

ON Stage[®]

VOLUME 10 • ISSUE 10



STAGE PRESENCE

Costume and make-up in
Indian classical dance

A RICHER SOUND

New members join the SOI

A FINE STATE

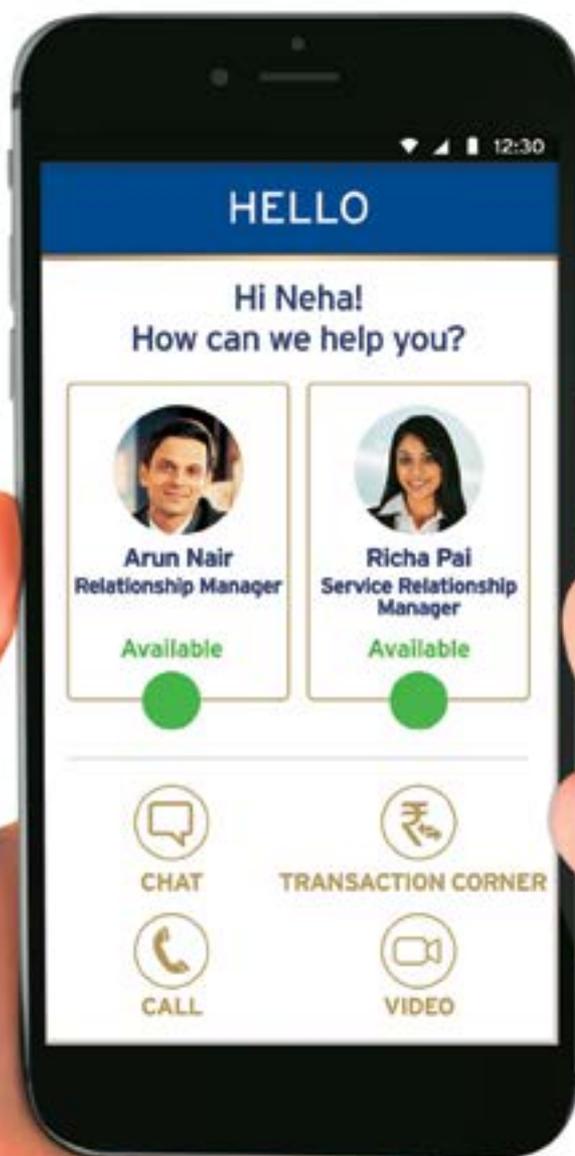
Glimpses of Maharashtra

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Chairman's Note



There is a general impression that with the lockdown, the NCPA is not functioning as before. While it is true that there is nothing which can substitute a face-to-face encounter and/or meeting to achieve the desired result, the next best course is to gird up our loins and innovate ways in which the NCPA would most benefit and the employees, musicians, technicians, etc. would occupy themselves meaningfully.

Having laid out these objectives before our heads of divisions, I must say that a modicum of success has been achieved. The musicians in residence of the SOI have been furiously preparing new programmes and have already, in the last month, recorded four of them fully for the digital platform. These have been recorded in the theatre and with better sound than when the audience is present. Similarly, full-year plans, conditions permitting, have been presented by the Indian Music, International Music, Dance and Theatre genres. Preparations are, therefore, underway to put together a year's programme of likely performances when the lockdown and other bans are lifted and otherwise, recording online for the presence of the NCPA to be noted by its members and the public alike.

Methods of management are being put together and we realise that getting the finest advisors in areas where we need these inputs is the cheapest way of keeping up with technology and modern practices. We have, therefore, inducted up-to-date experts in the area of digital recording and dissemination, and advice on marketing our performances through the digital media. At present, we are also concerning ourselves with the reinventing of the NCPA café, whose reins were unfortunately returned due to the losses incurred by the conductor of the business. We see this as an opportunity.

All the relaxations that the government is allowing are being carefully studied and out of the coronavirus mystery disappearing in the next few years, a completely rejuvenated and repolished NCPA will emerge. At least, that is the intention. Now, it is up to us to make it work.

