

ON Stage[®]

JULY 2021

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Ingenuity and Imagination

How international performing arts venues are opening their doors

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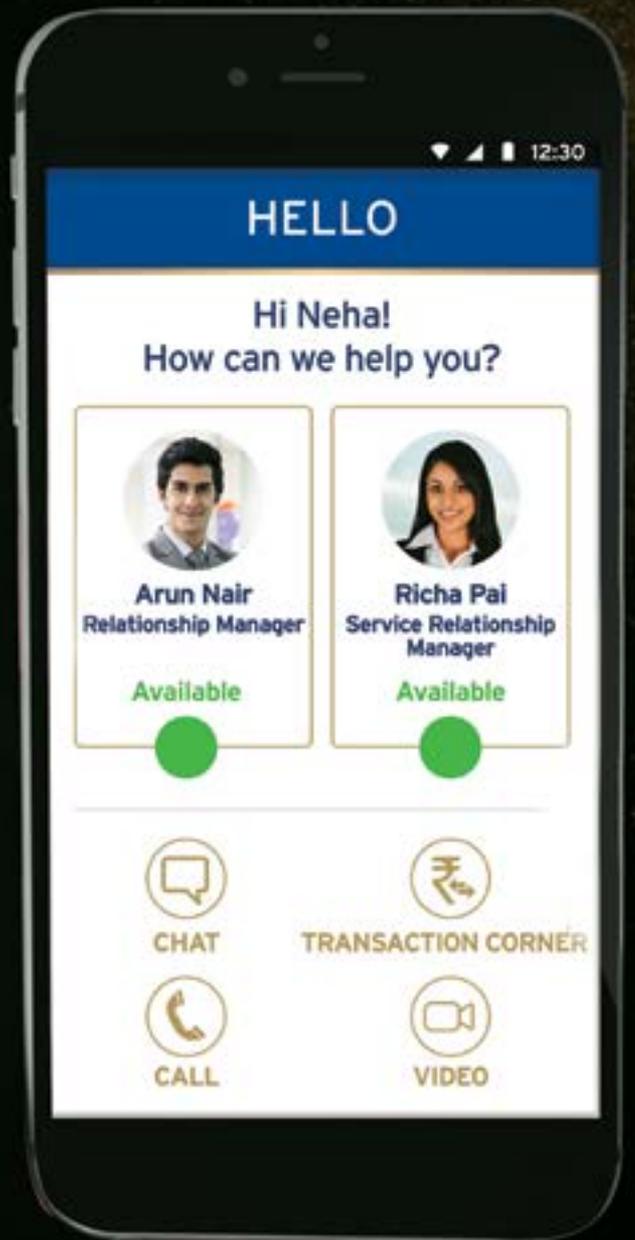
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Chairman's Note



Is there a glimmer of hope that we are gradually returning to normalcy and the prophets of doom, who predict all sorts of dire consequences including a third wave, a new strain of the virus and a permanent blow to our lifestyle, are all proved wrong? History seems to suggest that after every major catastrophe, people do return to their normal way of life. That is the nature of fellow human beings and they fight back furiously when outside influences attack their way of living.

I hope and pray this is so with the present situation also. The signs are good. Europe is leisurely returning to regular performances and the sight of the huge crowd at the recent French Open tennis tournament warmed the cockles of my heart. I am sure that with the innovative minds of art lovers, ways will be found to ensure that we are not deprived any longer of our dose of artistic performances.

The NCPA will make every attempt to return to its normally welcoming ways and I do hope that all of you will adhere to the norms and conditions that are set to attend major performances. I believe that this occasion will surely come our way sooner rather than later.

Say a little prayer for us.

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

Khushroo N. Suntook

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YOUR FIRST NOTE

Prelude is an introductory music education programme by the Symphony Orchestra of India.

BY THE SOI

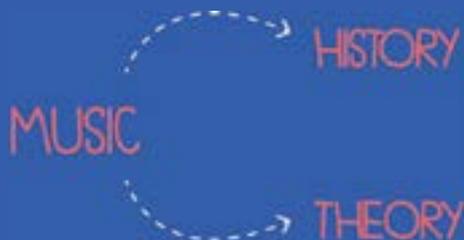
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ON Stage brings you excerpts from the *NCPA Quarterly Journal*, an unsurpassed literary archive that ran from 1972 to 1988, and featured authoritative and wide-ranging articles. In the first of a three-part series on categories of music, musician and ethnomusicologist *Ashok D. Ranade* dissects definitions and dispels common misunderstandings regarding primitive music.

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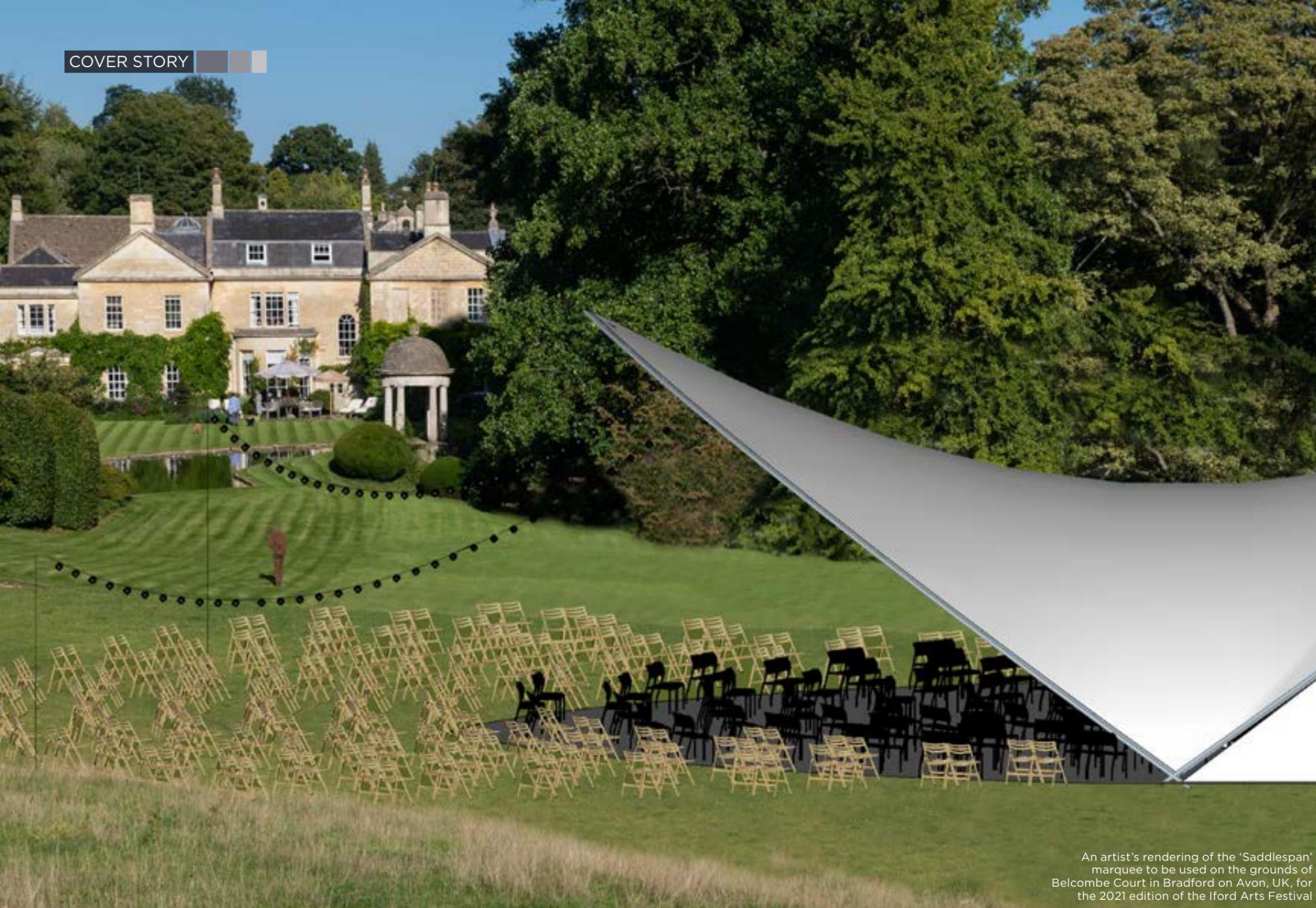
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An artist's rendering of the 'Saddlespan' marquee to be used on the grounds of Belcombe Court in Bradford on Avon, UK, for the 2021 edition of the Iford Arts Festival

State of the Arts

With inputs from Gian Ganzarolli, Consultant to the NCPA for opera, who gives us a sweeping overview of what has been happening across venues in Europe during the pandemic, we bring you the latest from centres of culture the world over that are thinking outside the box to make live performances safe for the audience.

It has been a year and a half since the performing arts sector around the world has been deeply suffering the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Theatres have been closed while *laboratori dello spettacolo* are struggling to get to the end of the month in the absence of subsistence from the government.

Finally, theatres across Europe are now reopening or planning to reopen, following specific government regulations. Some theatres, such as The Grange Festival in the U.K. with its resident Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO), are reinventing themselves when, due to logistical limitations, they cannot meet the governments' requirements. To meet the social distancing protocol, Michael Chance—the

Finally, theatres across Europe are now reopening or planning to reopen, following specific regulations imposed by their governments, while some are reinventing themselves

festival's artistic director—considered three options: repositioning the orchestra to a separate building; reducing the number of players to a basic socially distanced quorum; and lastly, using pioneering technology to play the full orchestral score digitally live with the singers on stage.

Eventually, Chance chose the last option. Therefore, the BSO will be live streaming, with the performance presented in multiple digital formats, even though the orchestra will not actually be present in the theatre.

Stages of change

The 13th-century Nevill Holt Hall in Leicestershire, home of the three-week long, annual Nevill Holt Opera (NHO) festival, had just completed an extensive round of renovations when the pandemic hit. The result was that the 2020 edition of the festival did not happen at all. This year, the organisers of the NHO have put in place an ambitious plan for the 2021 edition—to build an outdoor stage and seating that will enable an audience of up to 650 socially distanced people to enjoy a performance. The new stage will resemble a catwalk while audience members will have the option to spread out on picnic blankets on the lawn or choose premium seats under a covered grandstand.

Iford Arts, an independent opera company and not-for-profit charity, based in Bradford on Avon near Bath, has been known for its elegant opera productions usually presented in the intimate setting of the Iford Manor. In 2019, the festival moved to Belcombe Court, a Grade I listed historic house, also near Bath. The festival was cancelled in 2020 and for its 2021 edition, the organisers had to modify the setting to observe government guidelines and safety protocol. "We're using a 'Saddlespan' marquee in the grounds of Belcombe Court. It is open on three sides, so allows good airflow and more room for socially distanced seating. Our programme this year is a reduced one but with the marquee, we are able to have a larger than usual audience," says Julie Butterworth, Marketing Manager at Iford Arts. The company's Executive Director Michael Volpe has been recently awarded an OBE for services to opera.

In addition to the grounds being the venue for a much-anticipated double bill of *Cavalleria rusticana*



The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's livestream performances have reached a global audience

The only positive aspect that the pandemic has had in Italy is that the government has realised how fragile and unprotected the operators in the arts are

and *Pagliacci* this August, they will also make good use of the balmy summer evenings and host Picnic Prom with Classico Latino, an award-winning ensemble that blends the techniques and sounds of classical music with authentic Latin American rhythms and melodies.

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) has taken to the road this summer with a series of pop-up concerts marking its return to live public performances with events for Scotland's communities. Ensembles of RSNO players have been touring to destinations across Scotland, visiting primary schools, community centres, hospitals, care-homes and public spaces. Last month, a mixed ensemble of players performed in the sprawling gardens of Culzean Castle in Ayrshire, and a brass quintet visited the Newhailes House and Gardens in Musselburgh. Both performances were free to attend by members of the public visiting the properties, taking place at 12 noon and 2 pm in a socially distanced, outdoor setting, and lasting approximately 40 minutes.

Australia has been hugely successful in containing Covid-19 cases, leading to the reopening of several venues, some of them to full capacity. Handa Opera

on Sydney Harbour, a pop-up open-air opera house concept, is known for its spectacular views, and now, the potential for staging operas in a well-ventilated, socially distanced set-up. In March-April, Opera Australia presented its production of *La traviata* on a purpose-built temporary stage installed over water. Fireworks lit up the sky at every performance and a giant chandelier shimmered over the harbour stage. The biggest scenes featured 70 performers on stage and party boats in the harbour.

In Italy, Teatro alla Scala has been afflicted with untimely happenings. It had to cancel the inauguration of its 2020-21 season with *Lucia di Lammermoor* in December 2020, due to an outbreak of Covid-19 in the choir. Then, a few days before the presentation of *L'Italiana in Algeri* scheduled on 25th May, a cast member tested positive for the virus and the performance was thus suspended.

