

# ON Stage

VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 5

## L. Subramaniam Zakir Hussain

At CITI-NCPA Aadi Anant



**PRAVAHA**  
CELEBRATING NEW  
CHOREOGRAPHY

**DAVID HOCKNEY**  
INDEFATIGABLE IN  
HIS EIGHTH DECADE

**NCPA Chairman**  
Khushroo N. Suntook

**Executive Director & Council Member**  
Deepak Bajaj

**Editorial Director**  
Radhakrishnan Nair

**Editor-in-Chief**  
Oishani Mitra

**Consulting Editor**  
Ekta Mohta

**Senior Sub-editor**  
Cynthia Lewis

**Editorial Co-ordinator**  
Hilda Darukhanawalla

**Art Director**  
Amit Naik

**Deputy Art Directors**  
Hemali Limbachiya  
Tanvi Shah

**Graphic Designer**  
Vidhi Doshi

**Advertising**  
Anita Maria Pancras  
([advertising@ncpamumbai.com](mailto:advertising@ncpamumbai.com); 66223820)  
Tulsi Bavishi  
([tulsi@mansworldindia.com](mailto:tulsi@mansworldindia.com); 9833116584)

**Senior Digital Manager**  
Jayesh V. Salvi

Published by Deepak Bajaj for The National  
Centre for the Performing Arts, NCPA Marg,  
Nariman Point, Mumbai – 400021

**Produced by**  
**MW**

**Editorial Office**  
4th Floor, Todi Building,  
Mathuradas Mills Compound,  
Senapati Bapat Marg,  
Lower Parel,  
Mumbai - 400013

**Printer**  
Spenta Multimedia, Peninsula Spenta,  
Mathuradas Mill Compound,  
N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel,  
Mumbai – 400013

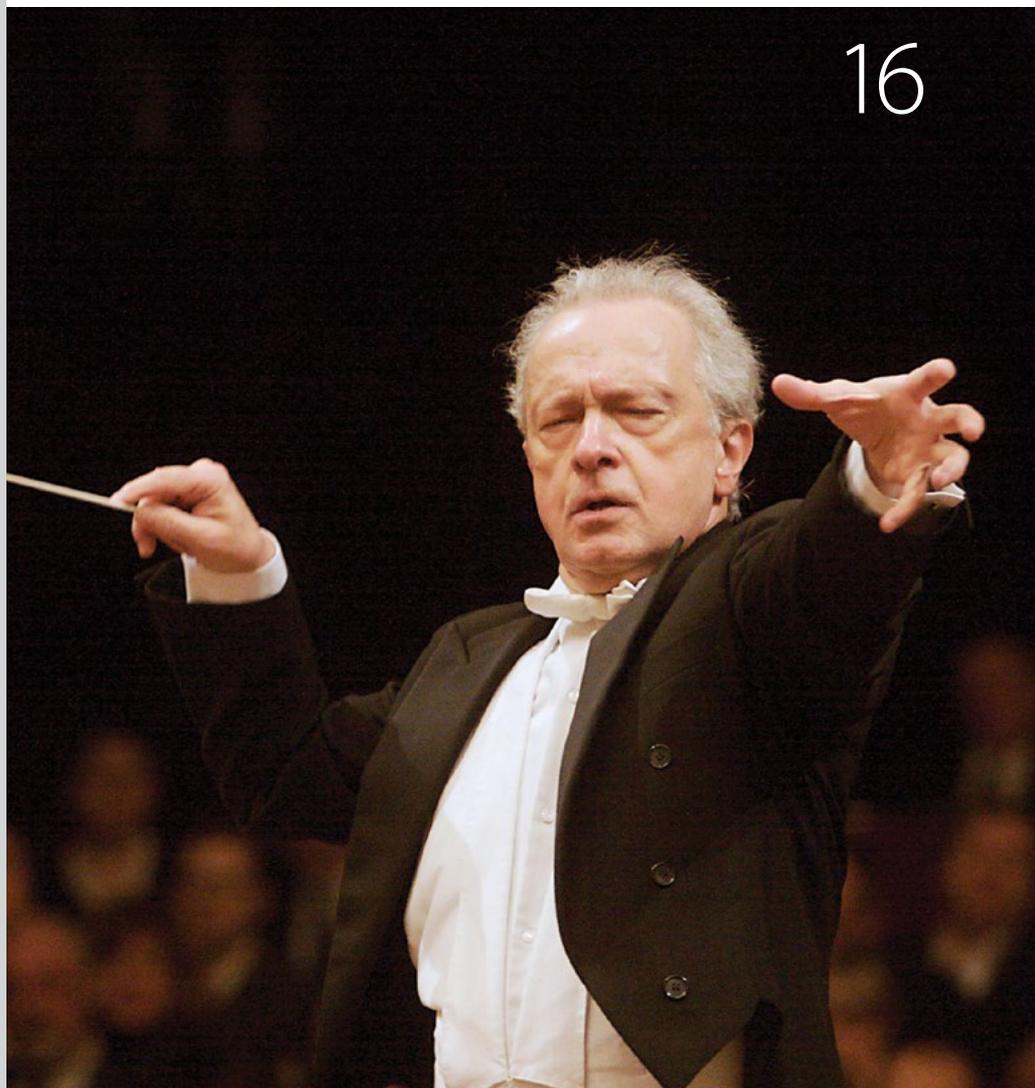
Materials in **ON Stage** cannot be reproduced in part or whole without the written permission of the publisher. Views and opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publisher. All rights reserved.

