

# ON Stage

MARCH 2021

VOLUME 10 • ISSUE 8



## The Music Flows Again

A festive reopening

**In a new light**  
Edward Elgar

**Celebrating the stage**  
World Theatre Day

**Arun Khopkar on**  
Bhaskar Chandavarkar



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# Chairman's Note



It was gratifying to note that our return to the stage after a considerable hiatus was as successful as it was. We were a bit perturbed about the terms and conditions under which we could perform, and the strict adherence to the protocol laid down by our government where it was not the most companionable manner in which to attend a concert. But surprisingly, all was forgotten due to the excellence of the players, the appreciation of the audience and, above all, the discipline and orderliness with which our music-loving people behaved. I was indeed proud of all the elements that made up this concert, and I hope this continues.

With the Coronavirus playing ducks and drakes with its ups and downs, and erratic invasion in our lives, it is time for us to evolve a different manner of operation of the NCPA while incorporating its basic reason to be. In order to promote its brand, we have, as mentioned before, decided to digitise our entire content of archives and to present future performances with the highest possible technical prowess available to us.

The reallocation of spaces to different activities engages us constantly, and we hope a new and vibrant NCPA emerges in a few months. Our city deserves more than one performing place and with this open area of temptation clearly before us, why shouldn't all our lovely heritage and open spaces enjoy our offerings? There are so many schemes and things which engage our endless imagination that we are always completely open to suggestions from our well-wishers, members and supporters. Do come forward. We need your help also.

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

**Khushroo N. Suntook**

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remembers him as a teacher of the idiom of classical dance, the tenets of ancient scriptures and the philosophy of a fruitful life.

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Bhaskar Chandavarkar, a multifaceted maestro, had an elemental love of music. By choosing to share this love with the world as composer, teacher and writer, he enhanced it in immeasurable ways. To mark his 85th birth anniversary this month, *Arun Khopkar* writes about the man who not only created great music, but also spent his life teaching and nurturing it in all its forms.

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With treasured R&B and blues classics as part of the line-up, Keshia B is paying tribute to

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# Reflections

Celebrating a colossus. **By Anil Dharker**

Beethoven has been described as ‘the Face of Western Classical Music’. You may have your favourites—Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, Bach...but you are still unlikely to dispute that statement, so secure is Ludwig van’s position in the pantheon of music. His music is ingrained in our culture: the opening notes of the 5th Symphony, da-da-da-dumm, are familiar even to those who are new to music. Also familiar, and in our divisive times so very relevant, is the line from the Ninth’s *Ode To Joy*: ‘Alle Menschen werden Brüder’ (All Mankind will become Brothers).

More’s the pity that the pandemic spoilt the celebration of the composer’s 250th birth anniversary but with human ingenuity, calendars are stretchable, so instead of ending the festivities on his birthday of 16th December 2020 as previously planned, celebrations began on that day and will last 250 days until September 2021. The Danish String Quartet consisting of musicians in their mid-30s did a marathon six-concert series on consecutive days, playing all of Beethoven’s string quartets, while the pianist, Susanne Kessel created what has been described as ‘the Mount Everest of homage projects’, commissioning 250 pieces for Beethoven across genres like jazz, pop and new music from 150 composers belonging to 47 countries.

Would the great man have approved such eclecticism? After all, he was trained in the classical tradition, not so pleasantly to start with by his alcoholic father who locked him in the cellar and thrashed him for not practising hard enough, but later, more conventionally, by Haydn in Vienna. In spite of this training, he did make major departures, for example, by being the first composer of his time to discard the harpsichord and play the piano.

Therein lies an interesting story. The person who made his early pianos was a she, not a he, and being a woman, long unacknowledged. In fact, as Patricia Morrisroe wrote recently in *The New*

*York Times*, credit was given to Nannette Streicher’s husband Andreas, who was her sales manager, while she was the manufacturing genius, having learnt the craft from her father, the legendary Johann Stein. She developed an innovative mechanism for the piano which came to be called the Viennese Action. This gave the piano a light touch which was too ‘refined for me’ Beethoven said. Andreas was more blunt, describing Beethoven’s playing ‘as if he is a brutal murderer bent on revenge,’ adding a line that was sadly prescient, ‘Beethoven played with such violence that you wonder whether the player is deaf.’ Nannette, however, was more sensitive to criticism and began to make much larger and louder pianos, her workshop producing around 65 grand pianos a year. Touchingly, she befriended Beethoven and 60 of his letters to her have been found: they are not love letters, but about domestic chores because she had agreed to sort out his shambolic household.

Beethoven’s love letters were to beautiful women; he fell in love often, almost always with titled women. At that time, young ladies of the aristocracy were encouraged to be musical: they could either sing or play an instrument. A violin or viola required too much strenuous bowing, while a cello had to be placed between the legs; only a piano was considered ladylike. Beethoven, as the most celebrated pianist of Vienna, naturally had a steady line of pupils. Apparently, *Moonlight Sonata* was written for Countess Giulietta Guicciardi, the 30-year-old Beethoven’s 18-year-old student. (Morrisroe has written a fictional account in her novel *The Woman in the Moonlight*). Who was the Elise of ‘Für Elise’? There is much



speculation about her identity. Could it be Elise Barenfeld, a young singer? Or Countess Therese, and the title was really meant to be ‘Für Therese’? And who was the ‘Immortal Beloved’ of Beethoven’s most passionate love letter? Was it Josephine von Brunswick, and was the letter ever sent? None of his proposals for marriage

were accepted because, great pianist or not, he was ‘only a commoner’.

We know of one letter that was never sent, and this wasn’t a love letter at all. Written in 1802 when Beethoven was 32, it’s come to be known as the ‘Heiligenstadt Testament’ after the wine-growing village in which it was probably written. ‘For my brothers Karl and Johann’, it begins, ‘O you men who think or say that I am malevolent, stubborn or misanthropic, how greatly do you wrong me’. He goes on to say, ‘From childhood my heart and mind was disposed to the gentle feeling of good will. I was ever eager to accomplish great deeds, but reflect now that for six years I have been in a hopeless case, made worse by ignorant doctors, yearly betrayed in the hope of getting better, finally forced to face the prospect of a permanent malady.’ He was of course, referring to his loss of hearing, ‘the one sense which should have been more perfect in me than in others.’ He ends by saying that it was to ‘my art I owe the fact that I didn’t end my life with suicide’, having contemplated taking his own life many times.

Luckily for us and for posterity, he lived a further 25 years, composing his greatest symphonies including the immortal Ninth, and the late quartets, music which he could only hear in his head. As Wagner said of him, ‘Beethoven was a titan, wrestling with the Gods.’ In the end, the gods of music won. ■

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*INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO*  
SERENADE FOR STRINGS  
*SOSPISI, OP. 70*  
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# ‘Without a song or a dance, what are we?’

Eleven months of stillness later, the NCPA came alive with music, dance and theatre, and art lovers partook in the celebration with gusto, making most of February shows “house full”.

By Snigdha Hasan





Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook with the SOI Chamber Orchestra

For a devoted audience member who became Editor of *ON Stage*, one of the biggest perks of the job is that the thought of the arts never leaves one. While the working hours comprise stimulating conversations with musicians, actors, dancers and genre heads at the NCPA, and grappling with words that flow from them, the day ends with the promise of being treated to a concert or play at a stone's throw from the office. To continue those conversations, tinged with despair for much of 2020, but not be rewarded with a live performance was, in the very least, unsettling. Hopes were alternately dashed and revived as the news of the vaccine, the mutant virus and rising and falling numbers came out. But

orchestra again. There was a hint of trepidation, of course. The odd realities of a pandemic-hit world are glaring. But with the comfortingly familiar "Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats" and the lights dimming, the concert routine seemed to come flooding back and the worries melted into the darkness.

### The sound of music

That a performance by the SOI Chamber Orchestra for the opening night had been made possible in spite of the musicians, advisors and business associates being scattered all over the world for much of the lockdown was a feat and Chairman Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook expressed his gratitude to

The standing ovation, then—and there have been many in the past few weeks—is as much for the plays, concerts and recitals as it is for the joy of witnessing live performances again

on a fine January morning—after several rounds of running through the safety protocols for artistes, audience and staff—when it was decided that the NCPA was safe enough to reopen on 3rd February, it was, pardon the yen to use the idiom, music to the ears.

And it was music to the ears of hundreds of audience members who came out, masks on and hands sanitised, to take their socially distanced seats in the Tata Theatre—and be serenaded by an

them in his speech that preceded the concert. What appears to be a difficult feat even in these trying times is support for the performing arts. "Culture unfortunately has not received the sort of support that is accorded to it in almost every other country of the world either by the government, or by most corporates. [Here, it] largely depends on CSR activities which are binding rather than voluntary," he went on to state, highlighting the need to value this important need of civilised society.

The *Allegro con spirito* of Mozart's Symphony No. 29 in A major, K. 201, with which the concert opened was indeed a spirited, festive choice for the occasion and the joy palpable among the audience seemed to flow directly from the orchestra that had come back together as an ensemble after close to a year. "The concert was an opportunity to fulfil the longing to return to the stage and we were deeply appreciative of this opportunity," says Deon D'Souza, a violinist with the Symphony Orchestra of India, whose arrangement of the Bollywood Oldies Medley was much appreciated.

To be able to sound the way the musicians did as an ensemble, however, took weeks of rehearsal which began in December. The seclusion preceding that was spent honing their individual art. Al-Farabi Bakhtiyarov, who played a soulful rendition of *Gabriel's Oboe* by Morricone at the reopening, for instance, worked on his weaknesses and read the biographies of leading modern classical musicians to gain an insight into their process.

As the orchestra prepares for upcoming concerts, practising individually in addition to rehearsing together is a need that only seems to have grown with chamber music being key to the programming. "Mr. Suntook always encourages

us to play chamber music and as an artiste, it is important to do so. Your responsibility when you are part of a chamber orchestra only goes up. With fewer musicians playing the same part, there is no hiding behind the sound," adds D'Souza.

For the sound itself to be able to reach the audience optimally, the theatres' sound systems as well as individual instruments call for regular maintenance. "I must mention our core technical staff who stayed on at the NCPA in spite of the atmosphere and thank them for the continuously dedicated service they paid to the maintenance and well-being of our theatres," said Mr. Suntook as the audience dedicated its first round of applause to this behind-the-scenes team.

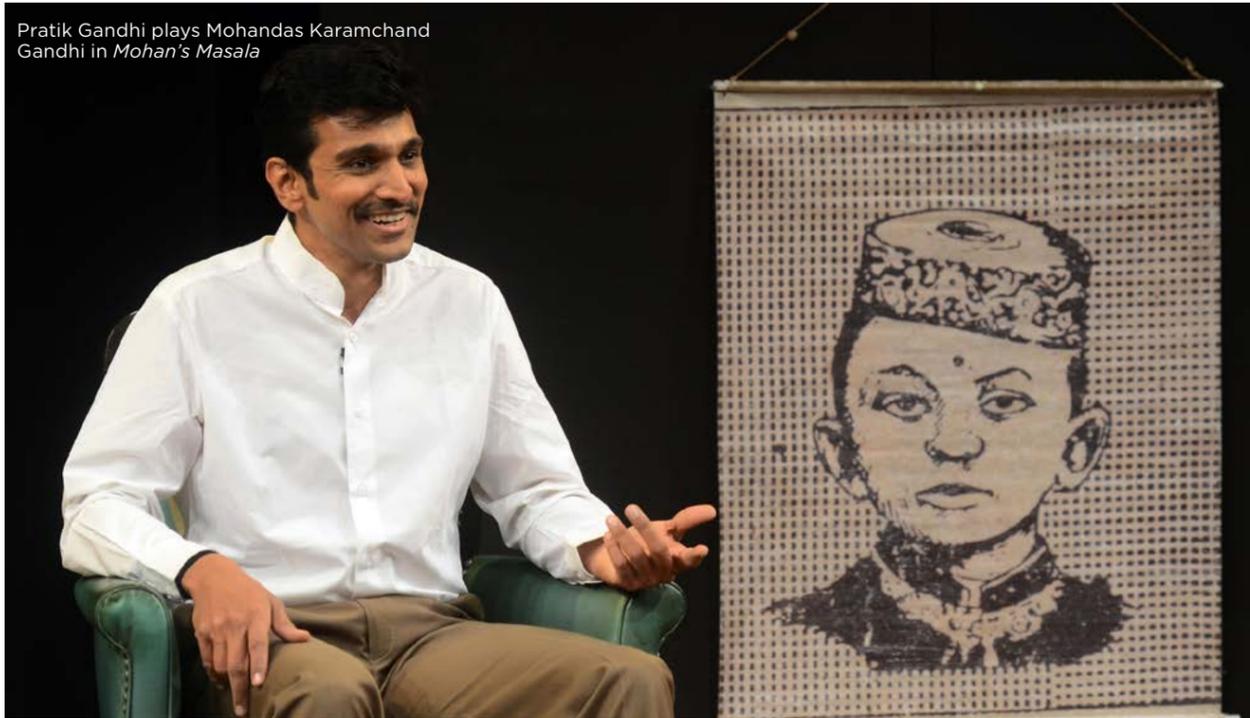
### On stage and off it

Another behind-the-scenes team as elated as the audience and artistes to be back in the theatres is the NCPA's gentle yet firm army of ushers, recognisable in their silvery *bandgalas* and now, face shields. Having been a part of the NCPA for years, many of them can instantly recognise members and regular patrons and the familiarity is mutual. "On the day we reopened, many of the audience members walked up to us to enquire



Masked and socially distanced audience members during the first concert performed at the NCPA in almost a year

Pratik Gandhi plays Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in *Mohan's Masala*



Vaibhav Arekar and Sankhya Dance Company in a scene from *Shiva: Facets of Him*



An usher stands by to provide assistance during a concert



Ventriloquist Seema Golchha with her puppet at *Unlocking Comedy*, an hour-long comedy show with some of the best comics on the scene



Musicians at the CITI - NCPA Promising Artistes Series

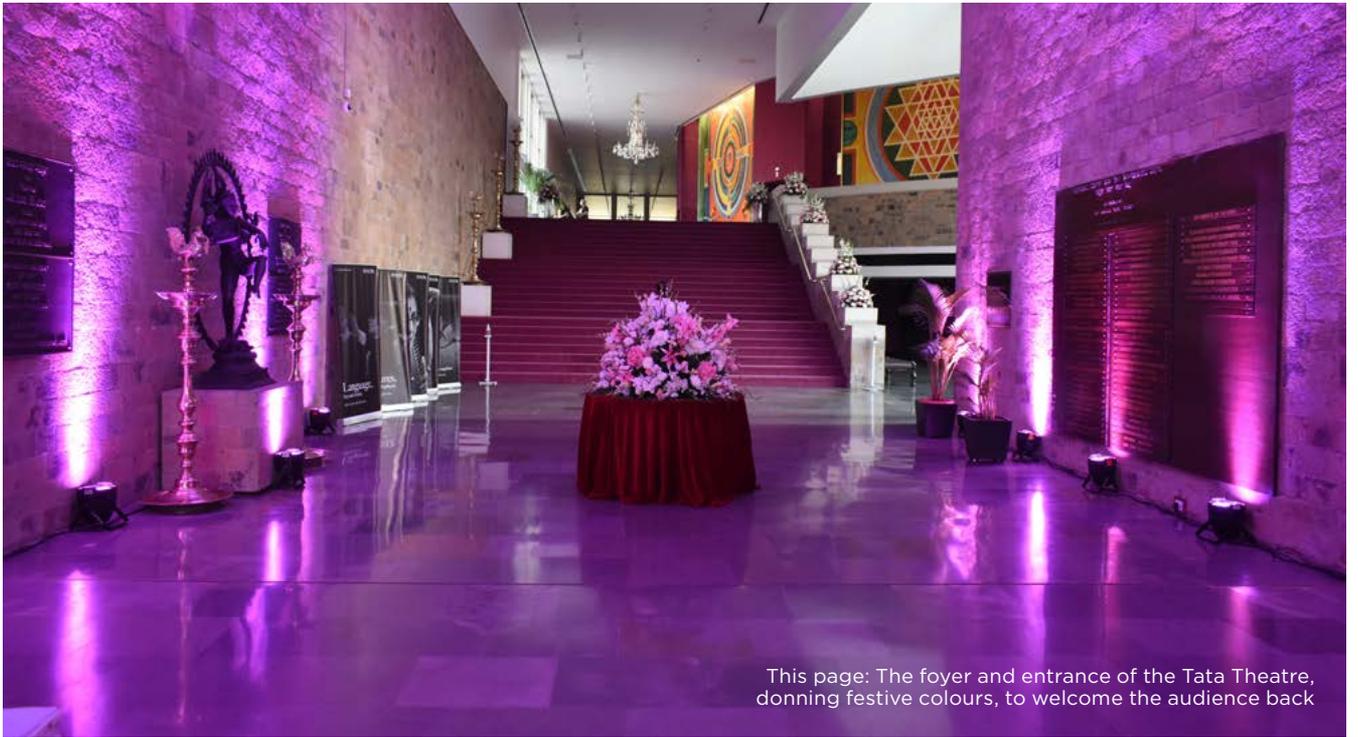
The Allegro con spirito of Mozart's Symphony No. 29 with which the concert opened was a festive choice and the joy palpable among the audience seemed to flow directly from the orchestra that had come back together as an ensemble after close to a year

about our well-being. They all had one thing to say, 'We cannot be happier that the NCPA has started hosting performances again. The ennui of sitting at home was becoming unbearable,' says Pranav Sawant, as he takes a breather from guiding the audience to the exit after a screening of *The Red Shoes*. Adds Ramesh Devadiga, "Even though we are operating at 50 per cent occupancy, the number of ushers hasn't been brought down to see to it that help is at hand for the audience at all times. We are grateful to the NCPA for standing by us throughout

these tough times, ensuring we were paid our salaries even when there were no performances and no audience to usher in."