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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Remembering a Renaissance man

Anil Dharker's passing leaves an aching void in the intellectual and cultural life of India. Chairman Khushroo N. Suntook reflects on his cherished association with a dear friend, erudite writer and great supporter of the arts.

If you ever imagined an Indian, particularly one representing the country in an elegant manner with a distinctive sartorial presentation, an impeccable accent and command of language, I am sure your thoughts would turn to Anil Dharker.

I have known Anil for a very long time, but it was only casually at first. I saw him regularly at Indian and Western classical music, jazz, dance and theatre productions at the NCPA and elsewhere, at social functions and at dinner and cocktail parties at his home where he was always a generous host. He was the epitome of a Renaissance man, well read, with a deep knowledge of a wide variety of subjects on which he could speak authoritatively. What really impressed you was the depth of his sense of values as well as erudite interpretation of today's political and social scene. His philosophy was that life is fleeting and we must seize every moment.

When I joined the NCPA, he would often drop in and we would start with a business conversation which soon drifted to the general arts scene, the lack of support for culture and the unfortunate passing of values from what really matters in life to how much you have in the bank. Here were two minds conversing about two different forms of art, mine connected with music and his connected with great literature. I soon thought that his original thinking deserved a much wider audience than was reached sitting across a desk, and thus we decided that he would participate in writing a column for the *ON Stage*. He asked whether there was any particular remit or direction for it, in which case he would not be interested, and I said no, but it had to be freewheeling, honest, original and interesting. I must say he did live up to his promise.

Later, when he had the ability to convince the Tata Group to support his wonderful venture, Literature Live!, the NCPA was happy to offer their premises for a considerable amount of time every November. Invariably, he brought

Mr. Anil Dharker (left) and Mr. Khushroo N Suntook (right) release a book at Tata Literature Live



persons of great interest and stature from around the world, whose knowledge, eloquence and unique points of view were often controversial but fascinating, and drew in large audiences. Many of his favourite personalities, like Shashi Tharoor, had their detractors but you could never accuse him of ever allowing any irrelevant subject to pass through his curation.

Anil was a part of our Theatre Committee. He was politely observant of what we did and occasionally expressed his opinion with no uncertain vehemence. He was a great lover of classical music and was invariably present at most of our concerts whether it was our own orchestra or visiting artistes. He had a fairly sharp understanding of the interpretation of the music that he heard and surprised me very often with his understanding and depth of knowledge of the musical works.

He was as persevering as one could ever imagine a person can be and often, when it was not possible to offer him our halls for many of his creations, he was extremely forward in stressing his point of view till, at last, we had to succumb.

We were happy to collaborate in a manner which I believe was not always to his satisfaction, but it was what I could do for him and in the end, he accepted it.

He was a delightful companion, universally popular among amazingly diverse people. You might meet him in places where you would not expect him to be, yet he was completely at ease with all manner of personalities. His knowledge of the waters of Scotland was fairly profound too.

Unfortunately, people like Anil Dharker do not receive adequate support in India for all their endeavours to promote culture as an important part of every citizen's life. He was part of something continuous and we cannot let it end with him.

On the day that he was to be operated on, I received an email from him saying that he was extremely nervous, and I now think of that message as a premonition. The news was extremely shocking not only for its untimely nature but because you don't often come across people like Anil. It was an unmitigated pleasure to have known him. He will be missed.