This version of *L'Italiana in Algeri* was intended for concertgoers under 30—who were to be seated only in boxes and on the tiers—as well as for streaming through the theatre channels and live broadcasting on Radio 3. Had this gone ahead, it would have marked the return of the public to the theatre for an opera for the first time since last autumn, when *La traviata* and *Aida* were staged in an in-person concert. At the time of this going to press, the first opera in which the orchestra was set to return to the pit was last month, with the presentation of *Le Nozze di Figaro* staged by Giorgio Strehler and directed by Daniel Harding. In September, the theatre will present the postponed *L'Italiana in Algeri* and in October, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with Music Director Riccardo Chailly.

Opera lovers can look forward to Season 2021-2022 at La Scala, which will open as usual on 7th December with *Macbeth* under the baton of Chailly, supported by a cast that will include Anna Netrebko, Luca Salsi, Ildar

Abdrzakov and Francesco Meli, in other words, the best in the business. In January, Evelino Pidò will conduct *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* with Marianne Crebassa, Lisette Oropesa and René Barbera with Michele Pertusi. In February, Lorenzo Viotti will conduct *Thaïs* before Valery Gergiev comes for *Pique Dame*.

As of today, apart from guidelines on regular sanitisation, temperature checks, staggered entry and social distancing for the audience, Italian theatres must adhere to the following rules:

- Musicians playing wind instruments must maintain an interpersonal distance of at least one and a half metres; for the conductor, the minimum distance from the first row of the orchestra must be two metres.
- For brass instruments, each station must be equipped with a condensate collection tray containing disinfectant liquid.
- The members of the choir must maintain a lateral interpersonal distance of at least one metre and at least two metres between any rows of the choir and from other musicians present on the stage.
- The use of changing rooms should be avoided and the arrival of orchestral players in the theatre in concert dress should be favoured.

Governing to protect

The only positive aspect that this pandemic has had in Italy is that the government has realised how fragile and unprotected the operators in the arts are and it is now updating laws to help them. This was not a natural process. In fact, when the Italian Minister of Culture announced the reopening of the world of entertainment, it led to the occupation of the Piccolo Teatro in Milan together with the Teatro Verdi in Padua and Teatro Mercadante in Naples, with protests held in Venice, Rome, Turin, Rimini, and throughout the rest of Italy.

Finally, in May 2021, the Italian government announced a new welfare system which will guarantee a package of support measures to ensure adequate social security for entertainment workers such as: adjustment and extension of protection and support for parenting, adjustment and extension of sickness



Protesters at the Opéra de Paris asked the government to reopen cultural venues

Reopening the NCPA

Chairman Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook reflects on these international developments and drawing inspiration from them in the Indian context

A decision which can go horribly wrong either way is to decide when to start in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. We can either go with the crowd in Europe and start slowly bringing in people commensurate with the infectious position in the community. For example, the recent French Open tennis finals was almost filled to capacity. There is no doubt that opinions are clear that there is nothing to replace live performances but I believe, in India, until sufficient confidence is built up, it may be too dangerous to go too fast.

The speed of the progress is what concerns us. Also, work which is currently underway to take care of modern requirements in our theatres, may not be required in future when things return to normalcy. These are some of the problems we face and which have to be tackled. Obviously, the cost of tickets will go up since very few can be sold in comparison with the olden ways and loved ones cannot sit next to each other except at designated distances. I believe that one day we will ask ourselves what the best decision was.

Members would be pleased to know that during the lockdown our genres and the Management team were busy thinking of new ways to expand and to examine new areas of opportunity. We are surely doing this on a large scale and will come to you for advice at the right time but be sure that the present Tatas proposition will not be disturbed.

We apologise to our members for the comparative inactivity but I assure you that each one of us is looking to the day when we can come back. In the meanwhile, we are examining ways and means of staging our performances, drawing inspiration not only from our own genres but taking advantage of the wonderful innovations being used in Europe and elsewhere. In spite of the inclement weather in Europe, there are still plenty of open-air spaces being used and we need to wonder how they can afford it.

I am sure members are aware of our ambitious plan to expand our premises subject to receiving the numerous permissions from various authorities. This is an exciting new development and can change the face of Mumbai on the cultural front. The renovation of the restaurant, the erstwhile Amadeus, also needs attention and there are some ideas on how to make it into an aspirational space with exclusive memberships and fine listening areas, both for debates, conversations and esoteric listening of unusual music.

Incidentally, I am happy to inform you, though sad for me, that my dear friend Vivian Liff who passed away recently has left us a huge legacy of more than 12,000 CDs and some few hundred volumes of very valuable books, which will make our collection one of the most extensive in the world as far as opera is concerned. We now have to take advantage of this position.



Members of the public enjoy a pop-up performance by The Royal Scottish National Orchestra brass quintet in the gardens of Newhailes House in June 2021

allowance, increase in the daily wage recognised for welfare purposes, insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases, an unemployment insurance for self-employed entertainment workers with an allowance which will be paid monthly, and an improvement of the pension contribution system.

Something similar also happened in France where the Odéon, one of France's six national theatres, became the scene of a new protest. In addition to the Odéon, there were many other structures being occupied by the dramatic arts students of the L'Ecole du Nord, Strasbourg and Besançon. Some of the protesters slept inside the facilities, with daily assemblies to discuss the protest, which eventually went beyond just the world of culture, becoming a criticism of the

French management of the pandemic.

The situation unfolded differently in Spain where the responsibility for managing the virus was decentralised to the regions. The Comunidad de Madrid was the only one of the 17 autonomous communities of Spain that chose to keep everything open. In January, the third COVID-19 wave imposed the early closure of the area at 9 pm, but since February, the curfew has been imposed at 11 pm. In the name of freedom, all commercial activities were open, and so were cultural places such as theatres, cinemas and museums. The reasons for such a different approach are mostly political, and, of course, economical. The freedom to have an aperitif in company is not only a source of tourist promotion, but above all, a propaganda tool in

Los Hacheros perform at the summer 2021 season of Carnegie Hall Citywide, the Hall's free concert series that brings live music to all five boroughs of New York City



The presentation of *La traviata* on Sydney Harbour featured a pop-up venue with fireworks and comfortable grandstand seating

view of the new government elections.

Across the Atlantic, the Metropolitan Opera in New York is preparing to open its 2021-22 season on 27th September but not without its share of protests. With unions representing its various employees, including stagehands, opposing pay cuts, negotiations with these bodies are proving to be as big a hurdle as ensuring audience safety in its 3,800-seater theatre. With Broadway theatres reopening to full capacity in September, opera-loving audiences are eagerly waiting for the Met to follow suit. The largest Broadway space, however, has half as many seats as the Met.

Nevertheless, a full slate of performances has been announced for 2021-22, including three contemporary Met premieres—the most since 1928—starting with the Opening Night presentation of Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Considerable thought to inclusion and diversity in programming has been given during the lockdown. Blanchard's opera is the first by an African American composer to be performed at the Met.

The Met's General Manager Peter Gelb explains several other plans meant to be responsive to a cautious audience, including a large number of earlier 7 pm curtain times, as well as reduced running

times. "We will be presenting *Boris Godunov* in its original two-and-a-quarter-hour version without intermission, making cuts in the Baroque opera *Rodelinda*, and removing the intermission between Acts II and III in *Madama Butterfly*. We'll also be presenting a 90-minute English-language version of *Cinderella*, an adaptation of Massenet's *Cendrillon*, as a holiday entertainment for families," he says.

Last month, the Carnegie Hall announced programming for its 2021-2022 season, sharing plans to reopen its landmark concert venue to the general public in October 2021. The season highlights include the *Perspectives* series curated by Oscar Award-winning composer and musician Jon Batiste, and internationally renowned violinist Leonidas Kavakos; the appointment of MacArthur Fellow and Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Julia Wolfe to hold the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair; and the venue's next citywide festival, *Afrofuturism*, which explores a thriving aesthetic movement that looks to the future through a Black cultural lens, intersecting music, visual art, literature, politics, science fiction and technology.

The Carnegie Hall also presented its first live performances since the lockdown in March 2020 by kicking off the summer 2021 season of Carnegie Hall Citywide, the hall's free concert series that brings live music to all five boroughs of New York City, on 12th June. The schedule includes more than 20 performances in 11 partner venues, including the Madison Square Park and Historic Richmond Town, from June through September, showcasing renowned local artistes performing a variety of musical genres—classical, jazz, folk, Latin music, and more—helping to reignite the arts and culture sector in neighbourhoods across the city.

"While we continue to work towards Carnegie Hall's reopening this October, we're thrilled to be presenting extraordinary live music performances across New York City this summer," says Clive Gillinson, Executive and Artistic Director. "As part of our ongoing commitment to our great city, we feel it's incredibly important to do all we can to bring live music back and we are enormously appreciative of our outstanding community partners for collaborating with us to make that possible." All performances have been organised outdoors with safety protocols in place for artistes, audiences and staff.

At an AAPPAC session called Digital Unpacked, attended by NCPA Chairman Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook and the senior management, there was a consensus that making performances available digitally does not compromise the live experience

Digital augmentation

At a session called Digital Unpacked organised by the AAPPAC (Association of Asia Pacific Performing Arts Centres) in May 2021, which was attended by NCPA Chairman Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook and the senior management, the heads of member/participating organisations concurred that making performances available digitally does not compromise the live experience but only augments the offering.

Katherine Connor, Executive Director, Performing Arts Connections Australia, and one of the panellists, observed, "The digital [medium] provides a low-risk entry point to live performances for people who may have not been inclined to going to theatres and these viewers are converting to in-person attendees. Those engaged in live streaming or creating work for the digital platform are removing the real and perceptual barriers to access live performance. They are developing new audiences and expanding the tastes of existing audiences."

She gave an example of a unique initiative called the Melbourne Digital Concert Hall (MDCH), created by and for musicians within two weeks of the lockdown in March 2020, to connect Australian artistes and communities everywhere through music and technology. The platform works on touring not a show, but infrastructure, which means a venue or a group of artistes can work with MDCH to bring in all the gear and crew to live stream their performances. The concept is straightforward. A concertgoer purchases a ticket to enjoy a high-quality live-streamed performance; MDCH passes on the full ticket price to the artistes, with a modest booking fee keeping the cameras rolling. The platform has a provision to also invite a small studio audience, and has presented over 230 performances so far.

The National Theatre and Concert Hall in Taipei, Taiwan, has been working on its Future Theatre Project to reimagine the theatre experience with digital transformation. Programming Director Lin Ting-Chun elaborated on the project that includes a private 5G network within the organisation to facilitate visual



A socially distanced concert at La Scala in Milan

transmission of performances through the installation of 5G-enabled 4k cameras in two of their theatres. AR (augmented reality) glasses for the audience to access multi-language subtitles among other services are being put in place. Ting-Chun also pointed out the need to explore the idea of tailoring digital content for the online audience by treating it as a separate entity.

Benefactors' role

Last month, I was in a webinar organised by the Opera Europa which was supposed to be live in Bergamo, Italy, but for obvious reasons, was only digital. Many theatres worldwide were present at this meeting and some of them shared their experiences and their actions in order to keep the music alive and to engage with their public.

Most of them did what the National Theatre in London did, i.e. rely on a back catalogue of high-quality recordings to make available to as wide an audience in the fastest way that they could. The National Theatre at Home streaming service, which started in April 2020, made many productions, including *One Man, Two Guvnors* and *Jane Eyre*, among others, available on YouTube for free for audiences around the world to watch from their homes. The online streaming was supposed to last for about four weeks, but it turned out to be much longer than expected during subsequent lockdowns. Finally, a total of 16 productions were made available to the public and the whole programme ran for 16 weeks. Through this initiative, the National Theatre was able to keep engaging with its audiences, and they

reached a total global audience of 15 million people that watched those recordings.

What was common to all theatres that shared their stories was that everyone asked for more help from their benefactors and many received a large amount of help from them. They were all engaging their benefactors through these webinars, and because the approach was much less formal, everybody was more at ease to speak frankly with each other.