Ushering in and seating people in a socially distanced arrangement with face shields on is no mean feat, though. "Our job entails going up and down the stairs several times and that fogs up the shields, but it is for our own safety," says Vishwanath Shetty. Apart from keeping the audience from using their cellphones, they now need to see to it that people keep their masks on at all times and that

NARENDRA DANGIA



This page: The foyer and entrance of the Tata Theatre, donning festive colours, to welcome the audience back



an audience member with even a hint of a cough is politely escorted out until the bout is over.

There is also the urge among attendees to meet artistes backstage but social-distancing norms suggest otherwise. As the ushers prevent crowding outside the green room after a house full show of *Mohan's Masala*, the much-loved duo of veteran director Manoj Shah and actor Pratik Gandhi speak of what it means to be able to stage plays again and to be back at a venue where they have premiered several of their productions, including this monologue that attempts to make Mahatma Gandhi human and relatable. "The NCPA is, in the true sense of the word, a centre for the performing arts," says Shah. "There are few venues with a soul. This is one of them," adds Gandhi.

As Gandhi moved through the phases of Mohandas's life that played a part in making him a Mahatma, the audience laughed and gasped, epitomising the collective experience of being with fellow art lovers in the same space. "I am often asked about the future of theatre now that so many

OTT platforms have come up," says Gandhi, whose portrayal of the lead character in a recent web series has earned him much critical acclaim. "And I always say, theatre is not going anywhere. There is no substitute for it." Shah points to the phone in his hand and remarks, "This device is making people very lonely. But can you imagine what happens when 500 people sit together and rejoice in what unfolds before them? That's what happened today," he says, referring to the standing ovation at the curtain call. "The sound of the applause is like the chime of the bells upon entering a temple."

The standing ovation, then—and there have been many in the past few weeks—is as much for the plays, concerts and recitals as it is for the joy of witnessing live performances again. To many audience members, the NCPA's reopening marks the return to normalcy. Or, as the ever-eloquent Gerson Da Cunha, advertising stalwart and thespian who has performed to many a packed house at the Tata Theatre, puts it, "Coming back to the NCPA feels like coming back to an old friend." ■

NCPA | citi

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# Elgar in Worcestershire

**Mikel Toms**, Resident Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of India, set out on his bicycle, pedalling through the haunts of the great English composer's life in the picturesque county and met the hills, rivers and woods that nourished his musical soul, and a man different to the one Elgar chose to show to the world.

"Has anyone ever been killed here?"  
"Killed?"  
"Yes."  
"I couldn't say off the top of my head. I'd have to find out for you."  
"It doesn't really matter. I don't mind if they have."  
"Don't you?"  
"Well, yes I do. I mean it would have been better for them if they hadn't been."  
"Who?"  
"I have no idea."  
"Right."  
"And what about the neighbours?"  
"I'm fairly certain they haven't been killed."  
"I mean any issues with noise?"  
"No. Unless you count the massive Anglican cathedral outside your front door."

I have never bought a house before and I worried my inexperience was showing. Before the viewing, I downloaded a list of incisive questions with which to grill estate agents. Murder and noise abatement appeared to be the compiler's main areas of concern.

I am fairly certain Edward Elgar's father didn't have this trouble when, in 1848, he and his new wife moved into No. 2 College Precincts, a beautiful red-brick townhouse, tucked away in the shadow of Worcester Cathedral and now on the market for an asking price of £365,000.

It is a large house for a couple and when they moved in, Mr. and Mrs. Elgar lost no time in making it feel smaller. By 1855, Elgar's three older siblings Harry, Lucy and Pollie had all been born here. Edward himself made an appearance in 1857 but by that time, the family had moved a couple of miles outside Worcester to a cottage in the small village of Broadheath. Elgar père retained the house at College Precincts, however, and in 1861, the family, including three-year-old Edward, moved back in again.

Edward's father, William, hailed from Dover on the southeastern coast of England. He left behind



Edward Elgar once said: My idea is that there is music in the air, music all around us, the world is full of it, and you simply take as much as you require

the sea, took up piano tuning and moved West to Worcester in the shadow of the Malvern Hills. It was a far-reaching decision. There are many composers whose music draws on landscape, the environment and nature for its inspiration. Strauss's *Alpine Symphony*, Debussy's *La Mer*, Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* and Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* are all good examples, but I find it difficult to think of any composer whose music has worked so strongly in the opposite direction, actively shaping the public's

RODIN777/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

There are many composers whose music draws on nature for inspiration, but Edward Elgar's music has worked strongly in actively shaping the public's perception of those natural features in return

perception of those natural features in return. The Malverns are an isolated and undulating line of hills that rise out of the Severn Valley at Great Malvern in Worcestershire and sink back into it eight miles south across the county border in Herefordshire. A geologist will tell you the hills comprise strata of igneous and metamorphic rock from the late Precambrian Eon, of granite and schist, of dolerite and gneiss. A musician will tell you they are a descending sequence for middle-register strings, marked *nobilmente*, probably in E flat.

"I like the tartan carpet," I said when we got back to the drawing room, "and that's an impressive lava-themed, cast-iron fireplace too", but I don't think I was convincing anyone.

On the whole, it's a nice house but I am not sure I would fork out £365,000 for it even if I had anything remotely approaching that figure in my bank account. I suppose the price reflects its location in the bosom of St. Wulstan's magnificent medieval cathedral. Maybe too, though, it reflects its association with the composer which it trumpets proudly on a blue plaque by the front door. The Elgars left College precincts when Edward was five.

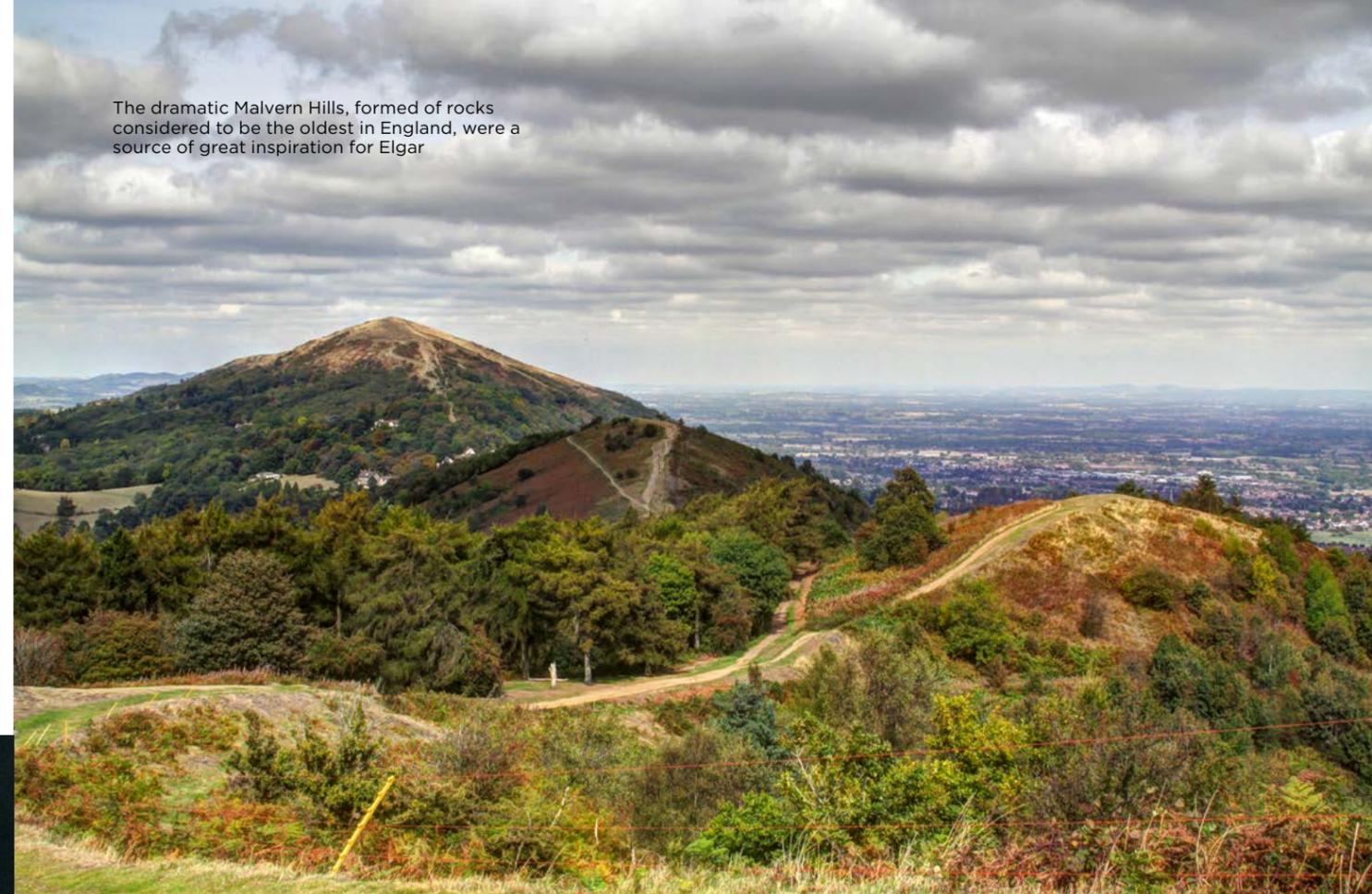
It's interesting, then, that the house Elgar chose to be remembered by was his birthplace at Broadheath, now the site not only of the cottage itself but also of the museum and archive devoted to the man and his music. He can surely have had even less memory of having lived there than he had of living at College Precincts. There are several other houses that would much better have represented his actual life had that been his aim. Elgar, though, would turn out to be one of the great image manipulators of classical music and a walk or cycle through the haunts of his life is very often a process of uncovering a very different man to the one he chose to show to the world. ■

The article has been excerpted from a chapter on Edward Elgar in Mikel Toms's upcoming book, *Travel Songs - Five Journeys with Great Composers*. A more detailed version of this article appears in the print edition of the March 2021 issue of ON Stage.

The SOI Chamber Orchestra will present *Entirely Elgar on 13th March at the Tata Theatre*. Marat Bisengaliev, a noted interpreter of the composer's works, will lead the orchestra as conductor and violin soloist in a programme dedicated to Elgar, orchestrated by Toms.

MIKEL TOMS

The dramatic Malvern Hills, formed of rocks considered to be the oldest in England, were a source of great inspiration for Elgar



# Ready for Revival

Rediscover the joy of the live medium as venues in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru celebrate World Theatre Day hosting more than 60 performances over two weekends this month, under the 'Spotlight On Stage' initiative as a way to give lovers of the performing arts experiences they have been missing for almost a year.

**Krutika Behrawala**

In December 2020, Bruce Guthrie watched *Einstein* at Prithvi Theatre. It is an evening he will cherish for long and not just because of Naseeruddin Shah's stellar performance. He was watching a play on stage after almost 10 months of COVID-19-induced lockdown that had brought live performances to a standstill. "Coming back to the theatre and experiencing a live performance was so good for the soul," says Guthrie, Head of Theatre & Film at the NCPA, which also reopened to the public last month with sold-out shows, signifying the ever-strong appetite of theatre lovers.

With the curtains rising again, the NCPA and other cultural venues in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru have come together to whet this appetite further and revive the joy of live theatre through BookMyShow's initiative titled 'Spotlight On Stage'.

## A need for the arts

"Ever since the lockdown was imposed last March, we had been inundated with audience requests to bring back live entertainment experiences, once the situation begins to improve," says Kumar Razdan, Head - Theatricals, BookMyShow. "With the onset of a new year, we wanted to mark the revival of the live entertainment sector as restrictions on capacity were eased slowly and the vaccine roll-out began to inspire confidence. And what better way to do this than collaborating with our friends and long-time industry partners to bring the magic back on stage?"

Through this first-time industry endeavour, audiences will enjoy over 60 performances spanning English and Hindi theatre, Western classical music, Indian music as well as stand-up comedy. The performances will be spread over two weekends, including World Theatre Day on 27th March. Besides the NCPA, the participating venues include The Royal Opera House, St. Andrew's Auditorium and Prithvi Theatre in Mumbai, Delhi's India Habitat Centre and Kamani Auditorium, and Jagriti Theatre, Ranga Shankara and Chowdiah Memorial Hall in Bengaluru. All the venues will ensure that social-distancing norms and government protocols are in place.

## Offline vs. online

Working together with the venue partners, the line-up has been "thoughtfully curated, keeping in mind the audience profile and preference for each

venue as also multiple genres across performances," shares Razdan.

For instance, on one of the six days, audiences in Mumbai will witness four different kinds of performances. At the NCPA, they will be regaled with Western Classical music while The Royal Opera House's stage will reverberate with an Indian dance performance. On the same evening, Prithvi Theatre's intimate setting will witness a play and St. Andrew's Auditorium will resonate with the *sur* and *tala* of Indian classical music.

"Every venue is so different in terms of the space and audiences. What is exciting is that we're collectively working towards bringing the audience back to theatre," says Asad Lalljee, CEO, Avid Learning, SVP Essar Group and Curator, Royal Opera House, Mumbai. With their live programming on pause through the lockdown, his team organised a number of online events. "Technology enabled us to bring artistes sitting in different parts of the world to co-create and co-produce over Zoom, and that's here to stay. However, it's not going to replace the physical experience of watching a live performance on stage."

The same holds true for performing artistes too, shares Vidyun Singh, Director - Programmes, Habitat World, India Habitat Centre. "Actors thrive on audience's excitement, their collective energy and instant reactions, which is not possible to receive online," she says. With the pandemic impacting the performing arts community financially, an endeavour such as this would also help artistes get back on their feet, assert the stakeholders.

Guthrie believes that such collaborative efforts are the way forward. "We need each other's help to thrive. That is the thrill of working in theatre too. It is a team effort," he says. Razdan agrees and discusses plans that sound exciting for artistes and theatregoers alike. "Going forward, we will bring several compelling initiatives in the live entertainment space in collaboration with partners across the industry, and we truly believe that 'Spotlight On Stage' is the best way for us to kick-start the recovery of this sector." ■

*World Theatre Day events will be held at multiple venues at the NCPA on 19th, 20th and 21st March and at the Tata Theatre on 26th, 27th and 28th March. For details, please visit [www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com)*





# An Impeccable Education

As the NCPA prepares to present an evening dedicated to the traditional composition and research of classical dancer, choreographer and scholar Parvati Kumar, one of his most cherished disciples, **Sandhya Purecha**, remembers him as a teacher of the idiom of classical dance, the tenets of ancient scriptures and the philosophy of a fruitful life.

