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VOLUME 10 • ISSUE 4

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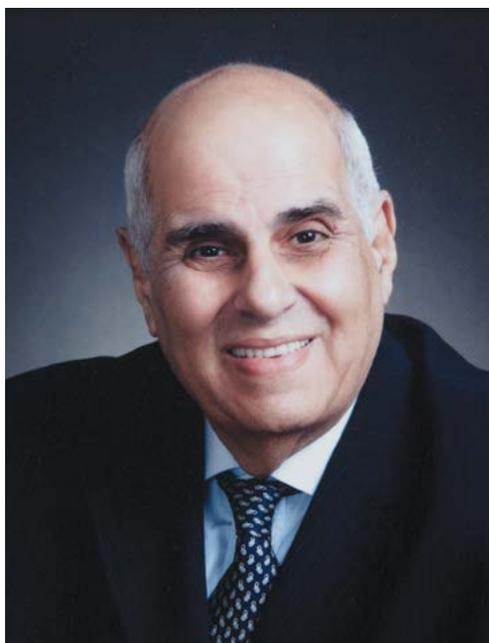
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Chairman's Note



To say the last few months were an unusual experience, especially for the performing art world, would be a momentous understatement. It shows to what extent we are susceptible to the power of nature to enrich, humble, elevate and also crush our hopes and ambition, and yet emerge innovative and inspirational.

When the lockdown was first announced, we thought that this was a temporary phenomenon and there was no need for an organisational change, and we carried on as usual expecting that we would return to work soon, based on optimistic dates given to us. Unfortunately, those dates never fructified and now it seems we are in for a longer haul than expected, and any management worth its salt must arrange to adapt.

For us at the NCPA, initial depression is being replaced by a growing confidence in functioning from home with forays to the office. If there was to be a shift towards managerial competence, to effectively work from home, certain infrastructure has to be created, nay evolved and executed, to the best of our ability. An investment into the future of programming and the shape and style it will take is by itself an expensive exercise.

In spite of all halls being empty and space staring at us with nary a penny in sight, you have to create an audience through the electronic media. I frankly do not feel it is a good substitute because nothing can take the place of a live performance, but we need to move into this digital space by employing the best brains to help us seamlessly make the shift. We have engaged a prize-winning filmmaker and documentary expert and we hope that with the wealth of material available, a reasonable amount of income can be generated by utilising all kinds of electronic streaming reproduction on our website, of our archival and modern performances and changing the manner in which we attend concerts. It is also time we started looking at utilising our various spaces, including the outdoors, for performances in the winter months. The details are in this issue of the *ON Stage*.

There is nothing like being there in the flesh. Since you do not notice the inflections, you do not notice the reactions and most of all, you have to take cold-blooded distances.

But, Hobson's choice.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. N. Suntook". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Khushroo N. Suntook

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THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK, FLETCHER FUND, 1996 (LEFT); SHUTTERSTOCK (RIGHT)

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Reflections

Music and the brain. **By Anil Dharker**

International research is of three kinds: scientific, science-fictionish and vacuous. Possibly belonging to the second category is recent work at MIT which used AI (artificial intelligence) to turn the Coronavirus into classical music. This is done, according to Professor Markus J. Buehler, to better understand the virus. Researchers assigned each amino acid – the building block of the spiked protein of the virus – a unique musical note. An algorithm then converted the notes to music. The first part of the resulting musical composition is soothing as the spiked protein eases into our unsuspecting cells. As the virus replicates and the protein binds to more cells, the music, we are told, turns dramatic and tumultuous, so we go from tinkling harmonics to a clashing and stormy finale.

Buehler hopes this will help develop antibodies by taking a musical counterpoint to the virus's melody and rhythm, and use AI to find an antibody that matches it. The composition is one hour and 50 minutes long, so a nice concert length, but it is unlikely to feature in a Symphony Orchestra of India programme anytime soon.

Does anyone remember the Mozart Effect? The findings of a study in the 1990s suggested that listening to everyone's favourite composer improved IQ. Don Campbell's book on the subject became a bestseller. Called *The Mozart Effect: Tapping the Power of Music to Heal the Body, Strengthen the Mind and Unlock the Creative Spirit*, it had the advantage of a title so comprehensive that it made reading of the book unnecessary. Campbell found this a lucrative bandwagon to board, and wrote a second book, *The Mozart Effect on Children*, then brought out related merchandise like special collections of music for babies and toddlers. The Governor of the American state of Georgia was so taken up by the idea that in January 1998, he announced an annual grant of \$100,000 to provide every child born in the state with tapes or CDs of classical music.



To get the legislation passed, Governor Miller played Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' to legislators and said, "Now don't you feel smarter already?"

Sadly, more rigorous research showed that these findings were mythical: Mozart is magic but his music does not make you a genius. What it does is increase spatial intelligence by acting on an area of the brain that deals with visualisation of objects and spaces with the mind's eye. Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos in D Major (K448) and his Piano Concerto No 23 (K488) seem to work best. This showed that Mozart was greater than Beethoven, someone proclaimed, till it was found that the Greek composer Yanni's song 'Standing in Motion' worked well too.

Does all this really matter? Music, any music, has a positive, uplifting emotional quality. This is biologically due to the possibility that listening to music increases the body's production of the antibody Immunoglobulin A, and also reduces the stress hormone cortisol, which is why music therapy is now taken seriously in medicine. Thirty trials carried on over 2000 cancer patients showed that music decreased anxiety and even stabilised heart rates and blood

pressure levels. It worked particularly well with patients with dementia and clinical depression. Many hospitals also use music to ease anxiety levels during surgery and to relieve postoperative pain. As a clincher, Harvard neurologist Gottfried Schlaug found that the brains of adult musicians had more grey matter than those of non-musicians.

On behalf of non-musicians who love music, I would like to make the point that serious listening too results in an intense activation of both the left and right hemispheres of the brain. I also know from personal experience that music helps memory: ask me to give you the lyrics of pop songs of my teenage years and I will be lost; ask me to sing them, and I will remember every word from 50 years ago. It is a pity there are limits to these things otherwise a chemistry student could rattle off the periodic table set to rap.

All these theories have resulted in music being put to some unusual uses. A cattle-breeder in Turkey first found that playing classical music increased the milk yield of his cows. His reasoning was simple: if music relaxes humans why not cows? This was later backed by a 2001 study at the University of Leicester: they called it their Moosic Study. An Italian vet carried this further by singing arias to his 'patients'.

The weirdest example comes from Germany where loud classical music is played in a sewage treatment plant: it helps break down waste faster, they found. According to the chief operator of the plant, 'the secret is in the vibrations of the music which penetrate everything – including the water, the sewage and the cells.' The possible connection between sewage and listeners of classical music is one I would rather not make.

What I would do instead is listen to 448, 488 and, of course, 'Ode to Joy', and listen with concentrated attention. If that does good things to my brain, that is a nice side effect. Incidentally, Mozart's IQ has now been evaluated to be 165, genius level. So if nothing else, his own brain benefited from his music.

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A Drive for the Arts

Socially distanced seating, pre-concert disinfectant mists, music-enhancing face masks, state-of-the-art drive-in concerts – the pandemic has got us thinking on our feet. **Richard Nowell**, technical consultant to the NCPA and other international organisations, recounts his first-hand experience of making the English National Opera's Drive & Live a top-notch sonic event and how the learnings can be put to use in our outdoor spaces.



Audience members watch *La bohème* from their cars at the English National Opera's Drive & Live



Natalya Romaniw (here) and Soraya Mafi (below) on stage at the ENO Drive & Live *La bohème* 2020



ENO's Music Director Martyn Brabbins conducts the orchestra from a lift 3.5 metres over the stage

I write this from the control position at Alexandra Palace in London, waiting for the first of the day's performances of English National Opera's Drive & Live *La bohème*. The concept is a fully staged opera performed to an audience who arrive, and remain, in their cars. Bike zones have been allocated to accommodate those cyclists brave enough to climb the hill to the palace and a taxi-on-request service has provided 10 cars for those who need them.

It would take too long to go into the details of the logistics here, so I will only say that the build took four days with nearly 100 people working across six supply companies.

Hearing it right

When we proposed our solution to the project, Europe was in full lockdown so we needed an arrangement that avoided passing equipment into or near patrons' cars. We very much wanted to keep away from relying solely on a simple FM radio broadcast, which was the obvious solution because Ian Dearden, the creative audio producer, and I felt that this would make the experience feel very sterile and isolating.

We have no less than three solutions working at the same time: FM radio broadcast, listened to on the patron's car stereos; a large, distributed

public address system, including rear-effects speakers, to cover a car park area of 100m by 50m without allowing sound to exceed stringent noise limits and spill over to the neighbouring houses; a dedicated Wi-Fi broadcast, allowing users to listen to broadcast-quality audio on their phones or tablets via their own headphones or Bluetooth speakers.

We have three engineers mixing the show in three different locations on-site - for the FM/Wi-Fi mix, the PA system and for handling the sound onstage for the performers. A fourth mixing desk is used to actually mix the orchestra down to groups that are fed to all the other desks, which ensures consistency whilst allowing the individual engineers to tailor their mixes for their specific purposes.

The FM broadcast, heard on the car stereos, provides a CD-quality mix that is very intimate and present. To ensure patrons feel like they are really part of something much bigger, the mix that is fed to the PA system is carefully timed to ensure it is synchronous with the cars though modern cars

don't make this easy. Over 65 loudspeakers are in use in total, both onstage and in the audience area. It also uses several 'rear' speakers (facing towards the stage) to provide reverb and a sense of space around the cars. The effect of the reverb machine handling this is that patrons get a studio-quality reproduction from their cars with the added sense that the performance is much bigger - as though in a giant concert hall - and is wrapping itself around them.

The Wi-Fi solution - which is really being trialled in this case - requires patrons to download an app and log on to the dedicated Wi-Fi network. This is not as difficult as it sounds and those who do are rewarded with broadcast-quality sound, without the artefacts that FM broadcast introduces.

Every person on stage has their own radio mic and their own in-ear-monitor. Every mic not only appears for all our consoles but also is split to the company broadcasting the performance live.

Pandemic protocols

There are two separate sets of performers known as red and blue bubbles with alternating day on and day off so that if someone gets ill, we can isolate a section without losing a show.

The snag is that to keep everyone safe from COVID transmission, our radio mic team has had to come up with complex protocols to remain socially distanced and to ensure equipment is always cleaned but also tested before use. There are nine primary cast members, 20 chorus members and 32 in the orchestra

There are two separate sets of performers known as red and blue bubbles with alternating day on and day off so that if someone gets ill, we can isolate a section without losing a show

in each bubble. We have provided both bubbles with their own mics and earphones, though they share (cleaned) radio packs. Our stage sound engineer has to ensure every single person can hear what they want at all times. Bear in mind that performers sing from the car park and from inside cars as well as onstage so the radio logistics are complex to say the least.

We have over 30 ways of audio intercom and communications systems on-site, 40 video screens just relaying

information to all the key people, including Martyn Brabbins who conducts from a scissor lift 3.5 m over the stage.

The show is shot and mixed live on video to the two main screens hung left and right over the access ramps that allow the performers to drive their vehicles from the audience onto the stage during the show. The video set-up deserves an article of its own but involves six fixed camera points, three cameras set up inside vehicles and live footage from a camera wielded (as part of the action) by a member of the cast. This is far from easy to achieve and is all done from a tiny control room in a customised van backstage.

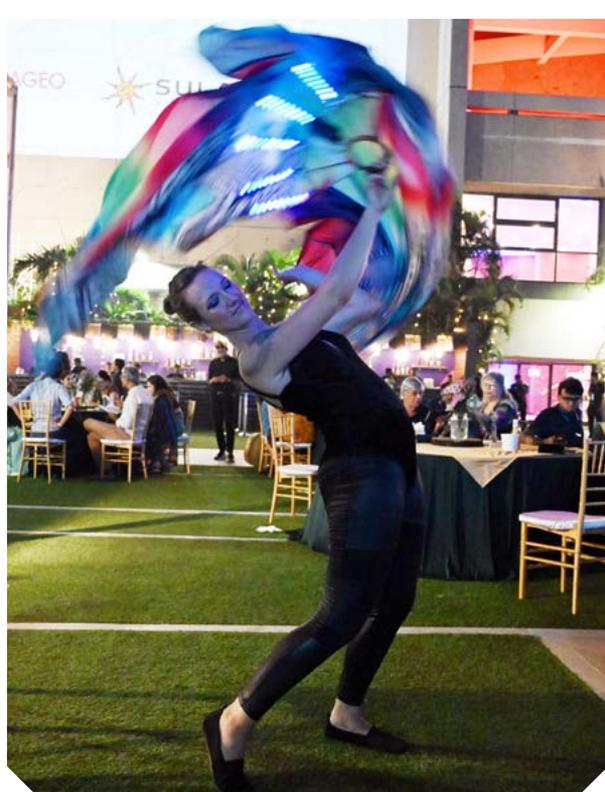
How this might relate to the NCPA

As India starts to come out of lockdown, it is of course our intention to use lessons learnt from experiences elsewhere. The NCPA management has spent considerable effort to gather information from colleagues all over the world. There are





The NCPA's Open Air Plaza offers ample space for socially distanced seating; (right) a performance during the ADD ART Festival in 2019



many similarities between the challenges presented by this production in London and those facing the NCPA in Mumbai.

I do not propose to talk about the NCPA digital project here as that is a huge undertaking and should be dealt with separately. Suffice to say the NCPA's online presence is being upgraded and developed into something of which all India can be proud.

We are keen to bring audiences back to our campus the moment it is truly safe to do so. Operating procedures have been developed and tested to allow audience members to come and go safely and a huge variety of possibilities have been explored and tested.

It is likely that the first spaces we can safely use will be our open-air spaces, most notably the Open Air Plaza (OAP). We know this space works well from events held pre-lockdown and it can be made into a comfortable, welcoming space for audiences to gather. Under these new conditions, however, we are intending to bring performances to the space itself, rather than using the OAP as an extended foyer. Safety being our primary concern, our focus is on social distancing, providing enough facilities for patrons to avoid crowding, and a robust cleaning regimen.

