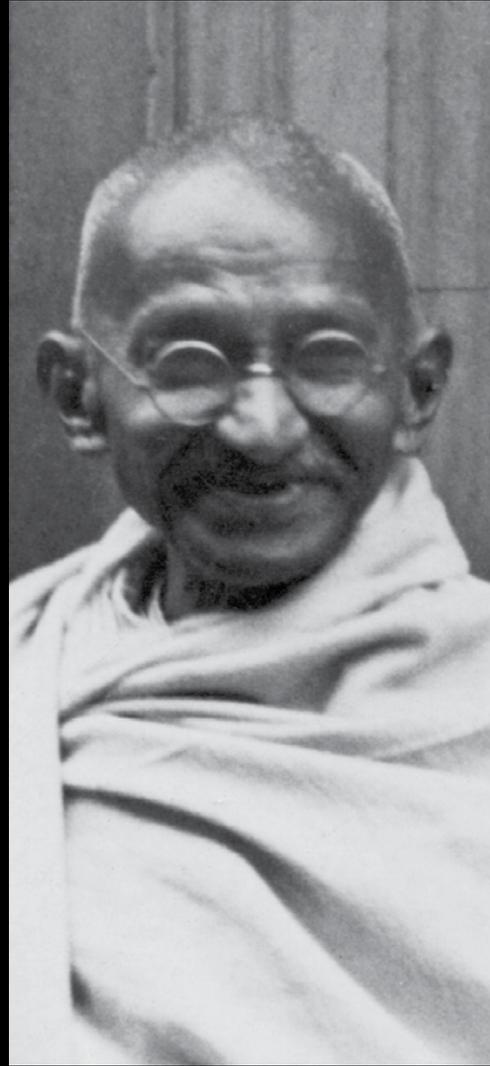


ON Stage[®]

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An Incredible Harmony

If it weren't for Beethoven, Mirabehn's path would not have led to Mahatma Gandhi. The story of the musical thread that ran through their lives

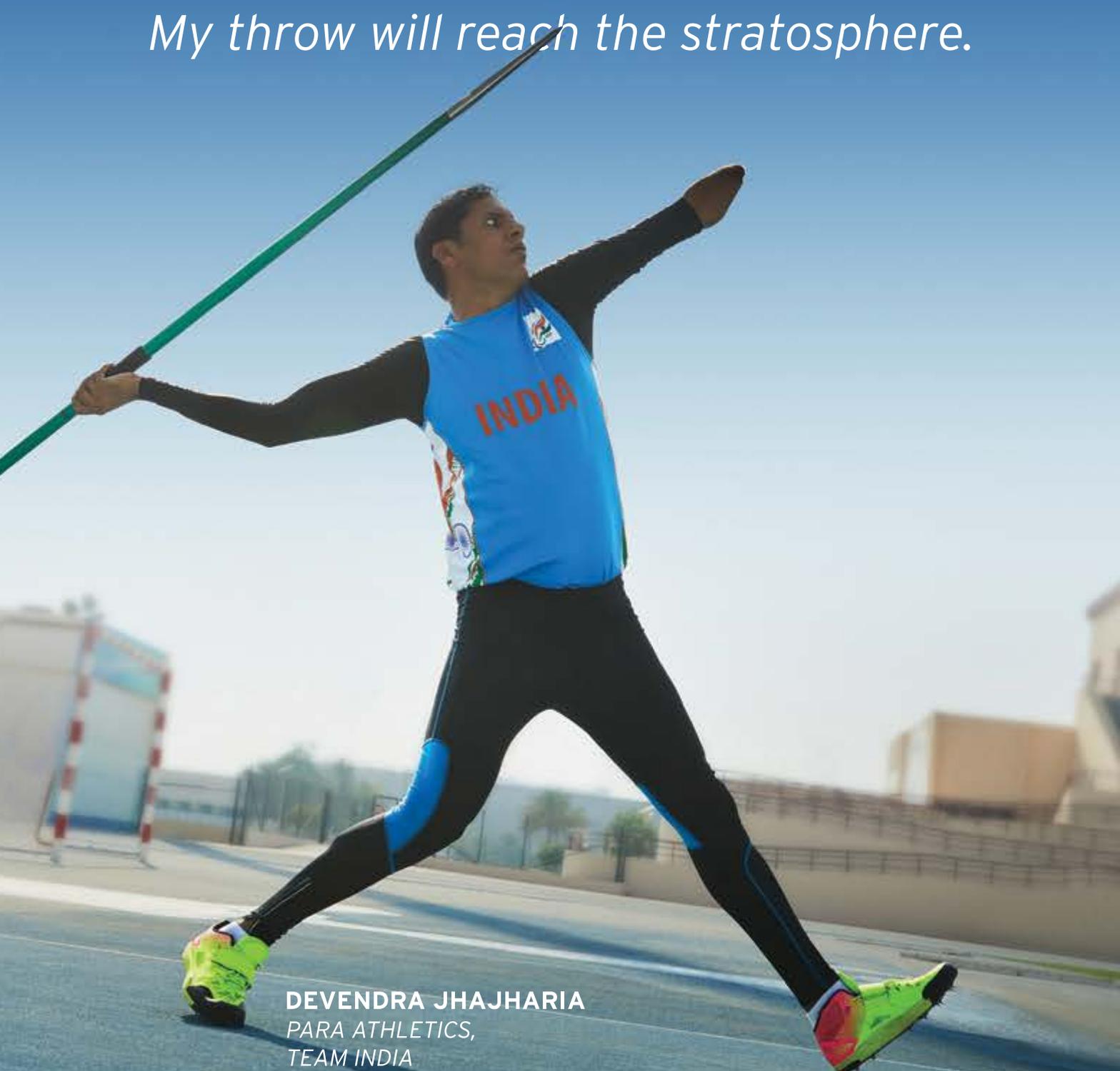
Nikhil Banerjee

The maestro's music
and philosophy

Konstantin Stanislavski

The thespian who
revolutionised acting

*It's okay, you can stare.
My throw will reach the stratosphere.*



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Chairman's Note



At last, it appears that there is some light over the bleak scenario we have faced over the last year and a half. It seems that our ability to combat pestilence and disease is fairly strong and we seem to be getting the upper hand. Well, let us at least hope so.

In spite of the uncertain situation, we have planned our season, contacted artistes and spruced up the whole infrastructure to go ahead. It is our bounden duty to support our fellow artistes and colleagues, both here and all over the world, to ensure that they get back to normal ways of earning a decent living.

We appeal to all of you to support the NCPA when we are allowed to commence operations. We will not only start but also try our best to curate concerts, performances, etc. in the best possible manner, as is evidently being practised at present all over the world.

We thank you for the patience you have shown and hope that we shall all meet and make merry soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. N. Suntook". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Khushroo N. Suntook

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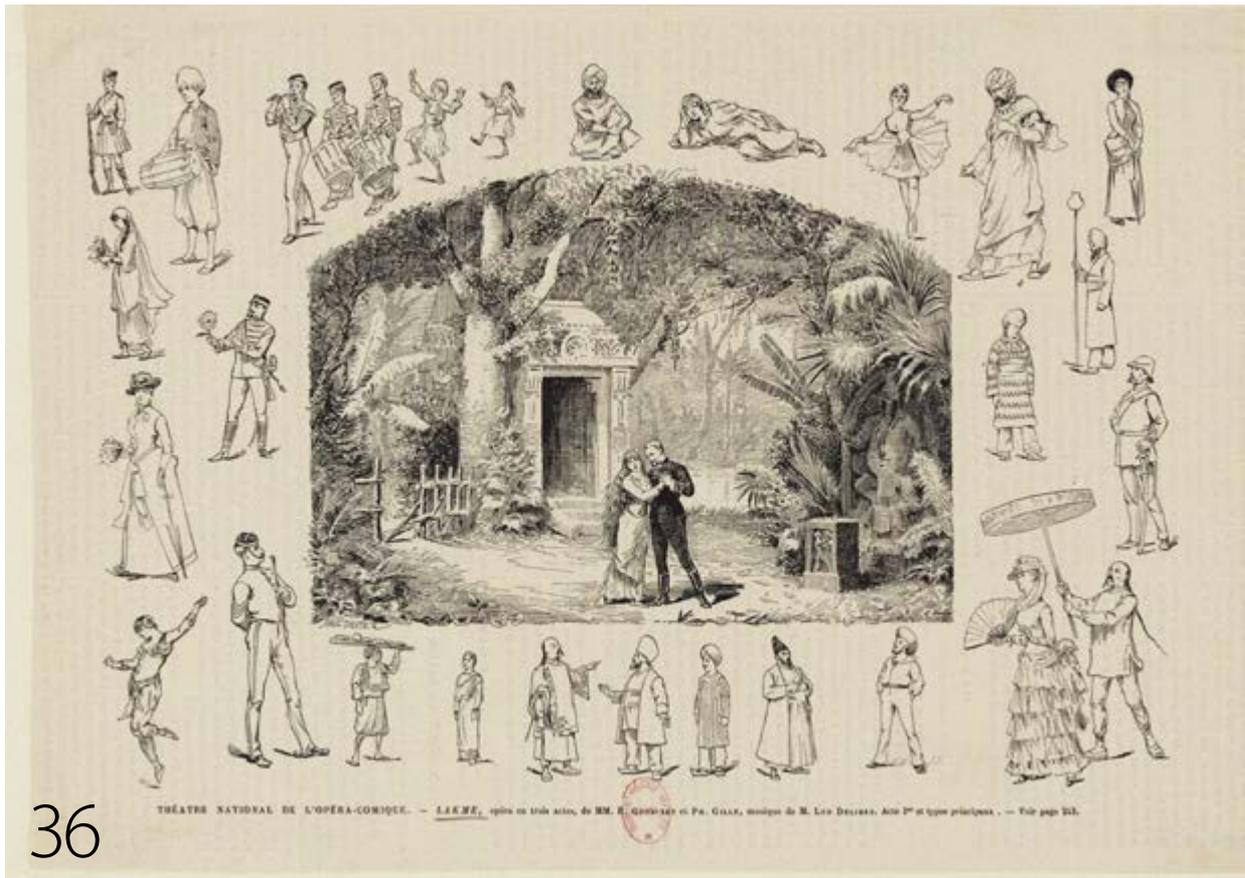


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ON Stage brings you excerpts from the *NCPA Quarterly Journal*, an unsurpassed literary archive that ran from 1972 to 1988 and featured authoritative and wide-ranging articles. In this multi-part

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This Month, That Year

From the grand NCPA International Jazz Festival to celebration of artistic plurality, from Polish music played by the talent of the Baltic region to the opportunity to learn from a Kathak legend, we bring you some of the more memorable events that were presented at the NCPA in October 2019.

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A SPIRITUAL TRIO

*When a spiritual force pulls you, it's hard to not pursue it, and Mirabehn was fortunate enough to experience that thrice in her life. Her love for Beethoven's music led her to discover the work of Mahatma Gandhi, into which she fully immersed herself, only for life to come full circle and lead her back to the music that started it all. **By Manohar Parnerkar***

“My life has been devoted to the service of Mahatma Gandhi and Beethoven—the two great souls with the loftiest ideals—one expressing himself through perpetual activity in moral, social and political reform, and the other through perpetual expression of the spiritual voice that came to him through music.”

- Mirabehn (1892-1982)

Born Madeleine Slade to Admiral Sir Edmond Slade, the story of Mirabehn's life is no ordinary one. Raised in a highly aristocratic English family, her affluent background was to become a distant memory when she embarked on an austere journey as one of Gandhiji's closest disciples for 23 long years. The culturally emotive name Mirabehn was given to her by Gandhiji when she first met him in Sabarmati Ashram in 1925. He is said to have named her after Mira Bai—the Rajput princess who abandoned her husband and family for her love for Krishna.

The three lives of Mirabehn

Sometime before she died in Vienna in 1982, Mirabehn had famously remarked that she had had three lives: the first one with Beethoven, the second one with Gandhiji, and the third one again with Beethoven. She was born a good 65 years after Beethoven left the world, and so what she refers to is her spiritual rather than temporal life with him.

Symphonic beginnings

As a high-ranking British naval officer, Sir Edmond was posted abroad for long stints. But when in London, he often entertained prime ministers and cabinet ministers including Winston Churchill at home.

Madeleine, however, grew up at her grandparents' country estate and that fostered her love for nature and animals. She learnt to play the piano and developed an abiding passion for Beethoven's music.

When Madeleine was only 14, she experienced something profoundly life-changing. She heard Beethoven's piano sonata, popularly called “Tempest”, which she listened to and played over and over again. In her autobiography *The Spirit's Pilgrimage* she wrote: “In this Beethoven creation, I was finding something far beyond the music. I threw myself down on my knees in the seclusion of my room and prayed.”