We all know that the arts need benefactors. We need to find them and not be shy to ask them for help. Governments can find ways to incentivise these donations to encourage benefactors to do their bit to save the arts. After all, a nation is defined by its performing arts and to protect the fragile system, it needs practical solutions. ■

A Pianissimo Journey

One of the finest pianists of India, the story of Rumi Nanavati's life in music deserves an audience of its own. **By Snigdha Hasan**

In a world where renown is quantifiable in terms of Google results and number of followers, an internet search for Rumi Nanavati yields but two helpful links and a dormant Facebook account. Yet, the two results seem to bookend the story of the six-decade-long career of a pianist with an extraordinary gift. One leads to an annotated Russian documentary, *Musical Spring*, which features the music of the II International Tchaikovsky Competition, held in Moscow in the spring of



1962. 'Isn't it marvellous that Russian music can be heard in an Indian guest's performance!' says the effervescent narrator as a young, dapper Nanavati plays Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* with dexterity. The other takes you to an article in the *Parsiana*, written after he performed for an intimate audience in a private recital at the NCPA in November 2016—this time, Toccata and Fugue in D minor by Johann Bach and two scherzos by Frédéric Chopin were part of the repertoire in addition to all 10 pieces of the Mussorgsky suite.

Born and raised in Bombay, Nanavati was a musical prodigy whose talent at the piano was spotted and encouraged by his aunt, who taught music in a school, and Harry Lyttler, a well-known British piano teacher of the 1950s who was based in the city. Despite his father's serious reservations about a career in music, the young pianist set out to study the instrument in conservatories in London, Moscow and Paris, winning gold medals and vindicating the trust his teachers back home had reposed in him. Nanavati continued to prove his prowess as a professional pianist in the many musical meccas of Europe, where he performed before Queen Elizabeth II and Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, and played with the Moscow and Warsaw philharmonic orchestras.

Life, however, had other plans. On a steady path to the peak of his career, Nanavati received the news of his mother's poor health and returned to India. And he came back at a time when Western classical music in much of the country was only heard in isolated pockets. Though Bombay had its share of patrons and venues that promoted performances in the tradition, it could not be compared to the thriving scene he had left behind in Europe for good. "I never went back again. It was an impulsive decision, one that remains my biggest regret," says Nanavati in a telephonic conversation, the lament in his voice reminiscent of what noted composer Vanraj Bhatia faced when the opportunities he got here proved to be no match for his training in Western music.

"Life has this dark side too and I am sorry that I bring no cheer this morning," the thorough gentleman, now 84, continues. What he does look back on with much fondness and joy is the time he taught music in the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre premises at the NCPA. "Those were happy days," he says. Deteriorating health left Nanavati indisposed and he had to move to a senior citizens' centre in Navsari and later to a flat in an apartment complex built by the Poona Parsee Panchayat in Pune. The move came at a cost. The veteran pianist had no access to

his beloved instrument.

That he was in need of support first came to the NCPA's notice on the initiative of noted lawyer Cyrus Nallaseth, whose son Soli is a young, promising pianist. When Nanavati expressed his desire to start playing again, the NCPA organised a private recital at the Experimental Theatre. "It was an impromptu recital and Rumi played rather difficult pieces. The lack of dexterity that stemmed from

not having played the piano for a considerably long time was made up for by his musicianship and one could tell that he was a pianist of quality," says Chairman Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook.

"The NCPA has been more than good to me. I was in a bad state when they sent me an ambulance and took care of my health. Mr. Suntook offered me a home in Colaba where I now live with an attendant. The NCPA is the only family I have," says Nanavati, who chose not to have a family of his own.

"One of the hallmarks of a civilised society is that it treasures its artistes. We need to celebrate our musicians and take care of them. Lives lived in complete dedication to an art form cannot be left to fade away in neglect. I hope people will come forward to support artistes whose performances they admire through their concert-going years. There are so many of them," avers Mr. Suntook.

Having lost his vision recently, Nanavati cannot read or play music anymore. "Days roll by and the one thing I miss the most is music," he rues. There is a pregnant pause and then he resumes the conversation before politely excusing himself. "There was a time when my fingers used to produce beautiful music. I want to sit at the piano once again and see the NCPA one last time." ■

मेघदूत

Monsoon with Meghdoot

Interpreting selected verses from the immortal work of poet Kalidasa, Meghdoot- The cloud messenger

Workshop conducted by
Rishiraj Pathak (Literature)

Guest Speakers
Piyal Bhattacharya (Dance) | **Subodh Poddar** (Visual Art)
Sandhya Raman (Costume Design)

July-August 2021 - 8 Classes
(July- 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th | August- 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th)

Time - 6:30pm

Duration - 1 hr + ½ hr for guest speaker

Rs. 2,000/- | Age - 18+

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The Sound of Music

The allure of music is so strong that it won't be very long before we gather to enjoy a recital again. Until then, we learn about the importance of sourcing and caring for fine musical instruments, as we unearth fascinating stories behind the harps, violins, violas, cellos and double basses in the prized NCPA collection.

Beverly Pereira

What is music if not the purest expression of emotions? On the face of it, music is the result of a combination of instrumental sounds, vocals, or both. Fundamentally, it is the union of a musician and their instrument—a unification so coherent that, to the listener, there appears to be no tactile rift between the musician's physical body and that of their instrument. We have seen this connection between performer and instrument in artistic depictions of classical music greats, from Liszt to Paganini. And, we continue to see it in the manner in which musicians treat their instrument with tender loving care after going to great lengths to choose it.

Finding a high-quality instrument that suits and responds to their specific needs remains one of the biggest struggles of professional orchestra players

Jamshed Bhabha and Chairman Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook, and their wide connections in the world of the performing arts. It includes the Rudolph von Beckerath pipe organ, Mumbai's only moveable pipe organ, which was gifted to the NCPA by members of the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce in 1988. The gargantuan instrument was fully restored in July 2013. The Sassman harpsichord, Type No. 1681 of 1970, is another rare instrument, which was donated to the NCPA by the Max Mueller Bhavan. Several concert grand and other pianos are part of the collection too and the story of the acquisition and upkeep of these massive instruments calls for another article.

The NCPA routinely purchases instruments for the Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI) and the SOI Music Academy, while trying to strike a balance between

“Khushroo N. Suntook has always been fascinated by really big double basses like those played by the Vienna Philharmonic, so we asked the Belgian luthier Serge Malouch to specially make one for the SOI around three years ago”

and young musicians alike. Financial constraints are not the only reason behind this struggle; high-quality instruments are hard to come by because of their scarce availability not just in India but in other parts of the world too. At the NCPA, the collection is a prized one with instruments acquired over the decades through the vast knowledge of NCPA's Founder Dr.

good sound and a sound budget. “At the moment, we can't really invest in expensive Italian instruments from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Luckily, there are good-sounding, relatively inexpensive instruments that can be sourced from living luthiers,” says violin virtuoso Marat Bisengaliev, who co-founded the SOI with Mr. Suntook.



The German Mittenwald-make cello



The double bass on the left, played by Joshua Rodrigues, is a Chinese instrument finished by Igor Czlipik by fine-tuning the thickness of the wood and giving it a new base and varnish; on the right, Bakir Utepbergenov plays the Grimaux double bass; Margarita Gapparova plays the Grimaux cello and Salauat Karibayev plays the German Mittenwald-make cello



Prayash Biswakarma plays a violin crafted by Belgian luthier Serge Malouch at the reopening concert in February 2021

Crafted to perfection

One such modern luthier who has crafted many an instrument, including violins, cellos and a double bass, for the NCPA is François Grimaux who lives in the south of France. “Grimaux’s double bass is perhaps the best sounding of the lot because it was made in the pure French style with a flat back. It’s the equivalent of a fine violin and is now often played by a student at the academy. It’s important for students to have access to good instruments in order to be competitive because

they represent the SOI Music Academy and the NCPA at large and participate in international competitions too,” says Bisengaliev. The virtuoso, whose personal collection includes a Giacinto Santagiuliana 1812-make violin, is always happy to lend some of his fine Italian violins to students and SOI players. He had readily given his viola to student Aliza Jetha when she had participated in an international competition, while another talented student plays his 19th-century German Mittenwald-make cello.

Yet another luthier crafted a very special double bass for the SOI, and its addition to the collection has contributed to the high standard of the orchestra. “Khushroo has always been fascinated by really big double basses like those played by the Vienna Philharmonic. To actually find and then purchase a similar one is next to impossible anywhere in the world. We asked the Belgian luthier Serge Malouch to specially make one for the SOI around three years ago. We now have a better dimension of sound because of finely crafted instruments like these,” says Bisengaliev.

But the NCPA didn’t always have string instruments crafted by modern luthiers. The first set of violins, double basses and cellos came in from China. “When we started creating the SOI in 2006, we didn’t have a good budget for high-quality instruments and thus had to go in for low-priced but reasonably good sounding instruments to be able to start. Some are still in use, while others like the cellos and double bass were completely renovated by Malouch and Grimaux. By this, I mean that most of the parts were completely stripped off and the thickness of the wood was changed to tune it to the highest quality. Now, these instruments look and sound just as good as handcrafted instruments.”



SOI harpist Daniela Iolkicheva

Harping on style

The collection also includes two harps, both of which respond to the high level of the orchestra. When SOI harpist Daniela Iolkicheva played the NCPA’s Lyon & Healy Style 100 harp at her first performance with the orchestra in 2017, she realised that it was in dire need of maintenance by the manufacturer. “A harp has a delicate and complicated mechanism in the arch. If this is not in perfect condition, it’s not possible to change to a natural, sharp or flat,” says Iolkicheva, who conveyed the urgent need for its repair to the Western Classical Music department.

Upon her suggestion, the old harp was sent to Chicago for repairs and returned in pristine condition. The department also seconded her suggestion to purchase a big concert harp that had the potential to add to the SOI’s already high artistic level. “I suggested a Lyon & Healy Style 23 and put the NCPA in touch with the factory in Chicago. Thanks to my colleague María Luisa Rayan who helped with its selection, the SOI soon had a wonderful instrument that remains a pleasure to play. And, thanks to the NCPA, the SOI now has not one but two excellent harps—a concert harp and a big concert model.”

Minding the store

At the NCPA, climate-controlled rooms fitted with dehumidifiers and regular air conditioning is where many of these instruments are stored. "When purchasing an instrument, it's important that it not only sounds good and is a good investment, but that it's also robust enough with a good defence layer to brave the humidity. Our instruments need to be checked every now and again by the team of luthiers

SOI violinist Mikhail Bulgakov keeps check on the orchestra's collection of instruments and flags repairs that need to be carried out. Through the lockdown, Maneck Billimoria, Executive, Western Classical Music, also regularly visited the NCPA campus to play on the pianos and ensure they are in good condition. Under the guidance of the department and Nayan Kale, General Manager of the Technical division at the NCPA, Sakharam Gawde, Manager-Backstage, and his

Bisengaliev believes that the next step forward would be to find benefactors who can invest in high-quality, valuable instruments which can then be lent to the SOI and the academy

from Europe who visit us every season, and usually there's always something that needs to be worked on," says Bisengaliev, adding that the exposed wood inside instruments poses a problem during the monsoons. The harp, too, says Iolkicheva, is delicate and the wood can very easily change shape or even crack if stored improperly.

A musical instrument, however, is best maintained when played regularly—something that the pandemic has hindered, particularly when it comes to mammoth instruments that cannot be moved around easily.

team have kept check on these instruments and their storage throughout the lockdown.

Bisengaliev believes that the next step forward would be to find benefactors who can invest in high-quality, valuable instruments which can then be lent to the SOI and the academy. "I hope we can create some sort of a trust, a foundation in the near future. This is really popular in Japan, Korea and China and it works incredibly well for both parties—the investors and young musicians. It will help students develop quicker and it is also one of the best investments for a music connoisseur."

SOI Music Director Marat Bisengaliev plays a Francois Grimaux-make violin



Personalised voice



The deep connection between musicians and their instruments transcends performing art traditions. At the innumerable concerts of Indian music held at the NCPA, musicians—soloists as well as accompanists—have almost always brought their own instruments even if that entails travelling long distances with them. "Musicians share an intimate bond with their instruments. It wouldn't be wrong to call an instrument a musician's personalised voice," observes Dr. Suvarnalata Rao, Programming Head-Indian Music, at the NCPA. The organisation does have its own collection that includes the tanpura, tabla, sarangi and dilruba, and on the rare occasion that musicians choose to play them, they never disappoint. "In fact, Ajoy Chakrabarty, a veteran vocalist of Patiala *gharana*, always chooses to have a pair of tanpuras from our collection," says Dr. Rao. The tanpuras, which, with their exquisite carvings, look as beautiful as they sound, have been sourced from famed craftsmen of Miraj, a city in southern Maharashtra known for some of the finest string instruments made in India.

Instrument craftsmanship has been a key area of research at the NCPA. In the mid-1970s, scientific research into the determination of the optimal shapes, sizes and modes of construction and ingredients of Indian musical instruments was undertaken. The research programme necessitated analysis of samples of raw materials used in the manufacture of Indian musical instruments with a view to optimise and standardise the manufacturing process, and with the object of eventually providing technical advisory services to the manufacturers of the instruments. The programme entailed the development of specialised equipment and techniques for electronic testing and measuring of instruments. The first instrument

selected for scientific analysis was the tanpura. A musical instrument maker from Australia worked at the NCPA for over a year on the construction of the tanpura and the veena without the traditional dependence with unpredictable results on natural products such as the gourd. A wooden mould was used to fabricate resonators with a thin, lightweight film of wood, and instruments were actually manufactured at the NCPA.