Rest in peace, Anil. ■



DR. JAMSHED J. BHABHA

August 21, 1914 - May 30, 2007

**Remembering our illustrious founder
whose vision and dynamism nurtured the NCPA**

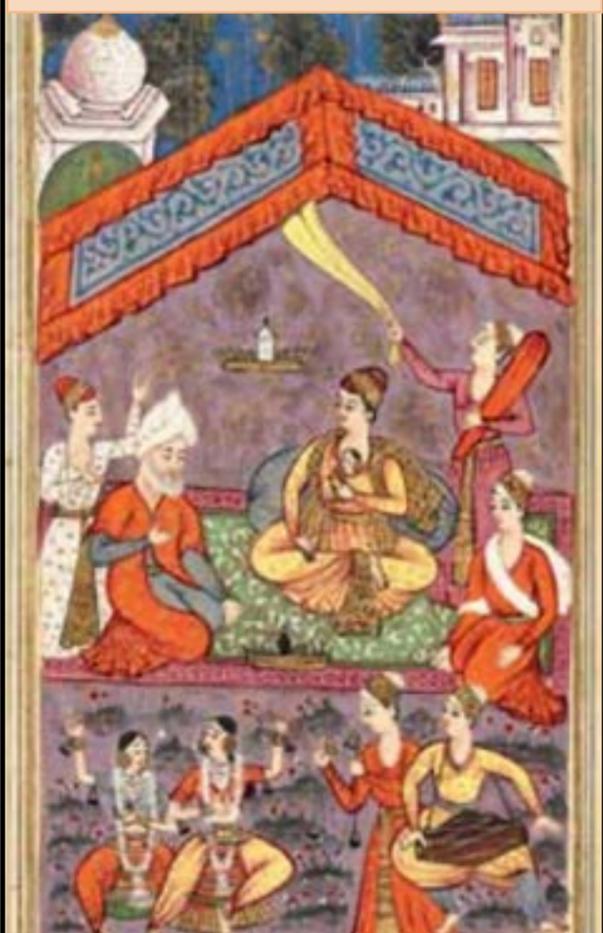
THROUGH THE SHEER OF GOSSAMIER

On how the costumes of *Sadir* from the Early Modern era reflect multicultural translations.

By Swarnamalya Ganesh

In wanting to understand the *aharya* or accoutrements of the ancient dance form of *Sadir*, one has to necessarily learn about connected histories and encounters that resulted in the dancer's body and persona becoming reflections of the nature of life and lifestyles they were leading. In my deep study of the history of dance through its immediate cultural memory in the late medieval and early modern through colonial periods, one thing is certain—that the cultural formations of dance were better able to sustain the complex attitudes that are implied in the phenomenon of cosmopolitanism. Almost as if the manifold pleated drapes speak volumes of the many negotiations that the dancer was constantly making while navigating multicultural contexts. These negotiations were made with a certain openness that stemmed from what Sanjay Subrahmanyam refers to as the proponents of cosmopolitanism—pleasure, curiosity and interest. Seen from this perspective, the thing that makes *Sadir* costumes stand apart from those used in Bharatanatyam—which traces its lineage to the former—is that they do not essentialise Indianness nor nationalist feminist significations, as Sadanand Menon warned us in his writings. In fact, it displays an eclecticism borne of mobility and cultural translations.

Performers dressed in loose pjyama costumes in a scene depicting Deccani dance from the 16th-century manuscript *Pem Nem*



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Reconstruction of the *salla* for the contemporary stage in a performance of *Sadir* by Swarnamalya Ganesh

SWARNAMALYA GANESH



17th-century dancers from Ramanathapuram wearing hand-blocked and dyed floral prints and betteles strips (From the Attic Exhibition Collection)

Parting and pleating

The unstitched yards of free cloth called the *pudavai* (saree) was most preferred, for it was possible to manipulate it in many ways. Ten yards of the cloth could be draped to facilitate easy movement and add grace to the performer. The *kaccham kosuvam* is one of the popular drapes that we often find in photographs of *Sadiri* performers of the recent past. In this style, the saree is pleated on either sides and the pleats are tucked next to each other at the back to create a *kaccham kosuvam* (parted legs like a pyjama). The rest is pleated and draped in the front to fall freely. The *melakku* (upper garment) is usually part of the 10 yards saree which would be taken across the left shoulder, crossed over and tucked at the waist.

A *ravikkai*, or a blouse, with sleeves, was worn as an upper garment. The elbow-length sleeves were often decorated with *zari*, shells, beads, laces and even gemstones. In the 19th and 20th centuries, it was not uncommon for the dressmakers, about whom we know very little, to stud and decorate only the right sleeve and lower portions of the left sleeve while keeping the rest of the blouse, which would get hidden beneath the *melakku*, plain. This was perhaps

done to be thrifty about costly embellishments that were often made of pure gold and other materials.