NCPA Booking Office  
2282 4567/6654 8135/6622 3724  
[www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com)



# Contents

16



## Features

08

### Reflections

On loving Vincent. *By Anil Dharker*

10

### In Their Fathers' Footsteps

What is it like following in the footsteps of musical legends, blurring the lines between parent and guru? We speak to two young musicians to find out. *By Reshma O. Pathare*

14

### The Line-up

CITI-NCPA *Aadi Anant* returns in its seventh edition to celebrate the guru-*shishya* heritage.

16

### The New Season

The Symphony Orchestra of India's 24th season promises some great works and an international roster of artists.

*By Zane Dalal*

20

### Rebel in Technicolour

David Hockney is the poster child for the artist as the face of freedom. As he enters his 80th year, we trace the achievements of his last eight decades with a documentary screening at the NCPA. *By Bhargav Prasad*



24

**The Classical in the Contemporary**

A new festival highlights the works of dancers that are breathing new life into classical forms. *By Samira Bose*

28

**Lucrece Speaks**

For Centrestage 2017, British theatre director Paul Goodwin is adapting Shakespeare's relatively unknown poem, 'The Rape of Lucrece' for the NCPA. Along with one of his cast members, actor Meher Mistry, he talks to *ON Stage* about the challenges of adapting Shakespeare and gender politics across the centuries. *Interviewed by Cynthia Lewis*

32

**The Healing Power of Music**

In 2017, the Symphony Orchestra of India performed at a few unorthodox venues, such as hospitals and crèches, in order to bring their art closer to those who can't reach them. *By Rinky Kumar*

36

**Clowns at the NCPA**

Two Argentinean clowns have set off on a journey to make the whole world laugh with mime

38

**Stories from Gujarat**

Through the words of celebrated author Kaajal Oza Vaidya, Gujarati culture comes alive in the story of Krishna

40

**Cinema, Television and Education**

In 1972, film-maker Shyam Benegal offered some notes towards the development of educational programmes for Indian television

43

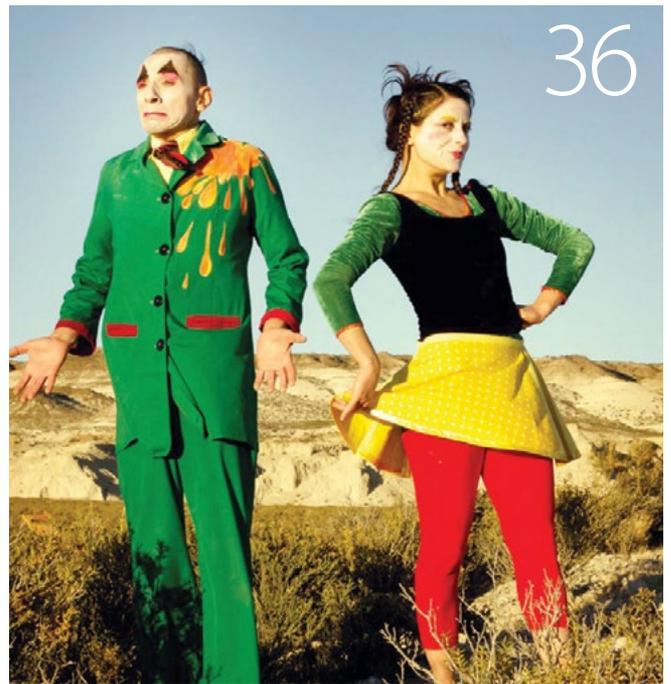
**Programme Guide**

All of December's events at the NCPA

56

**What's Next**

What to look forward to in the coming months



**Follow us on:**



[facebook.com/NCPAMumbai](https://facebook.com/NCPAMumbai)



[@NCPAMumbai](https://twitter.com/NCPAMumbai)



[NCPAMumbai](https://www.instagram.com/NCPAMumbai)



[youtube.com/user/TheNCPAMumbai1](https://youtube.com/user/TheNCPAMumbai1)



[pinterest.com/ncpamumbai](https://pinterest.com/ncpamumbai)

We look forward to your feedback and suggestions. Please do drop us an email at [onstage@ncpamumbai.com](mailto:onstage@ncpamumbai.com).