The music filled her with a sense of fearlessness, strength and purity. This magnificent obsession drove the adolescent Madeleine to imbibe nearly all of the composer's music, and then to make a pilgrimage to his birthplace of Bonn, and then to Vienna where he wrote his immortal music. Besides, she also managed to read almost anything and everything that had ever been written in English about Beethoven. When she heard of the Nobel laureate Romain Rolland's epic novel *Jean-Christophe* on Beethoven, she felt it might be worth discovering the French novelist's profound insights into the composer's life and art. So, she met Rolland in Switzerland where he had his second home. She wasn't disappointed.

During the course of their second meeting, when



Mahatma Gandhi and Mirabehn visited Romain Rolland in 1931, where the writer played a bit of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* for his guests



Mirabehn adapted to the simplicity of ashram life, which was in stark contrast to her life in England



She was an emissary of Gandhi and travelled the world to spread his message. Seen here with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose



From spinning yarn to learning Hindi, Mirabehn was committed to imbibing the culture of India

Rolland asked Madeleine if she had heard of Gandhi, she responded with a blank look. He then told her about a small book he had just finished writing on the Indian saint whom he described to her as “Another Christ”. She devoured the book that very night. Gandhiji’s life and work had such an impact on her that she vowed to visit him in India immediately and dedicate her life in his service. (How wonderful, then, that Gandhiji and Mirabehn together would visit Rolland for a week in 1931.)

Spiritual middle

On a November day in 1925, a 33-year-old Mirabehn—almost a foot taller than the frail, 56-year-old Gandhiji—arrived at Sabarmati Ashram to dedicate her life to the Great Soul. Since she had prepared herself for the puritanical ashram life that awaited her in India, she took to it like fish to water.

Although Mirabehn became Gandhiji’s special disciple, she had a difficult—and at times, troubling—relationship with the Mahatma. The descriptions of their unique relationship by Gandhian biographers and writers have ranged from “the most remarkable platonic association of our age” to “for many years, Mirabehn remained ‘married’ to Gandhi in the celibate manner he dictated”, and several others in between. All that aside, Mirabehn undoubtedly was one of Gandhiji’s most worthy disciples, probably his healthiest critic and his invaluable point man in the West pleading India’s case with difficult men like General Smuts and Winston Churchill. But for me, the most attractive side of Mirabehn’s life always

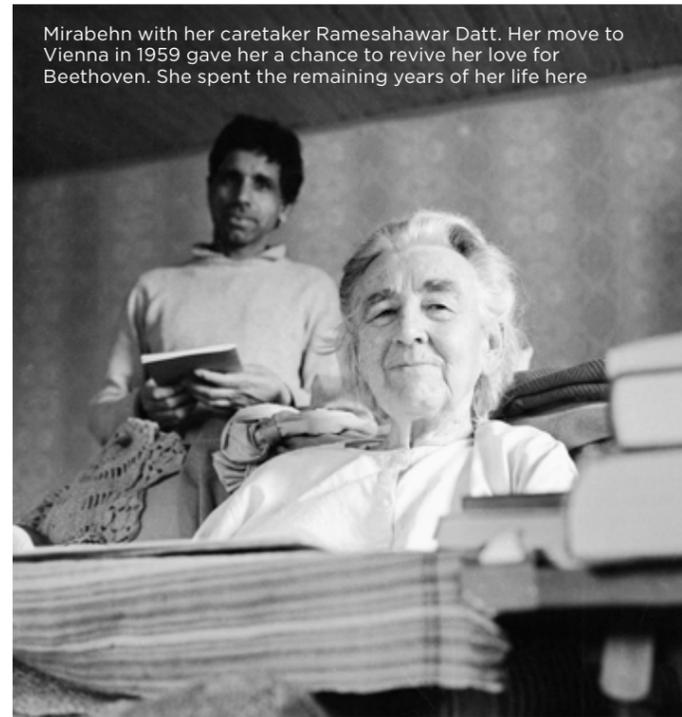
Some of the important beliefs and ideals of the Mahatma and Beethoven covered common ground, which perhaps explains Mirabehn’s reverence for them

will be—much like Annie Besant, C.F. Andrews and Verrier Elwin, the three eminent Britons of the last century who made India their home—her deep love and affection for the country of her adoption and its people.

Some of the important beliefs and ideals of the Mahatma and Beethoven covered common ground, which perhaps explains Mirabehn’s reverence for them. Both believed in God (Beethoven had read the German translation of the *Rigveda*, and had found the following description of God in it quite fascinating: “*But from what we observe in His...work we may conclude that He is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent*”), but rarely visited any places of worship. Both were men of heroic will who ardently believed in peace, freedom and universal



She was a prominent part of India’s freedom struggle and was considered to be Gandhi’s trusted advisor and healthiest critic



Mirabehn with her caretaker Ramesahawar Datt. Her move to Vienna in 1959 gave her a chance to revive her love for Beethoven. She spent the remaining years of her life here

brotherhood. What they also knew was that these were not bestowed on mankind from above, but had to be achieved gallantly, here on earth.

They identified with the democratic aspirations of people, and were strongly opposed to authoritarian rule; but where Gandhiji battled against it with peaceful mass movements, Beethoven did it through his music—‘Missa solemnis’ and the choral finale of his Ninth Symphony based on Schiller’s poem, *Ode to Joy*. It is also a well-known story that so furious was Beethoven upon learning that the dedicatee of his *Eroica Symphony*, his hero Napoleon, had turned a dictator, he tore up the dedication page.

Harmonious finale

After Gandhiji’s assassination in 1948, Mirabehn stayed on in India for nearly 11 years. During this period, she was most actively engaged in various community service projects across Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Kashmir. Broadly, these included institution building (she founded at least three new ashrams), afforestation, cattle breeding and pilot projects in dairying and farming.

However, in this time, the Beethoven she had buried away all these years within her deepest recesses resurfaced. And in a big way. The upshot: in 1959, accompanied by her Indian help, Mirabehn finally settled down in a solitary cottage in the woods on the outskirts of Vienna. This was really a Beethoven country surrounded by the nature that had inspired much of the composer’s music, including his beautiful ‘Pastoral Symphony’—one of his few works containing explicitly programmatic content.

During her stay here, Mirabehn constantly heard and reheard Beethoven’s music afresh after decades of living without it. It was here that she also wrote

The making of *Gandhi* (1982)



Rohini Hattangadi as Kasturba Gandhi, Ben Kingsley as Mahatma Gandhi and Geraldine James as Mirabehn in *Gandhi*

Mirabehn’s character is a prominent part of Richard Attenborough’s 1982 film *Gandhi*. The filmmaker had visited her thrice in Vienna during the course of writing the script and they also had many telephonic consultations when she was convalescing in England in 1978. Mirabehn was not only involved in the epic film, but was also excited about it.

When the filmmaker showed Mirabehn photographs of the British actress Geraldine James who would play her character in the film, she told him, “The only terrible thing, Richard, is that you have engaged someone who is very much more beautiful than I was.” (In a 1931 documentary titled *Mahatma Gandhi Arrives in the UK*, featured on British Pathé’s YouTube channel, a 39-year-old Mirabehn can be seen accompanying the Mahatma).

Mirabehn made another contribution to the film’s casting. Before Attenborough had cast Ben Kingsley, he asked her, “What is the one absolute prerequisite for the person who will play Gandhi?” With a wry smile on her face, she is supposed to have told Attenborough in that husky voice of hers, “Richard, he must be a good actor”. Attenborough chose well. Kingsley went on to win the Academy Award for Best Actor.

Sadly, Mirabehn passed away six months before the film’s release in December 1982.

Beethoven’s Mystical Vision, the first edition of which has a preface by Yehudi Menuhin. Music aside, the book dwells on Beethoven’s personal and spiritual development—insights, one may say, that were also nurtured by Mirabehn’s life in India. It has been published and republished here by agencies connected with the Gandhi Peace Foundation.

In 1981, a year before her death, the Indian government honoured her with Padma Vibhushan—the country’s second-highest civilian award—for her committed service to India and the people. The award was presented to her by K.L. Dalal, India’s Ambassador to Austria, who visited her at her cottage in Vienna.

It was at this cottage that Mirabehn, on the last day of her life, repeatedly held her arms heavenwards in a gesture that said “Take me, God”. Her three lives having become the music of a spiritual trio. ■

STRINGS OF RUMINATION

A humble student, an ingenious sitarist and a thinker who found a bridge between music and philosophy, Nikhil Banerjee's rich legacy speaks volumes of him being a complete performer. In the month of his 90th birth anniversary, **Ashwin M. Dalvi** remembers the maestro and his work.

“Welcome the raga... which means surrender yourself to the raga.”

These words belong to the great sitar virtuoso Nikhil Banerjee who assimilated the true essence of Indian classical music and popularised it as an integral element of Indian philosophy. Far away from pageantry, Banerjee kept the purity, sanctity and inviolability of his music until his last breath. An epitome of austerity, he proclaimed music as a path of self-realisation through sacrifice and renunciation. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to address him as a true 'Naad Yogi'.

Banerjee's journey from the very first touch of the instrument to fetching the title 'Artiste of the Artistes' was certainly not a serene one, but it stands as a strong example for learners of music grappling with the rigours of the arduous process.

Guiding forces

Banerjee was only four years old when his father, Jitendra Nath Banerjee, started him on the sitar. His first public performance came at the tender age of nine at the All Bengal Sangeet Sammelan, where he was hailed as a child prodigy. Recognising his potential and keenness for the instrument, Kunwar Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury, a noted *beenkar* (rudraveena player) of the Rampur Senia *gharana*, accepted Banerjee as a student. And so started a new chapter of systematic *taleem* with Kunwar Sahab. It commenced with initial exercises, correction of posture, the techniques of sitar, *meend*, *gamak* and *taleem of dhrupad*. Chowdhury was a mobile library of traditional compositions. After six years of grooming, he initiated Banerjee's *shishyatva* (pupilage) with Maihar's legend, Baba Allaaddin Khan. Known for his fastidiousness, he wrote to Banerjee stating: "I heard your programme, it was all rubbish. You do not know to put ornaments in their right places. But you have a hidden strength within you, which needs to be awakened."

Thus began a new episode in Banerjee's life; one that immersed him in music, where Baba made him "think in music, sleep in music and dream in music". The regimented daily routine at Maihar, which included rigorous *riyaz*, transformed everything. Banerjee realised the importance of surrendering to the guru, which eventually changed his perspective on music. It was a path of self-realisation—an unsaid lesson by Baba himself.

After Baba went on pilgrimage, Banerjee moved to Mumbai to seek further direction, counselling and guidance under Baba's son and sarod virtuoso Ali Akbar Khan. During his *taleem*, Khan would also occasionally share the stage to help and support Banerjee. Later, he moved on and continued his *taleem* with Baba's multifaceted daughter Annapurna Devi.

Banerjee always felt obligated to all his gurus and acknowledged the guru-like figures who he crossed paths with in his life. This included John Andrew Gomes, Banshidhar Rao, Lakhan Bhattacharya, Mushtaq Ali Khan, Dhruvtara Joshi, Gyanprakash Ghosh and Radhika Mohan Maitra.

The transcendental quality in Banerjee's music was Baba's musical bequest to him. Remembering his guru, he once said in an interview, "Guru does not just mean [one who teaches] music; a guru moulds you, your behaviour, your reactions; he follows your every step, guides you, observes you from a distance. A guru is someone who does what he says. If he asks you to practise for 16 hours, it means he has done so himself and therefore, knows the result. He understands what you should practise, what would suit your temperament, your emotions, just by watching you. Only a guru can know this because he is so pure from within. Oh yes, to find a real guru is a blessing."

Banerjee's unique style was a perfect blend of the *taleem* received from his gurus, and his philosophical approach. The firm foundation of technique laid

Banerjee realised the importance of surrendering to the guru, which eventually changed his perspective on music—it was a path of self-realisation



Nikhil Banerjee seen with Ali Akbar Khan, with whom he often shared stage and received guidance from



down by Chowdhury, the advanced training by Baba, and the influence of Bangla Sangeet (inspired by Rabindranath Tagore), all merged with Indian philosophy, resulted in the final output of Banerjee's music. An admixture of *dhrupad*, *tantrakari* and an impression of Amir Khan Saheb in note progression of *khayal gayaki* made it a complete style in itself. *Meend*-incorporated *taans*, well-programmed *ekhara mizrab* strokes, long surbahar-style *meends*, *been*-style phrases, *laykaari* with tabla, unified and sensible *gat kaam*, continuous, flowing vocalised *alaps*, full of intelligence and aesthetics, all came together in a confluence in his style. He never restricted himself to *teentaal*. He would play *dhamar*, *roopak*, *jhaptal*, *char taal ki sawari* and sometimes *aprachalit* (uncommon) *champak taal* with desirable sophistication. Though inadvertent, creating a third style of his own, at a time when two glorious styles were governing the instrumental world, was perhaps his biggest achievement.

Setting the stage

Banerjee started his performance career under the patronage of Khan. He began touring internationally in 1954. Performing at prestigious platforms in the country and abroad, he soon became a sought-after musician. He was invited to be a visiting professor at

the American Society for Eastern Arts, and the Ali Akbar College of Music in California.