In view of these challenges related to the materials used and methods employed by traditional instrument makers leading to a non-standardised product, a project was later conceived in order to assess in an objective way the problems associated with this craft and to evolve a comprehensive strategy to support this traditional art through more predictable scientific methods. Research trips were made to Miraj, Thanjavur and Calcutta—the three main centres of instrument craftsmanship in India—to gain insights from the ground up. Funding for this project was provided by the Homi Bhabha Fellowships Council (1996-98).

Four major string instruments of North India, viz. sitar, tanpura, sarod and sarangi were selected to research and document the prevailing methods of instrument-making and identify the problems associated with the methods; redefine the subjective criteria applied by the makers while selecting raw materials and develop simple techniques for objective evaluation of the same; ensure pest-free condition of the raw materials; and identify alternate raw materials for the most important component of sitar and tanpura, the bridge. The study brought to focus a number of areas, which need to be studied further in collaboration with the instrument makers.

Monsoon Melodies

The monsoon occupies pride of place in the world of Hindi film music. **Vidhi Salla** compiles a veritable playlist—from songs of longing to ballads of romance—that celebrates the rains in myriad ways.

The spectacular theatrics of nature—rumbling dark clouds heavy with rain, ensuing thunder and lightning, a cool breeze that alarms yet soothes—have been exemplified in Hindi cinema quite splendidly through song and visuals.

Under the broad umbrella of Indian culture, historically, poetry and music have played a vital role in romanticising the monsoon to the point of personification. Kalidasa, the revered 4th-century poet, told the story of a *Yaksha* (demi-god) pleading with the majestic rain cloud to carry the message of love to his estranged beloved in *Meghaduta*. His epic poem has many elements that continue to inspire poetry and lyrics to this day. Hindustani classical music too celebrates the monsoon via ragas Megh Malhar and Miyan ki Malhar, while legends speak of musicians making it rain through their soulful renditions.

It was inevitable then that the influences of monsoon poetry and music would fuse together to spawn the popular and hummable format of Hindi film songs. Every imaginable theme to do with rains has been explored with a corresponding song in Hindi cinema: separated lovers, lovers reunited, solitary souls cherishing the onset of monsoon, farmers celebrating the shower of blessings on their fields. A majority of these melodies have been composed and immortalised on celluloid during the glorious musical years between the 1950s and 1990s and naturally emerge in the mind when monsoons make headway.

Putting the 'r' in romance

The seductive charm of the rains finds a place of prominence in the romance-obsessed world of Hindi cinema. Countless rain songs have acted as enticing narratives that either ignite new love between strangers or bring two lovers closer while they are stranded together in inclement weather. Oft repeated as the cliché might be, over the years it has offered composers, lyricists, music lovers and *pluviophiles* (those who love the smell and sound of the rain) several opportunities to revel in the magic of monsoon.

One of the foremost visuals that comes to mind when you think of rain-soaked melodies is 'Pyar Hua Iqar Hua Hai' from *Shree 420* (1955). Amid roaring thunder when a reluctant Nargis offered shelter in her umbrella to an eager Raj Kapoor, the two made 'umbrella-sharing' a requisite romantic gesture for all lovers.

Amid roaring thunder when a reluctant Nargis offered shelter in her umbrella to an eager Raj Kapoor, the two made 'umbrella-sharing' a requisite romantic gesture for all lovers



In the 1958 film, *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi*, Majrooh Sultanpuri's comic lyrics describe the drenched beauty of Madhubala—'Tan bheega hai, sar geela hai, uska koi pench bhi dheela hai.' In contrast, another Madhubala classic, the titular song of *Barsaat ki Raat* (1960), delicately details a rainy encounter with a stranger, written by the master of Urdu lyrics, Sahir Ludhianvi: 'Haaye woh reshmi zulfon se barasta paani, phool se gaalon pe rukne ko tarasta paani.' Not only does it revive memories from the film of two strangers getting acquainted in a thunderstorm, but also stokes the imagination for such wishful encounters in the listener's life.

Rainy cab rides in Mumbai are hardly pleasant, but 'Tum Jo Mil Gaye Ho', from *Hanste Zakhm* (1973) turns an otherwise mundane activity into a whimsical adventure. Mohammed Rafi's voice infuses intensity into the Madan Mohan composition, while Lata Mangeshkar adds soft submission to the words of Kaifi Azmi. That, combined with the rolls of thunder in the song, makes you feel the splashes of water on your face while in a moving cab, just like the heroine experiences. Another song that arouses romance effortlessly is 'Roop Tera Mastana' from *Aradhana* (1969). S.D. Burman's sensuous score, combined with Anand Bakshi's suggestive lyrics, underlines the fiery chemistry between Rajesh Khanna and Sharmila Tagore while they are caught in a rainstorm. 'Rim Jhim Gire Saawan' from *Manzil* (1979) is as much an ode to monsoons as it is to Bombay. When Moushumi Chatterjee and Amitabh Bachchan walked hand-in-hand around Oval Maidan, Marine Drive, Victoria Terminus Station (as it was then called) and many familiar landmarks around the city in pouring rain, they looked like any other pair of lovers enjoying a rainy date around the city. R.D. Burman's up-tempo tune, 'Chhoti Si Kahani Se' from *Ijaazat* (1987), gets the poetic treatment of Gulzar's unmatched lyrics. The result is a vivid picture of rains filling up the vales and mountains along with the emotions of nostalgia that monsoons invariably wash ashore: 'Dil mein giley bhi the, pehle mile bhi the...'

Yearning and receiving

A lonely heart seeking love or wishing for the presence of a loved one is another favourite cinematic device in our movies. What better way to articulate that feeling than the anticipation of rains? In the film *Sujata* (1959), when Nutan encounters 'kali ghata' (rain clouds), it moves her to sing to the clouds and express her heart's desires. Looking just as beatific is Sadhana in *Parakh* (1960), when she sings the raga Khamaj-based 'O Sajna, Barkha Bahar Aayi', longing for her beloved and summoning him with the promise of monsoon romance. 'Ghar Aaja Ghir Aaye', from *Chhote Nawab* (1961), a song in the obscure raga Malgunji, is along similar lines—calling out to your beloved as dark clouds gather and

cause worry. Vasant Desai, the master of semi-classical tunes in films, composed the mellifluous 'Jhir Jhir Barse Sawani Ankhian' in *Aashirwad* (1968). This gem based on raga Gaud Malhar glides as easily as raindrops on a window pane and is matched by the visual of actress Sumita Sanyal softly humming along to the tune pouring out of her record player.

'Saawan Ke Jhoole Pade' (*Jurmana*, 1979) is a bashful confession of eagerly looking out for your beloved's company, especially when the rains are approaching. This *jhoola* (swing) takes on a literal form in the revelry of 'Megha Re Megha' (*Lamhe*, 1991) where Sridevi swings merrily along with her *sakhis* (female friends) celebrating the first downpour by dancing in the rain. The protagonist Shanichari in the film *Rudaali* (1993) exudes infectious joy when she encounters rain for the first time in years; her dreary existence mirrors the parched land of Rajasthan that smells extra fragrant upon receiving a much-needed thunderstorm. 'Jhuthi Muthi Mitwa', a composition in raga Vrindavani Sarang, beautifully resembles the falling rain by using a combination of dhol, tabla, sitar and flute that crescendos to a heightened climax, soaking the listener with music and the protagonist with rain.

Monsoon ragas find a special place in Hindi films and the songs that come to mind instantly are 'Bole Re Papihara' (*Guddi*, 1971) and 'Kahan Se Aaye Badra' (*Chashme Buddoor*, 1981). The former, based on raga Miyan Ki Malhar, is sung effortlessly by Vani Jairam and is such a universally admired classic that the mere mention of the rain-crazy bird *papihara* (cuckoo) reminds one of this melodious number. The song 'Kahan Se Aaye Badra' is not picturised in the rain and only features as a *bandish* being practised between a guru

and a *shishya* of Indian classical music. Yet it manages to conjure up lofty grey clouds because of its lyrics and it being based on raga Megh Malhar. Similarly, the Megh Malhar-based, 'Dukh Bhare Din Beete Re Bhaiya' from *Mother India* (1957) has no mention of rains except for the lines 'Prem ki gaagar laaye re badar' though the underlying sentiment of the song is that of a farmer finally experiencing joy as nature starts to provide fruition to his labour of love. Years later, this sentiment took full form in *Lagaan* (2001) when a village full of farmers sang 'Ghanan Ghanan Ghir Ghir Aaye Badra' to the monsoon clouds hoping that they may finally send a sprinkling to their arid lands.

The season of monsoon has come to symbolise a blend of nostalgia, joie de vivre and unabashed love. All of these qualities have been effectively harnessed into Hindi film music to create melodies that move, inebriate and even make you dance. Now, if only it would rain! ■

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Kaleidoscope

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



A force of nature

To her unquestionable talent, her love of privacy and a decades-long career spent nurturing musicians, add the fact that Argentine-Swiss concert pianist Martha Argerich not only has an eidetic memory but is also uber dynamic on stage, and you will perhaps understand why she is so well-loved around the world. Having just turned 80 last month, Argerich, much to our collective relief, shows no signs of slowing down and has concerts planned through this year and the next. To learn more about her life and legacy, read the cover story from the June 2021 issue of the *Gramophone* which celebrates her love of chamber music, her humility and her constant effort to help others shine brighter. On a lighter note, visit slippedisc.com/2021/05/how-does-martha-argerich-do-it-at-almost-80/ to watch an Argerich superfan enthralled by her high-voltage performances and just try not to relate.

Finnish lines

Every year, an array of Finnish and international dance artistes descends upon Pyhäjärvi, a small town in Finland, to celebrate contemporary dance



by presenting potent performances across urban and open-air spaces. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Full Moon Dance Festival and to celebrate this milestone, the organisers are looking to 'lengthen the lifespan of dance pieces' because too many spectacular ones are forgotten too quickly. The programme—that will showcase Finnish artistes and acts including Dance Theatre Minimi, Kinetic Orchestra and Reijo Kela, among others—promises dance art that will delight, trouble, arouse and provoke. For more information, visit <https://www.fullmoondance.fi/en>

Leading the Louvre

Since it was first founded in 1793, the Musée du Louvre has always had a man at its helm. This will change for the first



time in the 228-year history of the iconic museum, as Laurence des Cars takes over this September as the first woman to ever head the Louvre. Appointed by French president Emmanuel Macron, des Cars, who currently heads the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée de l'Orangerie, has exciting plans to make the museum more accessible. In an interview with *The New York Times*, she has talked about extending museum hours into the evening so 'young active people can come for one hour after work, have dinner at the Louvre, have the pleasure of getting lost in the Louvre.' Visit www.christies.com/features/7-women-museum-directors-11527-1.aspx to read

more about women museum directors from around the world. Though published in March this year, before des Cars's prestigious appointment, the piece gives an exciting overview of a group of visionary women who have made the art world inclusive and contemporary in more ways than one.

Soothing serenades

The Tokyo Sinfonia, founded by conductor Robert Rýker, has not only been consistently expanding the breadth of its repertoire since its inception in 2006, but has also provided a steady course of live performances through the lockdown. From festive dinner concerts to curated serenades—including the German Serenade in August 2020, the Romeo & Juliet Serenade in February 2021, the Austrian Serenade in May 2021, among others—the 19-member string orchestra, under the guidance of its accomplished maestro, has provided an intangible service at a time when the world is filled with tragedy and grief. In fact, such was the response to the Austrian Serenade that the venue ran out of delicacies on the special Austrian menu which was part of the attraction. In the coming months, connoisseurs can look forward to the Tanja Kuhn Soprano Serenade featuring excerpts from *Salome*, *Carmen* and *Madama Butterfly* and a Spanish



Serenade featuring works by Isaac Albéniz, Joaquín Turina and Pablo de Sarasate. For more information, visit www.tokyosinfonia.com ■

- Vipasha Aloukik Pai

The Evolution of Style

Focusing on the traditional aspect of aharya in Kathak, renowned exponent of the form, Shama Bhate, dissects the aesthetics and substance of ornamentation on stage.

The shastric traditions divided *abhinaya* or the expressional aspect of dance in four parts—*angika*: expression through body-limb movements, stances, footwork, facial expression, gestures (in short, stylisation); *vachika*: dialogue, music, or sound; *aharya*: the ornamentation and *satvika*: the emotional.

