the most respected names in Carnatic music. Back home, in parallel with his meteoric development as Carnatic artist, Radhakrishnan immersed himself in American jazz, playing in the all-star bands in high school and going on to study jazz at the University of Southern California (2000-2004). It was in this intense musical environment that Radhakrishnan first began to hear a new sound, one that naturally combines Carnatic and jazz music.

Prasant's musical trajectory reveals his deep musical curiosity and constant evolution within the Carnatic tradition. After he completed his Bachelor's Degree at University of Southern California in 2004, Prasant received the prestigious American Indian of Indian Studies Senior Performing Arts fellowship which funded a year of intense music study, research and performance in Chennai, India culminating in the creation of his second critically acclaimed album, *Duality* (2005). This recording displayed the subtle technical innovations he developed on the saxophone to render Carnatic music. Prasant has since released two additional Carnatic albums, *East Facing* (2007), which continued his effort of vocalizing the saxophone and *Kiravani: A Live Experience* (2010) which is a 2-CD live recording featuring an extensive one hour piece in the raga Kiravani.

After Prasant's move to the Bay Area in 2005, he founded VidyA. VidyA has emerged with a soulful, penetrating sound that pushes the labels of "fusion" or "world music" by merging the virtuosity of jazz with the melodic and rhythmic nuance of Carnatic music. In VidyA's music, Prasant's multi-layered compositions infuse the classic jazz sounds of bass, drums, and saxophone with unusual melodic richness. Named among the top jazz acts by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, VidyA's seamless hybridity forges new ground in the American jazz scene and serves as a liaison between the worlds of jazz and Indian classical music. It is a style that is heralded as "...madly percussive and sparkling with... a saxophone that switches idioms from second to second, and a warm, quickly picked string bass. The result combines jazz's sweet dreaminess with the Indian form's insistent rhythmic and tonal changes..." (*San Francisco Weekly*). *VidyA* (2008) is the debut album of his critically acclaimed Carnatic-Jazz trio.

Since then, Radhakrishnan has established himself as an exciting Bay Area artist known for blurring musical boundaries while steeped in traditional roots. His six year relationship with San Francisco art space, Red Poppy Art House, has resulted in two artist residencies in 2007 and 2010 and groundbreaking musical collaborations such as *Nefasha Ayer: The Space of In Between* (with Ethiopian vocalist Meklit Hadero, guitarist and painter Todd Brown, jazz artists Marcus Shelby, Howard Wiley and poet Michael Warr among others) and *Teobi's Dream* (a multi disciplinary project with Todd Brown at the de Young Museum).

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In 2010, Radhakrishnan was awarded a Zellerbach grant for the creation of new compositions performed by VidyA in 2011 and will be included in VidyA's anticipated second album, already recorded. He has also collaborated with a variety of Bay Area artists in various fields, such as Indian classical dance artists Natya, Charlotte Moraga and Rina Mehta. In a 2010 artist residency with Oakland Asian Cultural Center (OACC) Radhakrishnan and Mehta created original work combining Kathak dance with Carnatic, Hindustani and jazz musical traditions culminating in a grand collaborative performance there in May 2010. He has since received grants from National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Sparkplug Foundation and SF Friends of Chamber Music for his original work.

Prasant's exceptional approach to his music and instrument has been witnessed in a diverse range of venues and locations around the world: from concert halls in India and jazz venues in Japan, to concerts, cultural festivals, and lecture demonstrations all over North America. Prasant has also lectured in several universities in the U.S., including U.C. Berkeley, UNC Chapel Hill, University of Chicago, and Wellesley among others. "Prasant is redefining the way to play saxophone, and the way for us to listen to it." (San Francisco Chronicle).

Colin Hogan was born in San Francisco, CA. He was a member of the world-renowned Berkeley High School Jazz Ensemble while also studying with the Jazzschool's founder, Susan Muscarella. He then attended Cal State East Bay (Hayward) where he earned a BA in piano performance.

Colin has performed on five continents and has performed with many legendary jazz musicians including James Moody, Peter Erskine, Bob Brookmeyer, Roy Ayers, and Maria Schneider. In 2004 he performed with electric bass revolutionary Larry Graham of Sly and the Family Stone at the California Music Awards. Colin is currently involved in many projects including The Tommy Igoe Groove Conspiracy, Dynamic, The Jazz Mafia, Trio Zincalo and The Hogan Brothers with brothers Steve and Julian.