He accepted the invitations but not without a certain hesitancy. He wondered how our ancient and traditionally rich music would be viewed by the sophisticated, modern people of America. Would they be able to give it its due respect? Perturbed, he went to seek answers and blessings from Baba in Maihar. The guru approved and said, "Whatever you have learned and achieved is for the service of mankind. You must render with all sincerity the richness and the spirit of our music to everyone irrespective of caste, creed, religion or nationality. This is the only way you can serve your country and your music as well."

From then on, Banerjee visited the US and other countries regularly. He also served as a visiting professor at the Rabindra Bharati and Visva-Bharati universities in West Bengal. He received the Padma Shri in 1968 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1974.

Beyond music

For Banerjee, the sitar was the most versatile of all stringed instruments. To him, no other fretted instrument came close in terms of expression. His understanding of ragas was inextricably interwoven with spirituality. He once said, "Welcome the raga... which means surrender yourself to the raga. Like you

Banerjee believed that Indian music was the path to truth and salvation

SULFIAT MAGNISON/GETTY IMAGES

go to church and feel purity and peace within you... you must bow your head to great art. It's a much bigger [otherworldly] thing. In developing the *alap*, showcase each note...gradually and peacefully. Don't go beyond that. Be very peaceful while developing the notes."

He further expressed his philosophy saying, "Music is the most abstract form of all arts. Where words end, music talks. The Supreme Soul whom we cannot see... our music touches its feet. To love and understand Indian music, one must have some idea of Indian philosophy. It is said in our philosophy that the ultimate aim of each soul is realisation of the Supreme Soul. In our music, particularly in the *alap*, the skies of the Supreme Soul are palpable; surrender yourself to reach for them. That is why devotion and love for the Almighty are at the core of Indian music."

The maestro was fond of *Upanishad* chants and was highly influenced by his idols: Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita and Subhas Chandra Bose. In a lecture titled "Indian Classical Music in the Western World", he had stated: "Indian music has brought about a revolution in the stagnant Western souls. They are desperately searching for peace of mind, the truth, salvation of their soul. Swami Vivekananda once showed them the path through Indian philosophy. Now the radiance of Indian music would help them to find the way to salvation, and therein lies the glory of our music".

Banerjee continued to contemplate and ruminate over music and life until his very last day. At the age

of 54, his poor vision and heart disorders made him realise that his journey wasn't far from its end. The Dover Lane Music Conference in 1986 was his last public performance—he played both his favourite ragas, Darbari Kanada and Hemant. A day after the concert, it was all that he could furnish the world of music with. Fifty-four was not an age to go.

Banerjee was awarded the Padma Bhushan posthumously for his invaluable contribution to the world of music. He left a void that can never be filled but the fraternity will be ever grateful for the immortal music he has left for us. ■

The writer is a surbahar exponent and former Chairman of Rajasthan Lalit Kala Akademi

The maestro at the NCPA



Sitar maestro Nikhil Banerjee specially recorded for the NCPA archives in 1975 and 1976. These recordings were made available to the lovers of Hindustani classical music through Nad Ninad, a programme of guided listening sessions on the artistry of musicians who were invited to record their work at the NCPA. The session on Banerjee was organised in October 2018 and conducted by the writer, Ashwin M. Dalvi, who has researched the life and contribution of the maestro. A heritage album featuring Banerjee's recordings of ragas Maluka Kalyan and Nat Bhairav was released under the 'Masterworks from the NCPA Archives' imprint by Sony Music and the NCPA in 2013. Not meant for dissemination originally, the recordings were released after obtaining necessary permissions.

Remembering the virtuoso

"He knew where to apply the *da ra bol* and where the *dil* (heart). I am still amazed [at] the way he executed the taals with such panache and clarity. It is our great misfortune that he left us so early."

Abdul Halim Zafar Khan

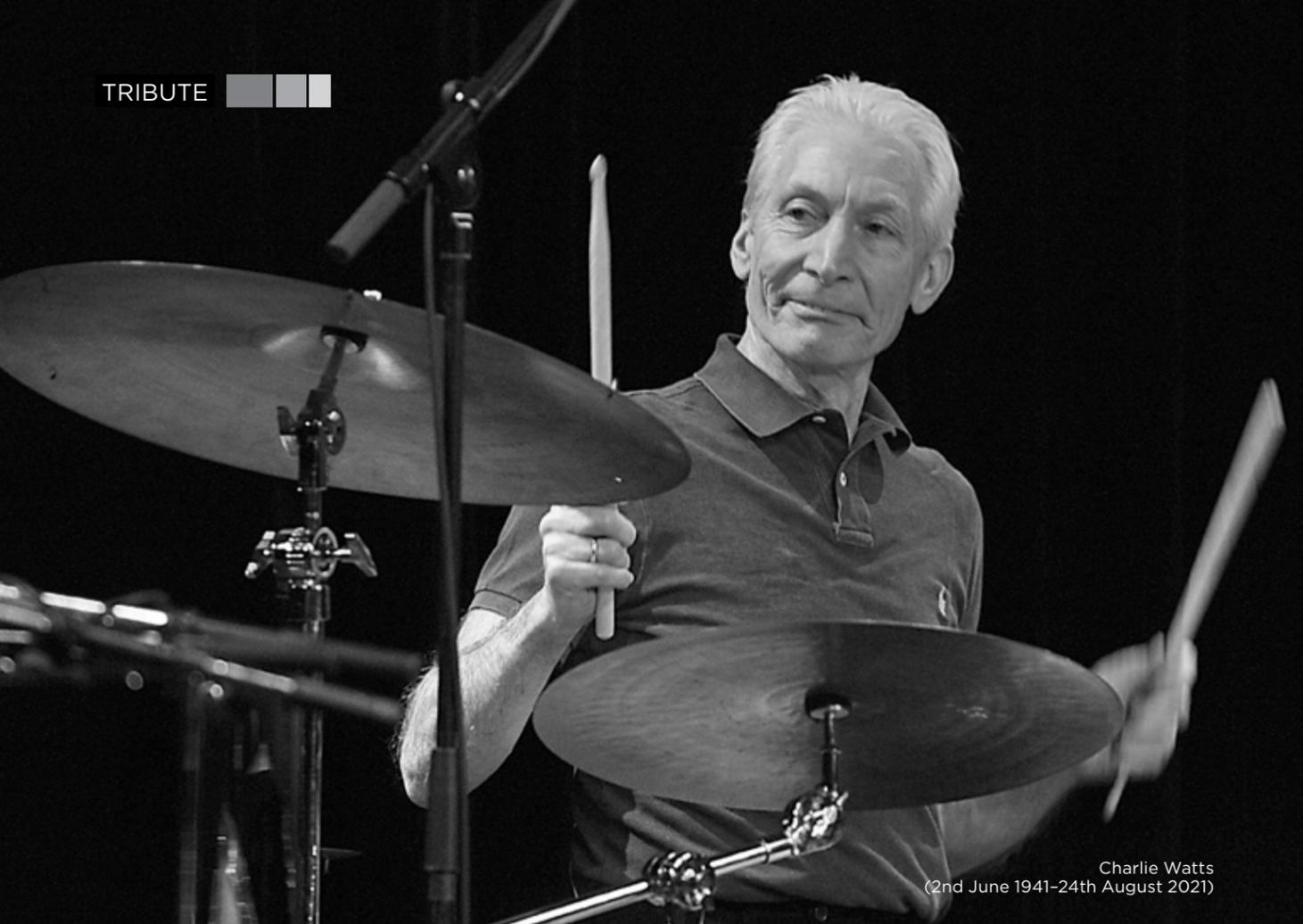
"He was one of the finest sitarists of our times, who remained a student at heart in spite of the overwhelming success and adulation. He left his mark on the sands of time. The younger generation of today's musicians will be missing an example of true musicianship."

Nikhil Ghosh

"Nikhil's uniqueness of his style was the 'feelings' in his music. The true identity of his music was his touch of originality and expression.

All I can say is that Nikhil followed the road shown to him by Baba, and later found his own way. The last time I met him, he told me, 'Dada, I still have a lot to learn. I shall come and stay with you now.' What an example of modesty and humility from such a great artiste."

Ali Akbar Khan



Charlie Watts
(2nd June 1941–24th August 2021)

KEEPING THE JAZZ ALIVE

Charlie Watts was not your typical rock star. With jazz being his driving force, he embraced the reserve and subtlety the genre brought with it. Anurag Tagat talks about the 'Wembley Whammer' who kept his passion close.

All it takes is watching some footage of Charlie Watts behind the kit to know that The Rolling Stones' late drummer was a jazzman at heart. Right from his traditional grip of the drumsticks to the rhythm and blues-inspired progressions that supplemented the starting point for the Stones' seminal style of rock 'n' roll, Watts drew from his jazz roots all through his drumming years. Often the only member who would avoid the public glare and decline interviews, it is perhaps Watts's jazz

influences that played a part in his being the sober, quiet force in The Rolling Stones. Of course, jazz music can be raucous and wild when it's given free rein, but Watts's staid demeanour might have made him an odd figure when he joined Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Bill Wyman and Brian Jones back in 1963.

Before joining the Stones and being launched into superstardom—even though he shied away from it for most of his life—Watts performed jazz as a drummer with his childhood friend and neighbour Dave Green in London in the 1950s.

Among the earliest records that Watts owned and surely revered was music by Charlie Parker. As most biographies and tributes to Watts have mentioned, the drummer revealed his talents as a graphic designer when he wrote and illustrated *Ode to a High Flying Bird* in 1964. It was a biography of Parker, as told by Watts.

New tracks

Keith Richards introduced him to the wonders of rock 'n' roll, giving him a taste of the music that perhaps made him see the allure of what the

Stones were going for. Watts told the *Rolling Stone* magazine in a rare interview, "While they were all going on about John Lee Hooker and all these other marvellous people [like] Muddy Waters, I'd be putting Charlie Parker and Sonny Rollins in. That's what I was into when I joined The Rolling Stones, that's what I used to listen to. Keith taught me to listen to Elvis Presley because Elvis was someone I never...liked or listened to. Obviously, I'd heard 'Hound Dog' and all that, but to listen to him properly, Keith was the one who taught me."

If you had to trace the influences of Watts and the styles that informed his drumming, it could go from the likes of Earl Palmer (with Fats Domino) to

Kenny Clarke (who performed with Bud Powell) to Tony Williams (who performed with Miles Davis). When it came to channelling all of that into the Stones, Watts's mantra was simple. He told the *Relix* magazine in an interview in 2012, "I play the same way, really, no matter who I'm with. It's really all in the touch that changes when you go from rock 'n' roll to blues or jazz, or whatever else you might be doing. It's in the feel. My thing is to make it a dance sound. It should swing and bounce."

He goes on to modestly narrate in the same interview that one of his "faults" was learning to play by copying other people. "I should have gone to class and learned how to do it. I never did. I learned by watching the great drummers in London, like Phil Seamen. When I was 17, I went to Paris to see Kenny Clarke playing



Charlie Parker's music played a huge part in shaping Watts's career

Watts has recorded and released 10 jazz albums in his career. They abound in a variety of styles, and his first recorded work as a jazz drummer came about in 1986 when he established The Charlie Watts Orchestra

with Bud Powell. Clarke had the greatest cymbal I'd ever heard. It was an 18-inch ride and it was really in how he played it that made it sound so incredible."

Home ground

When it came to indulging in jazz and making it known to the world that it was his passion outside the Stones, Watts mostly found time only when one of the world's most famous rock bands wasn't on their massive run of shows or recording material. He is said to have recorded and released 10 jazz albums in his career. They abound in a variety of styles, and although he always loved his jazz music, his first recorded work as a jazz drummer came about in 1986, when he established a 32-piece group called The Charlie Watts Orchestra. They released *Live at Fulham Town Hall*. Watts even took the project out on a world tour, performing alongside alto saxophonist Peter King, tenor saxophonist Evan Parker and several others. He was joined by two other drummers, making it one extravagant project which proved his everlasting urge to perform jazz.

Watts's name also appears in the Charlie Watts Quintet, and a separate big band. The drummer is noted to have recorded two Charlie Parker tributes, plus two scored sets of American Songbook standards



Watts's intuitive style of drumming and mastery of jazz have been foundational to The Rolling Stones' sound



The ABC&D of Boogie Woogie was a collaboration by four musicians united by their love for the genre



Charlie Watts and the Tentet often performed at Ronnie Scott's in London. Watts at Scott's is a compilation of two performances at the jazz club

titled *Warm and Tender* and *Long Ago & Far Away*. By this time, it was the 1990s and The Rolling Stones' legendary status in music was firmly cemented. It perhaps meant that Watts (and other members) were letting themselves lean into individual work.

In 1997, Watts teamed up with drummer Jim Keltner to release an instrumental album called *Charlie Watts/Jim Keltner Project*. It was a wholly unexpected and left-field offering of sorts, one that dived into seemingly West African rhythms and electronic overtures. The tracks take their names from both the drummers' major influences—from Roy Haynes to Max Roach and everyone in between. In 2012, Watts released a boogie-woogie record with pianist Axel Zwingenberger, vocalist-pianist Ben Waters and his friend Dave Green on bass. From

The influence of jazz was evident in Watts' drumming style and personality

the band christened The ABC&D of Boogie Woogie after the members' initials, a wild and energetic record titled *Live in Paris* emerged.