Does that mean that *aharya abhinaya* is not at the core but only at the periphery? How much does *aharya* contribute to a dance form as a creative medium of self-expression? How vital is ornamentation to a dance presentation? Does excessive ornamentation hamper the core parameters of a dance form?

Essential questions

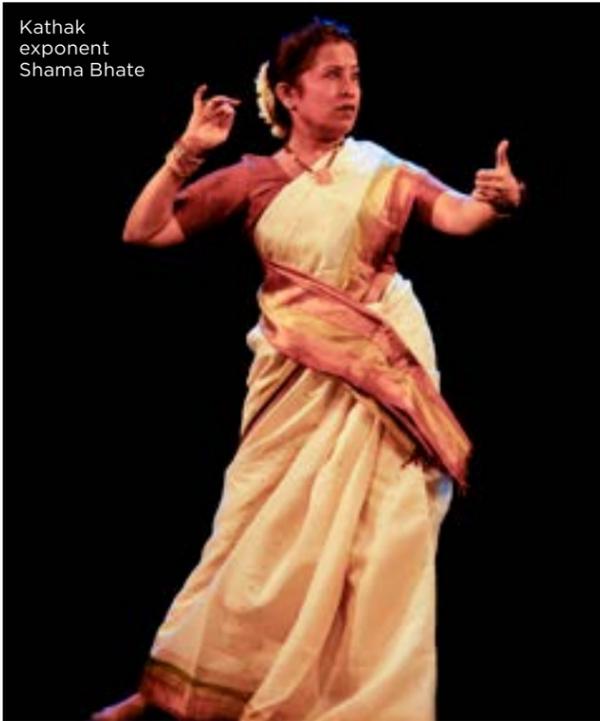
It is widely accepted that the decoration has to take second place to the substance and content (*angika* and *vachika*) in creative and pedagogic practices. The lines formed in Kathak are strong and straight with slight curves at the ends. The pure dance aspect of Kathak

is intricately rhythmic, vigorous and speedy. The music is an integral part that goes hand in hand with the dance. On the other hand, in the expressional aspect, traditional Kathak depicts the divine love of Radha and Krishna. It demands femininity, soft subtlety, together with decorative fantasy. The dancer has to take into account both these aspects while choosing a costume. The *aharya* ought to support all these characteristics of the dance form.

One also has to remember the Ganga-Jamuni *tehzeeb*, a blend of Hindu and Muslim culture, in which Kathak flourished. That has certainly influenced all components of Kathak—movements, stances, gestures, footwork, music, themes, delineation of those, and lastly, costumes. I distinctly remember that at one time, dancers dressed according to the Hindu or Mughal period they represented.

On what basis was a traditional costume initially conceived? Was it based on the regional sense of dressing prevalent in North India? Or did it depend on





Kathak exponent
Shama Bhate

One also has to remember the Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb, a blend of Hindu and Muslim culture, in which Kathak flourished and which has influenced all components of the form

churidars and a cummerbund. Previously, the make-up was negligible, almost none. Now, the male dancers also wear a good amount of eye make-up and are adorned with heavy gold chains around their necks. Durgalalji's costumes stood out. They were classy and exquisite. He was a handsome man, always dressed in a well-tailored immaculate costume that enhanced his vibrant dance and strong body lines. Gopikrishnaji always wore heavy make-up and distinctive costumes. The reasons could be twofold—his close association with the film industry and his choice of dramatic themes for *abhinaya*.

My guru Rohini Bhateji was always dignified in her approach. She was never overly decked up and avoided heavy, cumbersome attire. She sometimes danced in a saree, but would normally don a traditional tastefully chosen lehenga. She was a lean, tall person, and her dance emphasised the linear beauty of Kathak. Damayanti Joshiji also used to wear both sarees and lehengas. I have a vivid memory of her elaborate hairdo. Roshan Kumariji preferred durbari-style *angrakha* which highlighted her intricate and impressive footwork. Sunaina Hazarilalji had her specially designed costume which can be described as a cross between a lehenga and *angrakha*. Sitara Deviji liked to dress up, wear heavy make-up and jewellery, use bright colours, and sometimes, even a toupee that reminded one of Kathak's court origin.

Kumudini Lakhiaji had her own style. She brought a fresh outlook to Kathak costumes. She perceived Kathak lines and the gestural language of the dance form in a unique manner. She experimented with textures, colours and brought a certain kind of modern sophistication to her costumes which underlined her perception. She wanted Kathak lines and stances clearly visible, so rebelled against wearing dupattas, flowers and heavy jewellery.

In the spectators' eyes

Eventually, the focus on ornamentation in *kothis* and royal courts, with the idea of making the dancing bodies attractive and provocative to the landlords for their continued patronage, was no more at the centre. The dance slowly became a medium for self-expression and the mindset of the dancers changed. Did that trigger the minimalist modern approach of Kumudiniiji? The elegant approach of Rohiniiji? The classy approach of Durgalalji? It certainly is food for thought.

an individual's preference and taste? Was it chosen to suit a dancer's body type and complexion? Or was it according to the stage set-up and the backdrop? Or to enhance the basic stances and body lines of Kathak? What are the guidelines and parameters? How strict and rigid are they? Has the perception changed over the years? If it has, how does that impact a dance form? What could be the reasons for this change in perception?

Did aesthetic considerations eventually take precedence over other considerations when dance arrived on the proscenium platform and spread all over India as it gained the status of a powerful medium for human expression? Did *aharya* attain yet another dimension when classical dance was pitched against commercial dance shows? These two thoughts—one aesthetic, the other of presentation—seem contradictory, but they both have surely contributed to the changing trends in costumes.

Eclectic choices

Female Kathak dancers traditionally wore either *angrakha-salwar* or lehenga-choli. Male dancers wore an *angrakha* with a dhoti or churidar. These were styled differently in different *gharanas*, depending on the political patronage they received and the region they hailed from.

Kathak, by its inherent nature, is an open-ended dance form. At one time, it had a loosely structured format which provided ample scope for modifications and innovations. The maestros and gurus experimented not only with gestures, movements, expressions, themes and music but also with costumes.

I remember male dancers, including Birju Maharaji, used to dress very simply; they were usually bare-bodied and dhoti-clad. Most of the male dancers now wear heavily brocaded or embroidered kurtas,



Left: Kumudini Lakhia with her accompanists at a performance at the NCPA in 1973

Below left: Sunaina Hazarilal is often touted as the only practitioner of the Benaras Jankiprasad gharana

Below right: Birju Maharaj became the most famous exponent of the Lucknow Kalka-Bindadin gharana



At this juncture, I would like to address the flip side of the issue—the point of view of the audience. For a dancer, the consideration of costume and make-up naturally comes after the dance piece is fully conceived. But one has to remember that the spectators see and notice the costume and make-up first; they even identify the dance form by the costume. The first impression surely has to be accorded due importance since the performer and the spectator together contribute to the success and impact of a performance.

The sensibilities of audiences of the 1950s and '70s differ considerably from those of audiences of the 21st century. The expectations and demands of newer generations are varied. The Western audience responds differently than the Eastern audience; and Indian spectators have their own aesthetic sensibility. In performing arts, establishing a good rapport with the audience is of prime importance. The choice of costume is therefore governed by these considerations as well. In the West, people are enchanted by rich, vibrant colours and textures, and the femininity that an Indian dancer exudes. On the other hand, in an elite circle, people appreciate simple, straight, elegant lines rather than fineries and paraphernalia.

I do not mean that the choice is totally governed by the taste of the audience, but that aspect certainly plays a role and the dancer needs to take cognisance of that. The next generation of dancers also experimented, but by that time the rules were set and the modifications mostly relied on those. The fabrics and textures are available in plenty, the colours and combinations have given rise to a number of attractive ensembles and today's young Kathak dancers are charming, confident and impressive on the stage.

My only concern is this. The fabrics are flowy and flimsy—sometimes the costume lines and the dance lines get entwined, intermingled. The whole visual certainly looks dreamy with spectacular light design, supported by melodious music but sometimes, the substance does get lost. Dance is certainly much more than just a superficially beautiful spectacle, it is the expression of the soul and inner beauty. One fears losing the core in all the razzle-dazzle of costumes. ■

This article is limited to the scope of traditional solo format and does not deal with the choreographic aspect of Kathak. The writer would like to extend her thanks to Arshiya Sethi, Maulik Shah, Ishira Parikh and Sharvari Jamenis for their valuable inputs.

Timeless Texts

Since English actor David Garrick staged the Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford-upon-Avon in the 18th century, the bard and his words have never gone out of style. They remain both timeless and changeable, having been reworked, adapted, modified and transformed into powerful testimonies of the problems of being human. Why is Shakespeare so adaptable? Why do we keep going back to him? We talk to two Indian playwrights who discuss what inspired them to adapt Shakespeare's works in decidedly inventive ways.

By Devanshi Shah



Shakespeare's works have, for a long time, been an important narrative reference point, forever feeding an array of new productions and adaptations. Even when these adaptations chart a course independent of the source material, they reverberate with the fundamental constructs explored by the bard centuries ago. There is something truly unique about how these stories continue to be told with such relevance across time and geography. In India, versions of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* get recontextualised often to tell stories that resonate with the issues of our time. A memorable rendition from the 1990s includes Royston Abel's *Othello: A Play in Black and White*, which featured a Kathakali dancer as the tragic hero. It was a landmark theatrical production that won a Scotsman Fringe First Award in 1999. Raghuvir Sahay's Hindi adaptation of *Macbeth*, *Barnum Van* (1979), used Indian classical and folk arts like yakshagana to reinvigorate the timeless tale of ambition and greed.

Adaptations like these add another layer to how Shakespeare can be viewed, because these

plays do not only transcend time and place, they also transcend theatrical form. A more recent adaptation by Puducherry-based playwright Koumarane Valavane resulted in a Tamil retelling of *Romeo and Juliet* in the form of *Chandāla, Impure* (2019). It used the bard's play as a means of commenting on the caste system prevalent in India. While Shakespeare's young lovers were kept apart because of their warring families, Valavane's retelling used the contemporary remnants

of casteism to keep the lovers apart. Triggered by the large number of honour killings taking place in Tamil Nadu, Valavane reinstated the narrative to focus on the young lovers and gave them control over their lives by allowing them to choose their own deaths rather than succumb to being victims of an honour killing.

The play within the play

Director and actor Rajat Kapoor has been reinventing Shakespeare's plays using a surprising element: clowns. These adaptations are the result of decryption of the playwright's works to get to the essence of each story. Kapoor first encountered Shakespeare's writing in 1993 when he was tasked

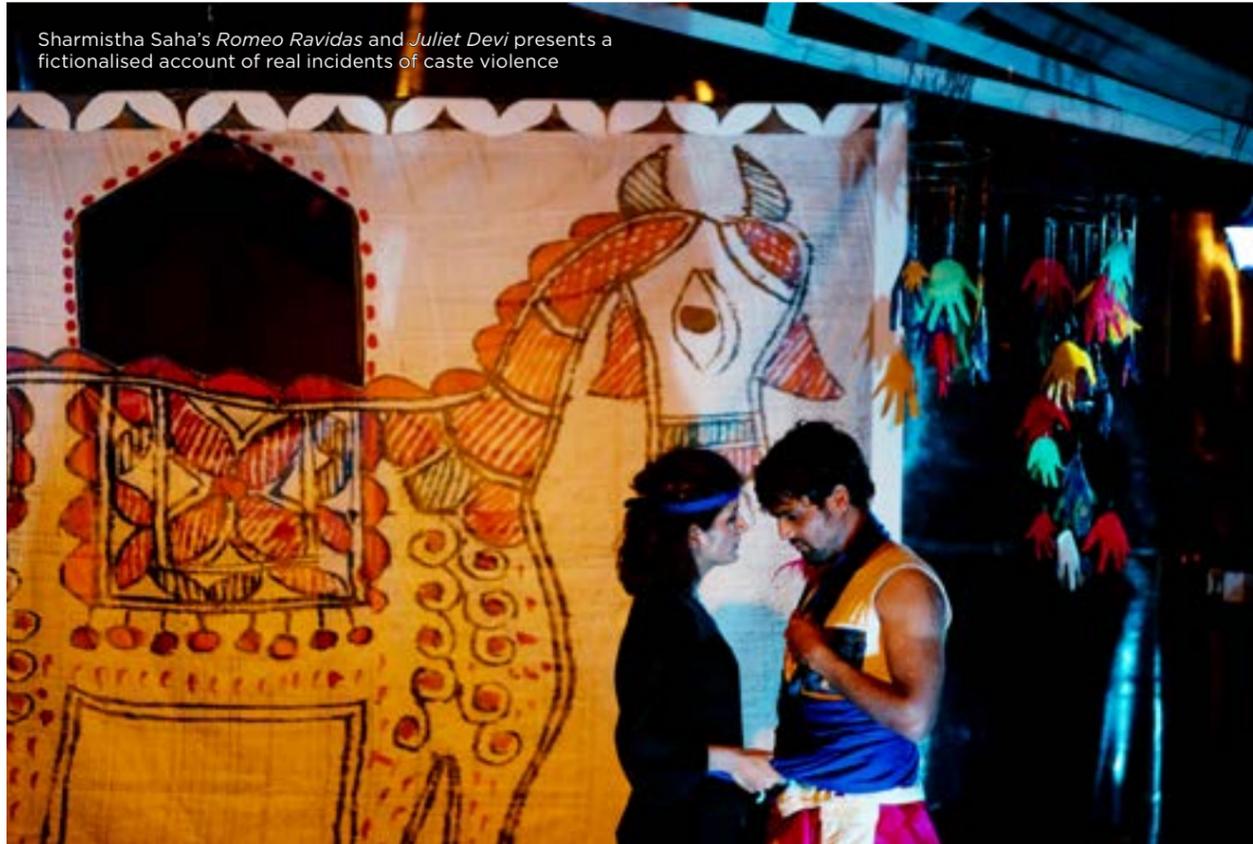
“Though we took all the themes from *King Lear*—old age, loss of power, the relationship between fathers and daughters, betrayal, blindness and madness—we started improvising with these themes to see where they took us”