From a technical point of view, we must respect our neighbours and sound levels are the primary point of concern. All necessary permissions for performances are sought as a matter of course but to really use the spaces properly we want to use a solution that does not generate noise pollution of any sort. Mr. Nayan Kale has already carried out tests of a Wi-Fi solution very similar to the one we

It is likely that the first spaces we can safely use at the NCPA will be our open-air spaces, most notably the Open Air Plaza

are using in London and what we learn from ENO's project will translate directly into improving the solution for patrons of the NCPA. By the time we open to guests, we will be confident of providing an excellent audio experience to every person in the OAP.

Our experience of recording both video and audio for in-house performances stands us in good stead in this regard and the experiences gained in particular with the Symphony

Orchestra of India in the last four years is invaluable for providing live relays with all the pressures and demands that it involves. It will need care, thought and quite some investment in both time and money but the NCPA has a track record of rising to such challenges. Neither Mr. Kale's technical team nor NCPA management are afraid of meeting challenges head-on.

Projectors will be used to throw images of the performance (or indeed a film) onto the side of the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre (JBT) and our new video department, headed by Mr. Sankalp Meshram, and developed through our desire to improve online content, will be able to mix live content onto that screen whenever necessary.

Performers can be on a stage in front of the JBT or even in the JBT or Tata Theatre depending on individual show requirements, with the audience enjoying the live experience of those performances in the open air. We know we can make this work with our colleagues from Mumbai and around the world and we expect to bring truly high-quality work to our patrons without putting anyone at unnecessary risk.

We look forward to welcoming you back to our campus. ■

Keeping up with Copyright

In a world in which consuming culture through digital platforms is becoming increasingly ubiquitous, performers and content creators need to learn the dos and don'ts of an entirely new landscape. In a workshop organised by the NCPA, Advocate Sanjay Kher will address the practicalities of the digital world of the performing arts.



With entertainment having been tailored to the size of the palm of the hand, the digital medium was already on the path to ubiquity when the pandemic struck. A platform for largely recorded programmes thus far, it also became a space for artistes from diverse areas of expertise to connect with their audience in real time. The soft underbelly of these burgeoning digital technologies is the tricky terrain of the administration and protection of copyright. “The ease of creating, modifying and sharing digital media makes copyright enforcement a challenge, particularly when it has brought matters within the competence of individuals operating from the sanctuary of their homes. Technology has enabled copying of digital works at an amazing speed without any loss of fidelity, and these works can be transmitted across the world in a matter of minutes. In short, copyright laws are widely seen as not having kept up with technology,” says Advocate Sanjay Kher, a practising lawyer of the Bombay High Court who specialises in intellectual property laws.

Perhaps, the great bugbear for newcomers in the field of digital media is the fear of being unable to exercise effective control over their content, including the inability to monetise their content or delete unauthorised content. Creators must also factor in the needs of the user. Before digital works are purchased, the buyer should ideally be able to browse through the content before making a decision. This makes ‘rights management information’ such as ownership data, licence fees, payment terms, etc. an essential requirement that needs to be embedded in the digital content.

In an online workshop, tailored to the rights and needs of performers and content creators, Kher will discuss the practicalities of the digital world for the artiste community. Titled Legal Issues in the Digital Domain, the workshop has been organised by the Indian Music department of the NCPA in keeping with the organisation’s philosophy of extending support to artistes through masterclasses, skill-building workshops, etc.

Kher’s extensive knowledge in dealing with matters related to Intellectual Property Rights, particularly patent and copyright, makes him a sought-after speaker at various institutes, seminars and conferences. He has, in the past, spoken at NASSCOM, Godrej Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, Aditya Birla Group and what was then known as the Franklin Pierce Law Center, among others. He has been particularly involved in contentious patent and copyright litigations and prosecutions which have required him to handle matters in countries such as the U.K., Germany, Peru, etc. He has also handled Indian and international patent litigations on behalf of Indian as well as foreign clients. ■

The workshop will be held online from 3.30 pm to 5 pm on 28th November. For more information, log on to www.ncpamumbai.com

responded to the tragic deaths by releasing statements that spoke of their solidarity with the movement. Where music had always been a salve for the masses in troubled times, it had now become central to the movement in ways that had not been harnessed before. People across cultures and continents upheld the cause online as part of the Blackout Tuesday discourse on 2nd June. Audiences the world over were open to receiving an education in the contribution of black artistes — a legacy sadly overlooked and often appropriated.

The roots of jazz

Hip-hop, rap, funk and other popular, more accessible, genres driven by the black community have been a part of the protest landscape for years now. Think Marvin Gaye's soulful 'What's Going On' and James Brown's funk-fuelled 'Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud.' One could say that the music by these very artistes was informed by the ragtime-tinged work songs of lament sung by their forefathers — songs that spoke of the African-American experience of tackling systemic racism and slavery that has prevailed for over four centuries.

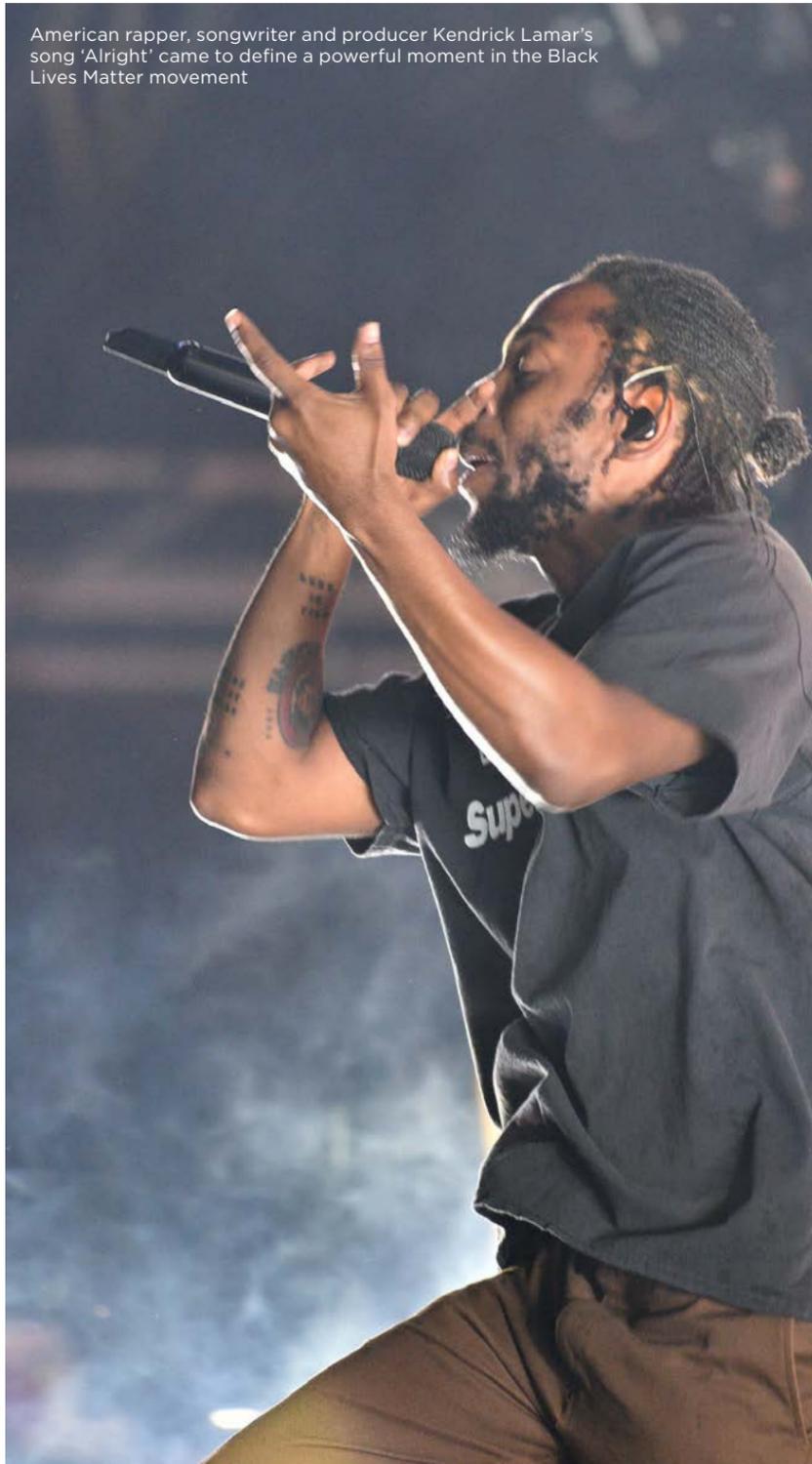
Jazz and the blues, predecessors of contemporary black music, have also been a catalyst for social and political change. Arising out of the social struggles of the marginalised throughout their history, these genres have never fallen short of serving as a powerful tool of expression. It is widely accepted that the music was born in New Orleans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, emerging out of the prevalent percussive tradition of African slaves brought to America in the 18th century and European harmonic accompaniments like the violin. Originally a blend of the ragged rhythms of rag-time, blues, and other West African music traditions, the sound evolved as it spread to other American cities like Chicago and New York. What started as a movement on the fringes of American society, soon became one of the most influential musical traditions of the 20th century.

Lamar's 'Alright', widely regarded as a protest anthem since its release in 2015, taps into the continually evolving nature of jazz. Sonically, the song is an outright mix of rap, hip-hop and funk. Yet, those in the know will recognise jazz undercurrents — horn sections and skittering drums — in its soundscape. Lamar, the son of a jazz musician, worked with some of the most reputed contemporary jazz musicians like

Arising out of the social struggles of the marginalised throughout their history, jazz and the blues have never fallen short of serving as a powerful tool of expression

saxophonist Kamasi Washington, bassist Thundercat and pianist Robert Glasper to give shape to this landmark album.

American rapper, songwriter and producer Kendrick Lamar's song 'Alright' came to define a powerful moment in the Black Lives Matter movement



THOMAS COOPER/GETTY IMAGES

Singer-songwriter Nina Simone's anthem 'Mississippi Goddam' was a crucial song of protest created during the American civil rights movement



DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS

Music that moves

Every movement in America had a song, and jazz became the music of resistance with its roots deeply entrenched in a centuries-old fight for equality. Racially charged songs such as Billie Holiday's 'Strange Fruit' immediately spring to mind as popular music that spoke to a political moment. Holiday was already a reputed voice when she was introduced to the eponymous song and poem written by Abel Meeropol in 1937 to protest the lynching of African Americans. Her recording of this chilling anti-lynching song is considered to be the earliest protest song to have found its way into New York's jazz clubs. Jazz also served as a marker of the impoverished living conditions of the community. In 1929, Louis Armstrong's rendition of the jazz standard 'Black and Blue' by Fats Waller and Andy Razaf was already breaking ground. Although not exactly a protest song, it painfully details the lived experience of being black and oppressed in 1920s America.

The American civil rights movement, spanning 1954 to 1968, saw the release of countless compositions by some of jazz's greatest architects. One such was the politically charged 'Fables of Faubus' written by Charles Mingus in 1959 at the peak of the movement. The song's lyrics were an explicit protest against Arkansas governor Orval Faubus who prevented nine African-American students from being integrated into a racially segregated school in 1957. Although the double bassist and singer was forced to release the song without lyrics at first, he went on to record the uncensored version titled 'Original

Some songs were written as a response to the atrocities faced by African-American communities, while others bore the promise of change

Faubus Fables' in 1960.

John Coltrane's composition of 'Alabama' in 1963 was a direct response to the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing by members of the Ku Klux Klan that had resulted in the death of four African-American girls. In the same vein, Nina Simone's 'Mississippi Goddam' (1964) responded to this very white supremacist terrorist bombing and the murder of American civil rights activist Medgar Evers.

But not all jazz protest anthems were written in response to Black genocide. Many, like 'The Freedom Suite' by Sonny Rollins, also spoke about empowerment and happiness in anticipation of the change that would come. Still others were simply a testimony to Black pride. Whether one considers jazz standards of musical greats of the past or Lamar's music that imaginatively taps into the lived Black experience of the present, the music is particularly resonant in 2020 in both the tiniest and toniest neighbourhoods of America and beyond. Every one of these protest songs is relevant today for the unrivalled level of musicianship. And, rightfully so. That they are still pertinent for the very reason they were written though is sadly beyond belief.

In Perfect Consonance

While the dictionary meaning of bandish is 'restriction', in the world of Indian classical music, a time-honoured bandish is a composition that is fixed, yes, but in the sense that it provides a well-trodden path paved by the masters. Musicologist Meena Banerjee decodes the nuances of the bandish, and explains why some are timeless and unchangeable, while others can be effortlessly pliable.

To move upwards spiritually from a form to formlessness or to rise above a culture-specific melody to universal music on a commercial plane, most Hindustani classical musicians use a *bandish* (composition) as a peg to hang the raga on. It is a fact that this art music encourages much more of *anibaddha* (instant creativity-based improvisations) than *nibaddha/bandish* (well-knit compositions); and further enthused by modern abstractism, the half-articulated utterances or the missing *antara* or a refrain-based flight of imagination is the order of the day. But this was not meant to be so, as the learned *vaaggeyakars* did not create compositions for nothing.

Looking back

An introspective review explicitly explains that the Vedas were communicated from guru to *shishya* through oral lore. That is why Vedas are also known as *Shruti* (to listen); and retention of the *Shruti*-based knowledge by the receiver - handed down by the mentor - is acknowledged as *Smriti* (memory). In his characteristic style, Ali Akbar Khan summarised the essence of this ancient tradition: 'At first you listen to learn, then you learn to listen.' In the absence of historic books and archival collections, it was this oral tradition or *guru-shishya parampara* which protected the priceless ancient Indian wisdom and the value system of all traditions of art and culture.

Bound in simple melodic structure, Vedic hymns became easy to remember. That is how *Saam-gaan* - the earliest composed classical music of this great



subcontinent - evolved. This led to *Gandharva gaan*, which heavily relied on the speaking voice (*vad*) of *vaadan* or instrumental music wherein each instrument (stringed, wind, percussion, etc.) spoke in its own language. This tightly structured sangeet included dance as its most effective expression. The mantra-based *nirgeets* (precursor of *taranas*) added variety to this sacred temple music. Gradually, hundreds of varieties of *prabandha* (*pra+bandha* or well+bound) were evolved which flowed like a linear novel without any break in between. Then came the *ashtapadis* or eight *padas* strung in a row (Jayadeva's *ashtapadis* are the most famed examples of this genre). *Chatuspadis* or a string of four *padas* followed next and retained their place in *dhruva-padas* or *dhrupads*.