Dr. L. Subramaniam and his son, Ambi

# In Their Fathers' Footsteps

What is it like following in the footsteps of musical legends, blurring the lines between parent and guru? We speak to two young musicians to find out. By Reshma O. Pathare

Our country, for ages, has practised the *guru-shishya parampara*, in which children would be sent to learn life skills and arts at the ashrams of wise sages. In contemporary times, while the format of this tradition may have altered, the quest for the perfect guru, who will hold our hand and put us on the right path, remains unabated. Lord Buddha had said, "When the student is ready, the guru appears." But the process of "getting ready" sometimes takes years in itself.

On the other hand, there are a few souls who are fortunate to be born having a coveted guru as a parent. They are fortunate to have their guru ready to groom them whenever they show an inkling of talent, or even before that. But is it indeed a boon or a bane to have your guru as a parent? Does it, in any way, alter one's life's choices, or is it the best thing to have your life's path charted for you in the easiest manner possible? Most of all, when the two roles converge and when there falls a covert (if not overt) responsibility to carry forward the guru's mantle, how does it bode for the child who is also a disciple?

## Born into music

"Speaking [for] myself, I feel god could not have been kinder than letting me be born as Pandit Ajoy

Chakraborty's daughter," says the talented songstress, Kaushiki Chakraborty. "Growing up with Baba has been not only the best possible education, but also the best possible way of living I could have ever asked for. Music has been the way of life for me since birth. In fact, I like to say that I

**"Growing up in a household reverberating with sangeet, there was no way I could stay away from it"**

was born in the womb of music, because not just Baba but even my mother is musically inclined. Our home was filled with music and conversations about music 24/7. It was an all-immersive experience and that, too, such an organic one that I never felt compelled to take up music. It was natural for me to take it up because I knew no other way of life. It is a very fulfilling experience to grow

up with your guru because not only does your practice not get relegated to a few hours, but also, you learn immensely just watching your teacher play, hearing his ideologies and seeing how he carries himself as a performer." Kaushiki's sentiments find an echo in Ambi Subramaniam, the talented young violinist and the son of Dr. L. Subramaniam. "I had a very liberated upbringing in the sense that even though Appa was a renowned artiste, he never bogged me down with an expectation to carry his legacy ahead," he says. "Having said that, growing up in a household reverberating with sangeet, there was no way I could stay away from it. However, for the longest time, I played the violin only because I enjoyed playing it. It was only when I decided to take it up formally that Appa [became] my guru. It helps that I'm first his son, then [his] disciple, and [so], he knew my moods and nuances. While he is a very strict teacher, I think that helped forge a unique bond [between] us, too. Add to that, being Appa's son, I got to see beyond the public celebrity persona of many legendary artistes, including Appa himself. It was humbling to see them skip their meals and sleep in pursuance of their compositions. That kind of learning rubs off on you and goads you to give your best."



### On the other side

Indeed, while it can be a happy convergence as these artistes say, has there never been a time when they felt the pressure of their fathers' expectations was greater on them than on other students, simply due to the genetic ties they shared? "Appa has always been a strict teacher, but that's his way of teaching everyone," says Ambi. "More than strict, he is particular about the technique and structure of music being retained in all creations. He has always been supportive of my experiments but insists that for any collaboration to work, the twin factors of comfort and compatibility have to be adhered



**"It is a fulfilling experience to grow up with your guru because you learn immensely just watching your teacher play, hearing his ideologies and seeing how he carries himself as a performer"**

to at all costs. I remember, when I was once collaborating with a flamenco guitar artiste for a composition, Appa insisted that I first learn the basics of flamenco guitar and only then work on the piece."