When it came to playing with the Stones—who were very much a live band that you had to see live, more than enjoying their studio material (also like any good jazz band)—Watts credited the versatility of Keith Richards as a key factor. He told *Rolling Stone*, “Keith's very much like playing with a jazz guy, very loose. He can go anywhere, and if you follow him and it's right, it's something special, which is kind

of what happens with jazz in its moments, really.”

While every rare conversation with Watts offers a glimpse of his jazz leanings, the best place to hear it is on the 2004 album *Watts at Scott's*. Released by Charlie Watts and the Tentet, a 10-member group, the album was taken from two live performances at Ronnie Scott's in London. Charm abounds in this double-disc recording, featuring standards like ‘Take the ‘A’ Train’ as well as ‘Body and Soul’, among others. Watts nods to Ellington and Strayhorn as well as Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis with his friends, including Peter King and Evan Parker. It will remain a delightful memento for everyone who wants to remember Watts as a jazzman, despite his reputation with The Rolling Stones often overshadowing his lifelong love for jazz. ■

SADIA/GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGES; PETER ROBINSON/MIRRORPIX/GETTY IMAGES

The Stones and Cricket

For fans of the legendary rockers in Mumbai, The Rolling Stones' concert at the Brabourne Stadium on 7th April 2003 remains etched on their memory. The Cricket Club of India's playground being the choice for the venue is not the band's only link with the game. Cricket lovers, the Stones' concert in Mumbai materialised through the connections of Dilip Doshi. The left arm spinner—a lifelong fan of the band, he would have their records shipped to him from England—met Charlie Watts and Mick Jagger when they came to watch a match that he happened to be playing for Nottingham in the 1970s. The three soon became friends. The friendship endured and yielded Mumbai's place on the itinerary of the Licks Tour that the Stones undertook in support of their 40th anniversary compilation album *Forty Licks*.

A senior organiser at the CCI recalls that the spectacular management by the Rolling Stones' technical group had to be seen to be believed. Two gates of the club had to be broken to allow their vans inside. The tennis courts were converted into dressing rooms and the 40-foot-high stage was constructed in no time with their mechanical prowess. He adds, “The stadium was packed with thousands of fans who stood throughout the three-hour concert reciprocating the tremendous energy that the 60-somethings brought to the city that Monday evening.”

Kaleidoscope

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



Wake-up call

Alexander Weise, the Joint Artistic Director of the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, has brought to stage Katori Hall's Olivier award-winning play *The Mountaintop*. Set during America's Civil Rights Movement, the play is an intimate, powerful and fictional look at the quieter moments of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life—his fears about his family, country and death—just after he delivers what would be his last speech.

Royal Exchange's revival of *The Mountaintop* is as funny as it is heartbreaking and asks what the makings of a hero are. The play runs from 25th September to 27th October 2021. For more details, please visit <https://royalexchange.co.uk/whats-on-and-tickets/the-mountaintop>

Planting hope

Soundstreams, an organisation that works towards strengthening public engagement with new Canadian music and music theatre/opera through innovative musical experiences,



has kicked off its 2021-22 season with *Garden of Vanished Pleasures*, a 75-minute theatrical production of contemporary music for digital broadcast, directed by Tim Albery. Composed by Cecilia Livingston and Donna McKeivitt, the songs are based on the writings of Derek Jarman, English artist, filmmaker, gardener and gay rights advocate, who created works of art during the AIDS crisis.

Founding Artistic Director of Soundstreams, Lawrence Cherney, stated, "The *Garden of Vanished Pleasures* is a poignant metaphor for what we have gone through: a reminder that we must come to terms with all that we have lost, at the same time as we plant hopeful seeds of rebirth and renewal." The production will run until 10th October 2021. Please log on to <https://soundstreams.ca/performances/main-stage/garden-of-vanished-pleasures/> for more details.

Collective effort

In October 2011, Ben Quilty went to Afghanistan on assignment as an official war artist, commissioned by the Australian War Memorial and attached to the Australian Defence Force, to



document the Australian experience of war and create a personal and informed representation of conflict. Having spent over three weeks in the war-torn country, the artist is now raising funds for the people of Afghanistan in the wake of recent developments. His campaign,

'Crisis in Afghanistan', which relied on art auctions promoted by celebrities and authors, and financial contributions from various industries including tech and finance, has raised funds in excess of US \$3.4 million.

Quilty said the money will provide "tarpaulins, kitchen sets, blankets, food, shelter, water, sanitation kits, cash, mobile healthcare clinics, psychological care and diplomacy skills to be used on an unproven and dangerous new government." Please visit crisis-in-afghanistan.raisely.com/ben-quilty for more information and to make donations.

Bird's eye view of Indian art

The first-ever Birds of India Company Paintings (1800-1835) is an exhibition curated by Giles Tillotson, a writer and lecturer on Indian history and architecture. Company Painting refers to the work commissioned by the East India Company to Indian artists, in



the 18th and 19th centuries. This led to departures in both style and substance in Indian art with the use of new materials such as European-made paper and transparent watercolour pigments. One of the most delightful genres was natural history—images of India's plants, animals and birds.

Of the 125 paintings on display, the most notable section is a set of 99 extraordinary paintings by unidentified artists, from the Cunninghame Graham album. The birds depicted include raptors, game birds, coastal waders and many woodland and forest birds. The exhibition is on at DAG, New Delhi, until 6th October 2021. Please visit <https://dagworld.com/> to know more. ■

- Aswathi Nair

Theatre of Introspection

The father of stage realism, Konstantin Stanislavski, did not give the world a 'secret code of good acting'. Instead, he asked actors to question, to explore, to learn about themselves through it all. Two theatre personalities who imbibed these ideas take us through them.

By Shayonnita Mallik



APIC/GETTY IMAGES

“My play *The Cherry Orchard* is not yet finished; it makes slow progress, which I put down to laziness, fine weather, and the difficulty of the subject... I think your part is all right, though,” wrote Russian writer Anton Chekhov to director and actor Konstantin Stanislavski, on 28th July 1903.

The play, about a newly bankrupt aristocratic family relinquishing their lands, would premiere in 1904 at the Moscow Art Theatre. It would be watched and discussed by a new USSR. One where serfdom had been abolished, where the proletariat—long banned from the theatre—now flocked to watch plays. A Russia where Lenin was leading the Bolshevik Revolution, where aristocracy was crumbling; one where communism was taking root at a time when it heralded just applause and not suspicion.

Elsewhere in Europe, Freud had just completed *Interpretation of Dreams*. Expressionism, realism conversations about the mind, and questioning everything—the system, the state, the rulers, oneself—captured the zeitgeist of the time.

Born Konstantin Sergeyevich Alekseyev in 1863 to one of the richest families in Russia, Stanislavski was a product of this grand time. It was fitting thus, that this man, running away from his uber-rich family to pursue his acting career, would invent a school of theatre realism that would change what one saw on-screen and the stage for the rest of all time.

The art in oneself

Three decades after the death of our hero, though, the students at India’s seminal theatre institute, the National School of Drama in Delhi, were learning about Stanislavski in a rather different manner.

“I had read the name when I was in college [at NSD],” says veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah, “and I had no idea who he was. I thought he’s some boring Russian philosopher... And, so, I didn’t bother.” *My Life in Art, An Actor Prepares, Creating a Role, Building a Character*—Stanislavski had left behind a ton of dusty tomes inside which, in the 1960s in India, he remained trapped. “Stanislavskian phrases ‘super-objective’ and ‘emotional memory’ and ‘psychological gesture’ were flung around quite a bit,” writes Shah in his autobiography *And Then One Day*, “but without anyone ever explaining them or illustrating what they meant. They were invariably misunderstood.”

But when Shah read more of the Russian thespian and started his master’s at the Film and Television Institute of India, he was star-struck. “For years, acting had been considered a gift of God,” he tells me. “[We were made to believe] that either you can act or you can’t.” But here was a man, who had been asking actors

(since 1903) to develop a system to receive inspiration. “[A man who] with the help of Anton Chekhov wanted to find the psychology of a character and be guided by that,” says Shah enthusiastically, “It was a reaction against the kind of stylised, highly artificial, practically codified kind of acting that existed in his time. And he discarded it all. He concentrated on the subconscious.” On “loving the art in oneself and not oneself in the art” as the master wrote.

Acting in Soviet land

Theatre director and pedagogue Anamika Haksar was introduced to Stanislavski not through his name, but his work. “I grew up watching all the wonderful productions of Ebrahim Alkazi,” she tells me. “We didn’t really know it was Stanislavski at that time, all we knew was that it was realistic acting.”

The desire to undergo a more comprehensive training in theatre took Haksar to Moscow on a drama scholarship after her course at NSD in 1982. “I met my batch for the first time in a potato field,” she laughs. But explains

that that is what the system of Stanislavski is all about—these men and women who would be famous writers, actors and directors one day, in a field, digging, feeling one with the earth—recognition of the self in the surroundings, breaking down of power structures and rigid definition.

This is what was striking about the teaching tradition in the USSR at that time, reminisces Haksar, who was the first Indian to study theatre in the country. She spent five years learning from the direct disciples of Stanislavski. “In the first year, all you do is probe the self—who are you, why are

you, what are your beliefs?” she says. “Everything is through improvisation, through exploration. You are plunging into an infinite space of discovery, at odds with the old style we were taught at the NSD which was blocking stage directions. [In Moscow,] you were made to work on painting and music, rhythm and tempo and then in your second year you entered the world of text.” All these exercises with art, thought and one’s own body were part of Stanislavski’s attempt to help students and artistes internalise deeper creative processes of direction and acting.

“If you speak any lines, or do anything, mechanically, without fully realising who you are, where you came from, why, what you want, where you are going, and what you will do when you get there, you will be acting without imagination,” he wrote in *An Actor Prepares*. “That time, whether short or long, will be unreal, and you will be nothing more than a wound-up machine, an automation.”

Stanislavski’s method states that each actor doing a part has to act with intention. They have to live through it entirely, with purpose

Naseeruddin Shah played the protagonist in *The Father*, brilliantly portraying the helplessness of an ageing man suffering from dementia



All about acting

One of the earliest things that Shah learnt from Stanislavski was: “No character ever appears without an intention. The intention may not be stated, but it’s always there. Every exit is an entry somewhere else. Every entrance is an exit from somewhere else.” Carrying a glass onto the stage, receiving a call, crying, screaming, leaving the stage after committing a murder, Stanislavski explained, were all equal processes. They couldn’t simply be practised in front of a mirror and reproduced. Each time the actor acted his part, he had to have lived through it entirely.

And yet, in many ways, Stanislavski isn’t always applicable.

After all, not everything can be a deeply psychological, internal process, explains Shah. “I don’t think I bothered too much about background or psychology in Ketan Mehta’s 1987 film *Mirch Masala* where I played this wicked, tyrannical, super dark character. I had seen several members of my family who were in the police; the kind of stuff they did to their employees, the way they treated them. And so, for this role, that memory was enough for me to draw upon. I did not have to try and understand, ‘Is my character married?’ ‘What did I have for breakfast?’ It was more in the moment.”

And it is this flexibility of interpretation that the grand

Rooted in self-discovery, in true Russian philosopher-sense, the thespian asked everyone to question everything

old man of realistic theatre had himself insisted on. “Create your own method,” he had implored. “Don’t depend slavishly on mine. Make up something that will work for you. Keep breaking traditions, I beg you.”

Misread genius

Breaking traditions, however, can be risky business. Rife with misinterpretation, it can create styles that differ vastly from their apparent ‘root’. One such system, says Haksar, is Method Acting.

Introduced in the 1930s as an offshoot of the Stanislavski system by American actor Lee Strasberg, ‘Method Acting’ was popularised by big names such as James Dean, Marlon Brando, Dustin Hoffman and Marilyn Monroe.

Yet, in its codification, believe some, it is far from what the Russian taught. “There is nothing called Method Acting in the Soviet system,” says Haksar. “So how can it be an expansion or contraction of something that does not exist? The method does a certain harm to a process that was very, very alive, and was ever-changing. You suddenly bring it into this rigid framework of motivation, justification—a very linear process that contracts the meaning of the Stanislavski system.”

But glamourised by Hollywood, the technique took flight. Soon, you had stories of actors going to near-schizophrenic extents to “live” and become their

character. “There’s the instance of Daniel Day-Lewis who, while playing Hamlet onstage, apparently saw the ghost of his own father!” says Shah. “You don’t do that. You keep a deliberate distance between yourself and the character. You don’t suffer along with the character. You have to be a vessel for the emotion.”