This page: Directed and written by Rajat Kapoor, *Hamlet - The Clown Prince* is a comical and surreal rendition of one of Shakespeare's most well-known plays

Facing page: Vinay Pathak and Jim Sarbh star in Kapoor's adaptation of *Macbeth*

Sharmistha Saha's *Romeo Ravidas* and *Juliet Devi* presents a fictionalised account of real incidents of caste violence



with translating one of the bard's plays into Hindi for a production. After having spent three months on the process and having read the text multiple times, he realised that Shakespeare's writing only came alive onstage. "I really understood that Shakespeare was meant to be watched rather than read. He wrote it in a way that only made sense when you watch it being performed. That is what excited me to take on these plays," he says.

That still makes one wonder: why clowns? Kapoor explains the genesis of the idea. "I thought, what if we did a clown play of a classic text of which the lines are known. How will the clowns interact with that? So I thought we would do *Hamlet* because it is one of the greatest texts ever. It was a one-off, at that point. We took a scene at a time and the story slowly emerged. The story was of a troupe that was trying to do *Hamlet*, not being able to do it and yet in our play somehow, we had to get the essence of the original play." The-play-within-a-play is a narrative device Shakespeare himself used in works like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Having experienced the thrill of transforming the plot and crux of *Hamlet*, Kapoor chose to take on

“The idea of using the popular trope of star-crossed lovers, but slightly changing it in *Romeo Ravidas Aur Juliet Devi*, was precisely to bring to light the caste-based discrimination that is commonplace in our everyday lives”

King Lear. "We wanted to attempt *King Lear*, but I wanted it to look very different from *Hamlet*. So we thought we would do it with one actor. And again, like we did with *Hamlet*, in *Lear* we didn't stick to the plot. Our *Lear* is not like Shakespeare's *Lear* at all. Though we took all the themes from *King Lear*—old age, loss of power, the relationship between fathers and daughters, betrayal, blindness and madness—we started improvising with these themes to see where they take us. Then we started interpreting it with our lives, our relationships with our daughters and our fathers, and it was really nothing like Shakespeare's *Lear* so we called it *Nothing Like Lear*. And yet,

when you see the play, anybody who knows *Lear* will recognise each reference. At that stage, I got excited about the idea of doing four or five Shakespearean plays running together. So then we took on *Macbeth* and *As You Like It*."

A tale of two loves

Sharmistha Saha's adaptation, *Romeo Ravidas aur Juliet Devi*, unravels not only the core narrative of *Romeo and Juliet* but also its depiction of love and romance. She elaborates on her approach saying,

"We discussed the implications of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* for our society and wanted to break away from its reductionist logic, especially for caste-based discrimination. We met several Dalit cultural organisations and important personalities associated with the Dalit movement in Maharashtra. We also had several workshops with actors and my co-writer Shubham Sumit at Studio Tamaasha." The titular characters are based on real people from contemporary news. "The play is based on two real incidents. One of a Dalit boy who was killed for owning a horse and was often called Romeo in his village and the other of Kaushalya Devi whose Dalit husband was killed by her father. However, in the play, when Juliet Devi meets Romeo Ravidas, it is in her dream. It is an encounter between the dead Romeo Ravidas and the alive, and now widowed, Juliet Devi," she says. The play took its cues from newspaper articles about discrimination, works by Dalit writers, interviews and interactions with activists, social workers and Dalit cultural artistes.

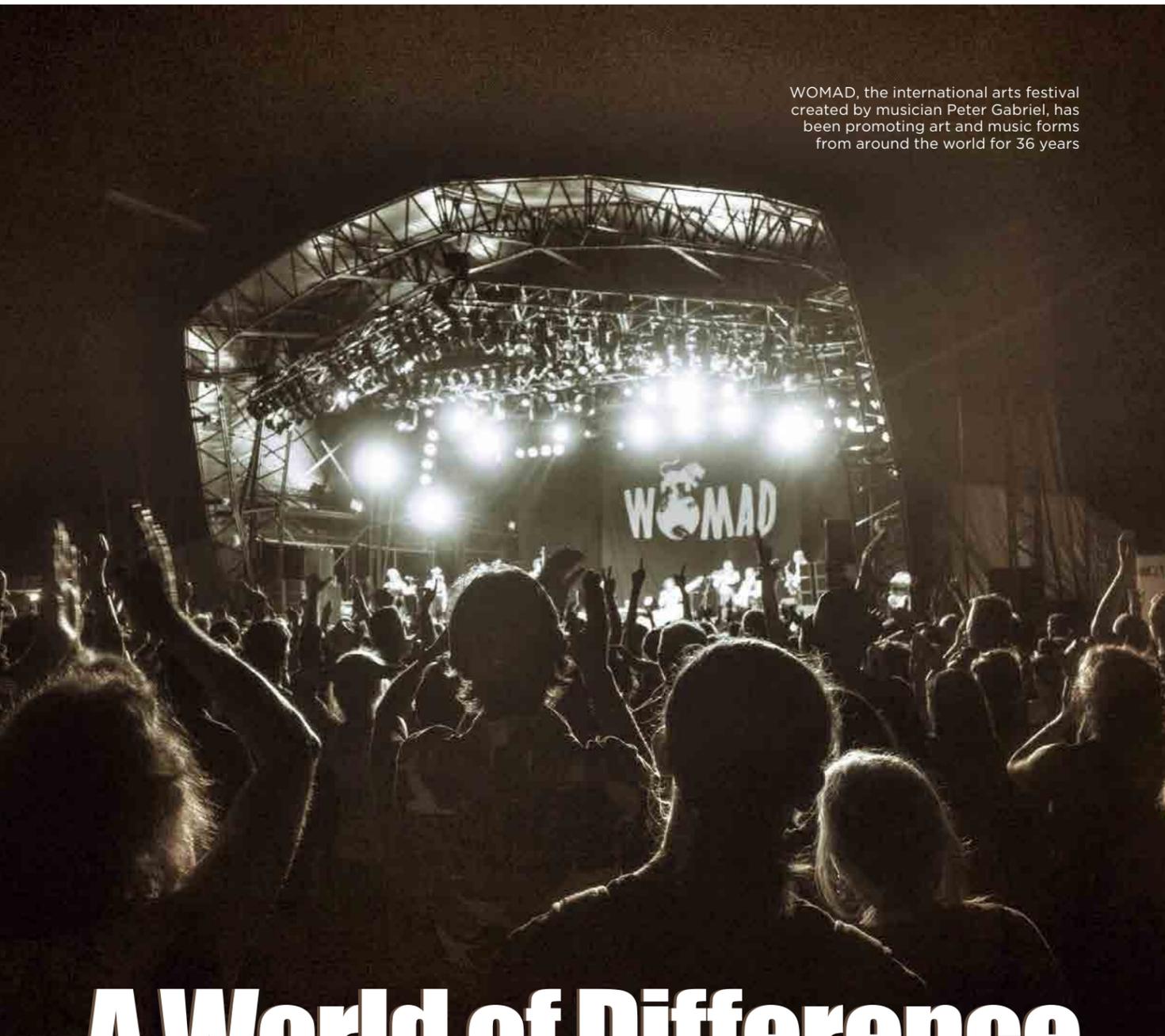
When asked about what inspired her to reference *Romeo and Juliet* in a production that is about giving a voice to the subaltern, Saha says, "The atrocities on Dalit communities and the discrimination against them are inbuilt in Indian society. The problem is so commonplace that often we do not even recognise

the existence of such discrimination. However, the only time popular culture has taken any interest in such discrimination is usually when the story involves an upper caste person, in most cases an upper caste girl in a relationship with a Dalit individual. In this narrative, one or both people lose their lives. In fact, this is also true for newspaper articles which are more geared towards highlighting such narratives. The idea of using the popular trope of star-crossed lovers, but slightly changing it in *Romeo Ravidas Aur Juliet Devi*, was precisely to break that cliché and bring to light the caste-based discrimination that is commonplace and exists in our everyday lives."

The continued relevance of and love for Shakespeare is probably best summarised by Kapoor's observation. "Shakespeare deals with universal emotions. *Hamlet* is about a man who is not able to act, and that is so much like modern man. The text is over 400 years old, but nothing has changed in those 400 years. The emotions have stayed the same. And Shakespeare went to the absolute depths of these emotions. So, if you think of jealousy, there is nothing like *Othello*, or if you think of ambition, nothing beats *Macbeth*." The bard has, in many ways, outlined every story there is to tell, leaving behind a framework so the world can continue to adapt his stories in ingenious ways. ■



Vinay Pathak stars in Kapoor's one-man show, *Nothing Like Lear*



WOMAD, the international arts festival created by musician Peter Gabriel, has been promoting art and music forms from around the world for 36 years

A World of Difference

An extensive genre beyond definition, world music is not only eclectic but also full of limitless possibilities.

By Narendra Kusnur

In 1982, British rock musician Peter Gabriel helped start a music festival that would add fresh excitement to the music scenario. Called World of Music, Arts and Dance, or simply WOMAD, its objective was to provide a common platform to musicians and cultural forms from different global regions. Though the term ‘world music’ was not invented yet, it was one of the events that led to the creation of the genre.

WOMAD faced teething troubles but went on to become one of the world’s most-awaited festivals. Noticing the response, record companies and event managers began promoting acts from different regions. African music became especially popular, thanks to the Afro-rock band Osibisa, Nigerian ‘juju’ musician King Sunny Ade, Senegalese singer Youssou N’Dour and Malian legend Ali Farka Touré. The success of rock star Paul Simon’s 1987 *Graceland* tour, featuring South African musicians Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba and Ladysmith Black Mambazo gave a fillip to South African music.

PATRICIA PHILLIPS / STOCKIM O / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

What’s in the name

By mid-1987, the term ‘world music’ was used frequently as a separate section in record stores and radio stations. Most of it was music from Africa, but some Latin American, Arabic and Indian acts were also included. However, purists felt the term was too loose and vague, as it lacked any strict definition. Initially, it was used to describe any music that excluded Western classical music or popular British or American genres like jazz, blues, rock, pop, soul and country.

The confusion was compounded by two other factors. The concept of fusion had existed since the late 1970s, and though it started off as a blend of jazz and rock, it went on to encompass Indian or Latin American music. The problem was whether to include these hybrids in jazz or world music. Indian band Shakti, comprising guitarist John McLaughlin, tabla maestro Zakir Hussain, violinist L. Shankar and ghatam exponent Vikku Vinayakram, could fit into either or just be called fusion. Nobody bothered, of course, as long as they loved the music. Generally, fusion was used to describe a blend of genres, whereas world music referred to specific music from particular regions.

The other thing was that the term could mean different things. In the U.K., local forms like Celtic, Northumbrian or Welsh music were part of the homegrown folk scene, and thus not considered to be world music. But an American would

put them under the world music banner, and probably club all indigenous music from that region as British folk.

In India, world music could mean anything except sounds from the subcontinent, Western classical music and popular American and British forms. At music stores, Chinese, Latin American and Scandinavian records all came under world music. People in India would refer to Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan as a Pakistani qawwali star, but for Real World Records—founded in 1989 by WOMAD and Peter Gabriel to provide talented artistes from around the world with access to recording facilities and audiences beyond their geographic region, it is now a well-known label in the genre—he was one of the biggest world music artistes.