*'Tujhi Ramachandra ki jai!'* If you ever heard someone exclaiming and correcting his students' mistakes thus—that was my guru, the sage-like Acharya Parvati Kumar (1921–2012).

Guruji and I had an age difference of 50 years. The present generation would slight it off as a 'generation gap'. However, not once did I experience this supposed generation gap. In 1977, from the first time that I stepped into his abode when he affectionately addressed me as 'bacchu', almost instantly, the pious bond between guru and shishya was so magnetic that it felt like we had years and years of a divine connection. But, Guruji, like a true rishi, was not one to accept a student under his tutelage without a test. Right at his doorstep he questioned me, "Why do you want to learn dance? And what do you wish to do with this learning?" As a little girl in the fifth grade, in all my naïvety I responded, "I want to become a guru like yourself and start a college of dance." Pleased upon

hearing such a firm and definitive answer, Guruji called me again on the auspicious day of Guru Purnima and taught me my very first *shloka* on *Sattvika sukha* from the Bhagavad Gita:

*Yat tad agram visamivam parinamamamruto param |  
Tat sukham saatvikam prokshamam aatma buddhi  
prasadam ||*

(That which seems like poison at first, but tastes like nectar in the end, is said to be happiness in the mode of goodness. It is generated by the pure intellect that is situated in self-knowledge.)

He taught me that Indian classical dance is ingrained with values and dance education does not merely comprise the physical act of dance and music, but is, in essence, an art of living life itself.

## A strong footing

And thus began my training, rooted in the foundation of *satva*. Most fascinating was the methodology Guruji

followed—firstly, to study the etymology or origin of each word, meaning or body movement. It was only after this detailed and basic exploration that he would begin with a lesson. His direction was simple—be it a body movement in dance or a thought in daily life, nothing originates without logical reasoning, rules and discipline. And thus, he simplified that way of life.

However, these concepts were not just taught through the medium of the usual theory and practical classes. A significant realm of the *guru-shishya parampara* is the combined study of varied subjects under one master. So, when Guruji explained emotions (*bhava*), he would narrate a Puranic legend, or cite an example from history or refer to an ancient treatise in order to touch upon that emotion and embed it into the student's heart and soul, and then allow it to organically manifest through the body. He did not believe in mechanical instructions like widen your eyes to show anger, or constrict your eyes to show sorrow, etc. Sorrow manifests when felt deeply from within and so the mere physical action cannot ensure *rasanispatti* (experience of *rasa*). The core of Guruji's teaching was vested in a collective learning of all the arts. Learning Bharatanatyam included learning music, tala, the arts of iconography, painting and even cooking, all of which were essential studies. For this, he would teach us verses from ancient Sanskrit texts, gently suggesting the importance of studying Sanskrit as a language for Indian classical dancers. And so, after my tenth standard, he expressed his desire that I get a degree in Sanskrit. The rebellious young lady that I was, I rejected the idea and even left my house in disagreement. But I suppose my unflinching faith and perseverance led me to not only successfully complete my Bachelor's and Master's in Sanskrit, but also attain a PhD in *Natyashastra*. I would believe this is a very important life lesson for today's generation—obeying your elders sculpts a lifespan.

Constancy or patience is another valuable virtue, the lack of which is evident in today's youth. The desire to get immediate results, to stand first, to obtain 95 per cent marks, etc. stirred by heavy competition have put at stake morals and values. Owing to Guruji's teachings, we had the blessing of being instilled with this virtue—*dhairya*.



Parvati Kumar with wife, Sumati Parvati Kumar (left), and disciples Sandhya Purecha (right) and Bhavana Shah

**A *nrityacharya*, ballet choreographer, dance director for films, Guruji was equipped with a deep knowledge of the scriptures, and most notably, he ensured the authenticity and sanctity of each of the avenues he worked in**

A strict follower of the *guru-shishya parampara*, Guruji would be seated with his 'tattakali' five minutes prior to the arrival of the student. His routine was on the dot, be it his time of worship,

yoga, snacks, meals or rest. The clock would indicate to us most of his daily activities. And this discipline, value of time as well as time management is what I imbibed from him.

Another popular belief—that Indian classical dance has no room for creativity and innovation—was challenged by Guruji and he taught us how to attempt novel creations within the framework of classical dance. For instance, with the research and traditional dance choreography of the ancient works of Sarfojiraje Bhosale in Marathi, he made them

accessible to the generations to come; the choreography of the text *Abhinaya Darpanam* into an audio-visual presentation did the same.

## Preserving tradition

Guruji was a true visionary. He knew that in order to preserve and propagate dance in its most authentic manner, he must codify it in a way that it is made accessible to future generations. Thus, he devised a method of writing the notations of dance alongside the system of music. With Guruji's strong foundation of the shastras, every step and movement had a technical term in Sanskrit which was included in this unique lithography that enabled one to pen down the tala aspect, music aspect including *svaras* or text as well as the dance movements along with the *adavu shola* clearly. The dance notations mentioned not only the *adavu* patterns in *nritta*, but also the hands, feet, postures, gestures, directions, movements of head, eyes, neck, etc. along with the *bhavas* whilst writing *abhinaya*.

Guruji was a multifaceted artiste—a *nrityacharya* (dance guru), ballet choreographer, dance director for films who was equipped with a deep knowledge of the scriptures. Amidst the versatility, he ensured the authenticity and sanctity of each of the avenues he worked in, presenting new dimensions within the respective tradition, thus garnering immense appreciation. This was unlike present times, where one finds folk steps in classical dance, or classical

dance in a film song, or fusion creating confusion. Guruji's works in each sector were regarded as superlative. This was a big lesson for us students, to realise that every field has its own specialities and whilst preserving that core tradition, with minimum blends, it is possible to work in various avenues of dance. Whilst propagating the symbiotic relation between theory and practice, he also made us conscious of the fact that if there is ever a conflict between theory and tradition, always surrender to tradition, the customary practice which he taught us through Panini's verse 'Shastrar Rudhiyah Baliyasi'. Even one who has profound knowledge of the Sanskrit *shastras* gives due acknowledgement to traditional practice. *Parampara* is greater than the art. Perhaps this is why he learnt from a devadasi and his guru compositions from the traditional repertoire like *Alaripu*, *Jatiswaram*, *Shabdham*, *Varnam*, *Padam*, *Tillana*, etc. Without any tinkering, he delivered this tradition to the next generation and in this manner, he was one of the first gurus to have preserved the *Thanjavur Bani* of Bharatanatyam. Quite contrary to the present when one learns a traditional composition from their guru, but then adds their own little element and projects the composition as their own novel creation. This not only destroys the tradition but also prevents seamless passage of the original tradition to the next generation. So one must be mindful not to tamper with the traditional compositions and instead to pass them on rightfully. And of course, to attempt one's own creations excluding the traditional compositions.

I had heard that Guruji would often lose his temper whilst teaching. But I rarely ever got to see that side. In fact, his treatment of me was different. He used silence as a tool over anger, or better still, would stop teaching me and that was indication enough that I had faltered. But his ire was such that when I made one small mistake, Guruji did not teach me for two years. But the devoted disciple that I was, I did not give up. I continued to go to his house every day for those two years, from 9 am until 9 pm and sat by his side. That was when I experienced learning by just being under the refuge of a wise man (*Panditanupashrayati*). There is a beautiful Sanskrit verse describing the student – *Yah pathati likahti pashyati paripruchhyati panditaanupshrayati Tasya divakarkiranai nalini dalamivamatinani vikasyate buddhi* (A disciple is who one reads, writes, learns, questions and is under the refuge of wise men. It is in the counsel and teachings of such a master that the intellect and knowledge blossoms.)

After an austere penance of two years, on Dussera, Guruji said to me, "Rise—from today you will begin dancing. Show me the *Todi Varnam* that I was teaching over the past two years." And with tears welling up in my eyes, I presented the *Varnam* without any mistakes. And it occurred to me then that there is learning even in the Guru's punishment.

## Lessons for life

Time-bound training does not apply between a guru and *shishya*. Till the time the guru teaches and the student learns, there should be no one to interfere or cause hindrance. And fortunately, not only did I learn that way, but my students also continue to learn the same way. Once I begin teaching, neither students nor their parents have stopped me to say, 'It's time to leave the children', or 'class hours are over'. Within constraints of time, it is nearly impossible to teach classical dance, or any Indian art for that matter.

It is impossible to sum up in these few pages the three decades of my life that I have cherished under Guruji's haven. To recount each memory, his teachings and values and his blessings would require nothing less than a novel.

An austere guru, a virtuous soul on the inside, he was caring, compassionate and soft-hearted. *Narikela samaakara drushyantepi sajjanah Anye badarikakara bahireva manohara* (The virtuous appear like a coconut—hard on the outside but soft on the inside—whereas others are like the Jujubi tree's fruit, only look beautiful on the outside, but bitter on the inside.)

Just like that if Guruji ever scolded us or was angry at us, he himself would pacify us by making tea or would gently call out to his wife saying, 'Suma, give her some tea.' No one would leave Guruji's house without being served tea, snacks or a meal. Throughout his lifetime, his dear wife Sumati tai whom we fondly call Amma, lovingly served Guruji and catered to every guest with sheer hospitality and warmth. Guruji and Amma were ideal companions and maybe that is why their abode was like a temple for all of us students. ■

*Sandhya Purecha is a celebrated Bharatanatyam danseuse, Sanskrit scholar and academician, Founder Principal of the Bharata College of Fine Arts & Culture. She has been a beloved disciple of Acharya Parvati Kumar and has received many accolades for her work, the most recent being the the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2017. Remembering Parvati Kumar & Rajee Narayan, an evening dedicated to two luminaries in the field of arts, will be presented on 19th February at the Experimental Theatre.*

**When Guruji explained *bhava*, he would narrate a Puranic legend, or an example from history or refer to an ancient treatise in order to embed that emotion deep into the student's heart and soul, and then allow it to organically manifest through the body**

 NCPA

# Catalyst

**Bharatanatyam by**

Prachi Saathi (Solo)

&

Anand Satchidanandan  
and Jayalakshmi (Duet)



**Kathak by**

Pooja Pant Dance Company

**5th March 2021  
6:30 PM**

Experimental Theatre,  
NCPA

Box office: 66223724/54 | [www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com)

 NCPA

## REMEMBERING ACHARYA PARVATI KUMAR & GURU RAJEE NARAYAN

BY

SANDHYA PURECHA & SARFOJIRAJE BHOSALE'S  
BHARATA COLLEGE

GAYATRI SUBRAMANIAN & GURU GV RAMANI  
NATYAKALA FOUNDATION

**19TH MARCH 2021 | 6:30 PM  
EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE, NCPA**

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# A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Bhaskar Chandavarkar, a multifaceted maestro, had an elemental love of music. By choosing to share this love with the world as composer, teacher and writer, he enhanced it in immeasurable ways. To mark his 85th birth anniversary this month, **Arun Khopkar** writes about the man who not only created great music, but also spent his life teaching and nurturing it in all its forms.

**B**haskar Chandavarkar was truly a man with a musical mission. It was his conviction that music springs from the deepest spiritual yearnings of man and fulfils his vital personal, social and spiritual needs. His immense musical activity, spread over half a century, was guided by it. He gave performances, composed music for 43 feature-length films in six Indian languages. His music for theatre was heard in more than 50 plays, in English, Marathi, Hindi, Kannada, German and even Japanese. He presented half a dozen theatrical and multimedia productions, which included some of the finest poems in Marathi set to music, a ballet and a programme of festive music.

He wrote substantial essays about music, participated in international seminars, held workshops and lectured about music in various national and international fora, in English, Hindi and Marathi, with equal fluency.

## Instrumental elements

First and foremost an instrumentalist, the variety and diversity of our musical instruments fascinated Bhaskar. He sensed that their ability to create varied acoustic spaces was integral to our musical genius. He wanted people to experience it. He composed music for them, for the spectacular national parades held on Republic Day. One year, he used only aerophones. Another year, he restricted himself to membranophones. *Drums of India*, marking 50 years of the Indian Republic, made the Delhi walls tremble



Bhaskar Chandavarkar composed music for directors like Mrinal Sen, Girish Karnad, Aparna Sen, Amol Palekar, among others, in languages as diverse as Kannada, Bengali, Marathi

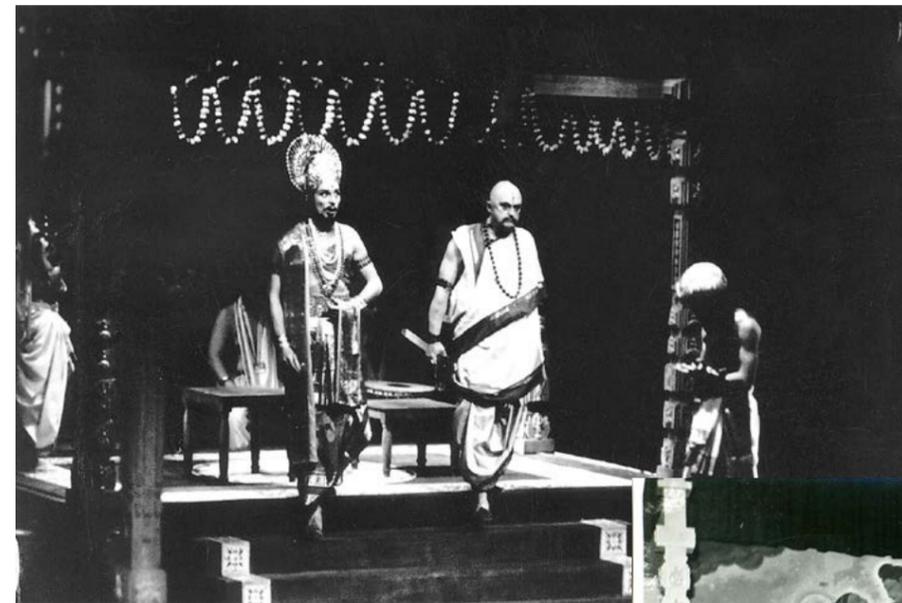
with its strength.

The musical instruments acquired bodies through the labour of those never-spoken-of instrument-makers. Bhaskar had great respect for them, who mostly come from the 'lowest' steps of our caste system, as the work involves animal skins and guts. Once, I accompanied him to the workshop of the Kendurkars, the famous Pune-based makers of percussion instruments. He was greeted with great affection by the old owner. It was a meeting of two artistes with mutual respect. The old man showed Bhaskar some of his latest creations, made with all the love and care he would lavish on a grandchild.

As a man who loved music in all its avatars, Bhaskar enjoyed creating music for dazzling spectacles. In his dreamlike account of the closing of the Festival of India in Moscow, he writes, 'It was a never-before-and-never-again experience. I was controlling the entire ceremony from my booth...a vast stadium was filled with music. It had elephants and horses parading. The stage was 500 feet long, with three large ballet troupes performing on it. There were many film screens, 90 to 100 feet tall...A girl mounted on horseback galloped through all this. Lighting maestro Tapas Sen provided spectacular effects.'