It is still remarkable what the method when practised in moderation could achieve. “[It showed] how mistakes can be beautifully incorporated into action,” explains Shah. “A mistake is not always a disaster. If you drop something by mistake, pick it up. In fact, there’s a great example of Brando that I read in Elia Kazan’s book. In *On The Waterfront*, Brando and the girl were walking along the promenade, and her glove fell by mistake. The director was about to call ‘Cut!’, but Brando picked up the glove, and made a whole wonderful bit of business with it which showed the character’s love for the girl.” That is good acting explains Shah—understanding the circumstances of one’s character and interpreting what they would do in a situation in true Stanislavski style.

Only, it isn’t just the technique that suffers a bad case of misinterpretation. Haksar laments the misinterpretation of *mise-en-scène*, which in India is often referred to as everything put into the physical space of a scene. “In the Russian system, it is the psycho-physical movement of an actor and object in space,” she explains. “It is the movement of the soul, the transmission of rays of light

from one soul to another. But the soul, you will notice, has been kicked out in all English translations.”

And it is indeed fantastical how much of a difference a translation can make. “I have just read it again—*The Work of the Actor on Himself*,” says Haksar, while I check my notes, confused about which of Stanislavski’s books she is referring to.

“*Rabóta aktyora nad sobóy*,” she continues in perfect Russian, “which has been wrongly translated to *An Actor Prepares*. It ought to be *The Work of The Actor on Himself*. ‘Actor Prepares’ is like saying this is the end. But in Stanislavski, everything is open. It is a laboratory of self-exploration and the exploration of the world in the deepest sense.”

Indeed.

“On the stage,” Stanislavski advised his students, “do not run for the sake of running, or suffer for the sake of suffering. Don’t act ‘in general’, for the sake of action; always act with a purpose.” Writing, acting and directing over a century ago, Stanislavski’s system was based on creating an expression, and not just an impression. Rooted in self-discovery, in true Russian philosopher-sense, the thespian asked everyone to question everything.

And that is where his true genius lies. That is why in every bit of good acting, every time an actor engages and doesn’t just entertain, the ghost of Stanislavski in the wings takes a bow, again. ■



Composition on Water by Anamika Haksar—based on Namdeo Dhasal’s poem *Water*, where he writes about caste hegemony and the denial of water to people from the lower caste—is a fine example of her interpretation of realism

The Home-grown Aesthetic

From the rich textiles of Odisha to handicrafts, regional treasures meld together to define *aharya* in Odissi, which is as rooted in tradition as it is open to possibilities.

By Sharmila Biswas

In any Indian traditional dance form, the *aharya* is designed keeping in mind the regional style and motif, and that it complements the dance movements.

There is a strong *parampara* that needs to be followed to ensure that the identity of the form is maintained. But within the boundaries of tradition, there is scope for individual preference and creative exploration as well. My personal preference is to design a costume that would beautify the dance, enhance the personality of the dancer, without drawing too much attention to itself.

My aesthetic sense was first influenced by my sister, Shreela Debi. Her research on Indian textile is deep, and her aesthetics and sensibility cover various aspects of life. My guru, Kelucharan Mohapatra, brought to Odissi the science and art behind design; his philosophy is one I will always follow. And, finally, it was the last two Maharis of the Jagannath Temple, Shashimani and Parasmani Mahari, who played a role in shaping my perspective on *aharya*. When I interacted with them, they had almost nothing left of the Mahari attire. The fact is they never really actively served in the temple but they knew certain designs. They spent hours sketching, describing, demonstrating their special style of attire.

It was Guruji who created the identity of Odissi dance to a large extent. Guru Deba Prasad Das also had his individual style; very beautiful, very Odia. We have two distinct components of *aharya* in Odissi—the head decoration *phula* and *tahia*, originally made with fresh flowers, now with *pith*, another age-old handicraft of the region. *Tahia* has been inspired by the famous headgear of Lord Jagannath of Puri. He is adorned with 24 specially made *tahias* during Rathajatra and Snanajatra. They are made of bamboo, cane, plantain leaves, flowers, pith and brocade. The other special ornament is *bengapatia*, the waist band. *Bengapatia* literary means the mouth of a frog, and has been thus named to indicate the conical shape of the pieces of silver strung together to make it. Traditional silver jewellery and rich textiles from the region are also specialities of the dance form.

The drape

The fabric that's draped is always graceful; in rhythm with the dancer. It is also unpredictable, with a mind of its own.

Although stitched costumes are easier to handle, I prefer unstitched saris. The dhoti style without the *kachha* came from the Gotipua dancers. I use it extensively for male and female dancers.



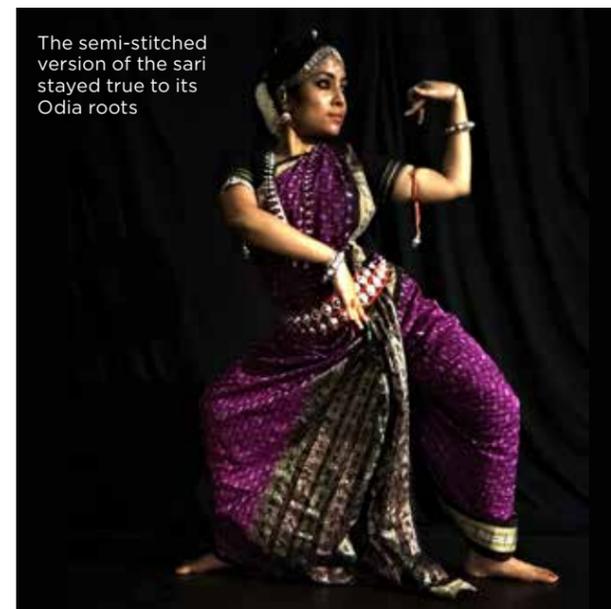
Gurus Kelucharan Mohapatra and Deba Prasad Das belong to the Gotipua tradition, and that influence is seen in the dhoti-style saris



This draping style brings in an added element of beauty to the various poses

I am pleased to have introduced the Mahari style of draping to Odissi, with my dance production *Sampoorna* in 1998. Later, this style was adopted by many dancers who further popularised it. The demonstrations by Shashimani and Parasmani did teach me the style but I found it to be cumbersome for the stage. Eventually, I designed a semi-stitched version; a style that I find graceful and uniquely Odia.

Odisha has a rich heritage of textiles unique to their region of origin. Pasapalli, Sonepuri, Bomkai, Khandua, Habaspuri, Simanoi, Kotpad and Brahmipuri are some of the textiles, each with distinct weave, motif and colour. Today, weavers need much support to produce authentic saris and dhosis. There's a lot of mindless fusion work that has originated, and good textiles are no longer easily accessible to dancers.



The semi-stitched version of the sari stayed true to its Odia roots

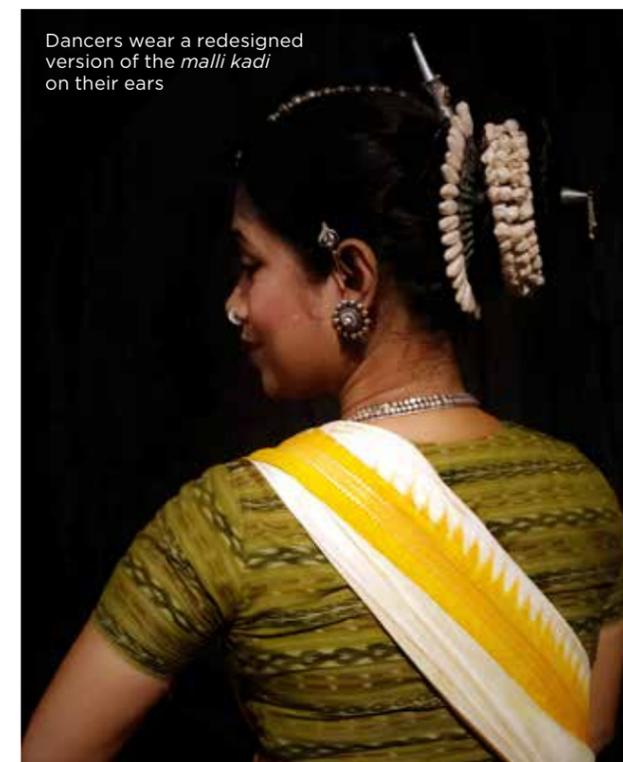
Traditional silver jewellery and rich textiles from the region are specialities of Odissi

The accessories

Gold jewellery was predominantly worn by the temple dancers and women in Odisha. But use of silver jewellery is the standard practice for the dance form. I follow the old Odisha patterns as much as possible; they are distinct and beautiful. Some of the designs that I learnt from the Maharis include *panapatra*, worn on the head, and an improvised version of the *malli kadi* for the earlobe. A tiny version of *guna* is worn on the nose. I come across different motifs while studying old jewellery and temple sculptures. I use them to design our ornaments.



The *panapatra* was designed by the Maharis and is used by Sharmila Biswas and her students



Dancers wear a redesigned version of the *malli kadi* on their ears



Intricately designed silver jewellery is part of the costume

The fabric draped is in rhythm with the dancer but it is also unpredictable, with a mind of its own

Personal element

Over the last 15 years, I have given much thought to the ideal dance attire for myself. The youthful *apsara*-like costume and accessories no longer suit my personality. Yet, there is a need to wear something identifiably Odissi in texture and pattern, and also formal enough for our stylised dance. I now prefer softer lines and muted colours that are soothing to the eyes. Small changes in most of the accessories and draping style have been incorporated.

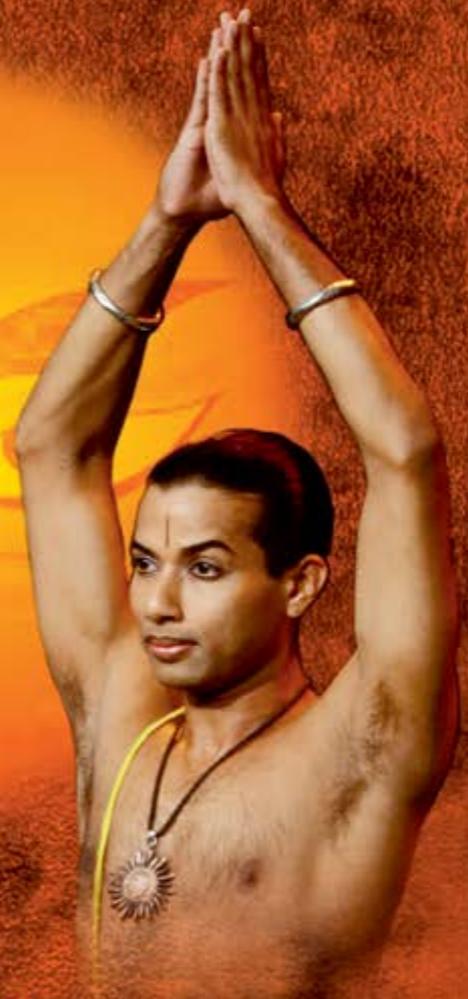
As I evolve as an artiste, I realise that traditions, texts and codification do not hinder creativity. Tradition is not a set of rigid and mindless rules. The more one studies the art form, the more the doors of creativity are pushed open to unlimited possibilities.

Ultimately, the *aharya* of Odissi dance is the united aesthetic vision of a large number of people living in and loving the beautiful Odisha. ■

For hair accessories or ornaments, I avoid the use of a large and prominent *tahia* and *phula*, and keep in mind the proportions of the original flower versions worn in earlier times. Sometimes, the *pith tahia* is replaced with silver ones.

Biswas has reinvented her own attire over the years but stayed close to the traditions of the dance form





Celebrating
ଦେବାଁ

An Odissi workshop by **Aruna Mohanty**

Guest speaker: **Rahul Acharya**

Discusses the influence of Tantra in the temple tradition of Puri.

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A Life in Focus

A chronicler of the socio-political and cultural life of India for five decades, veteran photojournalist and editor Mukesh Parpiani turned his lens on the many-splendoured arts at the NCPA 12 years ago as Head of the Piramal Art Gallery. Close on the heels of a prestigious lifetime achievement award, and a book in the offing, the lensman looks back on a profession with a ringside seat to life.

By Snigdha Hasan



Mukesh Parpiani

The year was 1989 and the mere utterance of Salman Rushdie's name was enough to stoke up fervour among people in disparate parts of the world. Bombay, the writer's birthplace, was no exception. On a February morning, demonstrators protesting against the publishing of Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* were making their way through a chock-a-block Mohammed Ali Road when they got into a scuffle with the police and things turned ugly. "Stones began to be pelted, the crowd ran amok and it was bedlam. A stone landed inches away from me. Soon, there was sound of gunfire," recalls Mukesh Parpiani, who was on assignment as a photojournalist with Rusi Karanjia's *The Daily*. 'Twelve Die in Bombay in Anti-Rushdie Riot' read the headlines the next day. "All in a day's work," Parpiani shrugs. He goes on to retell the happenings of the day the glass came crashing down in his Express Towers office when a bomb went off in the nearby Air India building on 12th March 1993. Or the day he arrived in Bhopal, the air still heavy with the smell of methyl isocyanate that had changed thousands of lives the night before. Parpiani



A safe haven during the Bombay riots of 1992



Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, accompanied by Union Home Secretary R.D. Pradhan (left), during a visit to Mumbai



Bal Thackeray addresses the Shiv Sena's Dussehra rally at Shivaji Park



The Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984 affected thousands of lives



Mumbaikars navigate a flooded Mithi river at Saki Naka



Mother Teresa during a visit to Mumbai

went from being a feisty photojournalist on the move to heading the photography departments of *The Indian Express* and the *Mid-Day* before he joined the NCPA as Head of the Piramal Art Gallery. Although he did not have to don a PPE suit to shoot the Covid wards of hospitals anymore, being the torchbearer for a vocation that calls for stepping out when others run for shelter, the last 17 months have been stifling for him. The stillness of the theatres eventually drove him to continue propagating photography as an art form online.