Kaushiki makes no bones about the fact that her father has been the strictest guru she has ever had. Even after all these years, she is yet to receive a "nod of approval" from him. "Apart from Baba, I have also trained with gurus Jnan Prakash

Ghosh and M. Balamuralikrishna. Compared to Baba, they were like cuddly grandfathers who would indulge me during *riyaaz*. No such luck with Baba though. He brought the same thorough single-minded commitment to our *riyaaz* sessions as he did to his performances, and would tolerate no breach in routine. In fact, if I ever expressed the desire to read a book or watch television to get over the fatigue of training, his forehead would frown at the thought that I found *riyaaz* tiring and would want to waste time in anything other than music. I did go through a phase [during] adolescence when I felt odd that Baba would refuse me simple pleasures like going to the cinema

or sleepovers with friends. But, now I realise that it was his way of preparing me for the heightened expectations I would be saddled with once I started performing professionally."

### My father, my guru

Having observed their gurus from close quarters since a tender age, it is obvious that the artistes learnt much more than just music from them. "Oh, it is a performer's delight to be able to observe a legendary artiste up close and personal," says Ambi. "At this age and stage, Appa still stays awake till 6.00 am, composing a piece, catches a two-hour nap and is fresh for the day's routine.

It is awe-inspiring. Another thing that I am trying to imbibe from him is the way he adapts his performance according to the audience's mood. I remember, we were once playing in South Africa and the Brazilian guitarist before us had set the tempo so high that the audience was literally jumping up and down. Our performance that was to follow was a purely traditional, slow-paced one, but Appa adapted to the situation so beautifully that he kept the tempo going and yet stayed true to our performance. Complementing the set mood and creating contrast are two challenges that a performer is always faced with. The way Appa tackles these challenges every time is a huge learning in itself."

For Kaushiki, learning from Chakraborty has been a rigorous, unpredictable and liberating experience. "Rigorous purely for the strict training he brought to the table; unpredictable because he had a penchant for suddenly starting a new piece while performing together and would expect me to follow; and liberating because he has been a guru who knew exactly when to let go of my hand to allow me to chart my own path. His methods, [although] unique, have served immensely in making me the confident singer I am today. He has also been very supportive of all my offbeat decisions, be it singing for films or performing for *MTV Coke Studio*. However, he remains my biggest critic. Even today, I get wary of his phone calls that come early [in the] morning, wanting to discuss some song he may have heard on YouTube. Mostly, I wind up the conversation on the pretext of having work, scared of the report card that is bound to follow. I'm waiting for his nod of approval but I also know it will never come because he feels it will make me complacent. That's the kind of teacher Baba has been." ■

*CITI-NCPA Aadi Anant: From Here to Eternity seeks to celebrate the vitality of the guru-shishya parampara. The Mumbai edition will take place on 3rd and 9th December at the Tata Theatre.*



## Cinema, television and education

*ON Stage* brings you excerpts from the NCPA Quarterly Journal, an unsurpassed literary archive that ran from 1972 to 1988 and featured authoritative and wide-ranging articles. In 1972, filmmaker **Shyam Benegal** offered some notes towards the development of educational programmes for Indian television

**Television has a continuing presence** [in our lives] day after day. It brings to the viewer a variety of events simultaneously, even as they take place. This, in turn, creates an alternate or an extended environment in the home or the community, thus adding a completely new dimension to communication. TV has the possibility of becoming 'the other family', capable of replacing a person's social situation. In this way, TV's ability to manipulate exceeds by far the influence of any other mass communications medium. Although there is no doubting the power of TV, it must be mentioned that the use it can be put to has built-in constraints. TV is basically a source of entertainment. Yet, whatever the form, it cannot be allowed to become yet another opiate. Therefore, it becomes necessary to find for it an application in social terms – as an instrument of social change.

In communication terms, TV would have to play a role in helping to speed the transition from a bureaucratic democracy to a participatory democracy. Again, in order to educate a whole mass of people, TV would have to be used as an extension of formal education. In overall educational terms, TV would have to be used to improve learning ability and extend human capability.

### Educational programming

More specifically, Indian TV would have to be educationally oriented. This does not necessarily mean that TV has to be dull and prosaic. Any educational programme would have to be, by its very nature, entertaining. In addition to feeding information, educational programmes on TV would have to orient themselves towards improving the viewer's ability to learn. Apart from

imparting pedagogical instruction, TV would have a prime role to play in making the viewer aware of the society in which he lives, of the way in which he defines himself, and of wrongs and rights, not as absolutes but as determinants in a social situation. Curricular objectives can easily be worked into the scheme. By and large, TV will have to do without the authoritarian presence of a teacher. Teaching would have to be transformed into the learning process. Programmes would have to be designed in such a way as to prepare a pupil to become 'aware' rather than learned. In formulating an educational programme, we would have to set down certain ground rules to help ensure its success.