He has worked as a music educator at SFJAZZ, Longfellow Middle School, and The Community School of the East Bay, and is currently an instructor at Cal State East Bay and the California Jazz Conservatory. He lives in Oakland, CA.

***"A trio combining classical Carnatic ragas, contemporary jazz and funk,
The Alaya Project is forging a beautiful new sound."***

- Andrew Gilbert, Berkeleyside

RESIDENCE

2020 Ensemble in Residence at the Center for New Music, San Francisco

COMMISSIONS

Received commissions from the San Francisco Arts Commission to compose new works and Zellerbach Family Foundation to record their upcoming debut album.



THE ALAYA PROJECT

RELEASES

-Sing a song

LISTEN

-Changing 5s

LISTEN

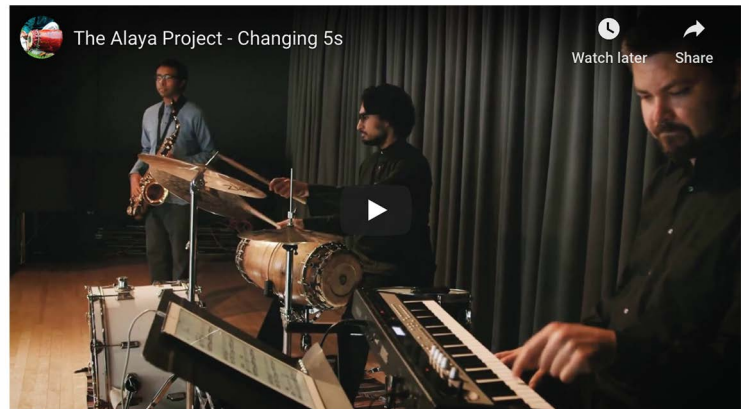
-Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite

LISTEN

-Sobhillu Live

LISTEN

VIDEOS *Click to watch*



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"When our ancestors speak of that delicate balance between tradition and innovation, they are hearing The Alaya Project, a sonic sanctum of crystalized soul!"

- Hafez Modirzadeh, Professor of Creative/World Music at San Francisco State University

PRESS PHOTOS rohanrhythm.com/thealayaproject



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"InterMusic SF has presented The Alaya Project at our annual SF Music Day festival, and as part of the Morrison Chamber Music Series at San Francisco State University. Led by visionary Indian percussionist, drummer, and composer Rohan Krishnamurthy, The Alaya Project presents music that is both sophisticated and accessible, and the performers consistently engage audiences with their collective virtuosity and variety of stylistic approaches. Highly recommended!"

-Cory Combs, InterMusic SF

TOURING ITINERARY

The Alaya Project has performed at major jazz, world, and classical music festivals in the Bay Area, including San Jose Jazz Summer Fest, San Francisco State University Morrison Concert Series, San Francisco Music Day, Way Out West, and Jazz in the Neighborhood. 2020 performances pending at SF Jazz, Center for New Music, and The Park Festival (India tour). Named Ensemble in Residence at the Center for New Music in 2020. Performances are broadly appealing and accessible, attracted audiences of all ages and backgrounds (~150 attendees per show), and brought new audiences to all the venues they have performed at. Awarded several commissions and grants, including San Francisco Arts Commission and Center for New Music.

2020

- October: Center for New Music, San Francisco
- February: San Francisco State University Morrison Concert Series
- January: Ensemble in Residency, Center for New Music, San Francisco, CA
- Summer/Fall pending - SF Jazz, Henderson Lab, San Francisco, CA
- Fall/Winter pending - The Park Festival, multi-city India tour (Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata)

2019

- September: San Francisco Music Day, War Memorial Opera House
- August: San Jose Summer Jazz Fest, Cafe Stritch, San Jose, CA
- July: Way Out West Series, California Jazz Conservatory, Berkeley, CA
- February: Jazz in the Neighborhood - California Jazz Conservatory, Berkeley, CA

2018

- December: KPFA Interview and Radio Broadcast, Berkeley, CA

2017

- June: Undercover Presents - University of California Theater, Berkeley, CA
- April: San Francisco Arts Commission Concert - Community Music Center, San Francisco, CA