Although the *kaccha kosuvam* already provided a pyjama-like comfort to the dancer, she additionally wore a *nijaar* (pyjama).

The term *nijaar* has its origins in the English word 'knickers' which is etymologically derived from the Dutch language, and denotes inner pants. The Deccan, particularly Tamil country, in the early modern era from the 17th century, had the continuous presence of the Dutch that left the local cultures, including language, food and clothing, deeply influenced. The *nijaar*

was stitched with a massive *kalli* (diamond dart at the fork) in the centre to provide tremendous ease of movement. Satin imported from West Asia and China, which made its way into the peninsula through the Arab traders, was the preferred material, and occasionally, a mixture of cotton was used for the upper portions of the *nijaar*.

Weaving magic

The most noticeable and unique piece of garment in a *Sadiri* costume is the *salla*. Made of organza, a sheer gossamer silk that was initially imported into the Deccan from countries like Turkestan (Persia), it

In my study of the history of dance, one thing is certain—that the cultural formations of dance were better able to sustain the complex attitudes that are implied in the phenomenon of cosmopolitanism

was later produced in the Deccan regions locally, in areas around Bijapur. This sheer fabric was used as a frontal hanging over the pleated saree as a free-flowing drape. The *salla* was decorated with attached horizontal and vertical zigzag rows of *tuiyya* border (tassled gold *zari*) also known as *gota patti*, famous from the areas of Rajput and Mughal kingdoms. Often, gold and silver *butties* or appliqué work motifs, such as *manga* (mango) or circular flowers, were added for further grandeur. The term *salla* is of Dakhni origin and means muslin, another material that was often used in making this piece of garment.

You may have already noticed that between the *pudavai*, *ravikkai*, *nijaar* and *salla*, we have gathered resources that came from across Europe, China, Persia, Rajasthan, Benares to the locally produced Kanchi, Mysore and Thirubuvanam silks of the South. Added to this were the gorgeous silks, cottons, muslins that were produced in the Deccan belts of Pulicat, Machilipatnam and Srikalahasti that specialised in indigo-dyed and blocked *kalamkari* printed fabrics. Additionally, hand-drawn, resist-dyed cottons and silks, as well as batik fabrics like *ikat* (originally from SouthEast Asia), were created locally and were extensively used. In the early modern period, even the everyday wear of people, which was largely dictated by what was locally produced and conducive to the local climate, was often embellished with transcultural fabrics, prints and designs. Therefore, the dancer's costume was all

the more a display of mercantile reach and prosperity of traders and kingdoms as well as the inflow of novel and exquisite materials through seaports. Be it combining French lace with Kanchi silks or fashioning *kalamkari* into a Persian-style skirt and *choli* in the courts of Vijayanagara and Nayaka Kings, the dancer stood adorning these as a conductor of culture which allowed for many assimilations to pass, pause and be represented as their own.