Bhaskar also created albums of pure music. *The Elements* series was produced by Music Today, with *Fire* by Bhaskar, *Space* by Zakir Hussain, *Wind* by Hariprasad Chaurasia, *Earth* by Vanraj Bhatia

COURTESY MEENA CHANDAVARKAR



◀ A scene from Vishkhadatta's *Mudrarakshasa* performed at Weimar (GDR) in 1976

▼ A scene from the Marathi version of Kalidasa's *Shakuntal*



▲ A scene from the German version of Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* performed in Wiemar (GDR)



▲ A scene from the German version of Girish Karnad's *Naga-Mandala* performed in Berlin

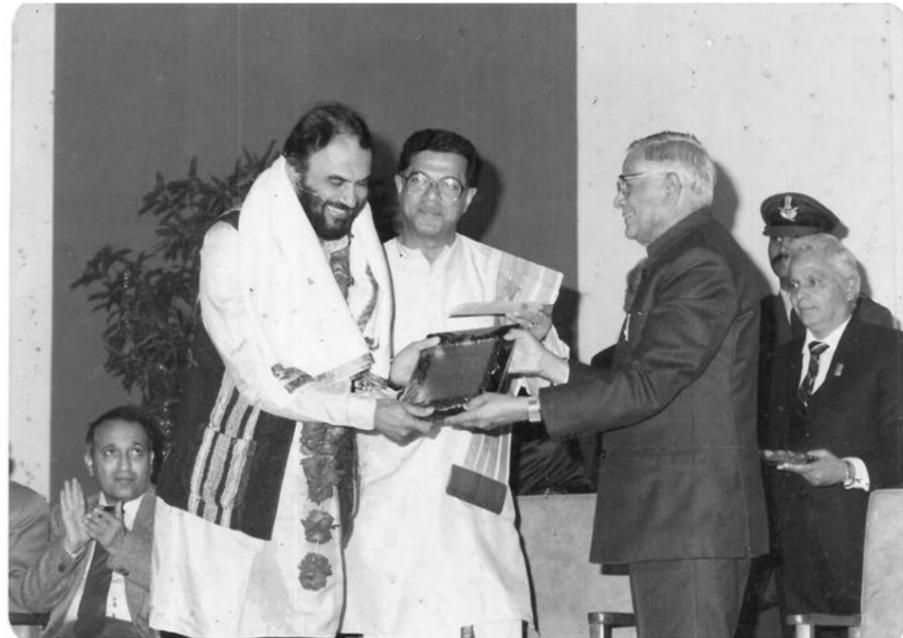
and *Water* by Shiv Kumar Sharma. Bhaskar's *Seasons*, vaguely reminiscent of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* and Debussy's *La Mer*, evoked India's seasonal cycle. His two albums sold over a million copies in the East and the West.

## Influence and inspiration

Two long interviews of Bhaskar, included in his book, *Rangbhaskar*, tell us about his life and work. Bhaskar, when he was one year old, lost his father. His mother came to stay with the family of her brother, where he was surrounded with music, theatre and literature. Later, he got involved with theatre groups of college friends, watched Hollywood films and Indian classics of Satyajit Ray and Tapan Sinha. When he started learning the sitar from Ravi Shankar, he saw these films again and again to understand the maestro's film music. Bhaskar admired his wide range of musical creations and decided to follow in his footsteps.

Life was never a bed of roses for Bhaskar. It was an arduous and long journey. He had an intrepid spirit, a growing assurance about his destiny and the grit to turn it into reality. He

DR. VIJAYA MERTTA



◀ Chandavarkar receiving the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award with Girish Karnad in the background



A scene from Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal*, for which Chandavarkar's music received much critical acclaim



▲ Recording for *Vamshavruksha* in 1971 with B. V. Karanth and Mohammed Rafi



▲ With Ravi Shankar and Bhupen Hazarika

had to argue with his family to choose music as a way of life. He needed to support himself through his earnings as a sessions musician, music teacher, and travelled to the U.K. in winter with just one warm coat and searched for concerts there. A happenstance led to his scoring and playing the sitar for *Nine Hours to Rama*, a British film directed by Mark Robson and Bhaskar made the best of it.

When you look at his bedouin years, you understand the empathy he had for the composers and musicians of Hindi film music. Many were boys who had run away from their families and had little or no formal training, but were able to pick up tunes from here and there, and turn them into musical gold. Their wanderings had given them the ability to have their fingers on the musical pulse of the masses and turn its beats into the rhythms of their catchy tunes. Bhaskar pays homage to the Hindi film music and its creators, in

his collection of essays, *Chitrabhaskar*. He traces its history, from the live music of the silent cinema, up to our times, and gives us very fine portraits of Ritwik Ghatak, Ilayaraja, C. Ramchandra, Raj Kapoor and A. R. Rahman.

### Powerful notes

During his period of struggle, one day Bhaskar was called to The Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) for a sitar session for a 'Bengali film director'. He was Ghatak, one of the world's great directors. He took to Bhaskar easily. Soon, he came to the FTII as a vice principal and sent for Bhaskar to work as a musician. Bhaskar sat at his feet, along with Kumar Shahani and Mani Kaul and soon became a serious student of cinema. Ghatak opened their eyes and ears to the

language of cinema. Bhaskar has written a deeply moving account of how this alcoholic genius created music for a short film, deep-diving into the darkness of drunken torpor and suddenly appearing on the crest of lucidity and creating genial music.

Bhaskar's film scoring started with the shorts of FTII students. In 1971, he worked on his first feature, *Vamshavruksha*, directed by his cousin Girish Karnad and B. V. Karanth. Later, he worked with Shahani, Nirad Mahapatra, K. G. George and Saeed Mirza, with whom he shared a film culture. Even when he did not know the language in which a film was being made, he understood its cinematic language and the needs of its film scores.

Literature and theatre were an integral part of his life since his childhood, shared with his cousin Karnad during their vacations. Bhaskar's grasp of narrative structures and techniques were his strength. He worked with Vijaya Mehta on classical Sanskrit plays like *Mudrarakshas* and *Shakuntal* and the primeval mythic narratives of Karnad's plays like *Naga-Mandala* and *Hayavadana*. The former led him to study the *Natyashastra* and the latter to study Tantric art and ritualistic chants. The naturalistic plays Mehta directed, needed contemporary and period music.

Bhaskar's view of music had an overarching frame of reference of aesthetic, ethical and socio-historical factors and was based on a deeply humanistic Renaissance vision of life. It resulted in nuanced and layered music in his works. His experience of parallel productions in Germany and India, with Mehta and Fritz Bennewitz, along with his extensive travels within and without the country gave him a truly cosmopolitan and open view of life. I think it was what made him so special as a man and an artiste.

Undoubtedly, *Ghashiram Kotwal* was Bhaskar's

In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, it is Bhaskar's inner anguish about the moral corruption and the resultant cruelty of our society, witnessed even today, that gives his music its power

chef-d'œuvre Though hundreds of pages have been written about it, I would like to make a couple of points. It was his sheer audacity to combine completely diverse musical forms like Art music, theatre music, kirtan, *lavani*, thumri, *vaghya murali* songs, Wanjari folk songs, women's songs, qawwali, *bharud*, *gondhal*, chants, recitation and ludic music. As Bhaskar's grasp of the theatrical needs of each moment is so firm, its narrative comes out bold. Each musical piece is presented in its pristine purity and yet, together they create scathingly *ironic music*. There

is no musical parody, but the very juxtaposition of these pure pieces with the events of the play, creates a severe critique of a merciless society. It is Bhaskar's inner anguish about the moral corruption and the resultant cruelty of our society, witnessed even today, that gives his music its power. It is the power of the curse of an anguished and tormented artiste that has turned into the agonised wail of a *shloka*.

Many imitations of *Ghashiram* have sprung up since, as every classic spawns mediocre imitators. They resemble the original, as much as a worthless piece of glass resembles a dazzling diamond. The diamond's light is strong on account of the divine geometry of its crystal-clear heart. A piece of glass has only surface glitter, but no heart.

This is a homage to Bhaskar from a student, who was privileged to have him as guide, friend and philosopher. ■

*Arun Khopkar is an award-winning filmmaker and a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award. His book Guru Dutt: A Tragedy in Three Acts won the National Award for the best book on cinema. He has edited two collections of essays in Marathi by Bhaskar Chandavarkar—Chitrabhaskar (on cinema) and Rangbhaskar (on theatre).*



# Soul Custody

*With treasured R&B and blues classics as part of the line-up, Keshia B is paying tribute to an army of women who have broken boundaries, redefined music, lived and loved on their own terms and in the process, become custodians of music for the soul.*

*By Ela Das*

If anyone were to go through their music library, irrespective of the genres they listen to, they would find within their collection a few (if not many) of the great female singers whose contribution to their art has not only been tremendous but also withstood the test of time, staying relevant through the decades, influencing generations of singers along the way. As a child, singer-songwriter, recording artiste and performer, Keshia B was introduced to different styles of music by her parents, ranging from jazz to country, which helped her discover her interest in singing. “I was continuously drawn to certain artistes such as Whitney Houston, Chaka Khan and Diana Ross; and when I started to sing in competitions, I was always told I sound like a black woman—that was when I knew that soul music was in my blood,” she recalls.

Beginning her musical journey at the age of 10, she went on to vocally train at the P. G. Garodia Conservatoire in Mumbai, winning the top spot at several college and state-level competitions including India’s Gospel Concert Glory and the Times of India Voice Hunt in 2008. “My journey and

break was through gospel music. After I completed my master’s in English literature, I began my studio career as a singer and voice-over artiste in both advertising and Bollywood films. When I was not lending my voice to jingles and music albums, I toured across the country and overseas [with well-known artistes]. I have also had the privilege of working with the country’s best music directors and artistes.” When she performed in popular music shows on Indian television, her soulful voice with hints of funk and gospel showcased her immense talent and diverse singing power. She also made her theatre debut as Mrs. Bumble in the Broadway rendition of *Oliver Twist*, and is now working on releasing her own original R&B album.

## **Tributes and teachings**

Paying homage to the music that has inspired her career, Keshia B will be presenting a diva special at the NCPA this month to highlight the dynamic and unique voices of strong female artistes and musicians across the decades. “The beauty of these women, along with their ability to brilliantly tell



Clockwise from top left: Whitney Houston, Tina Turner, Donna Summer, Diana Ross, Chaka Khan, Aretha Franklin



The main reason a show such as *One Night Only* will be timeless is because the music and the story behind each song always connects with the listener's individual life

stories through their songs, is what I will uncover for the audience. We have heard the names of these female singers before, but I am hoping that the people watching the show will leave with a new-found respect for them and also discover new female artistes in the current industry. I will be singing across genres such as R&B, pop, jazz and funk, which will culminate in the fresh and new-age neo-soul tunes that began to gain notoriety during the late '80s and early '90s," she explains.

Not only influencing her style of singing but also helping shape her on-stage persona, Keshia attributes Aretha Franklin for her confidence, Khan for her bold personality, Houston for her raw vocals and Adele for a balance between tender and edgy vocals. "When I watch these artistes perform and

begin to look at the story of their lives behind the scenes, I realise that they have all had simple beginnings and worked very hard to get where they are—be it with their looks, the lives they built and their vocals. I strongly connect with that and feel motivated to believe that we can all reach great heights by simply and honestly believing in our talent."

Pairing a mix of older divas with newer singers from recent times, Keshia has created a set which will give the audience a glimpse of classic songs, but with a twist—she might change the rendition or genre of the song. She will also be introducing newer styles and artistes that have not been heard before but have played a great role in changing the landscape of R&B and neo-soul music. With a line-

up comprising Gloria Gaynor, Houston, Khan, Donna Summer, Tina Turner, Etta James and Franklin, Keshia has selected singers that were ahead of their time with their music and songwriting, and whose life stories unravel love and struggle with a sense of vulnerability—something listeners try to channel in some way through the songs they listen to. "These artistes taught me what it was to lose yourself to music, while enjoying what you do—that is the most important thing. Their confidence and rhythm is what taught future artistes to build and grow and, quite simply, be themselves," she says. "Contemporary artistes such as Alicia Keys, Erykah Badu and Rachelle Ferrell have taught me the true meaning of technique and the beautiful aspects of a song, and how it can be created and sung. For me, the main technique of R&B and soul music is finding a way to feel the raw emotion behind the lyrics, to connect with the words, making the song come alive."

### Timeless treasures

"The main reason a show such as *One Night Only* will be timeless is because the music and the story behind each song always connects with the listener's individual life—the love, pain, struggle, happiness

and confusion that you feel, and how the lyrics of a song make you think of several things happening around you," says Keshia. She recalls the first time she sang 'Because You Loved Me' by Celine Dion—a song she has always dedicated to her mother—while she was a student at Sophia College during its festival Kaleidoscope. "My mum loved my rendition of it, and would swell with pride each time she heard me sing it. After she passed away in 2010, this song was even more sentimental and meaningful for me. And when I sang it at the festival, a girl came up to me after and shared how she too had lost her mum a week ago and needed to hear the same song that day because it made her feel connected to the parent she'd lost." The power of many life stories that continue to echo through music is something she has witnessed throughout her career, where every verse and lyric grows a newer, deeper meaning each time she sings it for a different audience.

A connection with the song, and the emotions and feelings it evokes in the listener makes it timeless. "The music of the artistes I will be showcasing is still relevant, and the rhythm is still catchy and will get you on your feet. Even today, older compositions and even their original scores are still being used as building blocks for creating newer sounds," she says. Younger listeners might be familiar with Norwegian electronic DJ Kygo, who recently used riffs of Houston's 'Higher Love' to create a single that was played on repeat across the summer of 2019; while in 1980, John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd famously crossed their budget, creating a stir at Universal Studios, to cast the queen of soul, Aretha Franklin, in their musical comedy film *The Blues Brothers* to give it the pitch-perfect star power it needed to reel in audiences.

Keshia adds to this sentiment. "If you notice, today's contemporary music, too, has taken inserts from the '60s, '70s and '80s, and used it to revamp an old song to create a newer one. This way, it feeds all age groups and types of listeners. Bands such as Postmodern Jukebox have taken contemporary songs and converted them with '40s-style jazz, swing and vintage soul beats. A band called Scary Pockets produces funk covers of older songs, making them sound completely fresh and new. The audience that these bands garner is unbelievable, which makes each tune stay relevant and enjoyable."

Keshia is especially looking forward to the audiences at the NCPA, which to her feels like home. "I have fond memories of my last show, *Beyond the Stars*, in November 2019—what an incredibly energetic audience! This show is twice as special since I have a new concept to showcase and, with the last year that we've all experienced, I really want to give my audience a chance to leave their worries at home and spend an evening reminiscing the classics, while discovering new music." ■

One Night Only - A Diva Special will be presented by Keshia B on 6th March at the Experimental Theatre.

# The Eternal Outlier

Contemporary dancer and choreographer Astad Deboo was well versed in the language of rebellion, the kind that broke ground, made history and in unprecedented ways, championed both unknown artistes and innovative idioms.

*By Arundhathi Subramaniam*



At the NCPA ADD ART Festival in November 2019



With Manipuri dancers at the Sunken Garden at the NCPA

**W**hen I talked to Astad Deboo on the 19th of August, it was one of those rare lockdown conversations that didn't leave me dispirited. Astad's energies were usually tense. Definitely not a verbal man, conversations, I believe, fatigued him. He was, essentially, a dancer, waiting to unleash his restless, bristling energies on stage. Now, however, his tone was measured, even, positive. He spoke of his daily evening walks along Marine Drive, his concern at the ill health of a family member, his efforts to offer economic support to his martial art collaborators from Manipur. He sent me a message afterwards: 'Great chatting with you.' I felt likewise.

*Astad's sensibility was too quirky, his idiom too idiosyncratic for the cultural establishment to know what to make of him; he belonged to a landless minority of one, and he would have had it no other way*

It was our last conversation. By 10th December, Astad was no more. Indian contemporary dance lost one of its most prominent choreographers; Mumbai lost its most significant experimental artistes; and I lost an artiste friend whose courage, commitment and creative audacity I admired deeply.

Despite his many collaborations, Astad exuded the air of a *solitarist*. He charted his life with the doggedness of a crusader, a pioneer who knew that struggle and grit-toothed endurance were an integral part of his journey. This self-perception of "misunderstood artiste" puzzled me initially. Here, after all, was a dancer who travelled and performed more than many. The Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his contribution to creative dance (1995) and the Padma Shri (2007) came to him arguably later than they ought, but they did not pass him by.

It took me time to realise how much his perception

of a hostile cultural universe stemmed from his oddball position in the dance world: the fact that he was neither classical dancer nor Bollywood entertainer. Astad remained, in many ways, the eternal outlier. His work was abstract and restlessly experimental a long time before the Indian dance world had the theoretical hospitality or cultural vocabulary to accommodate such forays. Even when grudgingly acknowledged by the academy, he retained his position of slippery 'betweenness', standing on the edge of varied lexicons, never lingering within any single grammar long enough to toe the party line.

I have watched Astad's work for over three-and-a-half decades now. I remember being particularly excited by *Thanatomorpha*, a collaboration with puppeteer Dadi Pudumjee, in the early 1990s. The visual drama and scale, the energy and alchemical magic of mask and movement, were unique. Here was a dancer making the kind of work that few were at the time. And yet, his sensibility was too quirky, his idiom too idiosyncratic for the cultural establishment to know what to make of him. Astad belonged, as I often told him, to a landless minority

of one. And he would have had it no other way.