There is also this tendency to mix up this genre with Fête de la Musique or World Music Day, observed every 21st June. That is

Initially, world music was used to describe any music that excluded Western classical music or popular British or American genres like jazz, blues, rock, pop, soul and country



Uzbek singer and songwriter Sevara Nazarkhan is renowned for her expertise in Central Asian folk music and instruments

SIMON GROSSET / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



Malian guitarist Ali Farka Touré was one of the most successful West African musicians of his time

also check out the genre's Grammy winners over the years. Once one has an understanding of what to expect, one can explore the Real World Records catalogue. Some prominent artistes are Afro Celt Sound System from the U.K., Canadian producer Michael Brook, Loney Dear from Sweden, Sevara Nazarkhan from Uzbekistan, Geoffrey Oryema from Uganda, Papa Wemba from Congo, Telek from Papua New Guinea, Estrella Morente from Spain, Totó La Momposina from Colombia and Aurelio from Honduras.

A cursory look at the above list reveals that musicians have been culled from different regions, with many of them playing indigenous folk forms and traditional instruments. Brook has collaborated with Khan, Dutch musician Pieter Nooten, Irish singer Iarla Ó Lionáird, Tanzanian artiste Hukwe Zawose and late mandolin maestro U. Srinivas to produce an assortment of global sounds.

Besides the Real World albums, one can also try out the catalogue of New Orleans-based record label Putumayo World Music or musician David Byrne's label Luaka Bop. For those looking for a more lounge-oriented sound, the *Buddha Bar* series can provide some great listening, as DJs Ravin, Claude Challe and others have used various global sounds to create a club ambience. There are also great artistes like Angelique Kidjo, who had a memorable concert at the NCPA's Tata Theatre in 2011, Israeli singer Ofra Haza, Japanese koto player Kazue Sawae and Spanish bagpipe player Hevia. American guitarist Ry Cooder's collaborations with Mohan Veena exponent Vishwa Mohan Bhatt on *A Meeting By The River* and with Ali Farka Touré on *Talking Timbuktu* are also popular in the world music category.

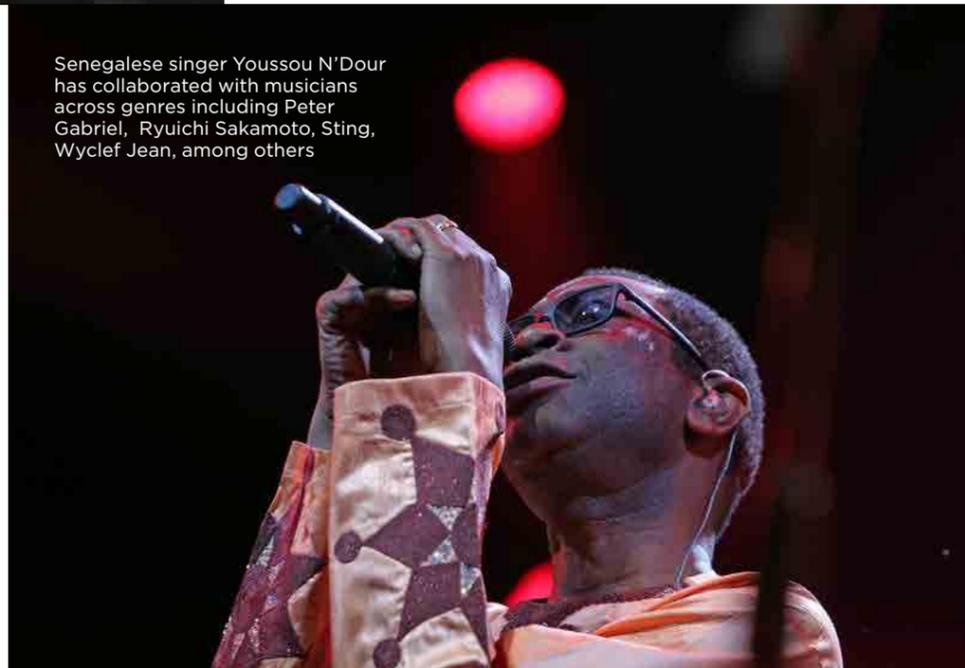
Besides music from different regions, world music opens up the opportunity to acquaint oneself with musical instruments from across the globe

more of a celebration where musicians from across the world play in public places, mostly as a gesture without payment. One can play popular music too, and thus it is not restricted to world music as one knows it. The taxonomy or categorisation issues notwithstanding, world music has helped many artistes reach out to newer geographies, and listeners to enjoy the sounds of many other regions. While a lot of music was earlier released on compact discs, today, one can access many gems on online streaming platforms or YouTube.

Where to begin

How does one get to hear world music in a structured manner? The first step would be simply to search on any streaming platform, and begin with any playlist. One could

Senegalese singer Youssou N'Dour has collaborated with musicians across genres including Peter Gabriel, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Sting, Wyclef Jean, among others



ZUMA PRESS, INC. / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (TOURÉ); SHUTTERSTOCK (YOUSSOU N'DOUR)



The Buena Vista Social Club, an ensemble of Cuban musicians, initially comprised elderly musicians who were brought out of retirement to play old-fashioned music that was popular in the 1940s

Auditory expansion

The Rough Guide to World Music, first published in 1994, divides the musical world into 13 regions: the Celtic world, from the Baltic to the Balkans, Mediterranean/Maghreb, the Nile; the Gulf, the Indian subcontinent, West Africa, Central/East Africa, Southern Africa, the Far East, the Caribbean, Latin America, North America and Australia/the Pacific.

The music of Mali, in West Africa, has been of specific interest to many Indian listeners, mainly because of the popularity of Touré. Other great Malian musicians are Salif Keita, the band Tinariwen, stringed instrument kora player Toumani Diabaté, guitarist Vieux Farka Touré and singer Fatoumata Diawara.

Besides music from different regions, world music opens up the opportunity to acquaint oneself with musical instruments from across the globe. There are stringed instruments like the kora from Mali, bouzouki from Greece, shamisen from Japan, erhu from China and qanun from the Middle East, percussion instruments like talking drum or tama from West Africa, taiko from Japan or hang drum developed in Switzerland, the tube instrument angklung from Indonesia or the duduk from Armenia.

What is mentioned on these pages is like a primer, a beginning. Whatever the differences regarding classification, the genre is so vast that there is no end to the process of listening. The more one explores, the more one discovers. It does not matter whether you start in Brazil, Papua New Guinea or Brittany, or where you eventually land up.

JAMES WATKINS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

10 ALBUMS FOR BEGINNERS

1. *Talking Timbuktu* by Ry Cooder and Ali Farka Touré, the U.S./ Mali
2. *Seven Degrees North* by King Sunny Ade, Nigeria
3. *Tierra de Nadie* by Hevia, Spain
4. *Buena Vista Social Club* by Buena Vista Social Club, Cuba
5. *Planet Drum* by Mickey Hart, various countries
6. *Volume 3: Further in Time* by Afro Celt Sound System, the U.K.
7. *Aventine* by Agnes Obel, Denmark
8. *Immigrés* by Youssou N'Dour, Senegal
9. *Nayda!* by Bab 'L Bluz, Morocco/France
10. *Yol Bolsin* by Sevara Nazarkhan, Uzbekistan

This Month, That Year

From celebrating 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi to a theatrical production of *My Fair Lady*, from a guided listening session that presented rarely heard recordings of Vilayat Khan to an evening of performances and discussions on the tradition of the *guru-shishya parampara* in the world of Indian classical dance, and platforms celebrating young talent in Western classical music and jazz, we look at some of the more memorable events that were presented at the NCPA in July 2019.



Johar Gandhibaba: Celebrating 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi, a presentation of songs that showcased the influence of the Mahatma's life and struggles on the lives of tribal communities from Jharkhand, was held at the Experimental Theatre. Seen here: Megha Sriram Dalton, a playback singer and composer with a deep commitment to the promotion of folk music of Jharkhand, with a group of Adivasis



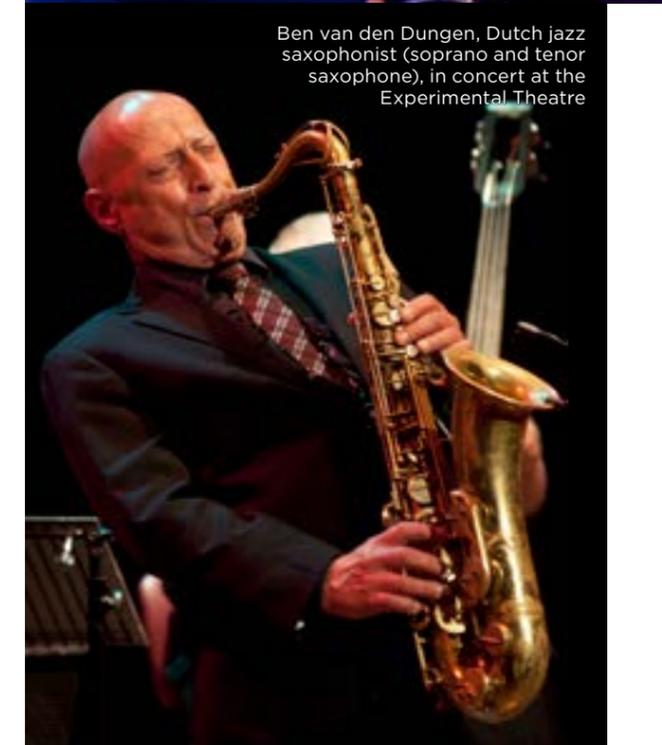
A theatrical production of *My Fair Lady* at the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre



An evening of Sattriya performances by Srijani Bhaswa Mahanta along with a group of monks from Purana Kamalabari sattri in Assam, presented at the Godrej Dance Theatre.



Readings in the Shed, an evening of storytelling on the theme of the magic of words, presented at the Piramal Gallery



Ben van den Dungen, Dutch jazz saxophonist (soprano and tenor saxophone), in concert at the Experimental Theatre

Dance in the Family, an evening of performances by scholars and artistes showcasing the *guru-shishya parampara* within the family, was followed by a panel discussion at the Experimental Theatre. Seen here: (From left) Dakshina Vaidyanathan, Rama Vaidyanathan, Vyjayanthi Kashi, Madhavi Mudgal, Arushi Mudgal and Prateeksha Kashi



The second edition of The Wunderkinds, a platform for talented young musicians (aged 13 to 23) trained in various musical styles and vocalese, encompassing Funk, R&B, Latin, Pop, Rock and Jazz, was held at the Experimental Theatre



A listening session on the artistry of Vilayat Khan was organised under *Nad Ninad* at the Experimental Theatre. The programme makes available the NCPA's archival recordings to lovers of Hindustani classical music. The session was one from a series based on rarely heard recordings of the sitar maestro, which were specially recorded for the NCPA archives during 1976-79. Presented by Shujaat Khan, son and heir to the rich musical legacy of Vilayat Khan, the sessions were conducted and guided by Arvind Parikh, who has trained with Khan. The series was inaugurated by the tabla maestro Zakir Hussain.



Jimmy Bilimoria, Assistant Manager, Vivian-Liff Collection, who is known for his vast knowledge of opera, conducted a session for enthusiasts of the genre to take them through its nuances, at the Stuart Liff Library in the NCPA



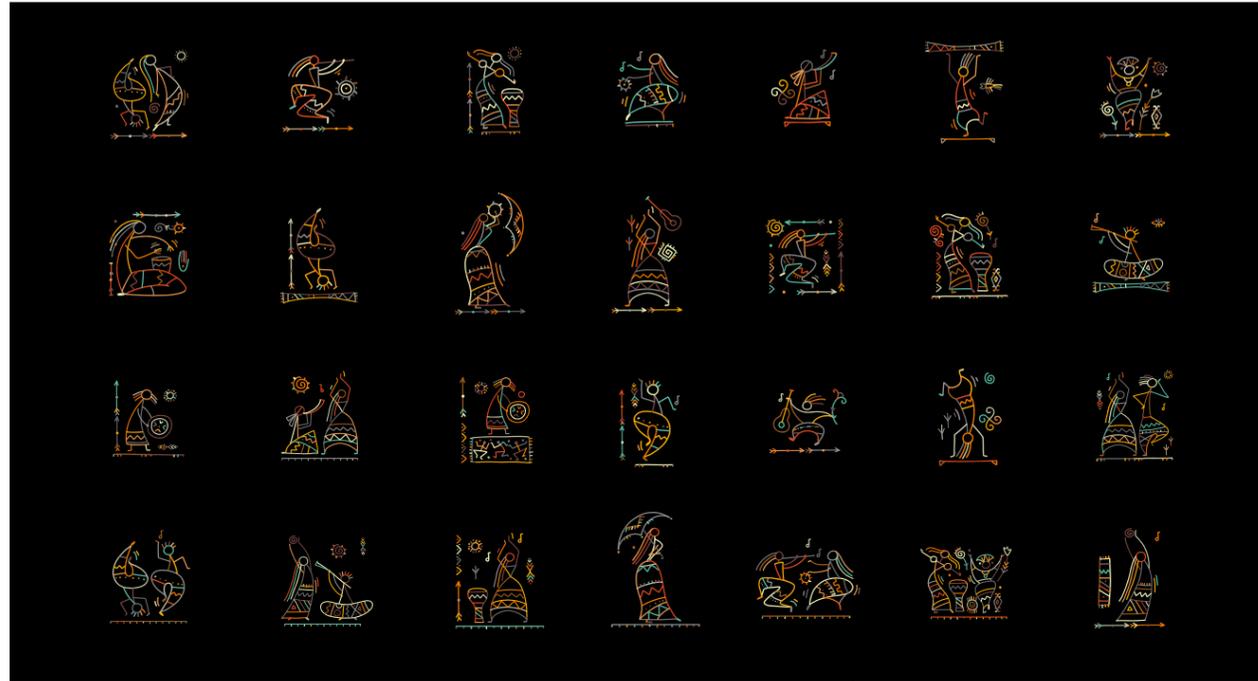
The Young Talent Concert series, which presents young performers who are carving a niche for themselves in the world of Western classical music, entered its 30th year in July 2019 and was held at the Godrej Dance Theatre



(From left) Shujaat Khan, Shiv Kumar Sharma and Arvind Parikh at the inauguration of a series of listening sessions on the artistry of Vilayat Khan as part of *Nad Ninad*.