### Pre-school programmes

The objectives of such programmes would be to aim at involving children in relating themselves to their

environment in ways that will not disadvantage them in whatever area of functioning they are likely to move into, as they grow up. Indian children who have been raised in an extended family have had the advantage of having their initial learning within the context of the family. This tradition of learning – a 'hand me down' extending over many centuries – did not necessarily require literacy on the part of those elders in the home. More often than not, this learning took the form of lullabies, rhymes, traditional stories and precepts based on religious and secular experiences. The rest of the learning followed the patterns of conduct observed by the household.

All of these concerned themselves with affective values, resulting in the development of concepts that related to everyday situations and social relationships, leading towards a world view. The child received an opportunity to learn about family and community rituals, songs and the meaning of events, such as births, marriages and deaths. In this tradition, a child was exposed to reality and armed with rationality and a philosophical base to cope with it. Added to this form of learning was entertainment, such as marionette shows, shadow puppetry, the *tamasha*, the *nautanki* and the other folk forms particular to any given region of the country. They were all, in one way or another, direct learning communications.

TV offers us an opportunity to take this entire area of learning, which is basically aural/oral (and unfortunately dying out with the advance of literacy and the breakdown of extended families), and then transmit it through its mass communication methods. As a form of pre-school learning, TV could make good use of these forms. However, the process of literacy can also be used as an adjunct of the forms mentioned earlier. It can bring to the child the alphabet, its sounds and its perception by challenging the child's imagination and relating it directly to its environment. These could then lead to programmes that would help in increasing reading abilities. The important principles in all such programmes are to offer easy identification and empathy in terms of characters and situations.

### Some models

Before we formulate a model for pre-school programmes for India, it would

be interesting to look at some of the better known series in different parts of the world. By far the most successful pre-school programme has been the Children's Television Workshop's programme, *Sesame Street*, in the US. The basic objectives of the programmes were to prepare disadvantaged children, particularly 'inner city' and ghetto children, for school. It was felt that children from poorer families, deprived of normal advantages and without an atmosphere of learning in their homes, would be at a disadvantage in learning ability terms compared to children who came from more affluent homes and had a background of some form of pre-school education. However, the objectives have since changed as *Sesame Street* has now become the most popular children's programme in the United States.

*Sesame Street* has a comprehensive overall educational programme that allows for a considerable amount of flexibility in presentation styles and methods to project ideas, attitudes

### The important principles in all such programmes are to offer easy identification and empathy in terms of characters and situations

and facts. The programme itself works within a format that consists of a street – *Sesame Street*. For easy identification, the street is set in the 'inner city' which, in our context, would be a working-class or a lower middle-class neighbourhood. The success of this programme has a lot to do with the imaginative use of dialogue, narrative, animation, incidents and stories, using adults, children and muppets (puppets). Each learning device is in the form of a self-contained module of a few minutes each to allow for repetition and reinforcement. These modules follow the pattern of tried and tested television styles, mainly based on TV commercials. The reason for using this pattern is obvious. TV commercials are the most frequently repeated and have the highest impact.

### A model for Indian pre-school programmes

If we accept the fact that the learning methods in the oral traditions are still worthwhile, we automatically arrive at the format:

- A host, preferably a lady who could be identified as an aunt or grandmother, who could conduct the programme.
- Use of a combination of modules to make the whole programme, so that individual modules could be repeated for reinforcing learning. (This would take from the pattern set by *Sesame Street*). Each module could consist of either a story, a statement, a playlet or a film.

Once the format has been set, it would then be necessary to work out the curricular goals. It would be seen from *Sesame Street* that curricular goals for children are more or less the same all over the world. The difference, however, would be in the priorities given to each of them. In my opinion, the priorities should be rated thus:

- The child and his world
- Social interactions
- Man-made environment
- Cognitive organisation and values
- Symbolic representation in terms of learning the alphabet, words and numbers.

This pattern will make the process of learning easier and more meaningful for the child. The programmes can be so designed that they would be useful for viewing at home as well as supplements to education in school. To make these programmes successful, the modules would have to be carefully worked out. The use of symbols and situations would have to take off from familiar ground as far as the children are concerned. Talking down would have to be avoided, and the spirit of enquiry consistently encouraged by a judicious use of scepticism. Each module would have to throw up an idea or a fact to be learned in as precise a manner as possible. Above all, the programmes would have to be entertaining. For without the element of entertainment, any programme on television can become unbearable. The key lies in recognition of the fact that the audience cannot talk back to the television screen, and since a dialogue of this kind is ruled out, it will have to be simulated within the programmes themselves.

*This article first appeared in the NCPA Quarterly Journal in December 1972 (Vol. I, No. 2).*