

## Sitar legend Ravi Shankar dies aged 92

13<sup>th</sup> December, 2012



The world's greatest ever sitar player Ravi Shankar has died in a hospital in the USA, aged 92. The legendary maestro was hospitalized last week to have an

operation, but never fully recovered. His wife Sukanya and daughter Anoushka, also an accomplished sitarist, were by his side when he passed away. They issued a statement to say: "Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of the surgeons and doctors taking care of him, his body was not able to withstand the strain of the surgery." They added: "Although it is a time for sorrow and sadness, it is also a time for all of us to give thanks and to be grateful that we were able to have him as a part of our lives. He will live forever in our hearts and in his music."

Ravi Shankar was born Robindro Shaunkor Chowdhury on 7 April 1920 in Varanasi on the banks of the River Ganges. He started learning the sitar when he was 26. Sixteen years later he was touring Europe and the USA helping to increase the popularity of Indian classical music. His major break came when he taught George Harrison of The Beatles to play the sitar. He went on to have a huge influence on Western popular music and an international superstar. He said in an interview in 2011: "Everywhere I went, I was recognised. I didn't like that at all." Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described him as a "national treasure and global ambassador of India's cultural heritage".

Sources: BBC News / RollingStone.com

### Writing

*Western pop and rock music is not the best in the world.* Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*greatest / sitar / legendary / maestro / accomplished / surgeons / sorrow / grateful / River Ganges / popularity / Indian classical music / influence / superstar / ambassador*

### True / False

- Ravi Shankar has been in hospital for the past month. T / F
- He died alone in his sleep. T / F
- His wife and daughter issued a statement to the press. T / F
- His wife said it is not a time for sorrow and sadness. T / F
- Ravi Shankar was not the name he was given at birth. T / F
- Shankar started playing the sitar when he was 6 years old. T / F
- Shankar taught a member of the rock group The Beatles to play sitar. T / F
- Shankar said he didn't like people knowing who he was. T / F

### Synonym Match

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. legendary    | a. expert         |
| 2. maestro      | b. representative |
| 3. accomplished | c. survive        |
| 4. despite      | d. impact         |
| 5. withstand    | e. renowned       |
| 6. break        | f. one of a kind  |
| 7. influence    | g. virtuoso       |
| 8. treasure     | h. tradition      |
| 9. ambassador   | i. regardless of  |
| 10. heritage    | j. opportunity    |

### Discussion – Student A

- Do you think it's amazing he became the world's best when he only started learning the sitar when he was 26?
- How has Indian classical music influenced world music?
- Would you like to be famous and recognized everywhere you go?
- What do you think it means to his family for India's prime minister to call him a "national treasure"?
- Will you now go and find or buy Ravi Shankar's music?
- Do you know enough about world music?
- What should the music world do to celebrate Shankar's life and music?
- What questions would you like to ask a Ravi Shankar expert?

## Phrase Match

- |                                 |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. The legendary maestro was    | a. the River Ganges       |
| 2. an accomplished              | b. influence on           |
| 3. his body was not able to     | c. sorrow and sadness     |
| 4. it is a time for             | d. as a national treasure |
| 5. He will live forever         | e. sitarist               |
| 6. on the banks of              | f. hospitalized last week |
| 7. helping to increase          | g. withstand the strain   |
| 8. have a huge                  | h. heritage               |
| 9. Manmohan Singh described him | i. the popularity         |
| 10. India's cultural            | j. in our hearts          |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you know about Ravi Shankar?
- What would you like to know about him?
- What do you know about the sitar?
- What do you think it's like to be the greatest musician playing an instrument?
- What do you think of sitar music?
- What instrument would you like to be a maestro at? Why?
- What kind of musicians continue to be top stars at the age of 90?
- What do you think other musicians will say about him?

## Spelling

- The legendary meoatsr
- never fully ecdeerrvo
- also an icaplomsdehc sitarist
- the nsugseor and doctors
- ihtdswnta the strain of the surgery
- increase the aiolptpyur of Indian classical music
- have a huge enuelicfn
- Everywhere I went, I was isdrngoeece
- global adsobrsmaa
- India's cultural ghiraete

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. g	3. a	4. i	5. c
6. j	7. d	8. f	9. b	10. h

## Role Play

**Sitar player** - You believe Indian classical music should be more popular. Tell the others three reasons why. Ravi Shankar was the greatest musician ever. He still gave concerts in his 90s. Western rock stars wanted to learn from him. Western music is full of silly songs by people who can't sing or play an instrument.

**Rock guitarist** - You believe rock music is a great gift to the world. Tell the others three reasons why. You think Indian classical music is OK but if it was great, why isn't it popular worldwide. Rock music gets to the heart and makes you want to dance. Rock guitarists and drummers rock!

**Concert pianist** - You believe the classical music of Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, etc. is the best music in history. Tell the others three reasons why. Rock music is ridiculous. They are not musicians – they did not attend music school. They have no talent. They cannot sing like opera singers. All classical musicians are geniuses.

**Drummer** - You hate all rock, classical, folk, jazz...music. Tell the others three reasons why. The only true music is drumming. It's the original music. It comes from the heart. It's the soul of rhythm. Just drums. All other music is noise. All other music has drums but they are not used well.

## Speaking – World Music

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Arabic music
- Flamenco
- Hawaiian music
- Indian classical music
- Caribbean calypso
- Australian didgeridoo
- Peruvian panpipes
- Scottish bagpipe music

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.