Primal Instincts

ON Stage brings you excerpts from the *NCPA Quarterly Journal*, an unsurpassed literary archive that ran from 1972 to 1988, and featured authoritative and wide-ranging articles. In the first of a three-part series on categories of music, musician and ethnomusicologist **Ashok D. Ranade** dissects definitions and dispels common misunderstandings regarding primitive music.



Musical categories are those fundamental classes in which the totality of the musical material available in society can be naturally organised. The categorisation leads to corresponding categories of kinds of experience of different musics. To gain an insight into musical categorisation is to become cautious in claiming universal validity for musical theories or judgements. In spite of inevitable and inbuilt overlaps, these categories denote distinguishable and valuable experiential contents. The categories pose differing questions and necessitate the construction of conceptual frameworks of varying philosophical import. If musical reality is to be construed in its entirety, all musical categories need to be identified and examined. The four categories sought to be identified against this background are: primitive or tribal music, folk music, art or classical music and popular music. These four categories do not and need not exist in all societies concurrently and in equal proportions. However, their

presence or absence constitutes in itself a fact of cultural dynamics demanding an interpretation. In general, the more the number of existing musical categories the more the degree of sociocultural complexity in the society under consideration.

What are the criteria according to which these categories are differentiated? No identical criteria can be employed because the four terms and the corresponding concepts display inherently differing orientations. For example, the terms 'tribal' and 'primitive' are traceable to ethnological biases, while the term 'folk' owes its origin directly to folklore. The two terms 'art' and 'classical' (interchangeably used in India), are clearly products of an aesthetising impulse while 'popular' is a term linked to cybernetic processes and operations of the mass media. However, irrespective of terminological sources, it is clear that in the present context the major thrust could only be the experiential content of associated musics.

PRIMITIVE OR TRIBAL MUSIC

The adjectival terms 'primitive' and 'tribal' are often used as near-synonyms in musical perspective studies. Though both terms represent attempts to categorise a particular kind of cultural manifestation, the term 'primitive' appears to be more accommodative in etymology as well as in usage. Besides, the term also carries a more qualitative (albeit a more general) connotation. On the other hand, the term 'tribal' suggests a narrower range as also a more direct linkage with anthropology. In its root-meaning, 'primitive' suggests 'the most ancient phase' while 'tribal' signifies 'that which pertains to a group of clans under a recognised chief and usually claiming common ancestry'. Indian terms used as corresponding to 'primitive' and 'tribal' are *adivasi*, *vanya*, *aranya*, *girijan* and *adim*. While the first and the last terms draw attention to the aspect of antiquity, the rest refer to habitat (an ethnological criterion). In the present context, 'primitive' and 'tribal' allude to

a type of musical expression genetically related to a particular body or group of people producing the music referred to. Further, the people described as 'primitive', etc. are generally assumed to denote those in the food-gathering, hunting, pastoral and agricultural stages of human development. The non-musical and the ethnographic orientation of the explanations offered for the terms 'primitive' and 'tribal' can hardly help in answering the question relevant to the present discussion: What is 'primitive' in music and why? As most of the data on music usually accepted as primitive has been the result of ethnographic and ethnological investigations, it is difficult to avoid equating primitivity in music with the music of the primitives.

Perhaps it might be useful to dwell a little more on dictionary sources to understand the shades of meaning that the terms have acquired. Through such scrutiny, chronological, aesthetic and sociological weightages become clearer and one can appreciate why the term 'primitive' is to be preferred to 'tribal' for the present discussion.

Primitive:

1 (a) not derived, primary; (b) assumed as a basis.

2 (a) of or relating to the earliest age or period; (b) closely approximating an early ancestral type; (c) belonging to or characteristic of an early stage of development; (d) relating to, or constituting the assumed parent speech of related languages.

3 (a) elemental, natural; (b) relating to, or produced by a relatively simple people or culture; (c) naive; (d) self-taught, untutored.

A further set of meanings refers to the qualitative aspect of the term with more directness:

1 (a) something primitive; (b) a root word.

2 (a)(1) an artist of an early period or a culture or artistic movement; (2) a later imitator or follower of such an artist; (b)(1) a self-taught artist; (2) an artist whose work is marked by directness and naivete; (c) a work of art produced by a primitive artist.

3 (a) a member of a primitive people; (b) an unsophisticated person. (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, G. and C. Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass., U.S.A., 1981, p. 907.)

However, it is symptomatic that

the same source does not define the term 'tribal' in any comparable depth. It merely notes: 'of, relating to, or characteristic of a tribe' (p. 1237).

It, therefore, seems safe to conclude that the term 'primitive' has a wider cultural connotation while the term 'tribal' has been chiefly employed to denote producers defined in a particular ethnographic context. At one point of time, the term 'tribal art' would not have been acceptable and it would not

To regard
primitive music
as the original
music of less
'cultured' man is
to deny that the
primitive in music
is a legitimate
channelising of an
authentic musical
impulse of human
sensibility

have appeared tautologous to use the phrase 'primitive tribe'. It is obvious that during its semantic development, the word 'tribe' suggested a context and projected a content with the minimum value-overtone. This has also happened in India. In addition, the term 'tribe' has acquired a specifically Indian connotation. This is the reason why Nadeem Hasnain's recent work refers to more than a dozen definitions of the word 'tribe' but finally lists the four major characteristics stated by D.N. Mazumdar as more relevant to Indian conditions. (Nadeem Hasnain, *Tribal India Today*, Harnam Pub., New Delhi, 1983, p. 17). The main features of Indian tribes, according to Mazumdar, are stated below in a slightly abridged form:

(1) In tribal India a tribe is definitely a territorial group.

(2) All the members of an Indian tribe are not linked by ties of kinship, but, within every Indian tribe, kinship appears as a strong, associative and

integrating principle.

(3) Members of an Indian tribe speak one common language, their own or/and that of their neighbours.

(4) There are other distinguishing features of Indian tribes such as dormitory institutions, absence of institutional schooling, a moral code different from that of Hindus and Muslims, etc.

Even after obtaining an idea of the Indian definitional deviations the question remains: Is it inevitable that a category of music carry a definition which is producer-oriented and not product-oriented? Are there no qualities in the product which need to be described as 'primitive'? Without facing the question squarely it will be impossible to identify the presence or absence of primitive qualities in the music produced by non-tribal societies. It is necessary to define musical categories with a focus on the experiential content of music. To follow the submerged Darwinian trail instead and to regard primitive music as the original music of less 'cultured' man is to deny that the primitive in music is a legitimate channelising of an authentic musical impulse of human sensibility. In other words, what is primitive in music is to be determined by using musical criteria. Further, it is not to be assumed that primitive music is music produced by people categorised as 'primitive'. Being directly related to human experience, and not social hierarchy or allied factors, the primitive in music is found to produce recurrent pervasive and legitimate moulds relevant to a particular human musical experience and expression. If music is not to be equated with a body of sweet sounds acceptable to an anaemic aestheticism, it is imperative that all musical categories be treated with adequate seriousness. This does not lessen the importance of the ethnographic evidence and data on tribal music. However, it means that the data is to be treated as providing a basis for conceptual discussion of the categories of music and the experience associated with it. To put it differently, features of 'tribal' music are to be noted so as to facilitate the detection of their existence in urban literature and sophisticated societies. Their appearance in such a setting justifies their being described as 'primitive'.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIMITIVE MUSIC

Primitive music and dance are so closely connected with the day-night and seasonal cycles of the concerned people that they can hardly be separated as music and dance respectively. Music is for everyone, everything and for almost every occasion. All critical phases in the human life cycle find their expression in music. Almost everything *causes* music. To that extent, music enjoys a high degree of cohesive relationship with the process of living.

As a formulation, a song is more important than music in the primitive way of life. It is symptomatic that a majority of primitive societies have a word to denote a 'song' but many lack a word to indicate music. However, 'song' as understood in primitive parlance is a very different entity. Every manifestation of an undifferentiated performing impulse becomes a primitive song. On the other hand, non-primitive usage allows music a wider application than song.

Primitive music is highly ritualistic. It is ritualistic even when it is not a part of any ritual. In other words, one senses a pervasive ritualistic charge in every performance. The type of rituality suggested is detected through an atmosphere of intense preoccupation of the participants with every detail, a certain elevated psychological stance among the performers and an air of inner compulsion communicated by them. Alert attention is paid to psycho-physical aspects seemingly unconnected with the act of performance. It is, therefore, next to impossible to arrange for the performance of primitive music without or outside the framework defined by the general rituality described earlier.

'Audience', as is normally understood, has a very unusual role to play in performances of primitive music. Almost everybody participates though to varying degrees. At the same time, it is also true that performers seem to direct the music to some entity external to them. Music does not take place for its own sake or for viewers or listeners and yet it has to reach out in order to complete itself.

On the whole, the 'primitive' in music relies more on rhythm than on melody. Primitive rhythms become manifest through instruments, movements, percussive speech or a similar mode of vocalising. Rhythm (as contrasted with



melody) controls primitive music to such an extent that instruments conventionally employed for melodic purposes are also pressed into rhythmic service. In addition to its overall preponderance, rhythm in primitive music also possesses definite structured and substantive qualities that need to be discussed separately.

Melody in primitive music is primarily characterised by a marked indifference to the quality commonly described as sweetness. So much of the non-primitive and the non-folk music is avowedly made sweet or melodious that the resulting qualities are (mistakenly) considered to be musically obligatory. It is symptomatic that the performers themselves, while rating performances, seldom apply the criterion of sweetness.

The role of language and literary expression in primitive music needs separate consideration. Here, language is not regarded as indispensable. Meaningless syllables and sounds appear in abundance. In other words, phonetic patterns rather than linguistic patterns receive more scope. Half-formed sentences, proverbs, slogans or similar formulations and other literary nonentities earn legitimacy in primitive musical compositions. Lack of 'literary' quality is thus closely linked with the general anonymity prevailing in primitive music.

As a matter of routine, the 'composer' remains unnamed in primitive music. More importantly, collective composing is allowed definite scope. Alternatively, it has often been pointed out that even though a particular tune is crystallised or consolidated into actual use by a single person, the tune partakes of many existing ones and, to that extent, it could be said to have been hovering in the air. That the same available corpus of tonal and rhythmic moulds is often linked

with new phrases and occasions suffices to create a 'new' song. This interpretation of the concept of creation or originality is unlikely to gain acceptance in other categories of music.

Music, so closely linked with the human life-cycle, can hardly be expected to have direct relationships with all its referents. As a result, symbolism becomes an important characteristic of primitive music. In fact, the act of performance as well as its peripherals embody symbolism. Symbolic processes and objects are numerous and both are employed at various levels of prominence and intensity.

Primitive music makes a generous use of non-musical resources and this is often achieved through symbolistic operations. Special reference needs to be made to the varied use of musical instruments. They are often regarded as non-musical objects and their simultaneous existence on two planes adds to their evocative power. Their unusual shapes and sizes as also the techniques of sound-production can be traced to the non-musical content of the musical instruments. In spite of the overall multipurpose character of musical instruments, their musical roles are precise to the degree of being firmly associated with affective states of mind and definite music-making events. Their being equated with emotional states increases their general potency as agents in communication processes considered in a larger context.

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