By this time the socio-cultural scenario of northern India had gone through a sea change thanks to the all-embracing Sufi philosophy. *Dev-bhasha* Sanskrit, the language of the elite, was replaced by a mix of Persian, Arabic and local colloquial dialects, and temple music had shifted base to royal courts. During the reign of Raja Mansingh Tomar, fresh sets of *dhrupads* were composed in Brijbhasha. Devotional fervour gave way to entertainment of the

Ashwini Bhide-Deshpande says, "I preserve and value my *gharana bandishes* like heirlooms and hand them over to the next generation as they are"

royals and numerous desi or folk elements mingled with the classical forms. The time-tested ragas and compositions of Tansen bear the stamp of these socio-cultural changes.

New contours

By the time Muhammad Shah 'Rangeele' ascended the throne of Delhi, *dhrupad* took a back seat. This was the time when Qawwal Bacche (Shakkar Khan and Makkhan Khan who were *qawwali* exponents) were singing raga music replete with newly styled compositions in Lucknow and Rangeele's learned court musicians 'Sadarang' and 'Adarang', who were renowned *dhrupad* maestros, were composing brisk and entertaining compositions having only two segments - *sthaayee* and *antara*.

Gradually, this style of singing crystallised as *khayal* and the compositions were termed as *bandishes*. Both the terms go hand in hand. If *khayal* is a high-flying bird, *bandish* is its nest that offers a base woven with different aspects of raga music.

These compositions derived all the characteristics of their predecessors but in small measures. Almost all traditional *khayal bandishes* offer key-phrases of the chosen raga along with a particular aspect of the chosen tala and its tempi. For example, a raga

Yaman-based *bandish* may begin from Gandhar and from the ninth beat of *teental* (a 16-beat tala), while another *bandish* may arrive with a *mukhda* starting from Pancham and from the second beat of *teental*. Varied melodic or rhythmic patterns of *khayal*, *tappa* or *tarana* beautify some compositions while complex *taan*-encrusted phrases add to the excitement of other *bandishes*. Each *gharana* displays its preference for certain *bandishes*: e.g. Gwalior likes to explore a plethora of designs, Agra and Jaipur enjoy rhythmic variants, Patiala relishes full-blooded taans while Kirana prefers to remain steeped in melody.

Though the *bandish* is very specific to the *gharana* it is nurtured in, many compositions, handed down the ages through the rich oral tradition, are accepted and adapted across *gharanas* of both vocal and instrumental music. These time-tested *bandishes* have, more or less, one common feature; and that is: they capture the essence of the given raga in the simplest melodic and rhythmic phrases, leaving a long rope for improvised creativity; e.g. 'Sakhi eri aali

If khayal is a high-flying bird, bandish is its nest that offers a base woven with different aspects of raga music



Ajoy Chakrabarty

piya bina' in raga Yaman or 'Tarapat hoon jaise jal bin meen' in raga Lalit. The latter, sung by Faiyaz Khan (Agra *gharana*), seems to challenge his beloved, while Amir Khan (Kirana-Indore *gharana*) treats it entirely differently. The understated pathos of his deep voice creates the mood of total surrender before his 'saiyan'.

Contemporary compositions

Despite the traditional treasure trove, maestros belonging to different *gharanas* composed *bandishes* of varied genres like *khayal*, *thumri*, *tappa*, etc. As a young scholar of ITC Sangeet Research Academy, Ajoy Chakrabarty saw several legends at their creative heights. A passionate collector and proponent of traditional *bandishes* across *gharanas*, he admits, "After striking a relationship with a raga, one gets an entry into its inner chamber where its personality, with its intrinsic beauty, scent, hues and moods, is unveiled. When any such mood or colour stirs the heart, the mind sets out to etch it; and that is how a composition arrives. Conversely, when I did not find suitable compositions while singing less explored ragas in *khayal's* arena - such as Shuddh Bilawal, Khamaj or Bhairavi - I composed *bandishes*. One such example is 'Karam karo more saaeen', a vilambit *bandish* in Bhairavi."

Like Chakrabarty, Ashwini Bhide-Deshpande too was lucky to have seen creative geniuses like Ravi Shankar, Kumar Gandharva, Dinkar Kaikini and several others at work from close quarters. Albeit immensely inspired by them, Bhide reiterates, "I preserve and value my *gharana bandishes* like heirlooms and hand them over to the next generation as is. These compositions are to be internalised completely; no change is tolerated because each *bandish* is a tool of presenting a raga from a specific angle. In our [Jaipur Atrauli] *gharana*, there are no composers except Alladiya Khan. He often explored the complex angles such as the spec of *shuddh nishad* in Khambhavati (Rageshri *anga*) or a *jhaptal bandish* starting from the second beat! These are essential to learn to get intimate with raga and tala; but are not easy to carry during recitals. As a modern musician, I create according to my personal likings. When I could not relate to 'Sau-sau bari balama' because I do not like to sing the *bandish* of an early morning raga like Lalit beginning from upper tonic, I composed 'Jagiye ho Nandlal' based on key-phrases of the raga in lower registers." This urge led her to bring out a book of her own compositions.

It is not a secret that postmodern musicians are also bringing an element of newness to their creations especially by punching mathematical intellectualism in raga, tala and tempi. Whether these compositions are embraced as classics will be determined by their trajectory over centuries - much like the celebrated *bandishes* of today that have borne the vicissitudes of time to emerge as crystallised musical gems.

This article was first published in the August 2020 digital issue (Volume 10, Issue 1) of ON Stage.

The Music Will Go On

As countries gradually lift restrictions, it has become easier to believe that the enriching experience of attending a live concert is not a distant reality. Gauthier Herrmann, who founded the Artie's Festival in collaboration with the NCPA, tells us how his chamber music ensemble has been adapting to the situation.

By Beverly Pereira

The fear and uncertainty associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdowns across the world have effected losses on both the micro and macro scale. Its impact on the live music industry, for one, is still hard to estimate, but its effects are certainly palpable. With the closure of most performance venues across the world, tours, festivals and entire seasons were cancelled mid-way or long before they had even begun. French cellist Gauthier Herrmann and his chamber music ensemble – the Artie's – have been visiting India twice a year since 2008. The biannual Artie's Festival, a collaboration between the NCPA and artistic director Herrmann, is a fixture on the Western classical music calendar of Mumbai. But like other concerts that were scheduled to take place in its venues, the NCPA was forced to cancel the March edition of the festival this year.

Life under lockdown

With lockdown restrictions well in place since late March in both India and France, where Herrmann lives with his family, travel was out of the question. Besides the concerts in India, he had to cancel 41 others that were slated to take place in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E., Switzerland, Australia, New Caledonia and various regions in France. Speaking to us from Switzerland, Herrmann, who played his last pre-lockdown concert on 8th March, says, "Most of our summer tour concerts were also cancelled."

But the initial days of the lockdown did bring some respite from the frenetic pace at which the world functions. As the shelter-in-place order and work-from-home situation became the norm, it was as if people across the world were collectively finding an odd sense of comfort in activities like baking or journaling. Some, like Herrmann, found solace in spending quality time with their loved ones. "To be honest, the lockdown has been a fantastic time as we spent three months together as a family. It was just the four of us – my dear

wife Mathilde and our fantastic daughters Indiya and Augustine," says Herrmann, who otherwise lives out of his suitcase, performing with his travelling ensemble across the world.

Yet, as strict as the lockdown regulations were, they did not allow for creativity to be curtailed. Members of reputed orchestras tuned their instruments ahead of livestreams that enthralled patrons with virtual recitals. The world was also privy to a slew of songs born out of virtual collaborations between musicians playing out of their home studios or living rooms. Herrmann and



“While we had to cancel tours in many countries, I can very honestly say that the worst part of it was to cancel the Artie’s Festival in India”

his ensemble also collaborated with musicians during this period. “We received a crazy number of requests for ‘confinement concerts’, which means you have each artiste playing in their own home, after which the final piece is edited. I only accepted two of them as I don’t really like the idea that this can slowly replace the experience of a concert and of sharing moments in real life.”

What Herrmann and his group of musicians did thoroughly find themselves engaged in, though, were recordings – live recitals, as it were, recorded on stage but without an audience. “A few countries requested real concerts. These were shot in France. This was a great artistic project as we took the time to record and shoot fantastic pieces not only by Beethoven. It was a nice way to celebrate Beethoven’s 250th birthday,” he says. These performances will be available to the public in the near future once the exclusivity period ends. In store are beautiful recordings of the first movement of Beethoven’s famous Spring Sonata and the first movement of Piano Trio Op.1 No. 3, with Herrmann on cello, his wife Mathilde on violin and Emmanuel Christien on piano.

Music in the time of crisis

The European summer is in full swing*, and the Artie's would have ideally been performing every other day. Yet, Herrmann believes that the situation is not so bad at the moment, considering the fact that the group has already performed at 10 live concerts so far. It has been a few good months – since 28th June to be





At one of the Vault Concerts presented recently at La Cathédrale Souterraine

precise – for the Artie’s group has started to perform to live audiences at physical concerts as part of what Herrmann calls the Vault Concerts. Catering to a very small audience, this series of concerts is hosted in both fascinating spaces like cathedrals and conventional venues alike. “The programmes went well and

we performed the Beethoven String Trio Op. 9 No. 1 as well as an amazing arrangement of *Poème* by Ernest Chausson for violin, cello and accordion,” he says of the recitals that took place in the south of France over the last two months.

The Vault Concerts are not exactly a product of the pandemic, though. They were planned over a year ago, but many of them eventually took shape only towards the end of the lockdown. “We have great luck in France with so many beautiful venues like churches and castles where we can perform.” Another crucial factor that makes all the difference in this time of social distancing is that the Artie’s group performs chamber music at its core. The ensemble almost always comprises a small number of musicians as opposed to a regular full-size orchestra. “It’s one of the fantastic possibilities of chamber music – you can share it anywhere and it is very easy to move.”

It is natural to wonder whether connections and intimacy between the artistes or even with the audience are lost in these times of physical distancing when wearing a mask is the norm. “Connections are not lost at all as we rehearse a lot and don’t wear masks for our chamber music concerts. Of course, to see 50 per cent of the audience wearing a mask is something that we could never have even imagined a few months ago and it’s very strange. The distancing requirements do affect the feeling of proximity. But, for now, in France, when we play at smaller venues, it’s still a bit free. And this means that people can choose the kind of distancing they want to keep,” he explains.

For these musicians, the return to the stage – to some semblance of normalcy – has made them realise how music is so important and valuable to the people. “It

“It is fantastic to speak with the audience after the concert and to hear how they miss music so much”

is fantastic to speak with the audience after the concert and to hear how they miss music so much,” says Herrmann.

Looking forward

Given that Herrmann has been visiting India twice, often, thrice a year for over a decade, I was curious to know what went

through his mind when he had to cancel what would have been the 25th edition of the Artie’s Festival earlier in March this year. “India and the NCPA are very important to me and my team. While we had to cancel tours in many countries, I can very honestly say that the worst part of it was to cancel the Artie’s Festival in India. It has been a part of my life for the last 13 years. In fact, the programme, focussed on Beethoven’s 250th birthday with my dear friends Pierre Fouchenneret and Romain Descharmes, was something I was really looking forward to sharing with the audience at the NCPA.”

As of now, there is no real clarity on whether regulations will permit international travel or the opening up of concert venues to the public in India come November when the second edition of the Artie’s Festival takes place. But, the French cellist shares a few things that we all need to hear in these times of uncertainty. “I’d be ready to jump on a plane as soon as it becomes possible. Even if we cannot organise concerts with a full audience at the NCPA in November, I hope we can at least organise the festival in a different format,” he says, suggesting having multiple concerts in a day with fewer people in attendance. “Even though it will never ever replace the joy of a live concert, another option could be to record a few programmes at the NCPA and then make it available to the NCPA audience first and later as a stream in collaboration with channels like Mezzo or Medici.tv,” Herrmann concludes on an optimistic note.

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THE ETERNAL SOUND OF MUSIC

In moments of social confinement, art, once again, is our companion, like it has been in war and peace, sickness and health. **By Snigdha Hasan**



Italian soldiers dance at a mountain outpost in the Alps during World War I

It is the fifth month of the year*, and in a parallel, Corona-free world, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra would have been neck-deep in rehearsal for the All Together Global *Ode to Joy* concert series, one of the many year-round events on the packed calendar of Carnegie Hall to celebrate Beethoven's 250 years. Under the baton of Marin Alsop, 10 partner orchestras across six continents were to play the Ninth Symphony, and as part of each performance, the jewel of the symphonic crown, the *Ode to Joy*, was to be translated into a local language. The idea was to reimagine the work as a 21st-century call for unity, justice and empowerment, much like what the composer had in mind when he incorporated Friedrich Schiller's poem into his last symphony. The concert, like countless other Beethoven tribute events the world over, still has a digital footprint, affixed with a spirit-dampening "Cancelled". But if this was a clarion call for unity, when did the world

need it more in the recent times than now? As balconies take on a new meaning, lone musicians playing their instruments in them turn to the *Ode to Joy* and other classical reservoirs of strength to relay the message of hope the world is so desperate to cling on to.

The new-age cultural diet of Skype concerts, YouTube broadcasts and Instagram Live streams has somewhat helped cushion the blow of the pandemic that prevents us from being social. What, however, is not novel is the role that art has played in the face of adversity despite being sacrificed at the altar of its very exigencies. Outlining the exhaustive history of this role is beyond the scope of this article, as is any attempt to cover all facets of the visual and performing arts in this pursuit. What the article does set out to do is recall some events from 20th-century world history, including a few from the Indian subcontinent during the same period, to look at how art - in this case, largely but not only music - responded to them.