Since the lockdown was first imposed last year, Parpiani has been organising virtual photo exhibitions under the aegis of the NCPA. As goes the fluidity of the online space, where the reach of good content is no longer determined by geography, his curated exhibition on birds, which saw participation by more than 200 photographers from across India, travelled far and wide. The exhibition was noticed by the Andhra Pradesh Photography Akademi and due diligence on the organisation's part led to a wealth of photographs published not only in newspapers Parpiani was directly associated with but also other national publications, including *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *India Today*, the Sunday supplements of *Anandabazar Patrika*, and foreign publications via the international news agency, United Press International. It was unanimously decided that there could be no better choice than him for the academy's Lifetime Achievement Award for the year 2020-21.

The news comes at a time when Parpiani's book, where he looks back on India over the decades through moments captured in his camera, is on the horizon. It will be released by Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook, Chairman, NCPA, at the Piramal Art Gallery when it is safe to return to the theatres.

Excerpts from a conversation with the veteran photographer:

From a photojournalist to photo editor to curator and head of an art gallery, how has each role been different?

I started with *The Daily* and those were the days of ample editorial space with few ads. I would cover the length and breadth of the city with my camera in hand, return to the office in the evening and process the photographs in the darkroom. I used to follow the politics of the city closely, covering mass gatherings including the Dussehra rallies of the Shiv Sena. Turns out, my work was followed closely by the party too and occasionally, I would receive a call from Balasaheb Thackeray if he spotted something interesting with my name in the credit.

Viveck Goenka, Managing Director of the Indian Express group, got acquainted with my work, particularly through the photographs of his grandfather and founder of the group, Ramnath Goenka, which I shot when JP Narayan would visit him in his penthouse at Nariman Point. I was invited to join the newspaper as its photo editor, where I



Homai Vyarawalla, renowned photojournalist, at a retrospective of her works at the Piramal Art Gallery



Legendary vocalists Gangubai Hangal and Kishori Amonkar seen together in a rare frame



Sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan and classical singer extraordinaire Bhimsen Joshi share a warm moment at the Tata Theatre

headed a team that covered major national and international newsbreaks such as the Harshad Mehta scam, the Chandra Shekhar government's pledging of gold to the Bank of England, the time when the United States Air Force used the Indian airbases in Bombay and Agra to refuel its aircraft deployed in the Gulf War, the 1992 riots and the Bombay blasts of '93.

When the serial bomb blasts ripped through the city, our photographers were able to travel to the sites in no time because I had ensured that each member of the team had a motorbike, which is commonplace today, but in those days, was a novelty. Photojournalists are a small community and raising their issues, whether through my camera or



The NCPA swathed in festive colours during its golden jubilee celebrations

my position as head of the department, has been integral to my work.

At the *Mid-Day*, Tariq Ansari gave me a free hand in running the photo department and one of the first initiatives I undertook was going digital. The newspaper's first DSLR, a Nikon D1, was bought for ₹ 4.5 lakh. Back in 2001, you could buy a small flat in Mira Road-Bhayander with that sum. The camera soon travelled to Afghanistan where it was used to document the ongoing war, but had a brief life as the correspondent traversing the rugged terrain on horseback couldn't save it from a plunge in a canal when the horse got agitated!

Moving from manual prints to shooting performances digitally was also among my first projects at the NCPA when I was appointed head of the Piramal Art Gallery by Mr. Suntook, who gave me full rein to run and manage its affairs. Dr. Jamshed Bhabha started the gallery in 1987 with a donation from Mr. Dilip Piramal. Mr. Jehangir HC Jehangir was the other brain behind the gallery, who initiated a conversation with the Ford Foundation that gave it a grant for 10 years. The money was used to set up a state-of-the-art darkroom and colour processing unit, facilities that were unparalleled in Bombay in those days. The gallery used to be headed by PC Patel and I had exhibited my work here on three occasions. When I took the baton from him, I was aware of the legacy I had been entrusted with.

Is there a difference between photographing the performing arts and news?

Well, some artistes do request us to not be too close to the stage or shoot too many photographs close to the stage, which is something my team and I take care of anyway. We move about quietly and discreetly from one corner of the theatre to the

other. We also put a napkin over the camera so that the artistes and audience are not disturbed by the sound of the shutter. Narendra Dangiya has been with us since 2010 and gallery attendant Gautam Ubale efficiently works with me. Very often, we use the services of freelance photographers Dilip Kagda and Datta Kumbhar in managing the exhibitions as well as for photography at the NCPA. Since 2009, a minimum of three lakh pictures of events have been captured. We have an excellent collection of all SOI seasons, Indian and international music concerts, dance performances and plays.

That said, whether one is out in the field or inside a theatre, it is about having an eye for the decisive moment or an interesting angle. For years together, on the final *visarjan* day of Ganeshotsav, for instance, photographers thronged the foot-over bridge near Chowpatty to get a bird's-eye view of the sea of humanity that gathered at the beachfront. To break the monotony, I decided to take a boat to a point farther into the sea to take a picture of a half-immersed idol. The following year, I took the aerial route by hopping on the Police Commissioner's chopper. And the year after that, just as I was wondering what my unique Ganpati shot would be, I spotted Mr. JRD Tata at the Chowpatty soaking in the festivities with a friend, slippers in hand.

How has the profession changed over the years?

While we have come a long way from having to make do with the ration of film roll given by the accounts department, news publications have become more glamour-oriented. There was a time when photographs of actors and actresses only appeared in film publications. I remember when Tina Munim and Rajesh Khanna led a protest by film workers on the streets of the city, one of my photos was picked

by the editor of *The Indian Express* to be used on the front page. So rare was this occurrence that Khanna tracked down my number and called me on the office landline to thank me.

Of course, the way photojournalism is practised in India remains markedly different from the West and other parts of the world. When I was on assignment in Bangalore to photograph the Miss World pageant in 1996, a fellow photographer from the US had plans in place to prolong his stay to document Indian railways, and the question of falling short of film roll did not even arise.

And how has Mumbai changed?

The city has gone from bad to worse. Its skyline has changed and there is very little architecture to be seen amidst haphazard construction. Chor Bazaar used to be a tourist's paradise and spotting a foreign traveller haggle for antiques made for an interesting photo op. I am not sure if I can call the area safe anymore. Traffic snarls add to the city's woes and there is no predicting how long it could take to go from one place to another. A sense of discipline used to define the city. Today, other, not-so-welcome qualifiers have taken its place. ■

Mukesh Parpiani has been a one-man army as far as the photography division of the NCPA is concerned over many years. He has managed a quiet corner above the Experimental with distinction. He has organised exhibitions on many well-known figures and those unknown to us, such as the recent one on cyclists traversing the globe more than 50 years ago—an exhibition attended by many, many people indeed, wondering at the prowess of these great athletes.

The treasure house of photographs connected with the NCPA is indeed invaluable and will form a major part of our digital foray. We are indeed fortunate in having Mr. Parpiani in charge of this crucial wing of the NCPA. After all, it holds evidence of our importance.

- Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook, Chairman, NCPA

Photography has rightly been recognised as a valid art form at the NCPA. Photography as a tool has no doubt played a vital role in documenting various performances that we have been specially curating and presenting to art-loving audiences during the past 50 years and more. However, it is the expertise, vision and passion of our esteemed colleague, Mr. Mukesh Parpiani, that has brought a touch of artistry to our activities at the NCPA. Whether it is a celebrity artiste or our schoolchildren celebrating Children's Day, Mr. Parpiani and his team are ever ready to capture the best of the moments. We also indeed take pride in the thematic exhibitions that are curated and hosted under his guidance at the NCPA.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Parpiani for the latest honour bestowed on him by the Andhra Pradesh Photography Akademi.

- Dr. Suvarnalata Rao, Programming Head - Indian Music, NCPA

It is with great pleasure and happiness that I would like to congratulate Mr. Parpiani on receiving this prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. It is indeed a very proud moment for the NCPA and his co-workers that he has received this award for his unwavering hard work and dedication. It proves the determination, passion and honesty with which he has worked to receive this great honour. He will be an inspiration and a role model for others to follow in his footsteps in photojournalism. We hope that he will do his utmost to offer great knowledge and experiences to society. We wish for his successful life in the future.

- Farrahnaz Irani, General Manager - International Music, NCPA

I was introduced to Mr. Parpiani during the induction programme when I joined the NCPA in 2013. Quiet, witty and immensely talented, he slowly introduced me to the world of photography through the numerous exceptional works that he had created over time. Ever-smiling and encouraging, our first collaborative event was a dance photography workshop conducted on International Dance Day in 2014. As we walk up to the gallery at the NCPA, his curation starts right from the ground floor walls and by the time we are at the door of the gallery, we are already hungry for more. His curation has always been unique and attracted audiences from all genres of art. Many dancers frequent the gallery for inspiration.

Many congratulations to Mr. Parpiani for this achievement. He deserves this award and many more.

- Swapnokalpa Dasgupta, Head of Dance Programming, NCPA

Most of my interactions with Mukesh Parpiani have been through the work he and his team carry out, photographing virtually every one of the hundreds of events that happen at the NCPA each year—documenting the life of the organisation through pictures which will continue to tell our stories even after institutional memory has faded.

But over the years, I have learnt that Mr. Parpiani's unassuming nature veils a life that has told so many stories through his lens. And I know from personal experience that many of the exhibitions he has curated in the Piramal Art Gallery at the NCPA have showcased tales that I did not know existed. And through all that, Mr. Parpiani's own story is fascinating in its own right, and the recent Lifetime Achievement Award he received is a testament to that.

- Xerxes F. Unvala, General Manager - SOI & Western Classical Music, NCPA

I am delighted that Mr. Mukesh Parpiani is getting the recognition he so richly deserves. The prestigious award could not have gone to a better person. He has captured the essence of the NCPA for so many years, as well as teaching people about photography in numerous workshops over the years. I'm sure he will continue his fine work in the years ahead.

- Bruce Guthrie, Head - Theatre & Films, NCPA

In Rhythm

Understanding Intricacies of the *Laya-Tala*, an online workshop by tabla maestro Suresh Talwalkar, will explore the rhythmic and temporal aspects of music in the Indian tradition, with valuable insights not only for instrumentalists but also vocalists and dancers.

From the pounding of spices in a mortar to the clickety-clack of wheels along the railway line, our world is enveloped in rhythm. Even in the absence of sophisticated instruments, the rhythmic clap of the hands or ticking of the clock could evoke a sense of music. It flows from here, then, that rhythm is a crucial aspect of the performing arts.

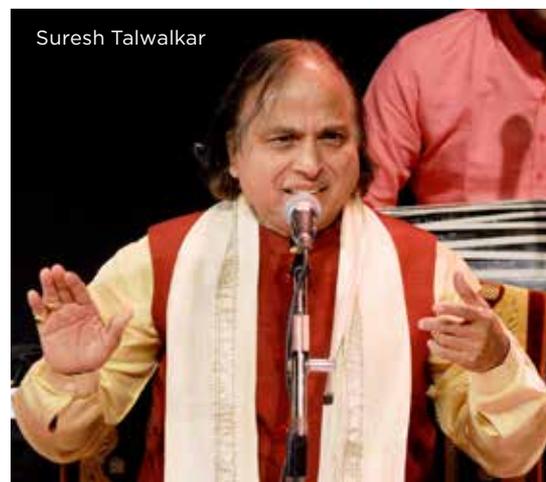
The Indian tradition is characterised by the unique temporal concept of *tala*, which is viewed as cyclical, and not linear, in nature. Whether in vocal or instrumental music, or dance, the aspects of *laya* and *tala* are integral to a performance. The upcoming online workshop, Understanding Intricacies of the *Laya-Tala* by celebrated tabla player and scholar, Suresh Talwalkar, recognises the importance of an in-depth study of these aspects, particularly for performing artistes. The workshop is supported by Citi and will be streamed live from the NCPA. It will be conducted in Hindi, followed by a Q&A session.

In the cyclical structure of *tala*, the very first beat—*sam*—assumes paramount significance as the juncture that signifies the end of the existing cycle (*avartan*) as well as the beginning of a new cycle. “Arriving at the *sam* is the highest emotional point of Indian

classical music,” explains Talwalkar, who is also one of the gurus under the NCPA’s Support to Gurus programme that promotes the traditional *guru-shishya parampara* of learning in Hindustani vocal (*dhrupad* and *khayal*) and Hindustani instrumental (melody and percussion instruments) categories. “In fact, *tala* has contributed five vital elements to Indian music: discipline; the sixteen-, ten- or eight-beat structures; *avartan*; *mukhda* [refrain] and *sam*,” he adds. Talwalkar further explains that *avartan* does not mean repetition. “Our cycles go from *vilambit* [slow tempo] to *drut* [fast tempo]. An *avartan* could last anywhere between five and thirty seconds. That’s the range.”