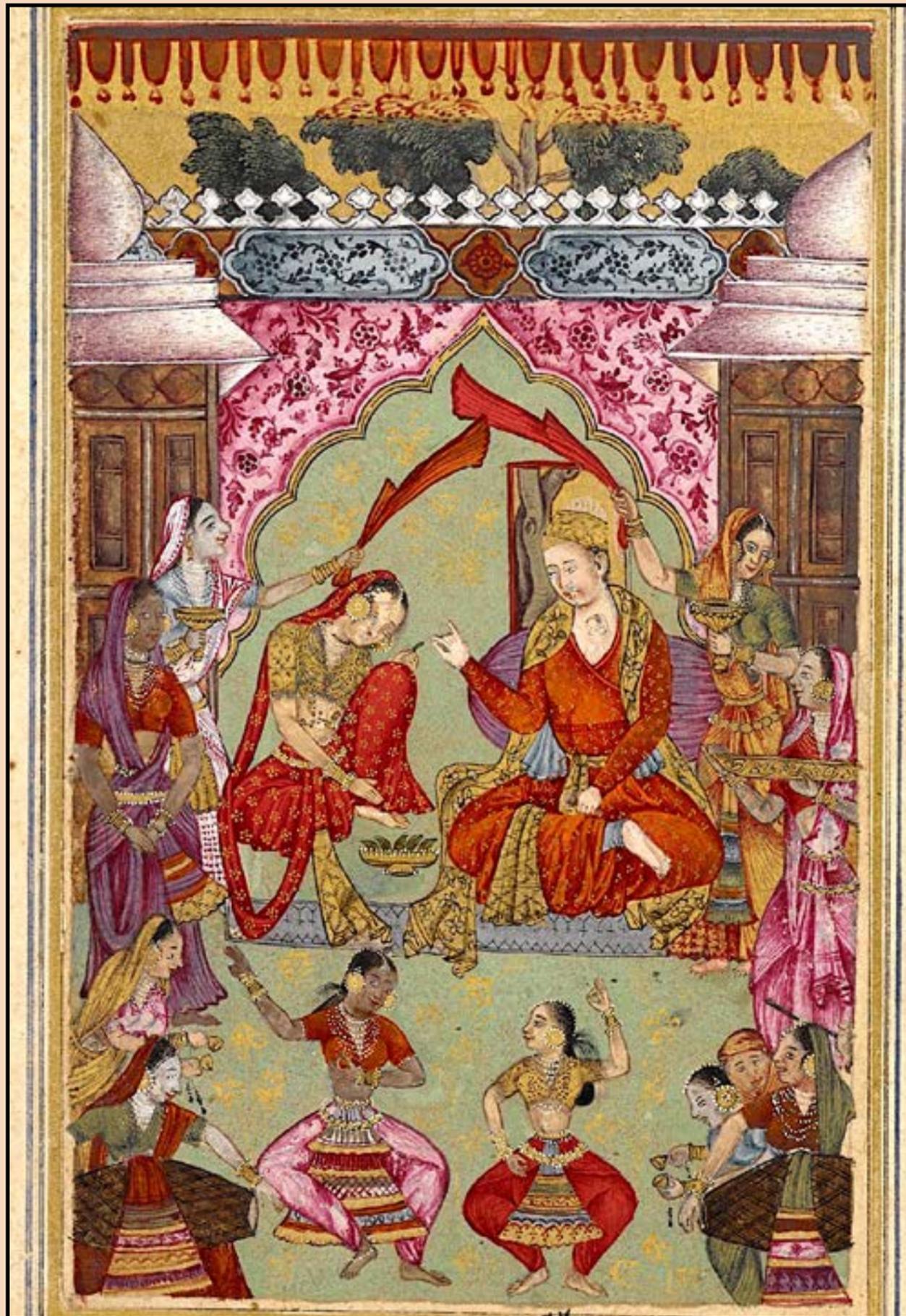
It is touted by some scholars that the pyjama style of dance costume was a post-colonial invention, perhaps by Rukmini Devi Arundale who, with the help of her Italian seamstress Madame Cazan, fashioned it. It traded in graceful, feminine yards of frontal drape of a saree for the structured pant-style costume which, in an apparently unladylike manner, parted the woman's

Ravikkai worn by Jeevaratnam, daughter of Thiruvallaputhur Kalyani Ammal (From the Attic Exhibition Collection)



Thiruvallaputhur Jeevaratnam in complete *Sadiri* costume from the Attic Exhibition Collection

legs. Of course, the frilly fan that is pinned to the pyjama and the seat piece that attempts to modestly cover the buttocks, somewhat help in retaining what would otherwise be considered absolute sacrilege of feminine significations that Bharatanatyam epitomises. There are some others, who in contrast, argue for the (un)stitched, draped saree to be the quintessence of *Sadiri* dance and Devadasi costume. This notion led dancers like Chandralekha to reject what she referred to as "dolling up" to feed the male gaze. While Chandralekha seemed to have found liberation in getting rid of the layers of drapes and the prettiness of all the colours, fabrics and motifs described above and replacing it with the visceral experience of centering the focus on the dancing body, many others saw the sarees and heavy jewellery as accoutrements that belonged to the devadasi and hence perceived as burdensome, dragging along with it, her "troubled and controversial" past. Thus, much of it was rejected and remodified into simpler, more elegant, stylised, inventive and minimalist costumes that eased the dancer of the physical burden of heavy jewellery and silks while stealthily allaying the weight of *Sadiri*'s contentious past. However, both these extreme views obscure the nuance of *Sadiri*'s vitality.