His spirit of enquiry started early. Although he had trained in Kathak as a young boy in Jamshedpur, the pivotal moment occurred when he watched a Murray Louis performance in Mumbai. Why, he wondered, spellbound, did dance in India have to be so fettered by traditional content, so bound by rigid syntactic rules? How could one evolve a movement language that was rigorous but fluid, expressive and personal? Painters in post-Independence India seemed to be asking themselves those questions, but the dance world seemed largely busy reconstructing a classical heritage. That was the beginning of Astad's long-standing creative ferment.

Always a man of action—both onstage and off—the 21-year-old packed his bags, boarded a cargo ship from Mumbai harbour, hitchhiked his way through Europe and reached New York five years later. The aim was



simple: to make some money out of performance and to use that money to learn dance. He did just that. In those years of adventure and apprenticeship, Astad evolved a hybrid idiom—an amalgam of elements garnered from Martha Graham, Kathakali, José Limón, Kathak, Japanese folk dances, jazz, classical ballet and Pina Bausch. Some viewers were to dismiss his work as a heap of quotations, an intercultural goulash. But his self-possession and creative effrontery were impossible to ignore, and drew many die hard admirers. “I never wanted to be a clone of anyone here or anywhere else. I was never turning West to discover myself,” he often declared. “Though I drew from various idioms, I’ve never felt uprooted from my Indian context. Of course, my work keeps changing, but I’ve always wanted to evolve my own signature. I believe I have.”

Astad’s dance eluded easy definition. He disconcerted both the high priests of orthodoxy and the pashas of heresy. His ecumenism made him too contemporary for the former; his forays into representational content and his use of facial *abhinaya* didn’t make him edgy enough for the latter. He wasn’t ‘classical’ enough to be kosher in India; he wasn’t ‘modern’ enough to be kosher in the West. Marching to the beat of one’s own drum, he realised, often meant being out of step with the cultural dogmas of the moment.

For Astad, the body was both instrument and compass. His preoccupations were always grittily kinetic, never merely intellectual. He asked questions about expansion, transformation, danger, velocity and distillation *in and through* the physical. He never relied on slick programme notes to do the work for him.

In a retrospective session in 2019 (organised by the dance group, beej), he did not allow himself the luxury of a nostalgic life-audit. Instead, he made his point viscerally, leaping out of his chair and banging his head on the floor to suggest the torment of drug addiction in one of his early productions. He stuck syringes into himself in that work, he recalled. He spoke of much else too: his performances on sidewalks and catwalks, at the NCPA and the CST railway station, at the Guruvayur temple in Kerala and the Annual Deaf Olympics in Melbourne, the times he slithered down the walls of St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai, plunged into a pool in Chandigarh, leapt up the fort of Champaner and even cavorted atop the Great Wall of China!

For all his love of risk, Astad treated his body with care. He told me that he never ate on the day he performed—a

sadhana he observed scrupulously. Of course, on a 17-show performance tour of South Africa in 2003, this meant that he spent most of his time famished.

As he grew older, he journeyed from solo to collaborative work, allowing a varied cast of characters to share the stage with him: from theatre actors to hearing-impaired dancers, musicians to street children, Pung Cholom drummers to *Thang-ta* martial artistes. Donald Hutera of *The Times*, London, once described him as a ‘diva without attitude’. I recognised the truth of that observation. For all his achievements, Astad was a man of humility. “I guess it’s because my essential self-image is that of a worker, not a prima donna,” was his rationale.

Over the years, he learnt to view the ageing body less as limitation than possibility. “My dance has become more minimal, more focused, more centred,” he said. “There’s greater maturity with age. I don’t simply prance around the stage; my energy is more concentrated, less dissipated.” He believed he was now doing the kind of work only his body was capable of. Never interested in decorativeness or mere virtuosity, he now saw poise and stillness as new ways to inhabit his body, to hold a moment on stage.

Committed though he was to helping upcoming dancers, he nursed no temptation to start his own dance academy. “I’ve had to struggle, and I’d like to make it easier for a younger generation. But I’m essentially a free spirit. I feed off my interactions with the martial artistes and deaf dancers, for instance, and part of me lives on in their work. That’s enough for me.”

He admitted to being uncomfortable when things went too well. “I don’t like to feel too settled. I’m not a masochist, but I know most of my work has grown out of a certain amount of pain. It’s the unrest that keeps me on the edge. I know I’ve accomplished a great deal. But the past is behind me; there is much still left to achieve.”

The past now lies behind him forever. And it is a past that befits a trailblazer—one committed to being multilingual and borderless even when those choices weren’t entirely recognised or supported. Between the tense binaries of purism and populism, Astad Deboo choreographed a life path with grace, dignity and fearless eclecticism. While the music he employed in his productions could be Philip Glass, *dhrupad* or even rap, the tune to which he danced was always, to the very end, entirely his own. ■

# Kaleidoscope

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



## Lost and found

The organisers of this year's edition of Belgium's largest classical music event, Klarafestival, have found inspiration in the words written on the facade of the lost property office at Wuppertal station, powerful words that bear repeating now more than ever: *es ist noch nicht alles verloren!* (All is not lost). In the first-ever completely digital edition of the festival, lovers of classical music will get to enjoy at least a dozen audio-visual projects on the Klara app and on their official website between 13th and 22nd March. Performances by the Belgian baroque orchestra B'Rock, the Berlin-based STEGREIF.orchester, the Brussels ensemble Het Collectief, the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra are scheduled, and additional collaborations with Brussels Philharmonic, Ictus and Collegium Vocale Gent are in the works. For more information, visit [www.klarafestival.be/en](http://www.klarafestival.be/en)

## Stepping up

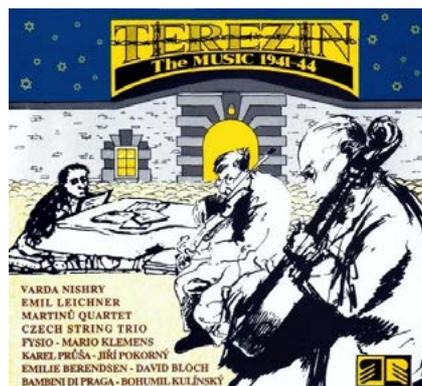
The 9th edition of the Istanbul International Dance Festival promises to be a happy whirlwind of established artistes, enthusiastic learners and serious connoisseurs. From 24th to 31st March, the historic city will be pulsing with energy as artistes from around the world prepare to showcase their talents in forms as diverse as salsa, tango, ballroom, bachata and kizomba. The festival will also include concerts, bootcamps, workshops, private lessons with, among many others,



Spanish *bachata* champions Marco and Sara, ballroom dancer Pasquale La Rocca and *kizomba* dancers Isabelle and Félicien. For more information, visit [www.istanbuldancefest.com](http://www.istanbuldancefest.com)

## Striking notes

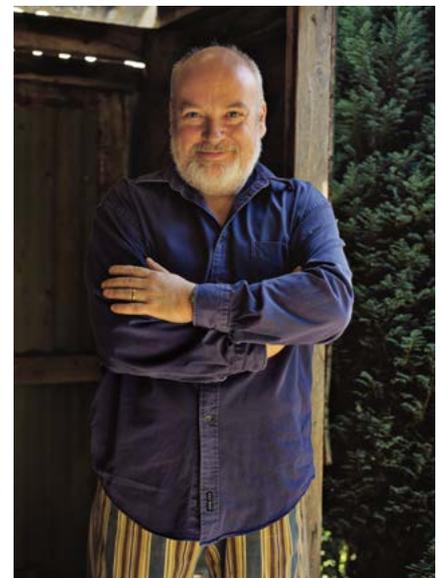
A place of terror, imprisonment and imminent death, the ghetto of Terezín in Czechoslovakia during the Second World War was also a place where extraordinary creativity thrived against all odds. A pit stop for Jewish prisoners about to be sent to the concentration camps at Auschwitz, the ghetto had within its walls composers and musicians who created beautiful music in circumstances that were anything but that. In 1993, a BBC/Czech TV film, *The Music of Terezín*, was filmed in the ghetto and included archival footage, interviews with survivors and



musical performances in places where they were originally presented during the war. A powerful, award-winning documentary that brings into the limelight a little-known facet of the Holocaust, *The Music of Terezín* is now available online, thanks to ORT, at [holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/the-music-of-terezin](http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/the-music-of-terezin)

## For a song

Australian composer Andrew Ford has just broken one of his own rules. 'I am currently composing music without quite knowing what I'm doing or why I'm doing it,' he writes. The ambivalence, though, ends there. For *Red Dirt Hymns*, he has commissioned some of Australia's best poets to write lyrics about love, hope, forgiveness and much more, which he then sets to music. As a non-believer, he insists that hymns are not exclusively religious but are, in essence, about the strength of a feeling or a moment. His aim is to make music that is simple and



most importantly, useful, especially at a time when much of the world is reeling. It is a work in progress, but you can listen to the remarkably atmospheric first hymn, 'Gone', sung by vocalist Gian Slater and written by Jordie Albiston, on Ford's Soundcloud. For more information, visit [www.andrewford.net.au](http://www.andrewford.net.au)

- Vipasha Aloukik Pai

# Play Halls and Curtain Calls

**Meher Marfatia** maps the hubs and haunts of Parsi theatre in the heyday of this genre in Bombay.

**I**t was Bombay's well-defined skyline that saved this theatre actor some embarrassment. Courting his fiancée more than fifty years ago, Kanti Madia was indulgently showing her the beautiful view from the lofty vantage point called Cafe Naaz. His raised finger froze mid-air as it skimmed over the top of the distinct dome crowning Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Suddenly, it dawned on him—he should have been in there instead. Writer-director Adi Marzban luckily covered for him, albeit from the wings, silkily ad-libbing chunks of Madia's dialogue till the next entry.

## Bright beginnings

Marzban was introduced to Girish Munshi, the son of Kanhaiyalal Munshi, trustees of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, by veteran actor-producer Burjor Patel. Under the Kala Kendra banner, Co-operative Players (Marzban's company with producer Pesi Khandalavala) launched *Piroja Bhavan*. The play birthed a whole new stage lexicon of realism, catapulting the modern Parsi natak to unprecedented success. It was soon followed by the memorable *Mota Dil Na Mota Bawa*, studded with talents as stellar as Homi Tavadia, Minoo Davar, Piloo Wadia, Dinoo Nicholson, Jimmy Pocha, Nader Nariman, Kanti Madia, Viloo Panthaky, Sorab Modi, and Ruby and Burjor Patel.

The "House Full" board was a comfortingly familiar sight for drama buffs at venues like Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Tejpal, Patkar and Bhulabhai Desai auditoriums. "Work on Adi's plays during our 12 years with him was at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan," recalls Burjor Patel. "The Jai Hind College hall was

the base for INT (Indian National Theatre). As INT had a Gujarati and a Parsi theatre wing, we moved by turns to Tejpal, Patkar, Birla and Bhaidas in Vile Parle. We would be completely lost without a weekend play to perform though, fortunately, that did not happen often."

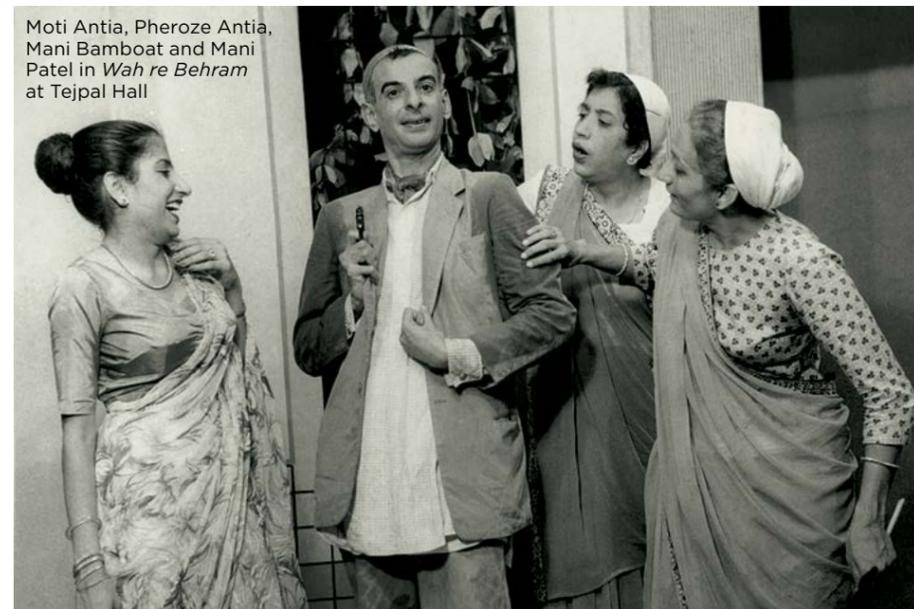
With his wife Ruby, Patel had a lead role in the powerhouse ensemble cast of *Piroja Bhavan* in 1954. Presented by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the game-changer production's inaugural run notched up over 30 nights in those days when five to six shows were considered decent business. With dramatic revolving sets perched at multiple levels and technically polished rain scenes with fog machine effects, this was Marzban's artful adaptation of Kaufman and Hart's history-mocker, *George Washington Slept Here*. Involving bizarre logistics, it coaxed a fantastic menagerie of horses, cattle and goats to trot onto the floorboards each night. "Arre, aaje bakri ne taap chhe," was the tender concern when an animal with even mild fever was restrained from making its stage appearance.

Theatre managers ensured that the stars, both two-legged and four, were comfortable and audiences left happy enough to never demand ticket refunds. These men ruled, wooed by producers and directors clamouring for coveted show dates. Competitive yet collaborative, they had staying power too. Cooversha Lala, for instance, managed Tejpal Auditorium for 35 years from its inception in September 1960.

## The right spots

At the time, impresarios vied fiercely for four main halls, not necessarily on de rigueur dates like New Year and Khordad Sal alone. They were Tejpal on the slope up from Gowalia Tank, Birla at New Marine Lines, Patkar at Churchgate and Bhulabhai Desai Auditorium at Back Bay. Like Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan before it, Tejpal boasted serial natak runs. "Getting a Sunday evening show at Tejpal was like winning the lottery—it was that tough to be allotted dates,"

Moti Antia, Pheroze Antia, Mani Bamboat and Mani Patel in *Wah re Behram* at Tejpal Hall



says Patel. "Tejpal on the schedule meant good box-office pickings."

Cooversha Lala of Tejpal, Burjor (Dicky) Pavri of Birla, Sam Kerawalla of Patkar and Jimmy Pocha of Bhulabhai Desai and later Sophia Bhabha hall, remained a friendly foursome. Lala attributes Tejpal's popularity to cheap rent, good lights, quality mikes "and *garma garam* batata wadas that they were the first to sell during the interval". Hot snacks served under Gujarati management were strictly vegetarian, of course. Trust the Parsis to pay no heed to that hitch, instead carrying their own packed *pora-pao* (omelette sandwiches).

*Piroja Bhavan* birthed a whole new stage lexicon of realism, catapulting the modern Parsi natak to unprecedented success

"Birla Auditorium hosted our Sunday night adda," reminisces actress Moti Antia, whose writer-director-actor husband Pheroze Antia etched a signature character: the bumbling, henpecked hero Behram. Along with playwrights and producers, the quartet of managers met regularly in a room near Pavri's office, down a passage from the auditorium. "We'd enjoy nice rounds of theatre gossip and discussion over dinner with

drinks," Antia recalls. "I often took curry rice there or *khariyas* (paya) with *brun* bread." Interestingly, Pavri was both a *pagri*-wearing priest and manager of Birla. The 1100-seater theatre he looked after was initially a lecture hall for doctors.

Describing what it was like to manage another theatre formed "by default", Kerawalla explains that Patkar was originally the badminton court for

The much-loved qawwali scene from *Laughter in the House 1*, premiered at the Tata Theatre in 2012





Dolly and Bomi Dotiwala in the very popular *Sagan ke Vagan*, 1966, at Tejpal Hall

young collegians of Sir Sitaram and Lady Shantabai Patkar's SNDT Women's University. With nine doors welcoming people to 700 seats, the hall boasted Kabuki theatre-inspired apron stage extensions.