Rhythm is intrinsic to dance too. Dancers with a natural sense of rhythm—the ability to move in time to a fixed beat—lend a certain grace to their performance. Therefore, in addition to *khayal* for vocalists and *masitkhani gat* (a kind of composition) for instrumentalists, the conceptual understanding of microbeats (the ability to identify the midpoint of the gap between two beats) for kathak dancers will be covered in the workshop.

The talk will also be interspersed with insightful anecdotes of iconic masters of *laya-tala*. Khaprumama Parvatkar, a



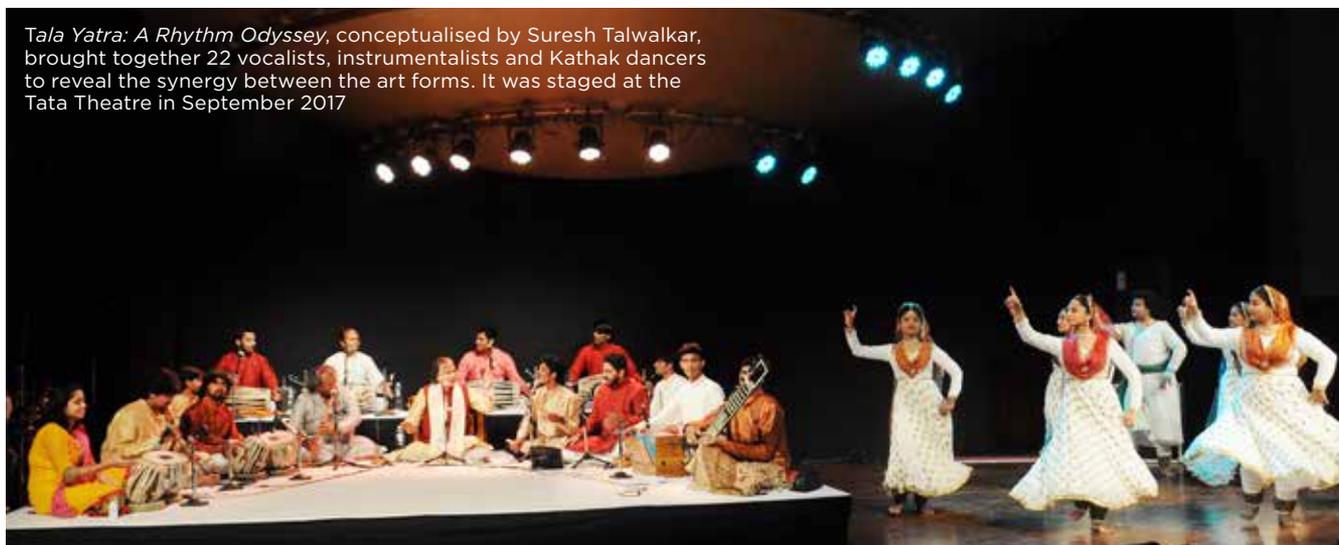
gifted musician from Goa, who played the tabla, ghumot and sarangi, had earned the sobriquet ‘Laya Bhaskar’. “It is unthinkable that in one cycle, he could present five *talas*. I will attempt to present a snippet of that based on what I have learnt from my gurus,” says the modest musician.

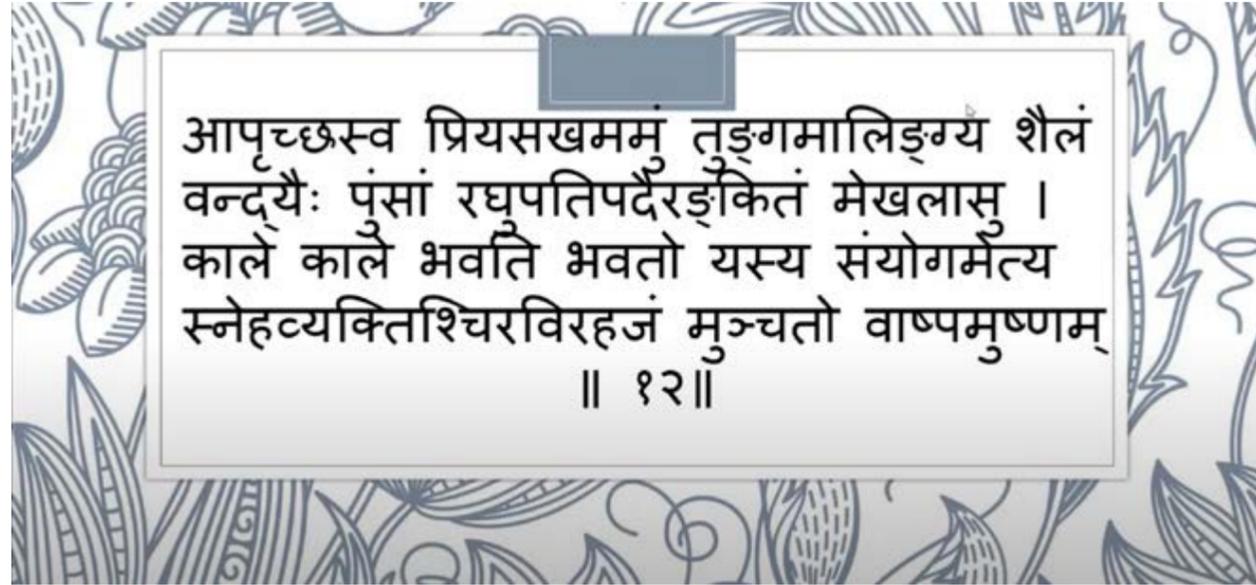
Talwalkar will be accompanied by Aashay Kulkarni on the tabla, a recipient of the Citi-NCPA scholarship (2015-16) awarded to promising artistes. ■

- Snigdha Hasan

The workshop will be live-streamed on Saturday, 23rd October 2021, at 11.30 am. The registration is free. For more details, please visit www.ncpamumbai.com

Tala Yatra: A Rhythm Odyssey, conceptualised by Suresh Talwalkar, brought together 22 vocalists, instrumentalists and Kathak dancers to reveal the synergy between the art forms. It was staged at the Tata Theatre in September 2017





THE LYRIC OF LIFE

In an exiled *yaksha's* message for his beloved wife, Kalidasa strung together vignettes of wisdom and knowledge with such grace that the lyric has been cherished as an epitome of “brevity of expression, richness of content, and power to elicit sentiment”. The recently concluded ‘Monsoon with Meghdoot’ workshop presented select verses from the poet-dramatist’s magnum opus, urging one to return to it over and over.

By Snigdha Hasan

Viraha, or pangs of separation, has been an enduring motif in the literature, art and music of the Indian subcontinent. Whether it is the restlessness in every moment of every day spent in the absence of one’s beloved in the raga Yaman composition, ‘Ae Ri Aali Piya Bin’, or the miniatures from the Pahari school that depict sequences from Jayadeva’s *Gita Govinda*, pining for the one who is away is an evocative theme untouched by the passage of time.

However, it takes a Kalidasa to immortalise what distance, forced upon two inseparable souls, could do to their being. The plight of a *yaksha* (the mythical category between gods and mortals), exiled to a mountain because he was too in love with his new bride, begins to unfold with the very premise of *Meghdoot*. So unbearable is his pain that he can no longer tell the animate from the inanimate. The yaksha pleads with a cloud that has arrived to embrace the peak of the Ramgiri on the first day of *aashadh* to become his messenger and carry his words to his wife.

“This sums up *Meghdoot*. It has no story as such. But the exquisite beauty of the language in which it is written remains unequalled. That is why Kalidasa



Rishiraj Pathak

is Kalidasa,” said Rishiraj Pathak about the Sanskrit poet-dramatist, considered among the greatest litterateurs India has produced in any epoch, during the first session of ‘Monsoon with Meghdoot’. A series of eight workshops organised by the NCPA in the rain-soaked months of July and August presented select verses from the lyric poem, elucidated and interpreted by experts from diverse fields.

Having only read translations of the work so far, this was a rare opportunity to be reacquainted with—nay rediscover—the work in its original form under the tutelage of Pathak, a noted Sanskrit scholar, poet and musician. There was another personal motivation behind signing up. Kalidasa, the legend goes, was one of the nine gems at the court of King Vikramaditya of



Piyal Bhattacharya's production *Viraha-Gatha* is based on *Meghdoot*

Ujjain, where the writer hails from. In the absence of written records, much of what is known about Kalidasa’s life, including the period and place he was born in, is conjecture. But if a link does exist, why would a city not love back its extraordinary son who eulogised its temples, palaces, people and river in *Meghdoot*, when the yaksha urges the cloud to take a detour and visit Ujjain? The Kalidasa Akademi, dedicated to the study of the poet’s literature, and its annual event, Kalidasa Samaroh, are one of the many ways in which this bond has been kept alive down the centuries. The Kalidasa Smarak in



Sandhya Raman

Ramtek near Nagpur is another ode to *Meghdoot* and the hill where the yaksha spent a year in exile. “Kalidasa belongs to all of India; he resides in the hearts of art and literature lovers,” said Pathak in his introduction, as he went on to underline the timelessness of the poet through his works. “*Kavi kisi samay ka nahi hota; kavi shashwat hota hai* [the poet does not belong to an epoch; the poet is eternal].”

Over the course of eight weeks, Pathak took the participants through the *shabdarth* (literal meaning) and *bhavarth* (the gist or underlying spirit) of select verses, whetting our appetite to read what could not be included. He also took care to contextualise usage of words that may be considered problematic today. *Patni* (connected to duty); *abala* (weak); *kaanta* (gorgeous looking); *bhaarya* (burden bearing) and *jaaya* (the one who gives birth), for instance, are all synonyms connoting the roles a woman is expected to play as a wife, he explained.

The translation of the Sanskrit text provided the foundation for us to interpret the verses in an

interdisciplinary context. Guest speakers Piyal Bhattacharya (Dance), Subodh Poddar (Visual Art) and Sandhya Raman (Costume Design) weighed in on the lyric through the prism of their fields of expertise. In one of the first few sessions, Raman presented possibilities of what could be explored onstage through costumes—the cloud embracing the mountain, the desire within or the misery of being apart. On the last day of the workshop, the noted costume designer and curator helped participants revisit those

ideas to develop them further.

Poddar, who is known for his ‘dancescapes’ that he paints as a live performance unfolds onstage, created some brilliant works in Chinese ink on rice paper as Pathak elucidated the verses. The swift movements of his brush that revealed a beautiful cloud within seconds or the poet’s portrayal of the Gambhira river was a delightful melding of art and literature.

Bhattacharya, an eminent researcher of *Natyashastra*, presented a fascinating example of how classics and their portrayal onstage transcend the barriers of language. His dance

production *Viraha-Gatha* is based on Dr. Rana Pratap Singh Gannori’s Urdu translation of the *Meghdoot*. The opening scenes of the longing of the yaksha and the yakshini, their separation depicted by a thin veil between them, were beautifully evocative with the lyrical Urdu narration playing its due part.

By now, we had retraced the path Kalidasa had charted in Poorva Megh and were now soaking in the yaksha’s reminiscences about his wife in Uttar Megh, the final part of *Meghdoot*, which details the contents of the message and how the cloud would find its way in Alakapuri, where the yakshini lives. The life lessons contained within those concluding verses are to be savoured and not given away here. But as the *bhavarth* of the last verse was explained, the imminent pangs of separation from *Meghdoot* could be felt by us all.

“Why lament the end when Kalidasa says joys and sorrows are but the cycle of life?” Pathak concluded. For a poem that beckons to the wandering mind in need of solace, only another poem could capture its essence: a thing of beauty is a joy for ever. ■

Songs of India

ON Stage brings you excerpts from the *NCPA Quarterly Journal*, an unsurpassed literary archive that ran from 1972 to 1988 and featured authoritative and wide-ranging articles. In this multi-part article, scholar, curator and Indophile **Robert J. Del Bonta** explores operas that mention, are set in or are about India, delving into the oddities that creep in owing to a Western view of the subcontinent.

The hidden gems are rich beyond measure. Unnumbered are the pearls thy ocean treasure.