A marriage scene depicting dancers dressed in pyjama costume with layered front frills from the 16th-century manuscript *Pem Nem*



Salla worn by Jeevaratnam of the Thiruvallur Kalyani daughter duo (From the Attic Exhibition Collection)

Cultural exchange

Sadir costumes are not restricted to drapes of sarees alone. True, it is common to find photographs of devadasis in either *kaccha kosuvam* or full sarees from colonial records. But, be it the highly rated pyjama-style costume or flowy drapes in sheer material that flutter about as the dancer moved, Deccani dance costumes of the early modern era were reflective of cultural translations of various peoples and places that were contextualised, in the words of Subrahmanyam, with great “pleasure, curiosity and interest”. One can see different styles of costumes from *angarakhas* and pencil pyjamas with scooped gossamer skirts to even gowns and stockings on occasions that were worn to perform various *Sadir* repertoires. In the larger argument of how to reconcile cosmopolitanism in a non-European manner, embarking on identifying attitudes and then measuring them seems a daunting task and one easier said than done. However, costumes whose exhibits are available to us from numerous wall murals, miniature paintings and literary accounts become great windows that showcase a variety of people and performances from the past and their willingness to interweave many cultural encounters.

The *Pem Nem*, a Sufi literary work created in the Adil Shahi court of Bijapur, is accompanied by a series of stunning miniatures. The Deccani style classical dancers in them are indeed wearing fitted pyjama-style costumes, a *choli* or *ravikkai*, gossamer sheer *melakku* and a fan that has several layers of frills.

I have shared but one example to demonstrate the variety of styles of costumes that adorn the Deccani dancer. I refer to them as Deccani dancers in a manner that must be read as inclusive of all the southern regions of the peninsula from whose cosmopolitan textures, *Sadir* was woven. It would be petty to reduce the *Sadir* dancer as coming from only one southern state, speaking only one language or belonging to only one particular community or religion. In piecing together the history of dance, be it Bharatanatyam or *Sadir*, we have thus far not paid studious attention to the cultural objects that strongly argue for the case of *Sadir* and the *Sadir* dancer being carriers of cultural

By combining French lace with Kanchi silks or fashioning *kalamkari* into a Persian-style skirt and *choli* in the courts of Vijayanagara and Nayaka Kings, the dancer stood adorning these as a conductor of culture

translations that accommodated many complexities with ease. Perhaps, if someone like Chandralekha, who is a careful reader, were here today, she may recant her views that accoutrements were merely importuning the male gaze and be excited to know that they in fact represent the multiple encounters that defined the very form of *Sadir* and enabled the female dancer an escape from the totalising view expressed as part of the colonial complex.

A discussion, as brief as even this, on *aharya* cannot be complete without speaking of the jewellery which lends the dancer her signature *Sadir* flavour. The different forms of jewellery too, you will be surprised to know, are steeped in eclectic borrowings and complex exchanges between cultures. However, that calls for another article at least of the same length, something that needs to be explored as the next piece in the jigsaw. ■

.....
A performer with over 35 years of experience, Swarnamalya Ganesh, is also a scholar of dance history, a musician, an actor and an academician. Her in-depth work in the reconstruction of Early Modern performance repertoires has culminated in a long-term performance-exhibition-education series titled *From the Attic*. She realigns her practice to *Sadir* as recognition of Bharatanatyam's subaltern history, taught to her by her Devadasi gurus with whom she has trained from age three. A Fulbright Fellow, Ganesh is the Director of Ranga Mandira Academy of World Dance/Performance and Indic Studies and an Assistant Professor of Practice-Literature and Arts at KREA University.

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Bigger and Better

There are several developments in the offing at the NCPA as the Symphony Orchestra of India welcomes a new double bass player, two teachers and three apprentice players into the fold.