SHUTTERSTOCK

An equal music

A good starting point could perhaps be the introduction of Beethoven's Ninth to Japan amidst World War I hostilities. At Bando, a camp in the Ibaraki prefecture where German soldiers had been taken prisoners of war, the composer's works were evoked regularly in the trying, seemingly endless circumstances. When the war was finally over, the soldiers continued to languish in Japan for almost a year until ships from the fatherland came to fetch them. This is when they performed the symphony outside the camp for the first time in a country where Western classical music was still fairly new. The listeners were enthralled. A century later, performing the *Daiku* (Big Nine), as it is called in Japan, especially during year-end and New Year's Eve, remains a cherished tradition.

The dramatic unfolding of events after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand aside, the year 1914, in the world of theatre, is known for an unusual premiere. When avant-garde director-producer Aleksandr Jakovlevich Tairov founded the Kamerny (Chamber) Theatre in Moscow, he decided to open it with a production of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*.

In a world increasingly gripped by violence and destruction, Tairov's message through his choice of play, which was as much an ode to nature as to human emotions, was clear: in life, seek beauty and shun what's ugly.

Twenty-five years later, when war reared its ugly head again, a parallel development enabling electronic mass distribution of music for the first time meant, as Annegret Fauser writes in *Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II* (Oxford University Press; 2013), "Whether as an instrument of blatant propaganda or as a means of entertainment, recuperation, and uplift, music pervaded homes and concert halls, army camps and government buildings, hospitals and factories. A medium both permeable and malleable, music was appropriated for numerous war-related tasks. Indeed, even more than movies, posters, books, and newspapers, music sounded everywhere in this war, not only in its live manifestations but also through recording and radio."

Music served a similar purpose in other countries, but the sorrows of war ran too deep to be obscured by upbeat songs stoking patriotic fervour among

What is not novel is the role that art has played in the face of adversity despite being sacrificed at the altar of its very exigencies



Aleksandr Tairov

civilians and men on the front line alike. The Soviet Union, having lost 20 million of its men in World War II, grieved through songs that mourned the death of soldiers in a foreign land who then rose as cranes in the sky ('Zhuravli/'Cranes'), spoke of post-war trauma that a soldier endures when thunder sounds like nothing but gunfire to him ('Ya Segodnya do Zarivstanu/'I Will Wake up Before Dawn Today'), and yearned for lasting peace through the painting of a young boy who wishes for 'Pust Vsegda Budet Solntse/'Let There Always be Sunshine' with his bright sun against a clear blue sky.

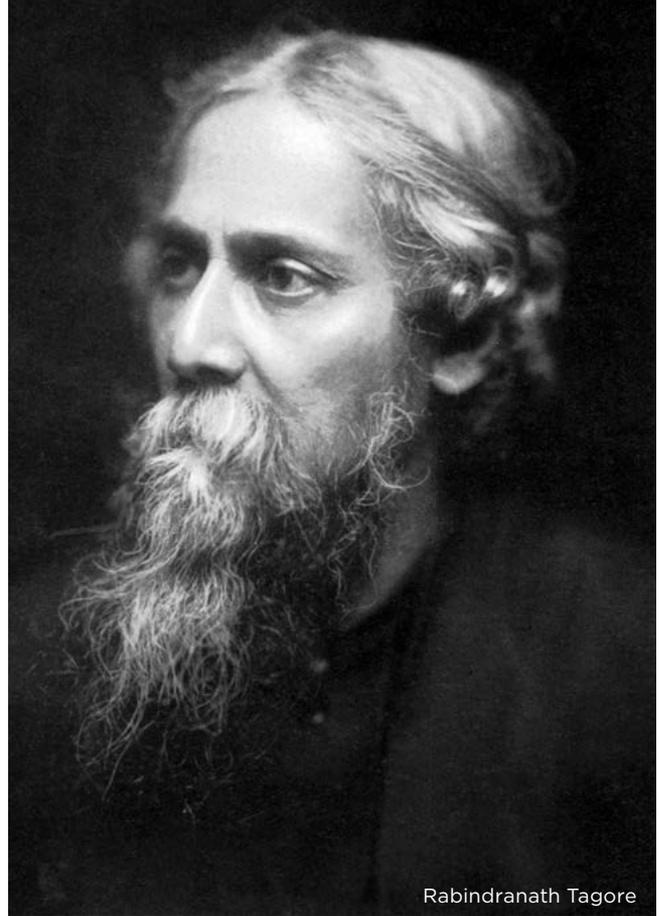
Jazz deserves a separate chapter in the documentation of war music. Much loved in America, it slowly moved up the ranks in Britain as the BBC reluctantly began to give more airtime to dance music. Listening to jazz in Germany had to be a fairly discreet act, for Hitler's hatred of the genre was rather well known. Culture, what ought to be included in it - and excluded from it - was a prime Nazi concern. The purging of Jewish musicians from German orchestras is a painful war memory soothed only by stories of forgiveness like that of Hellmut Stern's. The renowned violinist who was forced to flee Germany as a child, returned to his hometown after decades in exile to join the Berlin Philharmonic. In

FINE ART IMAGES/HERITAGE IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

what can be called the ultimate act of reconciliation, Stern spearheaded the orchestra's tour of Israel in 1990, where the ensemble joined hands with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra to perform a string of concerts conducted by Zubin Mehta. Stern passed away on 21st March this year.

Creative forces

Closer home, India's freedom movement was deeply enmeshed with the cultural awakening of its people, brought about by the numerous poems and songs that political leaders, activists, writers and artistes wrote and composed. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's 'Vande Mataram' (1882) was among the first such compositions that galvanised large numbers from all walks of life. This included musicians who came forward to record this praise to the motherland, starting with Rabindranath Tagore's own rendition, followed by Vishnu Digambar Paluskar's version in Raga Kafi and a duet by M.S. Subbulakshmi and D.K.



Rabindranath Tagore

Any reference to the Liberation War of 1971 is incomplete without dwelling on the songs of Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam that stoked the spirits of not just the Mukti Bahini but that of the common man too

Roy. By 1931, India had produced *Alam Ara*, its first talkie film, and soon enough, its cinematic output began to reflect the socio-political upheaval of the time. Lyricists were employed to write songs, often with thinly veiled references to India's impending freedom, which played a role in feeding the national consciousness.

The formation of theatre groups such as the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) in 1943 - the "People's Theatre" part of the name was suggested by Homi Jehangir Bhabha - further strengthened this awakening by promoting themes related to India's struggle for freedom. As a newly independent nation, India was eventually mired in a complex web of problems and with members including Balraj Sahni, Prithviraj Kapoor, Ritwik Ghatak and K.A. Abbas, IPTA continued to grapple with them on stage and on screen. It was joined in its efforts by Jana Natya Manch (Janam) in 1973, a group founded by Delhi's radical theatre amateurs, who sought to take theatre to the people and engage them through plays on price rise, elections, communalism, unemployment, trade union rights, etc. Few filmmakers today hire lyricists to pen songs about India's freedom from this ever-evolving set of problems - a role that IPTA, Janam and other theatre groups have steadfastly held on to.

When patriotic fervour had begun to give way to a new normal in the country, songs of freedom rose once again, this time in India's eastern neighbourhood, where culture over religion became the *raison d'être* of Bangladesh. Any reference to the Liberation War of 1971 is incomplete without dwelling on the songs of Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam that stoked the spirits of not just the Mukti Bahini but that of the common man too. In their bid to stifle dissent, the Opposition Forces banned Nazrul's 'Karar Oi Louho Kapat'. Months later, it was chosen as the first song to be broadcast from the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra (Free Bengal Radio Centre). Tagore's 'Amar Sonar Bangla' came to be the national anthem of Bangladesh.

What a set of forces found blasphemous in a composition became the symbol of the birth of a nation. But that's perhaps what music has always been. A force so strong, it transcends the reasons for its creation. From the confines of home, a virus-stricken world has imbued a 100-year-old aria in Puccini's *Turandot* with a new meaning, while Beethoven's Ninth is still being hummed as planned, albeit in sombre settings.

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Moments of Note

Eminent Indian dance historian, scholar and critic **Sunil Kothari** writes about the memorable moments he experienced during a lifelong association with the NCPA.

When the NCPA moved from Bhulabhai Desai Road to its permanent residence in 1973-74, it was a matter of great joy to me as I stayed at a stone's throw from Nariman Point. As a national cultural centre, the NCPA brought the greatest artistes, musicians, dancers and theatre performances to Mumbai audiences and I became a regular at the Little Theatre. I have happy memories of being involved in its grand endeavour, in my own way, by arranging several lecture-demonstrations, film screenings and dance appreciation courses. But the institution has not only been a great venue for the performing arts, it has also been an excellent resource for scholars and practitioners. Equipped with an extensive library of books on subjects related to the arts, its priceless and carefully conserved archival recordings and a comprehensive collection of art and photographs, the NCPA is indeed a cultural hub.

Then there was the *NCPA Quarterly Journal* which was edited by Kumud Mehta. It published several scholarly articles on dance, drama, Indian music, Western classical music, and allied subjects. I contributed many research articles on Odissi, Kuchipudi, dance sculptures of North Gujarat and also reviews on dance performances and books. Now we have *ON Stage*, the in-house monthly that is carrying on that tradition.

One of my more memorable responsibilities was to introduce dancers before their performances. It was a privilege to do the same for Yamini Krishnamurthy before her debut at the Little Theatre. I will also never forget the time Dr. Jamshed Bhabha asked me to introduce Kathak exponent Kumudini Lakhia at this very venue. A photograph of Dr. Bhabha, Lakhia and myself from that evening is one of my prized possessions.

Beyond the stage

Performances have always been the priority at the NCPA, but Dr. Bhabha had the foresight to realise that it would also serve as a place where scholarship could grow. Consulting books and visiting the archives for research became for me, and many others, an indispensable aspect of the institution. Additionally, lecture-demonstrations and workshops that seek to enlighten interested audiences have always been an integral part of the NCPA.



With Zakir Hussain and Sri Lankan exponent of Kandyan dance, Upeka Chitrasena, at the ADD ART Festival

I particularly remember arranging one such session on Bharatanatyam and Kathakali in which Mrinalini Sarabhai and Kavungal Chathunni Panicker participated. It has been recorded and is a part of the NCPA's archives. Those who have been lucky to participate in the workshops conducted by the legendary gurus Kelucharan Mohapatra, Kalanidhi Narayanan and Mohan Rao Kallianpurkar will undoubtedly remember the great learning experience these intense, hands-on sessions offered.

Another lecture-demonstration that I arranged was on Odissi in which Guru Mohapatra himself demonstrated various sculptural poses with luminous grace. He invited his disciple Protima Bedi to join him on stage and take *atibhanga*, the diagonal bend of the torso with the knees bent, which Bedi did in a trice owing to her excellent practice of yoga. Guruji also demonstrated *abhinaya* to the Odia song 'To laagi Gopa danda mana re kaliya suna', in which a *gopi* complains to Krishna that she cannot sell her milk and butter because of his pranks. The *abhinaya* cast a spell. I cannot forget the way he ferried milkmaids in a boat across the River Yamuna. He moved in a sitting position on stage creating an illusion of

rowing the boat. The transition from playing the role of Krishna to that of the milkmaids is ever etched in my memory. Once while performing an *ashtapadi* from *Gita Govinda*, Guruji in his depiction of Krishna looking for Radha in various directions, came forward where a series of flower garlands as a screen was arranged. He just removed the garlands and looked where Radha was, and we all felt Krishna's anxiety while waiting for Radha.

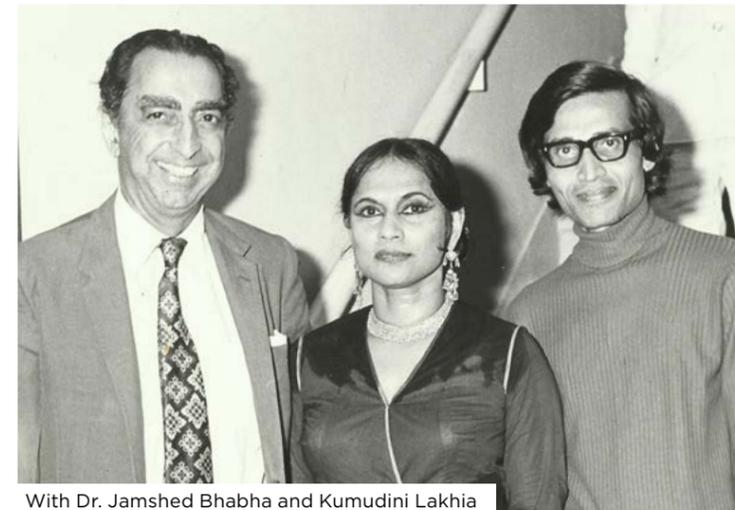
Besides arranging lecture-demonstrations on various classical dance forms, I also arranged screenings of films like Uday Shankar's *Kalpana*. Later on, when Satyajit Ray made, with the help of the NCPA, a film on Balasaraswati titled *Bala*, it was screened at the Little Theatre. Now we have regular screenings of films on ballets and plays from the National Theatre in London at the Godrej Dance Theatre.

Memorable creations

Another outstanding event was the East West Dance Encounter organised by Dr. Georg Lechner, Director of Max Muller Bhavan, in which several international dancers from Germany, Italy, England, America and France, along with leading dancers of India participated. In a way it was a historic conference because from then on, attention was focused on new directions in Indian dance. Performances included ones by Susanne Linke from Germany, the contemporary work *Angika* by Chandralekha, *Atah Kim* by Kumudini Lakhia and *Memory* on the theme of dowry death by Mrinalini Sarabhai. Among young dancers, Astad Deboo presented his new work *Mangalore Street* while Ileana Citaristi, the Italian dancer studying Odissi in India, presented *Echo* and *Narcissus*, in which she employed techniques from *Mayurbhanj Chhau*. Also memorable was *Winds of Shiva* by Uttara Asha Coorlawala which used yogic techniques.

The recitals by legendary musicians like Ravi Shankar, Vilayat Khan, Ali Akbar Khan, Shiv Kumar Sharma, Hariprasad Chaurasiya, Amjad Ali Khan, Kishori Amonkar, Mogubai Kurdikar, Bhimsen Joshi, Pandit Jasraj, the great M. S. Subbulakshmi and M. Balamuralikrishna were a treat for the arts-loving audiences of Mumbai. Dance performances of Bipin Singh, the Jhaveri Sisters, Kanak Rele, Sonal Mansingh and a host of others were a regular part of the NCPA. Today, in addition to stellar performances, the activity in dance has been further extended to gratis training for children of marginalised communities. I have indelible memories of those rare performances of Birju Maharaj. Crowds would come well in advance and fill up the Tata Theatre to experience his magic. Maharaj, with his extraordinary command of *taal* and *laya*, would mesmerise us while singing *thumris* in his melodious voice during *abhinaya*.