Oh, wondrous land! Oh, land of India!
-“Song of India” from *Sadko*

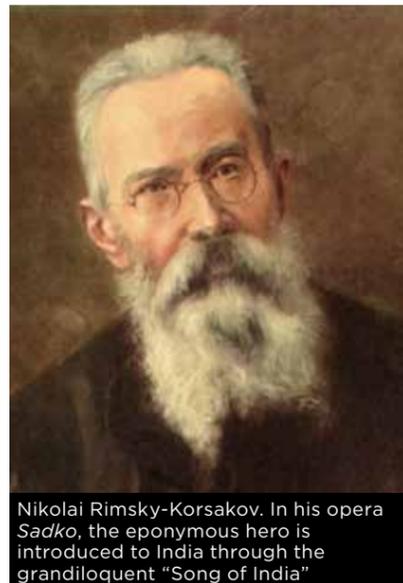
In the opera *Sadko* of 1898 by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, the hero Sadko asks three merchants to sing of their native lands so that he can decide which one he wants to visit. The merchants are the Viking, the Venetian and the Indian. After hearing the three songs including the overly familiar and enticing description of India, “Song of India”, for some unexplained reason Sadko proceeds to choose Venice. I believe that Sadko made a terrible mistake. I say this in spite of the fact that I would describe India in a very different manner; in equally glowing but not quite so affluent terms.

Exotic references

There are many operas that mention or are about India from all periods of our musical heritage. Although many of these operas have been recorded or discussed in books, very little is ever said about their content. Much verbiage is given over to such things as “Hindu

melodies”, referring to the oriental flavour of the music. This is especially true in reference to Massenet’s use of the unfamiliar saxophone for a waltz followed by “Hindu melody” for flute in the Paradise scene of *Le Roi de Lahore*. The use of the title “Hindu” is extremely misleading to a Western reader. No Indian would recognise such a thing as Indian, just as no Chinese would feel that Puccini’s *Turandot* sounds anything but foreign to his ear. These often-repeated comments are entertaining to read, but perhaps a more logical thing to say is that Massenet used the exotic situation of his opera to introduce exotic new sounds and strikingly original melodies. To call these melodies “Hindu” merely points out the European naïveté about things Indian. More important to consider are the plots of the stories. One must consider whether a French version of a love triangle set in Sri Lanka, as seen in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*, is as Ceylonese as an Italian version of a Scottish story such as *Lucia* is Scottish. Despite the Italianate quality of *Lucia*, one can view Europe as a cultural unit. But how do Westerners view something as foreign and remote as the Indian subcontinent?

Having been a student of India for all of my adult life and a lover of opera for almost as long, it has been a constant source of pleasure to me to hear India mentioned in odd contexts in a great many operas and directly dealt with in what are, in my opinion, some rather good works. When the Vendor of Animals in *Der Rosenkavalier* offers parrots from India during the *levée* of the



Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. In his opera *Sadko*, the eponymous hero is introduced to India through the grandiloquent “Song of India”



Massenet’s *Le Roi de Lahore* features among works that give Western operatic impressions of the Indian subcontinent



Turandot by Puccini was screened at the NCPA in November 2019, as part of its collaboration with the Metropolitan Opera, New York

JEAN-GUILAUME GOURSAY/GAMMA-RAPHO/GETTY IMAGES; HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; THE METROPOLITAN OPERA



With the royal India of the past as the backdrop, *La Bayadère* tells the story of a temple dancer

Marschallin, I can almost hear the loud squabbling of those loveable creatures in the Islamic ruins of Delhi. When earlier in the same scene, the powder of the Queen of Golconda is mentioned, images of the Kohinoor diamond, which was probably mined there, and the climb to the top of the magnificent Golconda Fort near Hyderabad in southern India crossed my mind.

Other operas include Indian characters adding a cosmopolitan quality to exotic operas set in the East. The most well-known example due to performances in recent decades is the character Idreno in Rossini’s *Semiramide* of 1823. Indian titles for characters in operas happen in the 18th century as well, as seen in Jean-Philippe Rameau’s *Les Indes Gallantes* (about many of the “Indies”) with its Persian prince who is also the King of India and Antonio Salieri’s *Cublai* concerning Kublai Khan, in which an Indian princess finds her way to Central Asia. These characters are gratuitous additions, doing very little to further the plots of their operas. An opera with Indian elements which actually function in the plot is Sir Michael Tippett’s *Midsummer Marriage* of 1955, where two of the characters

The choice of India is clearly for its exotic possibilities, but at the same time, this gave composers freedom from old traditions, contributing a great deal to the development of romantic opera

become transfigured as the Hindu god Shiva and his consort Parvati.

While these enticing allusions to India appear in operas from time to time, the ones that deal directly with India run the full gamut of our operatic heritage. The first use of India as a setting is found in the many operas based on Pietro Metastasio’s *Alessandro nell’Indie*. Metastasio’s text was set by a large number of composers during the 18th century, including Porpora in 1730, Handel in 1731, Galuppi in 1738, Gluck in 1744, Sacchini in 1763, as well as Cimarosa, Hasse, Cherubini,

J. C. Bach, etc. The operas are variously labelled by the full title or after the Indian king Poro (usually called Porus in the classical accounts) who fought Alexander during the Indian campaign. The plot line suggests a knowledge of the classical sources, since after Porus’s defeat, Alexander restored him to his kingdom. A fictitious character, the Indian queen Cleofide adds the necessary soprano role to these opera *seria*.

Indian context

The operas to be considered here follow later conventions and they make an attempt to be about India rather than it being merely set there. The oldest opera about India still performed is Adolphe Adam’s *Si J’étais Roi* of 1852, which is the story of an Indian youth who scribbles the words “If I were King” in the sand and gets his wish.

The important thing about this opera is that it concerns Indians and isn’t merely set in India to illustrate the magnanimity of a character like Alexander. The choice of the setting is clearly for its exotic possibilities, but at the same time, this choice allowed composers more freedom from old traditions, contributing a great deal to



Der Rosenkavalier manages to capture the sounds and feel of India quite well



Lakmé is set in British India. The opera revolves around a high priest and his family

the development of romantic opera. From *Si J'étais Roi* to the most recent of Indian operas, Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Last Savage* of 1963 (first performed as *Le Dernier Sauvage*, a comic opera about a rich American girl's anthropological aspirations and her search for the abominable snowman). Phillip Glass's *Satyagraha* of 1980 (about Mahatma Gandhi) and Per Nørgård's *Siddharta* of 1983 (about the early life of the historical Buddha and his decision to renounce the world when a dancer dies before him), the audience is presented with a variety of Indias; in some cases, over-romanticised, in others, fairly true to the realities of India, but always exotic.

Unlike *Si J'étais Roi*, many of the operas about India are no longer in the repertoire (the Adam opera was recently revived by a small company in London). Mentions of other little-known works such as Alfano's *La Leggenda di Shakuntala* of 1921 tantalise my imagination. The latter, in particular, conjures up the finale to Puccini's *Turandot* finished after his death by Alfano and memories of my struggle to translate *Shakuntala*, the most famous of all Sanskrit plays, over fifteen years ago. Both Louis Coerne (1904) and Felix Weingartner (1884) offered operatic versions of the playwright Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, while a ballet by Ernest Reyer with a book by Gautier premiered in 1858 and a famous overture by Karl Goldmark, by the same title that dates back to 1865. All of these were presumably based on the early translation by Sir William Jones of 1789 (translated from the English into German by Georg Forster in 1791 and into French

Enticing allusions to India appear in operas from time to time, but the ones that deal directly with India run the full gamut of our operatic heritage

by A. Bruguère in 1803), which was widely known in the intellectual circles of Europe. Even Franz Schubert began an opera based on the play as early as 1820, but he never completed it. Alfano's opera was staged at the Wexford Festival, 1982, where apparently it was staged as a performance in a crumbling hotel during the English Raj.

While one can imagine the classical presentation of the *Shakuntala* operas, other titles offer only vague, tantalising hints of the plot lines, such as Donizetti's *Il Paria* which hints at untouchables and was based on C. Delavigne's *Le Paria* of 1821. Many references to pariahs are found throughout this period in both literary and theatrical works. Other operas which tempt us are Donizetti's *La Regina di Golconda* of 1828. Franz Adolphe Berwald's *Drottningen av Golconda* of 1864 (first performed in Stockholm in 1968), Berton's *Aline, Reine de Golconde* of 1803, and Boieldieu's opera of the same name of 1804, as well as a number of ballets with similar titles. These works are all presumably based on the play by S.J. de

Boufflers and hint at the same Queen of Golconda who lent her powder to Strauss for *Der Rosenkavalier*. Mentions of *Les Bayadères* of 1810 by Catel (the famous ballet by Minkus of 1877 was entitled *La Bayadère*) and *The Temple Dancer* by John Adam Hugo, which premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1919, are equally tantalising. An operetta by Kalman called *Bayadère* is different from the other works since it is not about an Indian temple dancer but about an actress in a play by that title who is loved by an Indian maharaja.

Besides these few operas a quick list of some of the operas still in the repertoire giving Western operatic impressions of the Indian subcontinent includes: *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* by Georges Bizet of 1863; *L'Africaine* (a title which refers to colour and not race or continent) by Giacomo Meyerbeer of 1865; *Le Roi de Lahore* by Jules Massenet of 1877; *Lakmé* by Léo Delibes of 1883; *Savitri* by Gustav Holst of 1916 (but written in 1908); and *Padmavati* (an opera-ballet) by Albert Roussel of 1923.

Many of these operas have had productions in North America during the last decade or so: *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* in San Francisco and New York; *L'Africaine* in San Francisco; *Le Roi de Lahore* in Vancouver; *Lakmé* in Dallas, New York and Chicago; *Savitri* in San Francisco and Baton Rouge; *The Last Savage* in Charleston; and *Satyagraha* at Artpark in Lewiston, New York. ■

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THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR

From the grand NCPA International Jazz Festival to celebration of artistic plurality, from Polish music played by the talent of the Baltic region to the opportunity to learn from a Kathak legend, we bring you some of the more memorable events that were presented at the NCPA in October 2019.



Baltic Neopolis Virtuosi, an international ensemble whose aim is to connect the incredible talent of the Baltic Sea region, presented a programme at the Experimental Theatre featuring works by Polish composers, with the highlight being Chopin's first piano concerto, in its chamber version.



The three-day NCPA International Jazz Festival 2019 began with a bang at the Tata Theatre as rising star saxophonist and vocalist Camille Thurman, who is a member of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, joined the talented drummer Darrell Green for a collaborative performance debuting music from their latest Horace Silver tribute project.



The Dal Segño Trio, a professional New York jazz trio that plays traditional jazz standards from the Great American Song book with a modern flair, made their India debut at the festival and featured talented vocalist LaToya Smith as their guest performer.



The Round Midnight Orchestra, one of Europe's most popular bands comprising established musicians in Dutch jazz mixed up with Holland's young jazz talents, brought a slice of the exciting nightlife in the clubs around Broadway during the golden era of jazz.



Students of Kathak were presented with a rare opportunity to learn from the legendary Kumudini Lakhia at an intensive workshop she conducted at the Experimental Theatre.



Music Mirror: Guru Maa, a documentary on Annapurna Devi, one of the greatest exponents of surbahar and an outstanding guru, was screened at the Godrej Dance Theatre. Shekhar Sen, Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, which produced the film, gave the introduction.



Mandy Gaines and her trio presented a concert of jazz classics from *The Great American Songbook* on the second day of the festival.



Known for her unique talent of drawing her audiences into the performance, Mandy Gaines transported the listeners to a New York jazz club in its heyday.



A young connoisseur at the inauguration of the Sanctuary Asia photography exhibition at the gallery, where schoolchildren interacted with environmental activist and writer Bittu Sahgal



Harsh Javeri: A Retrospective, a selection of the late photographer's works covering a range of themes, was organised at the Piramal Art Gallery on the initiative of his wife and son.



Saxophonist and composer Yuval Cohen, a leading figure of Israeli Jazz, presented his latest work for chamber jazz sextet, which synthesised Western Romantic music, traditional jazz and the Israeli music that he grew up with.



New York City's Mingus Dynasty Quintet played for the first time ever in India. The band consists of artistes featured in the 2011 Grammy Award-winning album, *Mingus Big Band Live at Jazz Standard*.



With *One World Many Musics*, the NCPA celebrates artistic plurality and the power of music as a healing force that promotes cross-cultural understanding. *Strings of the World*, curated by Indian classical violinist and composer Sharat Chandra Srivastava, showcased musicians and diverse musical traditions from around the world.



Aditi Mangaldas, leading dancer, choreographer and one of Kumudini Lakhia's foremost disciples, presented extracts from her solo Kathak performance, *Footprints On Water*, in honour of her guru, at the Tata Theatre.



On the first day of *One World Many Musics*, Sanyog brought together five talented young instrumentalists belonging to diverse musical traditions. The group was led by Apoorva Krishna, a Carnatic violinist, who is seen here with percussionist Sunaad Anoor.



The third guided listening session on the artistry of sitar legend Vilayat Khan was organised under Nad Ninad at the Experimental Theatre. The session was inaugurated by renowned bansuri maestro, Hariprasad Chaurasia, and conducted by Arvind Parikh, who has trained with Khan.



Cyrus Broacha and Kunal Vijayakar had the audience in splits with their take on all things Mumbai in *I Love Mumbai*, a musical comedy by Ace Productions.



Black Hole, an NCPA presentation in collaboration with Jyoti Dogra, staged at the Experimental Theatre, explored ideas from theoretical physics from the perspective of an ordinary person trying to find a greater engagement with the universe.



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