### Actors speak

As for the actors' preference, Ruby and Burjor Patel's vote goes to Tejpal for Gujarati and Sophia for English plays. With comfortable-sized green rooms and excellent acoustics, Tejpal staged long-running plays from the pen of Pheroze Antia, including *Bapsy Bahr Pari*, *Mehera ne Khatar*, *Rangilo Behram* and *Wah re Behram*. The last two were from the hilarious series chronicling the hysterical antics of the unforgettable, titular Behram.

Singing star Bomi Dotiwala and his wife Dolly also favoured Tejpal's green rooms: capacious, well-equipped with lighting facilities and large mirrors. "Bhavan's was the more conveniently located green room, with the shortest distance for actors to cover on getting off stage," Dotiwala says. In his experience, the first two shows of any play were watched mainly by Parsis. The ones after were patronised by a wonderful mix of Bohris and Gujaratis. They laughed and cried when the

Dotiwalas enacted poignant moments in Marzban's hit *Sagan ke Vagan* at Bhavan and Tejpal. Tickets for it sold snap within an hour of booking window shutters raising.

Presented to theatregoers in 1961 in the musical revue, *Dhong Song*, the Dotiwalas carved a niche as dramatic actors with *Sagan Ke Vagan*. Bolstered by a rare bittersweet script from Marzban—his metier being sparkling comedy—the play crossed 100 shows, a record marked with no less than a really well-attended celebratory *jashan* at Colaba Agiary.

"Parsi plays had packed houses at multiple halls on the same evening," Dolly recalled. "Balancing it out trickily, we performed early items in the first half of a revue till the interval and then rushed from Birla at Marine Lines to Bhavan at Chowpatty for our full-length play."

Having co-starred with her husband Rohinton under

Marzban's direction, Scheherazade Mody says, "I did a lot of shows at Tejpal. It had a very warm ambience with lovely green rooms. To me, the play mattered but the theatre it was performed in was incidental. A stage is a stage."

## Sparking a historic revival of the genre, the NCPA presented two productions of *Laughter in the House* at the Tata Theatre between 2012 and 2017.



Piloo Wadi, Burjor Patel, Ruby Patel, Dinshah Daji and Dadi Sarkari (seated) in *Piroja Bhavan*, 1954

Citing humourists P.G. Wodehouse, James Thurber, W.W. Jacobs and Stephen Leacock as his comic influences, Marzban echoed most Parsi playwrights

when he said, in a 1971 interview to Bachi Karkaria: "People do not want to leave tragedy behind at home only to discover it has stalked them into the auditorium." No wonder there was that uproarious loud laughter in the house ringing through every Bombay hall. And may the curtain never drop down on it all.

The House Full board for hit shows of *Piroja Bhavan* was a fixture at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan



COURTESY MEHER MARFATIA

Sparking a historic revival of the genre, the NCPA presented two productions of *Laughter in the House* at the Tata Theatre between 2012 and 2017. Ten sell-out shows of each of these rib-tickling revues, directed by thespian Sam Kerawalla, saw adored vintage stars kick up their heels to dance and act in a spectacular medley of skits and songs from their glory years.

The backstage dynamic is a beautiful mix of learning and playing. Few exemplify this better than Dotiwala. A month after an accident cruelly claimed the vivacious Viloo Panthaky Kapadia, Parsi theatre lost another beloved performer. Having put in a spirited song and dance turn at the dress rehearsal of the *Laughter* sequel, 80-year-old Dolly Dotiwala passed away the next morning.

Setting aside the wrenching personal loss, Dotiwala bravely continued with a crackerjack opening night presence, only an hour after her *uthamna* prayers. The actor exuded dignity in distress. But his audience could not share such composure. There was barely a dry eye in the theatre as he most movingly underscored a time-honoured stage ethic: tinged with tragedy or not, the show must go on. ■

For more on interesting multicultural traditions and trends of Bombay in the last century, read *Once Upon A City* by Meher Marfatia. Published by 49/50 Books, it is available on Amazon and in select bookstores.

COURTESY MEHER MARFATIA

# Performing Arts: Stand-up comedy

A monthly column that explores any and every aspect of the performing and visual arts. This month, comedian and writer **Anuvab Pal** chronicles the journey of his show on the British Empire, from the NCPA to the BBC.

There are, I have realised, only two spots in the world left for discussing the legacy of the British Empire. And those are my two performing homes—the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). I began my stand-up show titled *The Empire*, about the funny remnants of the British Empire, at the NCPA's Experimental Theatre, thinking it would be the right spiritual home for it. It began with telling the audience that the show would be done with an accent that sounded like the voice of Dr. Shashi Tharoor, journalist Karan Thapar and The Prince of Wales had been put through a blender. The audience laughed.

South Mumbai and perhaps Kolkata, where I'm originally from, often need to be reminded that the British have actually left. The very Indo-Victorian culture left behind since Independence is ripe for comedy, starting with the emphasis on how we pronounce certain English words, to etiquette, to the sacred place London holds in the heart of India's cultural elite. The influences for a stand-up show around the Empire were many and often gathered from work fostered by the NCPA. Whether they be in the early days, the movies of Merchant Ivory Productions, or more recently, the screenings from London's National Theatre Live. In a world increasingly local and provincial, filled with infighting, jingoism and xenophobia, or to put it simply, the world people like Mr. Arnab Goswami are building (who incidentally, does get mentioned in the show), the NCPA's support of international artistes reaching Mumbai audiences is a breath of fresh air. And indeed, seeing my audience laugh at Indian idiosyncrasies placed against British ones, or American ones, or French ones, is a nice thumbs up to



the idea that laughter can be something beyond just puerile abuse and political jokes. It is also a testament that audiences can be global, cosmopolitan and erudite, when they need to be. With the NCPA providing a home for quality entertainment, bad Bollywood double-entendres can stay home for those few hours.

Taking this rather Wodehousean world view, I went to England to perform the same show and found a very different response. Their view of the Empire is not idiosyncratic nostalgia as ours often is, but shame. Outright shame. So to hear a comedian talk about

how funny the Empire may have been, is uncomfortable for them, as to modern Britain, the guilt around it wants to say, it should not have happened in the first place. In other words, it is either too early to laugh at it, and if a comedian from a former colony must do jokes, then they should berate us, and not say it wasn't all bad.

It taught me a fundamental difference between the audiences of the NCPA and the BBC when trying to make jokes about the Empire. Which is that the former are over it whereas the latter are not. My view of stories from history has always been a little different. Britain and India will always have a complicated history—much like a marriage. However, just like a marriage needs confrontation to survive and evolve, harsh history needs comedy to ask the tough questions. After all, whether ruler or ruled, art, including stand-up, is the great leveller because one shares things in common. And whether one performs at Old Broadcasting House at the BBC or the Experimental Theatre at the NCPA, in the darkness, with laughter in unison, we are all the same. ■

*Anuvab Pal's stand-up show, The Empire, debuted at the NCPA on 15th August 2015. It travelled around the world and in December 2019, it was filmed as part of the BBC World Service's The New Year International Comedy Show at Broadcasting House in London. The show has been seen by six million people worldwide and is now a part of the permanent viewing collection at The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, under the exhibit Cruel Britannia. He would like to thank the NCPA, where it all began. This article was first published in the April 2020 digital issue (Volume 9, Issue 9) of ON Stage.*

 NCPA

# ONE NIGHT ONLY

A DIVA SPECIAL

FEATURING

**Keshia B**

Royston Fernandes Backing vocalist

Vivian D'souza Bass

Nawaz Hussain Drums

Vatan Dhuriya Keys

Manasquam Mahanta Lead Guitar

**6th March 2021 | 7:00 PM**

Experimental Theatre, NCPA

Box office: 66223724/54 | [www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com) |



 NCPA

# TIME MACHINE

INSPIRED BY POSTMODERN JUKEBOX



Delraaz & Zervan Bunshah  
Lead Vocals

Joash Benedict  
Guitar & Backing Vocals

Jeremy Samson  
Bass

Shashwat Karkare  
Drums

**20th March 2021  
7:00 PM**

Experimental Theatre, NCPA

Box office: 66223724/54 | [www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com) |



# Programme Guide

March 2021

(Programmes are subject to change. Please check the website and refer to our emails for updated information.)



## DANCE



Prachi Save Saathi, 5th, Experimental Theatre



Pooja Pant, 5th, Experimental Theatre

### Catalyst

An evening celebrating choreographies born during lockdown

Bharatanatyam by Prachi Save Saathi (solo), Anand Satchidanandan and Jayalakshmi (duet) & Kathak by Pooja Pant Dance Company (Approx. 60 mins)  
Experimental Theatre  
Friday, 5th – 6.30 pm

### An NCPA Presentation

The national lockdown may have taken away a lot of privileges from us but it has also been a good teacher, a catalyst that has sowed the seeds of new knowledge and forced artistes to start thinking out



Anand-Jayalakshmi, 5th, Experimental Theatre

of the box and create artwork never thought of before. This evening is the first of many such presentations that features choreographies that have been born during the lockdown. Some of these choreographies have been presented online in a limited space and will now be remodelled to be featured on a live performance stage. There will be presentations by group members who have redesigned a choreography that was originally created by merging videos shot in their individual spaces. The NCPA brings them all together, not online but physically for the first time after a long gap. The first edition will have a solo performance by Bharatanatyam artiste Prachi Save Saathi, a duet by Anand – Jayalakshmi and a group presentation by Pooja Pant Dance Company.

**Tickets:**  
₹180/- (Members)  
₹200/- (Public)  
**Box Office:** 9th February for Members & 12th February for Public

## INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

### One Night Only – A Diva Special

Featuring Keshia B  
(Approx. 105 mins)  
Experimental Theatre  
Saturday, 6th – 7.00 pm

### An NCPA Presentation

“One Night Only” – A Diva Special, featuring **Keshia B**, will showcase the life, story and personalities of some of the great divas like Etta James, Whitney Houston, Chaka Khan, Gloria Estefan and Adele, to name a few. Keshia B will dish out some classic old-school diva specials like ‘I’d Rather Go Blind’ by Etta James, ‘Say a Little Prayer’ by Aretha Franklin, ‘Hot Stuff’ by Donna Summer, while giving you a glimpse of new age neo soul artistes like Erykah Badu and Ledisi. Ending the night on a high will be hit singles of Alicia Keys, H.E.R. and Jennifer Hudson.



Keshia B, 6th, Experimental Theatre

**Tickets:**  
₹450/- (Members)  
₹500/- (Public)  
**Box Office:** 9th February for Members & 12th February for Public

## THEATRE

### FemaPalooza

Stand-up Comedy  
English & Hindi (90 mins)  
Experimental Theatre  
Sunday, 7th – 7.00 pm



Jeeya Sethi, 7th, Experimental Theatre

### An NCPA Off-Stage Presentation In collaboration with Comedy Ladder

*FemaPalooza* is a unique show for women by women and only women are allowed; a stand-up comedy show with an all-funny line-up. Women feel most comfortable around other women and find it easier to let their hair down when men are not around. So, Comedy Ladder brings to you an amazing line-up of some of the best women in comedy. Bring your grandmothers, mothers, sisters, MILs, daughters and best friends for this unique show. A ladies night out like never before, these comics will leave you in splits. An evening of laughter and fun, you don't want to miss this one. A Women's Day Special!

Host: **Jeeya Sethi**  
Comics: **Anu Menon, Aishwarya Mohanraj, Ramya Ramapriya, Shreeja Chaturvedi & Sonali Thakker**

**For Adults only.**

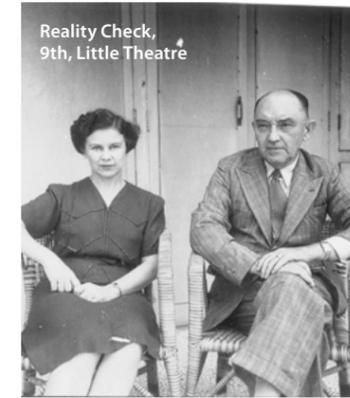
**Tickets:**  
₹360/- (Members)  
₹400/- (Public)  
**Box Office:** 9th February for Members & 12th February for Public

## FILM

**Reality Check**  
Documentary Film Screening  
Little Theatre  
Tuesday, 9th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with Cinema Collective

This year, the NCPA revives the Reality Check film series, which was started in 2014, to promote and encourage documentary filmmakers in India, whose work reflects life and culture in the country today in a provocative blend of creativity and integrity.



**My Home India**  
Polish/English Film  
Subtitled in English (45 mins)

This film is about the fragile but stubborn and strong-willed Kira Banasinska's phenomenal struggle to make a home for Polish war refugees in India. The film is a rare collection of previously unseen archives combined with first-hand testimonies from the survivors—a discovery of the extraordinary in the ordinary. Personal history is seldom the same as projected history. While making a home for refugees in India, the country became her home. Both in films and history books, a lot is spoken and known about World War II, but little is known about what happened to the Poles who survived Soviet labour camps and found their way into India. These Poles have different stories to tell but have one common link—Banasinska. The wife of Eugene Banasinski, the first Polish Consul General of Poland in Bombay, was instrumental in seeing that thousands and thousands of Poles found safe passage and homes in India.

Directed by **Anjali Bhushan**  
Written by **Anjali Bhushan & Małgorzata Czausow**  
Research Consultant: **Małgorzata Czausow**  
Produced by **Anjali Bhushan, Krzysztof Sołek & Małgorzata Czausow**  
Executive Producer: **Pravesh Sippy**  
Edited by **Katarzyna Leśniak**  
Music by **Sandesh Shandilya**

The film screening will be followed by a discussion.

**Admission on a first-come-first-served basis. NCPA Members will get preferential seating till 6.50 pm.**

## INDIAN MUSIC

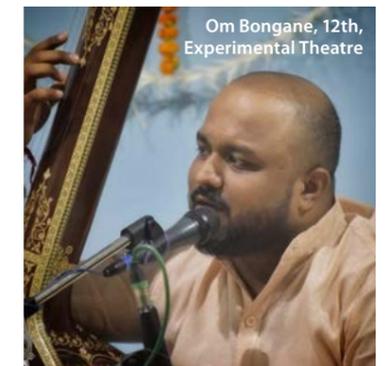
### CITI-NCPA Promising Artistes Series

**Ninad Daithankar (santoor)**  
**Om Bongane (khayal)**  
Experimental Theatre  
Friday, 12th – 6.30 pm

Prominent among the various initiatives undertaken by Citi and the NCPA to support practitioners of Indian music is Scholarships to Young Musicians. This series has been conceptualised to showcase the beneficiaries of these initiatives. The programmes are in the field of Hindustani vocal (*dhrupad and khayal*) and instrumental music (melody and percussion instruments).



**Ninad Daithankar** is the Citi-NCPA Scholarship winner, 2020-21. An up-and-coming santoor player from Pune, he has been learning the instrument from his father Dhananjay Daithankar (senior disciple of Shivkumar Sharma) for 12 years. He is equally proficient in Hindustani classical and light classical music and has performed in various prestigious music festivals held in India and abroad. A recipient of Ajay Bakshi Smruti Puraskar and Indumati Kale Yuva Vadyavadak Puraskar, he is pursuing his master's in Music from Bharati Vidyapeeth's School of Performing Arts, Pune.



**Om Bongane** is the Citi-NCPA Scholarship winner, 2017-18. He started learning vocal music at the age of seven while also learning to play the

harmonium and tabla. He initially took *taleem* in music from his father Kachru Bongane and later, learned in the *gurukul* style from Nath Neralkar and continues to train under him. Currently, he is taking Rampur-Saheswan *gharana taleem* from Rashid Khan. He is a recipient of Vishnu Digambar Paluskar Award by Sharda Sangeet Vidyalaya and Pt. Vasant Rao Deshpande Young Artist Award by SCZCC among other awards. Bongane has also performed at various music festivals.