I distinctly remember when my book on Bharatanatyam published by The Marg Foundation was released at the Little Theatre. Later on, during the golden jubilee of India's independence, a revised and enlarged edition was released at the Experimental Theatre. On that occasion, I especially remember



With Dr. Jamshed Bhabha and Kumudini Lakhia

how Maharaj, Guru Mohapatra and Narayanan had performed together.

A mark of honour

The NCPA ADD ART Festival, which commemorated 50 years of the existence of the organisation, saw a spectacular series of performances that were presented from morning till night by luminaries from the worlds of Indian dance and music, including Rashid Khan, Zakir Hussain, dance performances by the Nrityagram Ensemble (Odissi), Aditi Mangaldas (Kathak), Malavika Sarukkai and Alarmel Valli (Bharatanatyam), followed by Shiv Kumar Sharma's santoor and Hariprasad Chaurasiya's flute, Kathak *abhinaya* by Maharaj which was accompanied by the vocal expertise of Ajoy Chakrabarty. It all culminated with *The Manganiyar Seduction*, a magnificent musical presentation by the Manganiyars of Rajasthan. The entire line-up of the festival collectively transported the audiences to a realm of great aesthetic delight.

The festival also included a series of dance demonstrations that covered the eight major forms of Indian classical dance forms. An excellent idea brought to fruition by Swapnokalpa Dasgupta, Head - Programming (Dance), NCPA, the workshops revealed the richness and intricacies of our dance heritage. In the past, I have given several lectures on *Sattriya* dances of Assam with Indira P. P. Bora, the legendary guru Raseswara Saikia and Ghanakanta Bora Muktiya. Over the years, these lectures have been attended by people of note, including writer Pupil Jayakar, film star Hema Malini, the then Chief Minister of Assam Tarun Gogoi and musician Bhupen Hazarika. My lectures created an awareness of the 600-year-old living dance tradition of the monks in monasteries called Sattras, which I was able to research and experience on a visit to Kamalabari Satra in Majuli, Assam, in 1964. On the occasion of the golden jubilee celebrations, I was once again given an opportunity to present my talk, accompanied by a screening of a rare film on *Sattriya* dance. Thus, when I look back, I feel it has all come full circle. The NCPA played a seminal role in my journey, and for that I shall remain indebted to it. ■

ON A LITERARY NOTE

From encyclopaedias and biographies to tomes on pedagogy and online resources, **Dr. Suvarnalata Rao**, Programming Head - Indian Music at the NCPA, recommends essential reading to widen your understanding of and delve deeper into the genre.

On Hindustani music

The NCPA Reference Library is a repository of books on the performing arts as well as material that sets the arts in their widest context. *Essays in Indian Ethnomusicology* (1998) by renowned scholar-musician, composer and ethnomusicologist Dr. Ashok Ranade is a microcosm of this defining principle of the library from the shelves of which it has been picked up by several researchers and students. Through 27 essays, the book places music in India in the wider perspectives of religion, philosophy, linguistics, poetics, theatre-arts, folklore and aesthetics, helping readers appreciate Indian music and culture as inseparable entities.

Any essential reading on Hindustani music is incomplete without a mention of another of Dr. Ranade's seminal works, *Hindustani Sangeet* (1997). It sheds light on the structure, concepts and forms of Indian music in a detailed yet easy-to-grasp manner. The various styles of singing (from *thumri* to *ghazal* and *bhajan*), the many *gharanas* of music and the rich musical instruments of India all get their due in the book.

Pillars of Hindustani Music (1993) by B.R. Deodhar is rare to come by in bookstores today. A classical singer, musicologist and music educator of repute who was awarded the Padma Shri, Deodhar edited the Hindi music monthly, *Sangeet Kala Vihar*. His columns in the magazine, which included biographies of 19th-century Indian musicians, were published in this book, regarded as an important publication in the documentation of the Hindustani music tradition.

An eminent scholar of literature, philosophy and music, Dr. Thakur Jaideva Singh's *History of Indian Music* (1994) covers diverse periods that left an indelible mark on making Hindustani and Carnatic musical traditions what they are today. From the music of the Indus Valley Civilisation to that of the Vedic and Epic ages as well as that found in other religious scriptures, the book documents it all while also featuring authors, composers and musicians from the 9th to 20th centuries.

From Swami Prajnananda's relentless work in the history and philosophy of Indian music emerged several scholarly gems, one of which is *A Historical Study of Indian Music* (1965). Covering a vast expanse of time, the book explores ancient musical instruments, the concept of raga, the origin and

development of *dhrupad* and *khayal*, and the close relationship between music and dance.

Sitar and Sarod in the 18th and 19th Centuries (1993) by Allyn Miner brings to light the early history of the two most prominent stringed instruments of northern India, distilled from written, oral, and pictorial sources. Miner, a concert performer on the sitar, is a lecturer in the Department of South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Her area of work includes the social history of music in South Asia, and Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu musicological literature.

Among his many works that contributed greatly to scholarly understanding of Carnatic music, P. Sambamurthy's *Aids to the Teaching of Music* (1984) draws from his own life. A law graduate, he chose a career in music, becoming the Head of the Department of Indian Music at the Madras University. The book includes chapters on such topics as music and its place in education, music in training schools and training colleges, musical tests, music as a career, etc.

For reference

The world of music is enormous, and an academic publication that does justice to this vastness with authority is *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (1988). A series of encyclopaedias, it comprises volumes dedicated to the music of Africa, South America, The United States and Canada, Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Asia, The Middle East, Europe, and Australia and the Pacific Islands, each edited by ethnomusicologists from the specialised area of study.

Biographies, etc

The story of Gauhar Jaan is, in a way, the story of the momentous changes music in India went through at the turn of the 20th century. *My Name is Gauhar Jaan: The Life and Times of a Musician* by Vikram Sampath chronicles the journey of the eminent Hindustani vocalist whose was the first Indian voice to ever be recorded. Despite her significant contribution to popularising classical music, her name was nearly lost in the annals of history until the biography revived interest in her life.

For 70 plus years, the Nightingale of India, as Sarojini Naidu christened M.S. Subbulakshmi, made



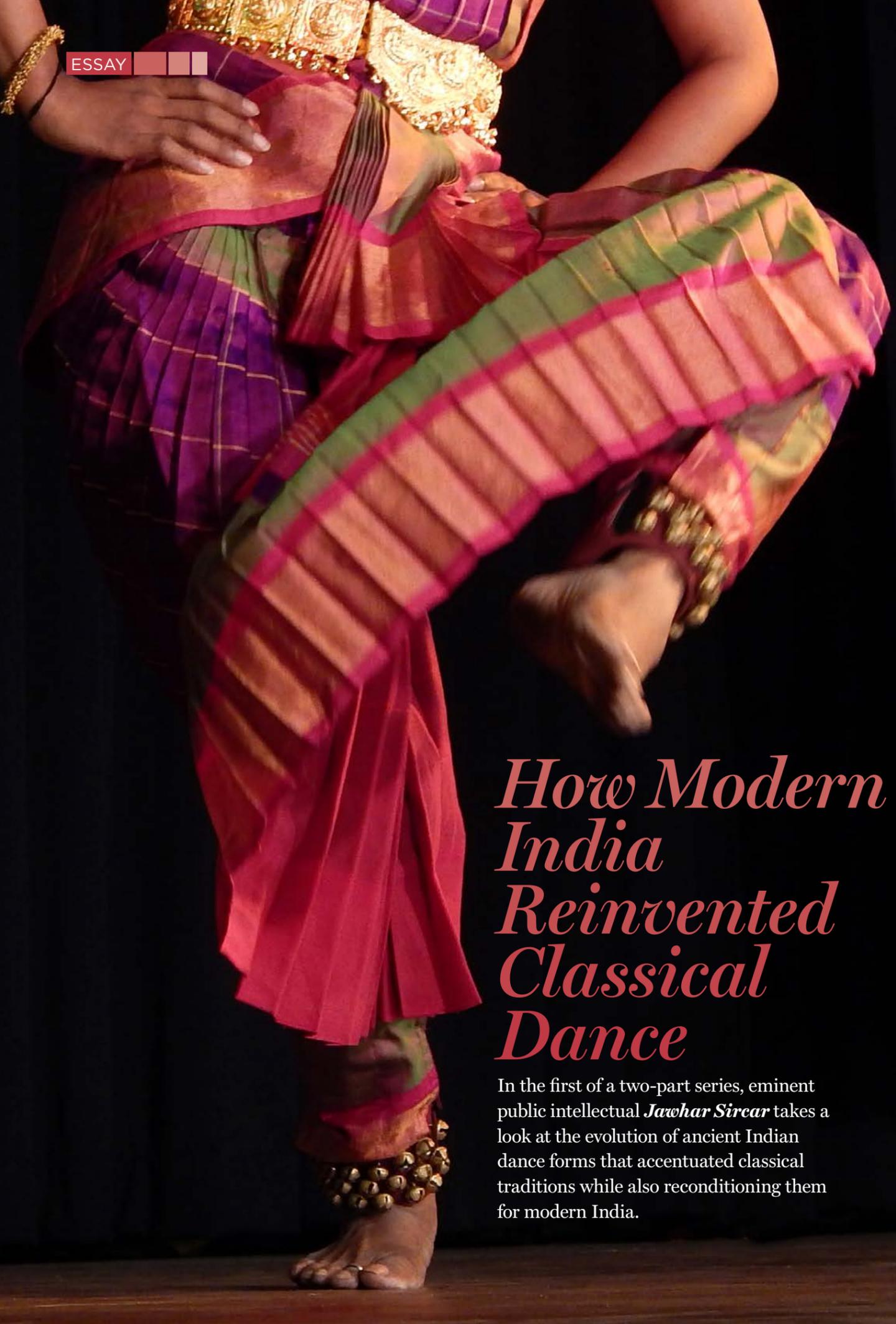
the country gasp each time she sang in her exquisite voice, hitting the perfect notes. *M.S. Subbulakshmi: The Definitive Biography* (previously published as *MS: A Life in Music*; 2004), by noted writer and columnist T.J.S. George recounts the journey of the singer extraordinaire, her musical upbringing and growth as a classical vocalist, her many influences and mentors, and the cultural icon she will always be remembered as.

Some lives are so grandly lived they need revisiting from time to time. While Oliver Craske's *Indian Sun: The Life and Music of Ravi Shankar*, the first biography of the sitar maestro, is an eagerly awaited one by connoisseurs in India, Ravi Shankar had himself chronicled his moments of introspection in the form of the autobiographies, *My Music, My Life* (1968) and *Raga Mala: Autobiography of Ravi Shankar* (1997; edited by George Harrison). The latter is a tell-all memoir, acclaimed as much for its candour as for it being steeped in the sitarist's musicality.

Online resource

Music in Motion: The Automated Transcription for Indian Music (AUTRIM) is a groundbreaking project by the NCPA and University of Amsterdam, which puts at the disposal of students, teachers and researchers of music a tool that enables them to take a zoomed-in look-and-listen of North Indian music. The project was undertaken at the behest of former chairman of NCPA, the late Dr. Jamshed Bhabha, who dreamt of developing a system of notation that would be specifically fit to describe and analyse Indian music with all its fine nuances and inflections. The website presents a wealth of information on the theoretical concepts governing the North Indian art music and offers over 100 compositions in 84 ragas performed by top-ranking vocalists, transcriptions of which can be both "seen" and "heard" in great detail. For more information, visit www.autrimncpa.wordpress.com

This article was first published in the June 2020 digital issue (Volume 9, Issue 11) of ON Stage.



How Modern India Reinvented Classical Dance

In the first of a two-part series, eminent public intellectual *Jawahar Sircar* takes a look at the evolution of ancient Indian dance forms that accentuated classical traditions while also reconditioning them for modern India.

Despite considerable material progress, the world still views India as an ancient land steeped in spirituality, with a culture that stretches back to a hoary, unfathomable past. Indians, too, subscribe to this glorification of its timelessness and have been encouraged, especially in the last few years, to take an obsessive pride in this tryst with eternity. Thus, we can hardly be faulted in subscribing to very marketable propositions, like the one that claims our classical dance forms represent an unbroken tradition for several millennia and all of them go back to the venerable sage, Bharata Muni, who composed *Natyashastra*. No one, however, is sure when he lived or wrote this treatise on dance and theatre. Estimates range from 500 BC to 500 AD, which is a rather long stretch of time, though pragmatists often settle for a shorter time band, 200 BC to 200 AD. This is approximately when the Mahabharata and Ramayana were also composed. While linking current traditions with the oldest dates possible surely confers more awe and respect upon Indian classical dance, it will become increasingly clear that this may not be accurate. In this article, as we navigate through the dance traditions we celebrate today, we realise that what we see now is really not what was performed centuries ago.

A new stage, a new audience

The very term “classical” denotes that it was meant for a limited class of connoisseurs or *rasikas*. So, a question that often arises is how large or limited were the earlier ‘classy’ audiences of ancient and medieval classical dance. To find a possible answer, I managed to obtain the floor-space measurements of the *mandapas* attached to the more important temples that were under the care of the Chennai Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India. This data revealed that the public halls of the temples were usually quite small, relatively speaking. Except the two massive Brihadeeshwarar temples at Thanjavur and Gangaikonda Cholapuram that were endowed with very large public spaces, the rest had limited areas for dance and music. The space for performances in the *mandapas* in the latter category was in the range of 200 to 400 square feet, while some went up to 650 square feet. They could, thus, accommodate only small audiences of some 30 to 40 persons, or at best, seat a maximum of 80 or so. Therefore, if these performing arts had not been liberated from the confines of the temple or the palace or the *kothi-haveli*, they would have never been democratised and thus viewed and appreciated by large numbers, unprecedented in the history of India.

Like all ancient institutions, Indian classical dance forms also suffered from the vicissitudes of time. Many of them underwent long periods of ‘breaks’ when these traditions received no patronage, when political fortunes fell. At times, several dances were even banned by the colonial government. The point is that the classical forms we see nowadays represent an unbroken continuity in neither form nor substance – they have had to move a lot from the past and undergo fundamental changes, to adjust with the times and technology. Consequently,

they have had to dispense with many aspects of the glorious tradition that had been built up over several centuries. The arrival of the Western proscenium stage in India and the setting up of modern auditoria altered the landscape of the performing arts so radically that all forms had to revamp their presentation protocols to survive. The stone or tiled floor of temples and palaces was, for instance, replaced by the wooden floor of the proscenium stage, and those that had an element of cushioning gave an ‘extra bounce’, which dancers learnt to utilise. Dancers also had to reorient their steps and postures as their audience was no more seated all around them, as in temples or palaces of the past, but in front, in much larger numbers than ever before. Similarly, while microphones and better acoustics management, coupled with new lighting technologies, did help classical music and dance a lot, they also demanded re-harmonisation with the new paradigm. While classical forms transcended the limitations of performing only before a small elite, the new democratic viewers brought different tastes and preferences into the halls.

Politically speaking

As India moved towards Independence, it was imperative to present or foist a ‘national culture and tradition’ and it was also realised that a federal cultural conglomerate like ours would need to project a multi-ethnic, multi-dimensional one, rather than have just one ‘national dance’ or one national music, theatre or even food. The pre-colonial glory of India, that had been slighted and belittled by the British, was now brought out of the archives and the past, real or imagined, sought to be resuscitated, re-energised and relived. At this stage, let us try to locate when exactly the processes of ‘modernisation’ began and when these classical forms were ‘democratised’ enough for the people of India to claim ‘ownership’ of their traditional culture. The answer we find after examining the history of many important forms of Indian classical dance is interesting, as everything seems to hover around mainly one decade, the 1930s. This is when most of them underwent a lot of ‘reinvention’ and considerable overhauling, and also when the face-off between the past and the future was the most pronounced. Those classical dances that missed the bus in this brilliant decade appear to have been taken up for resuscitation and repackaging in the next round, in the 1950s. But the undeniable fact is that Indians had a plenitude of reasonably ancient cultural traditions in many different regions, that had been cultivated and nurtured over centuries. As these could easily be woven into a new cultural tapestry, India did not, therefore, need to conjure and ‘manufacture’ culture – like the Disney characters of America or the ‘Bush Ballads’ and *Crocodile Dundee* of Australia.

India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, took special care to rebuild modern India on the strong foundations of the past, and he was also personally involved in setting up the three national academies for art, literature and the performing arts. The last of these, the Sangeet Natak Akademi, which was meant for music, dance and theatre, was set up in 1952, and



An odissi dancer at the Brahmavar Temple in Odisha

its task appeared to be ready and cut out for it. Those ancient forms of classical dance that had already begun their new life from the 1930s were waiting for a much-required boost from the new government in India. As for the other classical dances, like Odissi, that had not yet been resuscitated by the time the country attained Independence, actually needed more help and national 'recognition'. The first National Seminar of Dance was held in New Delhi in 1958, amidst a lot of hope, as the most pioneering and historic step that was taken to make sense of the complex diversity of varied forms of classical dance in different regions of India. Kuchipudi of Andhra Pradesh, for instance, made its pitch for being given recognition but felt slighted at not being given appropriate status. It was confirmed at this seminar that India was literally sitting on a gold mine of incredibly rich ancient dance forms that had survived several centuries, with or without breaks. What it needed most was revival to the extent possible and also serious 'packaging' for modern audiences, both in India and abroad. This was achieved by redesigning costumes, and reconstructing the grammar of dance, as also by using new techniques. Shortening performance time for recitals was critical as contemporary audiences were strapped for time, unlike the leisurely rich of yesteryears. Almost all classical dance forms were, therefore, compelled to innovate and deviate to some extent from *Shastric* or *Marga* mandates. They had to attract and hold back present-day audiences, who had many more attractive cultural expressions and entertainment to choose from.

We cannot proceed further without referring to a feature that appeared quite common among several classical dances, irrespective of region. It is

The classical [dance] forms we see nowadays represent an unbroken continuity in neither form nor substance – they have had to undergo fundamental changes to adjust with the times and technology

the phenomenon of how a new class of performers, usually from upper economic strata and castes, took these dances out from the monopolistic possession of their age-old custodians. The latter consisted of temple dancers, the 'mistresses

of the Lord' as these traditional *dasi attam* practitioners were called, or court dancers who had kept the flame burning, often under adverse circumstances. Many of the forms associated with temple *devadasis* and palace *tawaiifs* carried the dichotomous distinction of being 'classy, highly skilled arts' and, at the same time, being branded as sensual and loose. We could view the process of modernisation of form and technique and the accompanying sanitisation of public repute that began in the 1930s with Bharatanatyam as a sort of 'Brahmanical appropriation'. In most cases, the new dancers from the upper strata overshadowed the older hereditary class of performers, while the latter usually stepped back and faded away. There were, of course, brilliant exceptions like Tanjore Balasaraswati of *devadasi* origins, who became a world-class Bharatanatyam performer, loved and adored by the public. In a way, therefore, she was the dance-counterpart of M.S. Subbulakshmi, the nightingale of Carnatic music, who was also the daughter of a *devadasi*. Both of them more than made up for the ignominy and exploitation that their matrilineal ancestors had suffered, over centuries.

This article was first published in the April 2020 digital issue (Volume 9, Issue 9) of ON Stage. Jawhar Sircar, a public intellectual, writer and speaker, has served as India's longest-tenured Culture Secretary and was also CEO of Prasar Bharati (Akashvani & Doordarshan).

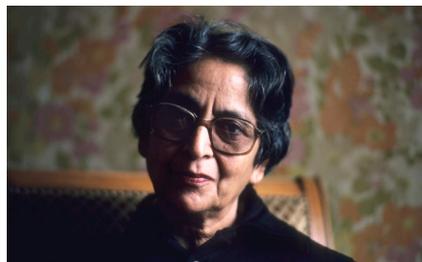
Kaleidoscope

Your window to the latest in the performing arts across India and the world.



↑ Spring festivities

Every year since the 1980s, the Ruhr area in Germany has hosted the splendid Ruhr Piano Festival which showcases performances by world-class pianists in castles and concert halls across the region. This year, notwithstanding delays and cancellations, a series of concerts by Markus Becker and Ma'alot Quintett, Arcadi Volodos, Fred Hersch Trio and Michel Camilo are scheduled to be presented as part of the festival. Also performing works by Beethoven and Debussy will be the magnificent Maria João Pires, who enthralled audiences at the NCPA during the SOI Spring 2020 Season. For more information, visit www.klavierfestival.de



↑ Eminent Lahoris

Pakistani NGO Lahore Sangat has been installing blue enamel plaques to commemorate great personalities who once lived or worked within the historic area of Lahore, often known as Old City or the Walled City of Lahore. Famous for significant Mughal monuments, including the Lahore Fort, a World Heritage site, as well as the Badshahi and Wazir Khan mosques, the local neighbourhoods in the area now also honour relatively modern luminaries like freedom fighter Lala Lajpat Rai, novelist Amrita Pritam and classical dancer Maharaj Ghulam Hussain Kathak. A fitting tribute to the past. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/lahoresangat

⇒ Excellent conduct

At a time when the representation of women who wield the baton in orchestras is universally appalling, the Philharmonie de Paris and Paris Mozart Orchestra presented the first edition of La Maestra, a competition that seeks to shine the light on talented women composers. Jury member and stellar conductor in her own right, Marin Alsop explained to NPR that the competition was more about creating a support system for women to grow. 'Men have had hundreds of years to open the door to women and they chose not to,' she said. Indonesian conductor Rebecca Tong won the first edition of the competition, which received over 200 applicants from 51 countries. For more information, visit www.lamaestra-paris.com and to watch videos from the competition, visit www.arte.tv/maestra



↑ Triumphant return

It is heartening to learn that the first day of post-lockdown live performances at Rangamancha, the open-air venue in Kolkata, saw a full house in spite of the weather forecast predicting thunderstorm and heavy rains. The love for the performing arts ran deep and with safety precautions in place, audience members were able to enjoy *Jwarasur Badh*, an innovative production by theatre group Purba Paschim, that chose to transplant contemporary elements like face masks and vaccination in a mythological world in which Hindu deities warred with a 'fever demon'. While rehearsals were conducted online and the actors wore masks on stage, for audience members and artistes, the experiment was undoubtedly a success. For more information on the theatre group, visit www.purbapaschim.net

⇩ Being Black in Britain

The National Theatre in London has reopened its doors with a compelling sequel to *Death of England*, which *The Guardian* called an 'exhilarating and hair-raising drama'. In *Death of England: Delroy*, writers Clint Dyer and Roy Williams have now turned their eye to the condition of being a Black working-class man in Britain. The production stars Michael Balogun who takes the stage at the remodelled Olivier Theatre which now has physically distanced seating and social bubbles to ensure a safe live theatre experience.

For more information, visit www.nationaltheatre.org.uk





The National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) Summer Fiesta has been a staple tradition providing arts and culture experiences for the children of Mumbai during the holidays. A community-minded festival, it is designed to empower children by inspiring their imagination and broadening their creative minds through exciting, interactive workshops. This festival continually strives to provide new and unique opportunities for children to learn, play, and be active. Local and national talent conducting the workshops at the festival bring with them a wide array of different skills, from acting, public speaking, dance, music, to writing. Summer Fiesta aims to promote the benefits and values of the performing arts not just by showing children the entertainment but also by getting them involved in high-quality workshops that are fantastic value for money.

Like so many events, the 2020 Summer Fiesta had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, rather than allow the current state of affairs to halt proceedings entirely, this Diwali, the NCPA is delighted to bring creativity into your home with the **Winter Fiesta**.

Unleash your child's creativity and imagination with a wide variety of live, interactive workshops for children aged 3 – 20 years of age. From magic, to classical music, to dance, to Shakespeare, to creative writing, to physical theatre, there is something for everyone at every age. These workshops focus on enhancing imagination, creative thinking, and self-expression. Participants will learn various skills in an informal, non-competitive environment.

One of the great benefits of having these incredible workshops online is that it allows us to be truly national and reach out to parts of the country that have not had the opportunity to participate in a workshop at the NCPA. This taps into one of the great virtues of art: bringing people together. Our hope is that, even after we can welcome

people back to our theatres and rehearsal rooms, this initiative will continue and allow us to develop relationships with young creative people all over India.

Participants will receive an official certificate of participation from the NCPA, signed by the workshop leader and NCPA Genre head. Above all else, we want all participants, whether they book a single workshop or multiple, to have an enriching and fun experience.

Age group: 3 to 20 years

For workshop registration, please contact Binaifar Bhesania on 9137076369 or Email: winterfiesta@ncpamumbai.com
Online Registration: www.bookmyshow.com
For more information: www.ncpamumbai.com
Workshop details mentioned below:

DANCE

Happy Feet

Age Group: 3 to 5 years

Conductor: Mahafreenn Irani

Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)

Time: 10:00 AM to 10:45 AM

Even the shiest among us wish to get on the dance floor and show some moves. Because that is what dance does – it lets you enjoy music and rhythm, shed inhibition and be comfortable with your body. And the sooner that happens, the merrier. This workshop will let tiny tots do just that and help improve coordination, give them an energetic cardiovascular workout, and most importantly, let them have fun and realise everyone can dance. Mahafreenn will teach a different dance style through a song every day – Hip-hop (Dance Monkey), Bollywood (Ghungroo), MJ style (Billy Jean), and Retro (Grease lighting). On the concluding day, the child can present all four songs in a stellar performance to fans at home.

Workshop Fees: ₹3,000/-

Limited seats: 15

DANCE

Dance Dynamic

Age Group: 6 to 8 years



Conductor: Mahafreenn Irani

Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)

Time: 11:00 AM to 12 noon

Even the shiest among us wish to get on the dance floor and show some moves. Because that is what dance does – it lets you enjoy music and rhythm, shed inhibition and be comfortable with your body. At an age where preferences and personality traits already begin to develop roots, this workshop will help improve coordination, give children a cardiovascular workout, reduce stress and most importantly, let them have fun and realise everyone can dance. Mahafreenn will teach a different style through a song every day – Hip-hop (Dance Monkey), Bollywood (Ghungroo), MJ style (Billy Jean), and Retro (Grease lighting). On the day of the finale, the child can present all four songs in a stellar performance to fans at home.

Workshop Fees: ₹3,500/-

Limited seats: 15

LITERATURE

Feet in The Sand!

Age Group: 6 to 8 years

Conductor: Sakshi Singh

Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)

Time: 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM

The lockdown may have forced you to turn down your child's request to take her to the beach more than once. But an imaginary escape to the chowpatty is still safe. As author and poet Sakshi Singh takes kids on a sea-kissed journey through her bilingual book on the environment, *Feet in The Sand/ Raiit me Paav*, they will learn to read, rhyme and create their own poems and stories. The book (the workshop fee includes a digital copy) focusses on the need to save

planet Earth and to clean it in a fun and childlike way.

Workshop Fees: ₹2,800/-

Limited seats: 15

MAGIC

Hocus Pocus

Age Group: 6 to 8 years (Adult supervision/ assistance recommended)

Conductor: Kruti Parekh

Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)

Time: 12:00 noon to 1:00 PM

Asia's only professional woman mentalist and a Ph.D. in Magical Entertainment, Kruti Parekh is all set to turn your child into an instant magician. Using objects easily available at home, she will take participants through the basics of magic and help them explore their creativity and digital dexterity, thereby giving a boost to their confidence along the way. Once they have grasped what sleight of hand is all about, Parekh will also teach them how to present the magic tricks. Learning something new calls for discipline and this workshop promises to be both fun and regimented to bring out the best in children. The participants will be sent a list of props to be kept ready for the class.

Workshop Fees: ₹2,500/-

Limited seats: 25

LITERATURE

How Our Country Got Its Name

Age Group: 6 to 8 years

Conductor: Oindrila Purohit & Veena Manoj of Grooming Babies Global Pvt. Ltd.

Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)

Time: 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Mythology gives young minds a rich insight into humanity and history. It offers a glimpse into ancient civilisations and culture, imparting traditional wisdom in an accessible manner. Based on an ancient story, in this workshop, children will explore how our country came to be called Bharatvarsh. It is a multisensory workshop where the story meets craft. Through interactive narration, rhythmic storytelling, verbal storyboarding and creation of props,

the sessions transport young minds to the origin of our mighty nation, highlighting the values of compassion, courage and coexistence. They aim at nurturing children's imagination, developing their visualisation and narrative skills, and helping them think sequentially and in a structured manner.

Participants would need:

Day 1: 1 wooden party spoon, 1 colourful paper napkin, small rubber bands, sketch pen
Day 2: A3 chart paper, origami papers, craft glue, crayons, and sketch pen
Day 3: 1 shuttlecock, golden acrylic paint, self-adhesive crystal stickers, 1 origami paper, sketch pen, craft glue
Day 4: Paper bag, A4 tinted papers, sketch pen, scissors, craft glue
Day 5: Drawing paper, pencil, eraser, sketch pen

Workshop Fees: ₹2,500/-

Limited seats: 20

MULTIMEDIA EDUCATION

WeKids YouTubers

Age Group: 6 to 8 years

Conductor: Shantanu Joshi

Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)

Time: 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Got a little star in the making? Let your kids produce their own YouTube show at home, with guidance – and some fun techniques to make the show special – provided at every step of the way. Whether it's a film or tech review, cooking show, stand-up comedy, DIY special, documentary, news bulletin or advertising, it will all come together when the participants immerse themselves in the creative process. They will learn the fundamentals of ideation, scripting, facing the camera, interview and presentation skills, voice modulation, music and effects. Each participant will



release their show on YouTube after our final editing touch. Access to a smartphone, in addition to the device being used to participate in the workshop, is mandatory.

Workshop Fees: ₹4,500/-

Limited seats: 6

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Being Beethoven!

Age Group: 6 to 8 years

Conductor: Musicians of the Symphony Orchestra of India

Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)

Time: 4:00 PM to 4:45 PM

Mozart gave his first concert just before he turned six while Beethoven's earliest known public performance was when he was seven. You now know the reason behind the recommended age group for this workshop. Through five daily sessions, musicians of the Symphony Orchestra of India will familiarise participants with the world of Western classical music. The workshop will introduce a variety of concepts in a fun and engaging manner. Students will learn to develop their listening skills, rhythmic ideas, learn the history of famous composers and hear their music, learn about the different instruments in an orchestra, the basics of music theory and Solfeggio.

Workshop Fees: ₹3,500/-

Limited seats: 7

DANCE

Dance Theatre

Age Group: 12 to 15 years

Conductor: Sumeet Nagdev

Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)

Time: 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM

In a workshop high on energy and full of music, participants will be taught the nuances of modern dance with elements of jazz-ballet and physical theatre. They will learn to apply their skills of expression to storytelling through mime and performance. The class helps children become confident on stage by encouraging them to express themselves wholeheartedly through musical

theatre and dance. Participating students will need a minimum of 100 square feet of space to move and good quality speakers. Sumeet Nagdev's mission is to provide holistic dance education and allow students to participate in organised and devised modern dance training, enabling them to consider it as a career option.

Workshop Fees: ₹2,500/-
Limited seats: 20

MULTIMEDIA EDUCATION

WeKids YouTubers

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Shantanu Joshi
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 4.00 PM to 5.00 PM

Got a budding film critic, tech guru, DIY specialist, chef, documentary filmmaker, reporter or stand-up comedian in the making? Let your children produce their own YouTube show at home to get a taste of the world of broadcasting, with guidance provided at every step of the way along with fun techniques to make the show special with the child's unique stamp. Participants will be taken through an immersive creative process through which they will learn ideation, scripting, facing the camera, interview and presentation skills, voice modulation, music and effects. Each participant will release her show on YouTube after our final editing touch. Access to a smartphone, in addition to the device being used to participate in the workshop, is mandatory.

Workshop Fees: ₹4,500/-
Limited seats: 6

MAGIC

Hocus Pocus

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Kruti Parekh
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 10.00 AM to 11.00 AM

Asia's only professional woman mentalist and a Ph.D. in Magical Entertainment, Kruti Parekh is all set to turn your child into an instant magician. Using objects easily available at home, she will take participants through the basics of



magic and help them explore their creativity and digital dexterity, thereby giving a boost to their confidence along the way. Once they have grasped what sleight of hand is all about, Parekh will also teach them how to present a magic show. Learning something new calls for discipline and this workshop promises to be both fun and regimented to bring out the best in children. The participants will be sent a list of props to be kept ready for the class.

Workshop Fees: ₹2,500/-
Limited seats: 25

CREATIVE WRITING

Creative Writing

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Shabnam Minwalla
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM

Creating a short story can be compared to a spot of sorcery. You toss different ingredients together and make something magical. In this workshop, we will look at all that goes into writing fiction. Then we will choose our ingredients – character, setting, and plot – stir them together with loads of imagination and come up with our very own stories. In these sessions, the participants will learn to generate ideas, and then transform them into stories. This will allow them to understand the limitless nature of the imagination, the wonder of words and the power of stories.

Workshop Fees: ₹3,500 (Inclusive of GST)
Limited seats: 12

COMEDY

Laugh Out Loud - Stand-Up Comedy Workshop - Juniors

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Rima Medhi for Creatiwitty.inc

Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 2:30 PM to 4:00 PM

At a time when the world could do with some laughter, a light-hearted workshop will teach participants the serious business of making others laugh. The art of stand-up comedy is about writing one's own script and performing it with a generous dash of spontaneity. The highlights of the workshop include content structuring, creative writing, voice modulation and performance and presentation skills. A good comedian also boasts impressive communication skills, exudes confidence, has a remarkable stage presence and is a performer who can think on her feet – benefits that come with learning how to crack a good joke.

Workshop Fees: ₹4,500/-
Limited seats: 12

DANCE

Jazz Funk with Ashley Lobo's The Danceworx

Age Group: 12 to 15 years
Conductor: Ragini from Ashley Lobo's The Danceworx
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 4:00 PM to 5.15 PM

Jazz funk as a dance form is a fusion of styles. It finds its roots in jazz within a melting pot of commercial genres of dance like hip-hop, street, etc. Funk builds its foundation on one's inner groove, while jazz influences a dancer's posture, technique, and musicality. Over five days, participants will explore performance-based movement. The module of classes will be based on fun choreographies that will help the young dancers to explore not only their individual style, but also coordination and rhythm. In the process of learning a set choreography, they will learn to focus on abilities of quick learning, understanding music, and of course, dancing their hearts out.

Workshop Fees: ₹3,500/-
Limited seats: 20

DANCE

Hip Hop with Ashley Lobo's The Danceworx

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Naren Lalwani from Ashley Lobo's The Danceworx
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 5.30 PM to 6.45 PM

Hip-hop is a dance style that stems from the music itself. It allows dancers to groove to the rhythm of music and find their unique style within various techniques of waacking, popping & locking, break dancing, etc. In this workshop, participants will get to find their groove, feel the rhythm, and identify musicality – all through fun methods and dance combinations. The focus of the workshops would be on how to be an ace performer and have the kind of confidence that would help not only in dance, but also daily life in the long run.

Workshop Fees: ₹3,500/-
Limited seats: 20

PUPPETRY

The Puppetarians

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Sangya Ojha
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM

The world of puppets is as fascinating on stage as it is behind the scenes. Over the course of five days, children will be taught to make puppets from things easily available at home. Once the puppets are crafted, the basics of puppetry techniques, movement and voice modulation for the creation of different characters will be shared and practised. Tricks for performing at home for the family and making videos with puppets will also be shared so that even after the workshop is over, the fun, learning and

practice continue. This workshop will help children use their imagination and find creative expression through puppetry – skills which will go a long way.

Workshop Fees: ₹2,500/-
Limited seats: 30

LITERATURE

India Roots!

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Oindrila Purohit & Veena Manoj from Grooming Babies Global Pvt. Ltd.
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 12 noon to 1:00 PM

India Roots is a series of artistic engagement workshops to help children experience the folk traditions of India through stories, knowledge sharing, and art and handicrafts. Each session centres around one Indian state and delves into its culture. During the five sessions, children will make a clay mask symbolic of the tribes of Jharkhand, learn the Gond art of Madhya Pradesh, design jute handicrafts inspired by the traditions of Bengal, paint the art of Kashmir, and participate in Maharashtra's Diwali tradition of building a mud *kila*. Development of healthy ethnic pride has been linked to enhanced emotional intelligence in young minds. Aimed at children who are growing up to be world citizens, the workshop seeks to inspire confidence in India's roots and artistic heritage.

Participants would need:

Day 1: Clay, newspaper, blunt knife, acrylic paint and brushes
Day 2: Art paper, sketch pens, drawing pencil
Day 3: An empty tall glass bottle, 5-metre jute rope (preferably colourful), hot glue gun, scissors
Day 4: Mid-size thermocol plate, brush, acrylic paints (maroon, green, blue, golden), white paper, drawing pencil
Day 5: 3 round thermocol plates (in 3 different sizes), 2 packets of moulding clay, 1 empty tissue roll, 1 straw, 1 sheet of white A4-size paper, strong adhesive, sketch pen, acrylic paints and brushes

Workshop Fees: ₹2,500/-
Limited seats: 20



DANCE

Duet with The Camera

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Swapnokalpa Dasgupta along with Senior Photojournalist, Mukesh Parpiani
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 12 noon to 1:00 PM

The Head of Programming (Dance) at the NCPA, Swapnokalpa Dasgupta, and the head of Piramal Gallery, Mukesh Parpiani, will help children explore different movements in varied spaces captured while experimenting with the camera. Tables and dancing fingers, footwork and staircases, dancing shoulders, and much more – even in the absence of a stage or dance studio, there is ample scope and possibilities for movement. Each day, the workshop will unveil a new perspective, a new angle to experience the performative body. A video would be put together featuring the captures by all students at the end of the workshop.

Workshop Fees: ₹2,500 (Inclusive of GST)
Limited seats: 20

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Being Beethoven!

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Musicians of the Symphony Orchestra of India
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 5:30 PM to 6:15 PM



How niche is Western classical music? Not so much, if we told you the sources of some of the most popular pieces of music ever. Can you learn it in India? Yes, from the country's first and only professional orchestra. Through five daily sessions, musicians of the Symphony Orchestra of India will familiarise participants with the world of Western classical music. The workshop will introduce a variety of concepts in a fun and engaging manner. Students will learn to develop their listening skills, rhythmic ideas, learn the history of famous composers and hear their music, learn about the different instruments in an orchestra, the basics of music theory and Solfeggio.

Workshop Fees: ₹3,500/-
Limited seats: 7

DANCE

Dance with Ash - Discover Your Inner Dancer

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Ash Mukherjee
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 6.00 PM to 7.00 PM

In this series of workshops specially designed for the NCPA, award-winning dancer and choreographer Ash Mukherjee will help participants find and understand their natural movement through the medium of play, word association, small tasks, movement and meditation. This invaluable experience of discovering their authentic movement expression will allow participants to express themselves assertively, understand the skills of storytelling and musicality, and decide which style of dance training might suit them best. Drawing from Mukherjee's experience in the arena of dance and well-being from styles like ballet, contemporary, folkloric, *Natyashastra* and jazz theatre dance, the course will impart a holistic experience created with both experienced young dance students and complete beginners in mind. The workshop will conclude with a final online dance performance and a sharing session.

Workshop Fees: ₹2,500/-
Limited seats: 20

MAGIC

Hocus Pocus

Age Group: 12 to 15 years
Conductor: Kruti Parekh
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 4.00 PM to 5.00 PM

Asia's only professional woman mentalist and a Ph.D. in Magical Entertainment, Kruti Parekh is all set to turn your teen into an instant magician. Using objects easily available at home, she will take participants through the basics of magic and help them explore their creativity and digital dexterity, thereby giving a boost to their confidence along the way. Once they have grasped what sleight of hand is all about, Parekh will also teach them how to present a magic show. Learning something new calls for discipline and this workshop promises to be both fun and regimented to bring out the best in children. The participants will be sent a list of props to be kept ready for the class.

Workshop Fees: ₹2,500/-
Limited seats: 25

DANCE

Bharatanatyam

Age Group: 9 to 11 years
Conductor: Rama Vaidyanathan along with Dakshina Vaidyanathan and Sannidhi Vaidyanathan
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 5.00 PM to 6.00 PM

Dance in India has a unique way of identifying with the country's heritage and layered culture. It is therefore important to expose children to this vast world of gestures, expressions and mythology. The curriculum of this workshop will give participants an insight into Bharatanatyam, to trigger their curiosity and enhance their understanding of the idiom. Basic movement dynamics, fun exercises in storytelling, and an introduction to the fascinating world of poetry, metaphors and symbolism will give them a holistic

idea of the art form. It promises to ignite a love for aesthetics and sensitise them to India's soft powers.

Workshop Fees: ₹3,500/-
Limited seats: 20

COMEDY

Laugh Out Loud - Stand-Up Comedy Workshop - Seniors

Age Group: 12 to 15 years
Conductor: Rima Medhi for Creatiwitty. inc
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 4:30 PM to 6:00 PM

At a time when the world could do with some laughter, honing your comic timing could just do the trick. A light-hearted workshop will teach participants the serious business of making others laugh. The art of stand-up comedy is about writing one's own script and performing it with a generous dash of spontaneity. The highlights of the workshop include content structuring, creative writing, voice modulation and performance and presentation skills. A good comedian also boasts impressive communication skills, exudes confidence, has a remarkable stage presence and is a performer who can think on her feet – benefits that come with learning how to crack a good joke.

Workshop Fees: ₹4,500/-
Limited seats: 12

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Talk Like TED

Age Group: 16 to 20 years
Conductor: Rima Medhi for Creatiwitty. inc
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 11.00 AM to 12:30 PM

Creatiwitty.inc in association with TED-Ed brings you its exclusive workshop, Talk like TED, which gives you access to the TED-Ed Curriculum and Global TED-Ed platform. If you have an idea worth

sharing, jump right in. If not, the sessions will help you come up with one. Next, you will learn to craft your own TED Talk by structuring the content and scripting, and presenting it effectively. Preparing for the talk will help you widen your worldview, develop research skills, think of solutions to global challenges, and enhance your vocabulary and general knowledge. Better communication and analytical skills, confidence-building and remarkable stage presence fall under some of the other benefits.