**Admission for Members on a first-come-first-served basis. NCPA Members will get preferential seating till 6.20 pm.**

## WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

### SOI Chamber Orchestra

Marat Bisengaliev, conductor & violin

Entirely Elgar

(70 mins)

Tata Theatre

Saturday, 13th – 5.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

SOI Music Director **Marat Bisengaliev** is a noted interpreter of the works of Sir Edward Elgar. His album *Elgar: Re-discovered works for violin, Vol. 1* was nominated for a Gramophone Award and the second volume was named by Classic FM as one of the "Top 5 Elgar recordings". In 2013, Bisengaliev received the first Elgar Proliferation Award from the American Elgar Foundation. In this concert, Bisengaliev will lead the SOI Chamber Orchestra as conductor and violin soloist in a programme



SOI Chamber Orchestra, 13th, Tata Theatre

dedicated entirely to Elgar that delves into works spanning the composer's life.

Elgar:

Romance, Op. 1

Serenade (arr. Szigeti)

Salut d'Amour

Intermezzo

Introduction and allegro

Serenade for strings

Sospiri, Op. 70

'Nimrod' from Enigma Variations

Adieu

Tickets:

₹900, 675 & 450/- (Members)

₹1,000, 750 & 500/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office: 9th February for

Members & 12th February for Public

## THEATRE

### A Fistful of Rupees

English/Hindi Play (80 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Sunday, 14th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Raghav shows up in Mumbai without much of a plan and throws himself headlong into the ruckus. After living in quiet and orderly Singapore for many years, Mumbai comes as quite a shock. Everything feels heightened, louder, brighter, impossible to ignore. He fights the absurd loneliness of the crowded city with lots of laughter, and some bravery. *A Fistful of Rupees* considers the idea of what it means to truly 'arrive' in this expansive and yet tiny world, flitting between grim



A Fistful of Rupees, 14th, Experimental Theatre

overpowering personality, as well as a heartfelt journey of a young person navigating opportunity and despair with equal earnestness. At some point, Raghav must decide whether he wants to continue to spectate and observe, or finally jump in as well.

Runner-up, Sultan Padamsee

Playwriting Awards 2018

Showcased at the Tata LitLive!

Mumbai Literature Festival 2018

Written and Directed by Shiv Tandan

Cast: Vidyuth Gargi, Niharika Lyra

Dutt, Mallika Shah & Vaibhav Kapatia

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office: 9th February for

Members & 12th February for Public

## SCREENING

### Agrippina

by George Frideric Handel

Opera Screening (135 mins)

Sung in Italian with English Subtitles

Godrej Dance Theatre

Tuesday, 16th – 6.00 pm

An NCPA – The Metropolitan Opera (New York) Presentation

A classic love feud between rulers and rulers-to-be. The story is set in ancient Rome, and its line-up includes the emperor Claudius, along with the whole raft of plotters and schemers who surrounded him. His fourth wife Agrippina plots his death, so that her son Nero from a previous marriage can secure the throne. Mezzo-soprano **Joyce DiDonato** headlines Handel's brilliant and tuneful comedy, in a new staging by **Sir David McVicar** that *The New York Times* hails as "bold, snicker-out-loud funny, magnetic."



Agrippina, 16th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office: 25th February for

Members & 28th February for Public

## FILM

### Short Film Corner

Short Film Screenings

Little Theatre

Wednesday, 17th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with White Wall Screenings

There are so many wonderful short films being made in India, with auteurs at work in their own regions, and bold, new voices who are experimenting with form and technique. Short Film Corner hopes to connect movie lovers with these films and also open up dialogue with filmmakers, who in turn, get a chance to connect with their audiences. White Wall Screenings (WWS) was founded in 2017 as a community to facilitate a conversation between short filmmakers and film connoisseurs. WWS has successfully showcased more than 300 short films and also continues to conduct workshops, masterclasses and conversations around filmmaking and films.



9+1=1, 17th, Little Theatre

9+1=1

Hindi/English Film

9+1=1 is the first-ever film made on the subject of carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide, also known as a silent killer, is one of the deadliest combinations of gases that can kill people within minutes without showing any physical symptoms. When we talk about air pollution, this gas is the least talked about when, in fact, it causes the highest number of deaths as compared to other gases. As per data from various sources, most of the deaths happen when household fumes are generated either while cooking or in an attempt to warm houses in winters. 9+1=1 is the story of a man who keeps nine paying guests in his house to earn extra income. One day, he leaves town and when he comes back, he finds that all the paying guests have died from inhaling poisonous carbon monoxide. The gas emanated from a makeshift coal tandoor they improvised to party in their landlord's absence oblivious of the repercussions they could face.

Written & Directed by Rahul Yadav

55km/sec

Hindi/English Film with English Subtitles (20 mins)

Seconds before a meteor hits Earth, an awkward man confesses his love to his college crush on a farewell call with his school friends. But when the



55km/sec, 17th, Little Theatre

impact calculations turn out to be off by a few minutes, he still has time to have a last conversation with her before the world ends.

Directed by Arati Kadav

Storm in a Teacup  
English Film (9 mins)

The film is about a newly married couple's drama-filled argument which starts with



Storm in a Teacup, 17th, Little Theatre

an innocuous request of making tea. The tea-making process acts as a window to the wife's changing forms of anger which morphs from the silent treatment, passive aggression, simmering anger to the eventual fit of fury.

Written & Directed by Shreyas Govindarajan

The film screenings will be followed by a discussion.

Admission on a first-come-first-served basis. NCPA Members will get preferential seating till 6.50 pm.

## SCREENING

### The Cherry Orchard

Theatre Screening

(Approx. 133 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Thursday, 18th - 6.00 pm



*The Cherry Orchard*, 18th, Godrej Dance Theatre

#### An NCPA - Ireland Consulate, Mumbai, Presentation

Bringing together one of the world's great classic plays with one of Ireland's greatest writers, Druid presents **Tom Murphy's** version of Chekhov's masterpiece, *The Cherry Orchard*. Directed by **Garry Hynes**, with the acclaimed creative team behind DruidShakespeare, this production will feature a large company of actors, starring **Derbhle Crotty** and other leading members of the Druid Ensemble. Druid's production of *The Cherry Orchard*, a play about land, legacy and the struggle between tradition and change, will be the first major production of Murphy's work since his death in 2018.

Cast: **Derbhle Crotty, Ian-Lloyd Anderson, Siobhán Cullen, Megan Cusack, Peter Daly, Rachel Feeney, Garrett Lombard, Aaron Monaghan, Rory Nolan, Helen Norton, John Olohan & Marty Rea**

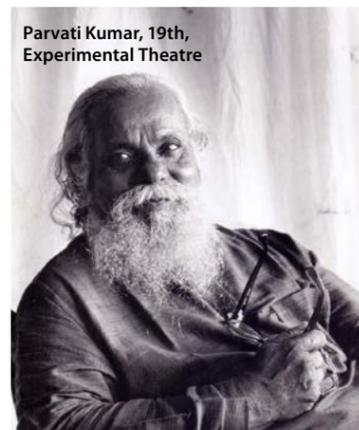
**Tickets:**  
**₹360/- (Members)**  
**₹400/- (Public)**  
**Box Office: 9th February for Members & 12th February for Public**

#### THEATRE

#### World Theatre Day Events

(19th, 20th & 21st March)  
 (26th, 27th & 28th March)

#### DANCE



**Parvati Kumar, 19th, Experimental Theatre**

#### Remembering Parvati Kumar & Rajee Narayan

An evening dedicated to two luminaries in the field of arts (Approx. 90 mins)  
**Experimental Theatre**  
**Friday, 19th – 6.30 pm**

An NCPA Presentation by Sandhya Purecha along with Sarfojiraje Bhosale Center's Bharata College of Fine Arts and Culture & Gayatri Subramanian along with Guru G.V. Ramani Natya Kala Foundation

The evening presents Parvati Kumar's unique research on *Abhinayadarpanam* and Marathi *Nirupanas* along with the traditional compositions and choreography in Tanjavur Bani by students of Bharata College of Fine Arts and Culture. The evening will also pay homage to the work of the



**Rajee Narayan, 19th, Experimental Theatre**

legendary guru, Rajee Narayan, a woman *vaggayekara* of the 21st century who was known for her compositions and choreographies in rare *ragams*, conventionally unexplored *talams*, beautifully woven traditional *adavus* and subtle yet poetic *sancharis*. The students of Guru G. V. Ramani Natya Kala Foundation will present excerpts from three of her rare compositions from one of the last recordings done by her.

**Tickets:**  
**₹180/- (Members)**  
**₹200/- (Public)**  
**Box Office: 9th February for Members & 12th February for Public**

#### INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

#### Time Machine

(Approx. 105 mins)  
**Experimental Theatre**  
**Saturday, 20th – 7.00 pm**

An NCPA Presentation

Inspired by the work of Postmodern Jukebox, Time Machine sets the stage



**Time Machine, 20th, Experimental Theatre**

ROBBIE JACK (THE CHERRY ORCHARD)

by playing modern music as well as timeless classics with a vintage/jazz vibe to them. By mixing modern pop music with a '50s to '80s feel, and the classics with a fresh beat, they aim to create a space where people of all age groups can resonate with the music.

**Tickets:**  
**₹450/- (Members)**  
**₹500/- (Public)**  
**Box Office: 9th February for Members & 12th February for Public**

#### THEATRE

**Sherlock Homi, 21st, Tata Theatre**



#### Sherlock Homi

Gujarati/English Play (100 mins)  
**Tata Theatre**  
**Sunday, 21st – 11.30 am, 4.30 pm & 7.30 pm**

An NCPA Presentation for the **Adi Marzban Endowment Fund** (4:30 pm show)

Parsis are few in number—this statement is a myth. Parsis are everywhere. You just don't realise it. One such Parsi is none other than the world's most infamous detective—Sherlock Homi. To the world, he is suave and dashing, but he is actually a typical happy-go-lucky Parsi man, who migrated from Bharucha Baug in Bombay and now lives in London's 221B Baker Street with his partner in crime Dr. Jamshed Wadia. He uses his Parsi sense (the equivalent of a sixth sense, just crazier), to solve crimes in a way only a Parsi can—with a cup of tea, two eggs every morning and using a lot of swear words...or as we Parsis call it...punctuation.

Written & Directed by **Meherzad Patel**  
 Cast: **Danesh Irani, Danesh Khambata, Azmin Mistry & others**

#### A Silly Point Production

**Tickets:**  
**₹1,500, 1,125, 750, 600, 375 & 225/- (Members)**  
**₹2,000, 1,500, 1,000, 800, 500 & 300/- (Public)**  
**(Inclusive of GST)**  
**Box Office: 25th February for Members & 28th February for Public**

#### THEATRE

#### World Theatre Day Events

**Spotlight on Stage**  
**Tata Theatre**  
**Friday, 26th, Saturday, 27th and Sunday, 28th**

The year 2020 has been like no other, impacting the arts fraternity enormously. 'Spotlight on Stage' is an initiative that believes in the power of community collaboration, where BookMyShow is working with producers, performers and venues to come together and celebrate live performing arts. The initiative will host English and Hindi theatre, Western classical music, Indian music, international music, stand-up and dance and will find its home in performing arts venues across the city over two weekends this month. The NCPA will participate in this exciting celebration of theatre with a collection of varied performances by the vibrant performing arts community of Mumbai. For details on performances and venues, please visit [www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com)

#### SCREENING

#### Uncle Vanya

**Theatre Screening**  
**(Approx. 150 mins)**  
**Godrej Dance Theatre**  
**Thursday, 25th – 6.00 pm**

An NCPA-More2Screen Presentation

Sonya (**Aimee Lou Wood**) and her Uncle Vanya (**Toby Jones**) while away their time on an isolated estate, visited occasionally only by the local doctor Astrov (**Richard Armitage**). However, when Sonya's father, Professor Serebryakov (**Roger Allam**), suddenly returns with his restless, alluring, new wife Yelena (**Rosalind Eleazar**), polite facades crumble and long repressed feelings start to emerge.



**Uncle Vanya, 25th, Godrej Dance Theatre**

As the conflicted family are forced to confront their despair, loneliness and each other, can the beauty of life help them find new hope? **Sonia Friedman Productions'** stunning five-star play *Uncle Vanya*, a new adaptation of the **Anton Chekhov** masterpiece by **Conor McPherson** directed by **Ian Rickson**, was abruptly halted as the world went into lockdown. Currently nominated for four Olivier Awards, *Uncle Vanya*—full of tumultuous frustration and hidden passions, but brimming with hope and optimism for the future—is a must-see event for our times.

**Tickets:**  
**₹360/- (Members)**  
**₹400/- (Public)**  
**Box Office: 9th February for Members & 12th February for Public**

#### WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

#### SOI Chamber Orchestra

**Marat Bisengaliev, conductor & violin**  
**(70 mins)**  
**Tata Theatre**  
**Wednesday, 31st – 7.00 pm**

An NCPA Presentation

SOI Music Director **Marat Bisengaliev** will lead the SOI Chamber Orchestra in a programme of beloved classics including Mendelssohn's Octet in E-flat major, hailed as "one of the miracles of 19th-century music" in a special arrangement for string orchestra.

Programme including:  
 Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 3  
 Rossini: Sonata No. 3 for strings  
 Mendelssohn: Octet

**Tickets:**  
**₹900, 675 & 450/- (Members)**  
**₹1,000, 750 & 500/- (Public)**  
**(Plus GST)**  
**Box Office: 25th February for Members & 28th February for Public**

SEAMUS RYAN (UNCLE VANYA)

# What's Next

APRIL & MAY 2021

(Programmes are subject to change. Please check the website and refer to our emails for updated information.)



*Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*, 8th April, Godrej Dance Theatre

## SCREENING

**Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci** by Pietro Mascagni/Ruggero Leoncavallo  
Opera Screening (172 mins)  
Sung in Italian with English Subtitles  
Godrej Dance Theatre  
Thursday, 8th April - 6.00 pm

An NCPA - The Metropolitan Opera (New York) Presentation

Met Principal Conductor Fabio Luisi leads this immortal double-bill of one-act operas that teem with love, jealousy, despair and murder. In *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Santuzza is pregnant and abandoned by the handsome and popular Turiddu. But their illicit dalliance is discovered by Santuzza's husband, Alfio, who challenges Turiddu to a duel, and kills him. In *Pagliacci*, Canio, the iconic clown, must entertain the audience while his heart is breaking. His wife, Nedda, plans to flee with her young lover, Silvio, after the performance. But when the action on stage too closely mirrors real life, Canio erupts and murders them both.

**Fabio Luisi** (Conductor); **Eva-Maria Westbroek** (Santuzza), **Patricia Racette** (Nedda), **Marcelo Álvarez** (Turiddu/Canio) & **George Gagnidze** (Alfio/Tonio)

**Tickets:**  
₹450/- (Members)  
₹500/- (Public)  
**Box Office: 9th March for Members & 12th March for Public**

## INDIAN MUSIC

### Saz-e-Bahar

Festival of Indian Instrumental Music  
Experimental Theatre  
Friday, 9th & Saturday, 10th April - 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

The tenth edition of this two-day festival will showcase four internationally renowned instrumentalists, wielding instruments of different categories—string-plucked (rudraveena), string-bowed (sarangi), wind-blown (bansuri) and drums-percussion (tabla).  
**On each day at 6.00 pm, Dr. Suvarnalata Rao will present a pre-event talk on specific instruments presented on the respective days.**

9th April  
**Akram Khan (tabla)**  
**Ronu Majumdar (bansuri)**  
(Approx. 120 mins)



Akram Khan, 9th April, Experimental Theatre

**Akram Khan** had the privilege of learning tabla from stalwarts like Niazu Khan, and his own illustrious father, Hashmat Ali Khan of the Ajrada *gharana*.

**Ronu Majumdar** was mentored by eminent musicians such as Vijay Raghav Rao, Laxmanprasad Jaipurwale and Ravi Shankar.



Ronu Majumdar, 9th April, Experimental Theatre

10th April  
**Dilshad Khan (sarangi)**  
**Mohi Baha'ud-din Dagar (rudraveena)**  
(Approx. 105 mins)

**Dilshad Khan** was mentored by his uncle, the eminent sarangi maestro Sultan Khan, and today, represents the younger generation of instrumentalists.