Please note - Creatiwitty.inc is an official TED-Ed partner. We do not access content unofficially.

Workshop Fees: ₹4,500/-
Limited seats: 12

THEATRE

Playing Shakespeare: Voice, Text & Physicality

Age Group: 16 to 20 years
Conductor: by Michael Corbidge, Lucy Cullingford & Cathleen McCarron from the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC)
Dates: Monday, 16th to Friday, 20th November (daily)
Time: 2.00 PM to 4.00 PM

A five-day series with three practitioners from the world-renowned Royal Shakespeare Company. Never fear Shakespeare again as you learn how to navigate his text in a fun, active way using techniques and learning the skills that focus on the use of your voice, body and mind to tell stories, and own text.

Workshop Fees: ₹5000/-
Limited seats: 30



Day 1: Monday, 16th November Uncovering Shakespeare's Physical Key! 'Just know it's there!' with Michael Corbidge

Join Michael Corbidge, Senior Associate Company Voice and Text Coach at the RSC, for a fun-filled workshop. Whether you are a Shakespeare buff or simply want to discover the joys of text and character, or are an actor looking to delve deeper, this workshop will have plenty to offer you. An opportunity to 'buff and shine', it includes tried and tested ways of performing Shakespeare. Experience an immediate and visceral connection to Shakespeare's text and a chance to let the words live in space unhindered by expectations. Corbidge has created a toolbox and practical key-kit to build confidence with text, voice, physicality, and character and aid in the quest for sense and emotional logic. We shall be chomping our way through one of Shakespeare's best-loved works.

Day 2: Tuesday, 17th November Sonic Sonnet with Michael Corbidge

During two blissful hours of exploring one of Shakespeare's 'love' sonnets, Michael Corbidge will lead you into a world of exquisite sound, colour, and textures. He will guide you to all the clues on the page, equip you with detection knowledge and you will become the super-sleuth of text analysis before you know it. There is something to suit everyone in this workshop on text investigation. Whether you are young and curious, an emerging professional, a teacher or a jobbing actor. With Corbidge's trademark visceral connection to sound and his infectious ways of getting folk connected to right brain activity, join a text session you will never forget.

Day 3: Wednesday, 18th November Shakespeare: Some Fundamentals with Cathleen McCarron

This lively, practical, text-based workshop will delve into Shakespeare's extraordinary language and equip you with tools to investigate it, connect to it and speak it with passion and confidence. Shakespeare can seem daunting and impenetrable at first, but you will

discover how practical games and exercises in key areas such as thought, imagery and verse can begin to break down the text, demystify the process and reveal meaning, emotion and character. No previous experience or knowledge of acting Shakespeare is necessary – everything you need to know will be there on the page.

Day 4: Thursday, 19th November Shakespeare: How to win an argument and get what you want with Cathleen McCarron

Shakespeare's elaborate language can sometimes seem overly poetic and "flowery" to our 21st-century sensibilities. In fact, in Shakespeare, language is action: characters speak in pursuit of their objectives and use any number of linguistic strategies to achieve them. Shakespeare was trained in rhetoric – the art of using language to persuade – and deployed it to great effect in his plays, utilising rhetorical techniques such as antithesis (opposites), lists and repetition to enable his characters to entice, coerce and insist. In this fun and practical workshop, you will explore Shakespeare's persuasive tactics and discover how to speak his text with precision and intention. No previous experience or knowledge of acting Shakespeare is necessary – everything you need to know will be there on the page.

Day 5: Friday, 20th November Movement workshop for Shakespeare with Lucy Cullingford

If you caught a show of *The Mirror Crack'd* at the NCPA earlier this year, you would know the role movement played in its aesthetics and carrying the plot forward. This session will open with exercises for students to build an actor's warm-up, enabling the body to work from a strong centre, while maintaining focus on release, alignment and connection with breath. The idea is to open the actor's sensibility to the epic and three-dimensional theatre space, weight and time, exploring how a physical understanding of all three can be a useful toolkit for building a character. The workshop will also explore the eight efforts of action drive, aligning with Rudolph Laban's theories of the body, human movement and behaviour.

A Crisis Captured

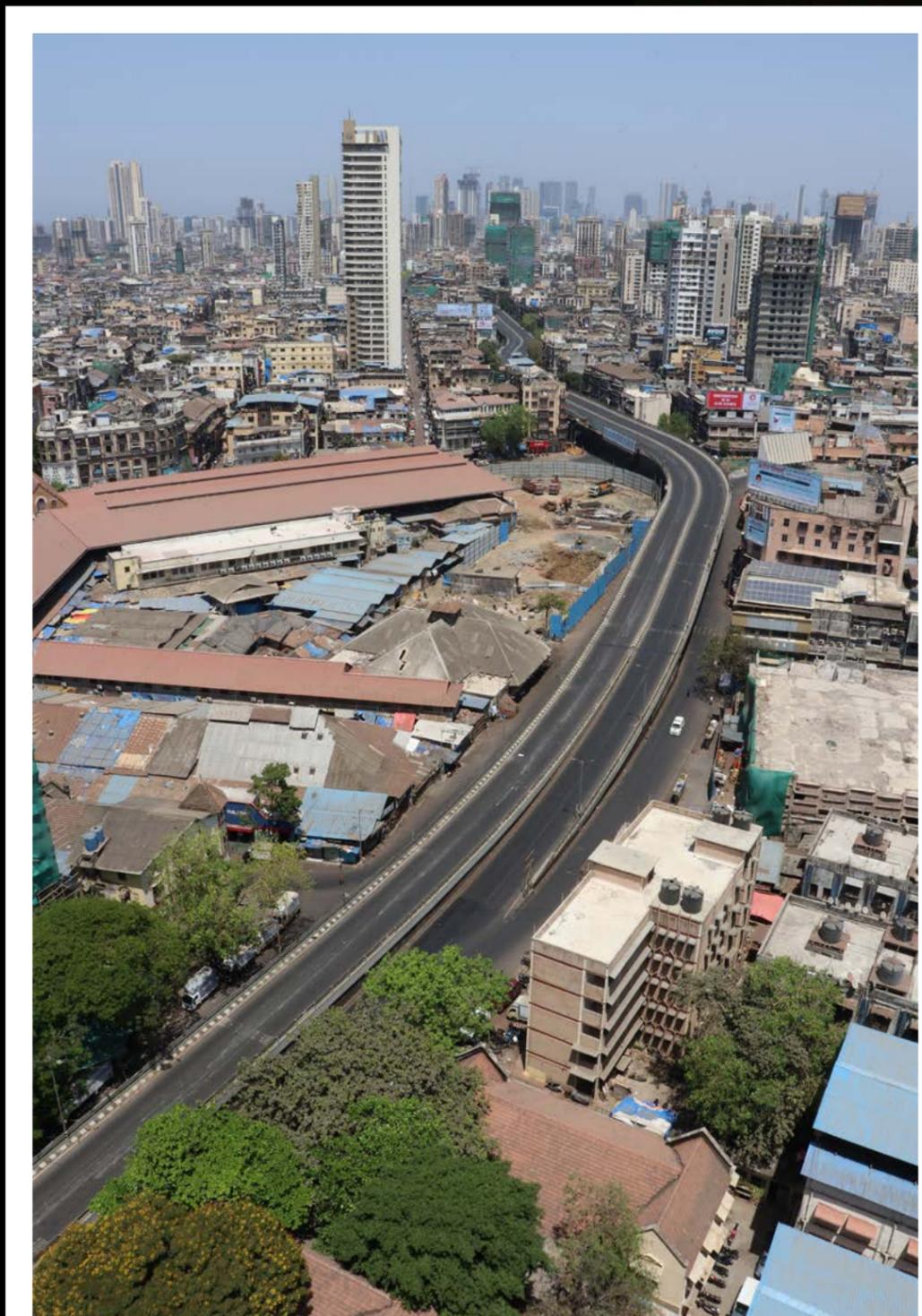
As the Piramal Gallery at the NCPA prepares to host an exhibition that documents the city battling a pandemic, we bring you glimpses of what photographers from Mumbai witnessed through their lenses.

From masked faces, and policemen and healthcare workers taking on a mysterious foe to empty roads and serpentine queues of the makers of our homes desperate to reach home, the unravelling of the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many shades of humanity. When life trudges back to normal, these images may begin to fade away from our memories as the more immediate needs take precedence.

As a way of documenting a pandemic that gripped the world and brought the city that never sleeps to a standstill, the Piramal Gallery will be organising a photo exhibition, which will be hosted at the NCPA once the lockdown is systematically lifted and it is declared safe to visit public places. "This exhibition will also be an online one, so that those who are unable to travel can experience moments that photographers and photojournalists have captured," says Mukesh Parpiani, Head, Piramal Gallery.

As submissions start pouring in, we bring you frames from across Mumbai that speak of a city's tryst with a virus.

This photo essay was first published in the June 2020 digital issue (Volume 9, Issue 11) of ON Stage.



→
A CHILD
HOLDS A
PLACARD ON
GUDI PADWA
IN GIRGAUM.
PIC/BHUSHAN
KOYANDE

↓
J.J. FLYOVER,
SHOT FROM
HAJ HOUSE.
PIC/VASANT
PRABHU





↑
DESERTED C.S.T. AREA AS SEEN FROM D.N. ROAD.
PIC/VASANT PRABHU



↑
A SECURITY GUARD AT WORK
BELOW PAREL FLYOVER.
PIC/BHUSHAN KOYANDE



↓
A MIGRANT FAMILY WALKS ON MUMBAI-NASHIK HIGHWAY.
PIC/PRAVEEN KAJROLKAR



↑
POLICE ENFORCE LOCKDOWN ON
MOHAMMED ALI ROAD.
PIC/BHUSHAN KOYANDE



↓
TRAINS PARKED ON
PLATFORMS AT C.S.M.T.
PIC/VASANT PRABHU



→
A MEDICAL TEAM CHECKS TEMPERATURES IN A
DOOR-TO-DOOR CAMPAIGN IN LOWER PAREL.
PIC/BHUSHAN KOYANDE

The Performing Arts Dispatch

A new series on cultural centres from around the world. In focus this month: The Royal Albert Hall.

From Saint-Saëns playing its Grand Organ within months of its opening to it being home to the BBC Proms, from its glazed iron roof to the mosaic frieze, the Royal Albert Hall is as iconic for its structure as it is for the formidable list of names that have performed within its arena over one and a half centuries. And it is not just music that has reverberated through it. The South Kensington concert hall hosted the first ever sci-fi convention in 1891, a costumed fundraiser themed on an 1871 science fiction novel. The world's first bodybuilding contest was held here in 1901 as was the first British indoor marathon in 1909 and the first sumo tournament outside Japan in 1991. For the two ABBA performances that took place in the hall in 1977, there were 10,000 tickets available in total, and it received over 3.5 million postal applications.

These memories seem a tad distant under present circumstances – the Royal Albert Hall, like other performing arts centres across the U.K. and the world, closed its doors in March. Though the final two weeks of the Proms season will be performed at the venue*, whether or not they will take place in the presence of a live audience remains to be seen. Chief Executive, Craig Hassall, tells us more.

ON Stage (OS): The Royal Albert Hall completes 150 years in 2021. How will the milestone be celebrated and have those plans been altered due to the pandemic?

Craig Hassall (CH): It will be a historic moment for the charity, but we have not yet announced how we will be celebrating – that announcement will likely come in the autumn. We do know that it will be a diverse celebration focused on both our history and our future, featuring a world-class line-up of artistes; new and innovative events; and larger education and outreach projects than we've ever done before.

In terms of the pandemic, we've lost £14m of income so far due to our extended closure, and have also had to reschedule a large number of shows, so we've taken the decision to extend the celebrations into 2022. The Hall's very existence was thrown into jeopardy by the pandemic – but we're doing everything in our power to make this upcoming anniversary one to remember.



OS: When the hall does open its doors to the audience, how do you envision the nature of concerts?

CH: This isn't entirely clear yet, but it's the question occupying us more than anything else at the moment. The most important thing is the safety of our audiences, artistes, staff and contractors, and we will rigorously follow the latest advice. Currently, it requires one-metre social distancing, but the Hall typically needs a capacity of around 80 per cent to break even. With this advice, the capacity would be around 36 per cent, which would make it financially unviable for us to stage live events.

The National Arenas Association, of which we are part, has been asking the government to look into the possibility of replacing blanket social distancing guidelines with other checks and balances. A test case in Seoul – where a production of *The Phantom of the Opera* has successfully continued running – has seen audience members walking through a light mist of disinfectant, having their temperature taken, and filling in a questionnaire about their symptoms and recent places they've visited. If we're to find a solution, it is going to be a combination of numerous measures, from increased access points to hand sanitisers, Perspex screens and PPE for staff.

OS: How was the Royal Albert Home series organised?

CH: As soon as the Hall closed in March, we started thinking about ways to keep its spirit alive online. We wanted to entertain people who were forced to stay at home, but

also to seize an opportunity for a new kind of digital reach, supporting artistes that might not normally be able to play at the Hall. It was also about raising awareness around the venue and ultimately taking in donations to help us through this period.

It's almost entirely been original performances by artistes from their homes, but we've had some other presentations – including An Evening with Nitin Sawhney, who shared a whole variety of performances from home and the Hall. The mezzo-soprano, Katherine Jenkins, did a special behind-closed-doors concert from the venue itself, to mark VE Day.

OS: What were some of the key learnings during this period that will continue to guide the functioning of the venue when it reopens?

CH: To not be afraid to try new things, and to lead on them internationally – we were the first venue to run a series like Royal Albert Home. We learnt to innovate, embracing digital ways of sharing the Hall, and using the venue as a platform in music even without the building.

This period has also seen the Black Lives Matter movement spread throughout the world. We have taken some time to reflect and discuss how we can address systemic racism, and ensure we are putting in place meaningful actions that will ensure the Hall is fully open and welcoming for everyone, and address our own institutional issues.

*This was first published in the August 2020 digital issue (Volume 10, Issue 1) of ON Stage.

**5
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