Having trained with maestros like his father Zia Mohiuddin and uncle, Zia Fariddudin Dagar, **Baha'ud-din Dagar** is one of the very few exponents of the rudraveena, a rare instrument today.

**Daily Tickets:**  
₹135/- (Members)  
₹150/- (Public)  
**Box Office: 9th March for Members & 12th March for Public.**



Dilshad Khan, 10th April, Experimental Theatre



Mohi Baha'ud-din Dagar, 10th April, Experimental Theatre

## DANCE

### NCPA Mudra Dance Festival 2021

This year, we pay tribute to iconic dance choreographies and musical compositions at the *Mudra* Dance Festival.

### Kuchipudi by Amrita Lahiri presenting choreographies of Vempati Chinna Satyam, Odissi by Shayomita Dasgupta and Subikash Mukherjee presenting choreographies of Kelucharan Mohapatra and Kathak by Shama Bhate and Nadroop

Experimental Theatre  
Sunday, 11th April - 5.00 pm

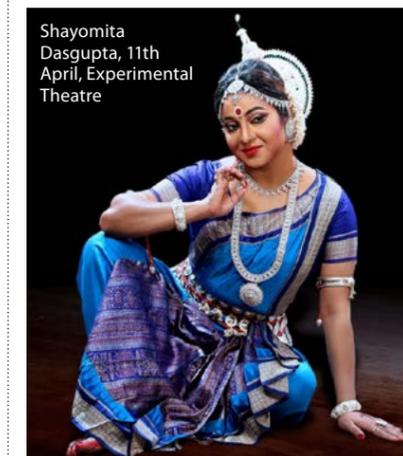


Amrita Lahiri, 11th April, Experimental Theatre

**Amrita Lahiri** is widely recognised as one of the foremost performers of Kuchipudi today. Critics describe her as 'gifted with a radiant stage presence', and her dance performances and choreographies have been acclaimed for their elegance and dynamism, combined with a refined approach. Performances in 2016 include those at Music Academy in Chennai, India International Centre in New Delhi and at the Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa. She has toured as a soloist in India, USA, Switzerland, South Korea, Africa and Southeast Asia, presenting Kuchipudi from its traditional origins to its contemporary forms. Kuchipudi has a lightness and dramatic quality that sets it apart from other Indian classical dance forms. Lahiri combines its grace and light-footedness with a focus on depth of emotion and attention to aesthetics of movement, music, and content. She began dancing at age seven in Washington D.C., studying under Anuradha Nehru until she moved to New Delhi at age 15. After her solo debut at the India International Centre in New Delhi in 1996, she continued to perform Kuchipudi, and also started learning Bharatanatyam under Leela Samson. While in New Delhi, she also studied under Swapna Sundari and Seetha Nagajothy. In Chennai, she studied under Jaikishore Mosalikanti. She has worked for leading arts organisations such as the British Council in New Delhi, Kennedy Center

in Washington D.C. and Museum Rietberg in Zurich. She was Head of Programming (Dance) at the NCPA till 2013.

**Shayomita Dasgupta**, an English graduate from Gauhati University, presently based in the vibrant cultural milieu of Kolkata, started her dance journey under the tutelage of Garima Hazarika, an Odissi exponent from Assam. It was in 1995 that she started taking direct Odissi lessons from the legendary Kelucharan Mohapatra and subsequently received the National Scholarship under the doyen. She feels blessed to have shared the stage with her guru on numerous occasions, the most notable being enacting the role of Sita in the dance drama *Dashanan*. Gradually, she became associated with Ratikant and Sujata Mohapatra's Srijan family and is currently under the tutelage of the former. She is a recipient of numerous awards and has conducted several workshops on Odissi. She has performed various shows in India and abroad and is the Director of Pragyadyuti, where

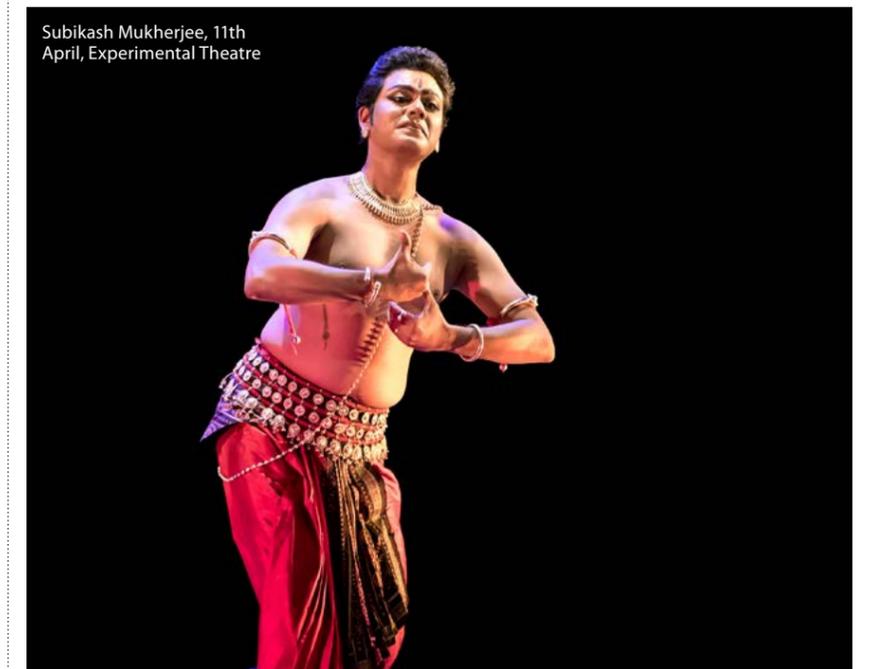


Shayomita Dasgupta, 11th April, Experimental Theatre

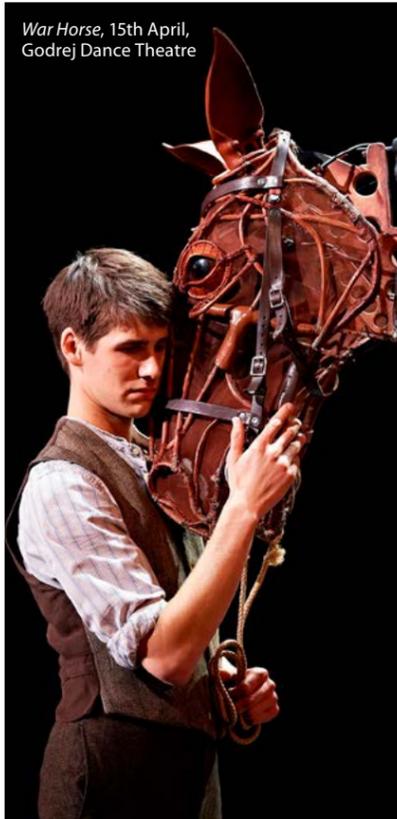
she performs group shows with students and nurtures these young talents to carry the legacy of Kelucharan Mohapatra *gharana* forward.

**Subikash Mukherjee**, one of the more established male Odissi dancers of our country and a student of Ratikant Mohapatra, initially started learning Odissi under Giridhari Nayak in Kolkata at a very tender age. After completing Sangeet Visharad from Pracheen Kala Kendra, Chandigarh, he was selected as a student at the Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar, where he was trained under Kumkum Mohanty. He has been fortunate enough to receive the guidance of Kelucharan Mohapatra and has even had the opportunity to share the stage with him. Through his dedication and commitment, he has won accolades and awards including the West Bengal State Music Academy Award, Victoria Memorial Society Award, Yuva Mission Award 2009 and many more. He even bagged the first position in Sanjukta Panigrahi Award 2002. His name was added in the Guinness Book of World Record for participating in the Largest Odissi Dance. He is also an empanelled artiste of ICCR and a graded artiste of Doordarshan Kendra. Mukherjee runs the dance institution Sankalpa Nrityayan, where he trains students in the Mohapatra *gharana* of Odissi dance. Through his art, he not only reaches sublimity but also serves as an example and a role model for the future generations.

**Tickets:**  
₹450 & 270/- (Members)  
₹500 & 300/- (Public)  
**Box Office: 26th March for Members & 29th March for Public**



Subikash Mukherjee, 11th April, Experimental Theatre



War Horse, 15th April, Godrej Dance Theatre

## SCREENING

**War Horse**  
Theatre Screening  
(Approx. 180 mins)  
Godrej Dance Theatre  
Thursday, 15th April – 6.00 pm

An NCPA-National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

*War Horse* is based on the beloved novel by **Michael Morpurgo**, adapted by **Nick Stafford** in association with the award-winning Handspring Puppet Company. At the outbreak of World War I, Albert's beloved horse, Joey, is sold to the cavalry and shipped to France. Though still not old enough to enlist, he embarks on a treacherous mission to find him and bring him home. Now seen by more than eight million people around the world, this powerfully moving and imaginative drama is a show of phenomenal inventiveness. At its heart are astonishing life-size puppets by South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company, that bring breathing, galloping, charging horses to thrilling life on stage.

**Tickets:**  
₹360/- (Members)  
₹400/- (Public)  
**Box Office:** 9th March for Members & 12th March for Public



Isheeta Chakraborty, 16th April, Experimental Theatre

## INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

**Going Beyond!**  
Experimental Theatre  
Friday, 16th April – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

**Isheeta Chakraborty** will present a set of modern and contemporary jazz tunes, with a sound that is more global in nature, deriving from not just American and European influences but also African and Latin music. The set of songs will include originals as well as familiar standards. This set will be a showcase of her versatility as an artist. Chakraborty will be performing as a vocalist in a quintet with keys, bass, guitar and drums.

**Tickets:** ₹750 & 500/- (Plus GST)  
**Box Office:** 9th March for Members & 12th March for Public.

## WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

**SOI Music Academy**  
(Approx. 90 mins)  
Tata Theatre  
Sunday, 18th April – 5.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation



SOI Music Academy, 18th April, Tata Theatre

The SOI Music Academy is the flagship educational initiative of the Symphony Orchestra of India, providing advanced musical training to talented young children. On 18th April, the SOI Academy Orchestra, comprising students of the SOI Music Academy, will present a concert led by music director **Marat Bisengaliev**. Graduating students of the Academy will also be featured as soloists in the programme, playing with the SOI Chamber Orchestra.

**Admission passes will be available at the Box Office from 26th March for Members & 29th March for Public.**

## SCREENING

**Hansard**  
By **Simon Woods**  
Theatre Screening (100 mins)  
Godrej Dance Theatre  
Thursday, 22nd April – 6.00 pm

An NCPA-National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

The official report of all parliamentary debates. See two-time Olivier Award winners, **Lindsay Duncan** (*Birdman, About Time*) and **Alex Jennings** (*The Lady in the Van, The Queen*), in this play by **Simon Woods**. On a summer morning in 1988, Tory politician Robin Hesketh has returned home to the idyllic Cotswold house he shares with his wife of 30 years, Diana. But all is not as blissful as it seems. Diana has a stinking hangover, a fox is destroying the garden, and secrets are being dug up all over the place. As the day draws on, what starts as gentle ribbing with the familiar rhythms of marital scrapping, quickly turns to a blood sport. Do not miss this witty and devastating portrait of the governing class, directed by **Simon Godwin** (*NT Live: Antony & Cleopatra, Twelfth*



Hansard, 22nd April, Godrej Dance Theatre

*Night*) and part of National Theatre Live's 10th birthday season.

**Age:** 15+

**Tickets:**  
₹360/- (Members)  
₹400/- (Public)  
**Box Office:** 9th March for Members & 12th March for Public

## SCREENING

**Easter in Art**  
Exhibition Screening  
(Approx. 85 mins)  
Godrej Dance Theatre  
Thursday, 29th April – 6.30 pm

An NCPA- Seventh Art Productions (UK) Presentation  
The story of Christ's death and resurrection

has dominated Western culture for the past 2000 years. It is perhaps the most significant historical event of all time, as recounted by the gospels and as such, has been depicted by the greatest artists in history. From the triumphant to the savage, the ethereal to the tactile, some of Western civilisation's greatest artworks focus on this pivotal moment. This beautifully crafted film explores the story of Easter as depicted in art, from the time of the early Christians to the present day. Shot on location in Jerusalem, the United States and throughout Europe, the film explores the different ways artists have depicted the Easter story through the ages.

Directed by **Phil Grabsky**

**Tickets:**  
₹360/- (Members)  
₹400/- (Public)  
**Box Office:** 9th March for Members & 12th March for Public



Easter in Art, 29th April, Godrej Dance Theatre

## INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

**International Jazz Day**  
Tata Theatre  
Friday, 30th April – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation



Louiz Banks, 30th April, Tata Theatre

In Mumbai, International Jazz Day has been celebrated for the last seven years. This year, the NCPA and Louiz Banks will present the 8th edition of the event, which will feature an array of some of the finest musicians and singers in the country, presenting a repertoire ranging from jazz standards to jazz fusion, spread over a span of three hours. The NCPA, along with Banks, will celebrate this iconic day live at the Tata Theatre in Mumbai.

**Tickets:** ₹1000, 800, 500 & 300/- (Plus GST)  
**Box Office:** 26th March for Members & 29th March for Public

## INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

**Jazz Goes Retro**  
Featuring **Rajeev Raja & Many More**  
Tata Theatre  
Saturday, 15th May – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

The timeless songs of Michael Jackson, Madonna, Elton John, Sting, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, The Doors, Eric Clapton and many more, performed by a jazz big band that includes piano, guitar, bass, drums and a full-blown horn section.

**Tickets:** ₹1000, 800, 500 & 300/- (Plus GST)  
**Box Office:** 9th April for Members & 12th April for Public.

# Events at a glance

March 2021

 THEATRE	 INTERNATIONAL MUSIC	 DANCE	 FILMS / SCREENINGS
 INDIAN MUSIC	 WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC	 MULTI ARTS & PRESENTATIONS	 PHOTOGRAPHY & EXHIBITION

Day	Date	Time	Event	Venue
Fri	5th	6.30 pm	Catalyst An evening celebrating choreographies born during lockdown: Bharatanatyam by Prachi Save Saathi (solo), Anand Satchidanandan and Jayalakshmi (duet) & Kathak by Pooja Pant Dance Company	
Sat	6th	7.00 pm	One Night Only – A Diva Special Featuring Keshia B	
Sun	7th	7.00 pm	FemaPalooza Stand-up Comedy in English & Hindi	
Tue	9th	7.00 pm	Reality Check Documentary Film Screening	
Fri	12th	6.30 pm	CITI-NCPA Promising Artistes Series: Ninad Daithankar (santoor) Om Bongane ( <i>khayal</i> )	
Sat	13th	5.00 pm	SOI Chamber Orchestra Marat Bisengaliev, conductor & violin <i>Entirely Elgar</i>	TATA THEATRE
Sun	14th	7.00 pm	<i>A Fistful of Rupees</i> English/Hindi Play	
Tue	16th	6.00 pm	<i>Agrippina</i> by George Frideric Handel Opera Screening Sung in Italian with English Subtitles	Godrej dance  theatre
Wed	17th	7.00 pm	Short Film Corner Short Film Screenings	
Thu	18th	6.00 pm	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i> Theatre Screening	Godrej dance  theatre
Fri	19th	6.30 pm	World Theatre Day Events (19th, 20th & 21st March) (26th, 27th & 28th March)  Remembering Parvati Kumar & Rajee Narayan An evening dedicated to two luminaries in the field of arts	
Sat	20th	7.00 pm	Time Machine An international music event	
Sun	21st	11.30 am, 4.30 pm & 7.30 pm	<i>Sherlock Homi</i> Gujarati / English Play	TATA THEATRE
Fri	26th			
Sat	27th			
Sun	28th		Spotlight on Stage	TATA THEATRE
Thu	25th	6.00 pm	<i>Uncle Vanya</i> Theatre Screening	Godrej dance  theatre
Wed	31st	7.00 pm	SOI Chamber Orchestra Marat Bisengaliev, conductor & violin	TATA THEATRE

WATCH ON book my show **ONLINE**

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# SEA WALL

BY **SIMON STEPHENS**

DIRECTED BY **BRUCE GUTHRIE**

STARRING **JIM SARBH**

AGE: 16+

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
[WWW.NCPAMUMBAI.COM](http://WWW.NCPAMUMBAI.COM)



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