By Beverly Pereira

An orchestra, as it were, is a microcosm of perfection—a group of musicians intimately working together to reach a harmonic understanding among each other. This understanding develops over time, but, ever so often, there arises a need for new recruits. It could be because an older player has left the orchestra. Or, perhaps, the orchestra is willing itself to grow into something larger and thus requires additional players. And so begins the new player's journey towards finding their voice in this microcosm as they harmonise with an entirely new structure, all the while navigating music that will eventually unite the player with the orchestra as a whole.

In the case of the Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI), a greater Indian presence among its musicians has been integral to the vision of NCPA Chairman Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook since he co-founded the SOI with Marat Bisengaliev in 2006. It has been no mean feat, but with unwavering focus, it is beginning to bear fruit. The pandemic may have stalled live performances, but the hunt for

orchestral players did not stop. "We have been scouting for talent all over India, from Nagaland to Tamil Nadu. What we have been looking for is that the players should have achieved a certain degree of technique and a certain level of understanding of the genre they are playing," says Mr. Suntook.

The hunt has also been supported by the SOI's long-time collaborators and impresarios, and over the past few months, new musicians have been selected to join the SOI. For one, there is a new double bass



Double bass player Jasiel Peter

player on board. Jasiel Peter from Bangalore arrived in Mumbai last month and has immersed himself in getting acquainted with the ways of the SOI. "I listened to Jasiel two years ago, before he went to England to complete his music education. Even at the time, I felt he was ready to play with the orchestra. Now, he has returned and joined us at the SOI," says Bisengaliev, the orchestra's Music Director and violin virtuoso, who plays a crucial role in maintaining the consistently high standard of the orchestra.

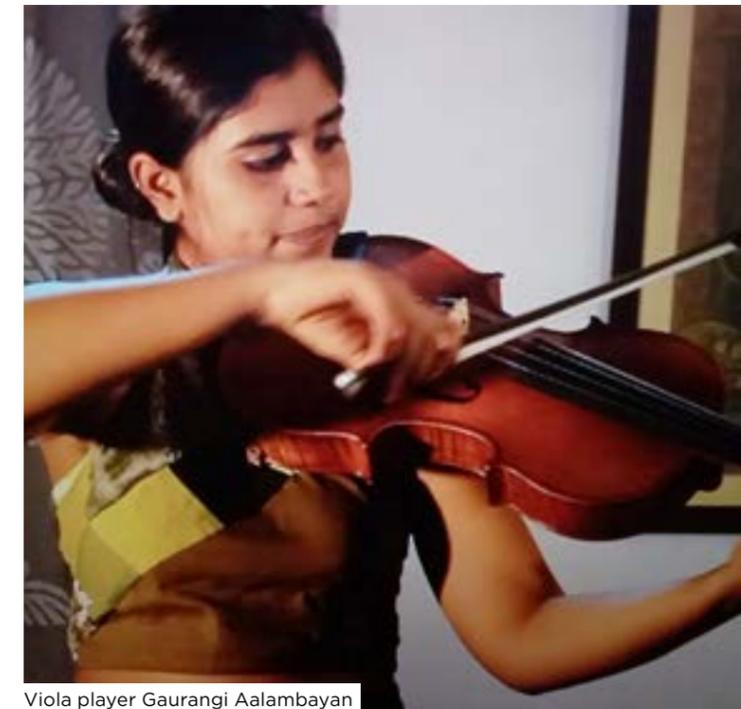
Bisengaliev is happy that a growing number of Indian musicians are bringing their skill, talent and musicianship to the table. "We are always scouting in India and abroad, but it is not easy," he says, adding that this is also gradually happening thanks to the creation of the SOI Music Academy that seeks

to transform young players into professionals fit to be hired by professional orchestras. At the academy, students in the age group of 6 to 16 are tutored by those SOI musicians who are trained in the Russian Conservatoire method. In fact, in the pre-pandemic times when the SOI musicians were not on stage, almost every one of them imparted one-on-one music lessons to the budding young musicians enrolled at the academy. Now, virtual classes have become the norm.

Learning on the job

Apart from Peter who has joined the SOI in full-time capacity, three apprentice players have been selected to join the orchestra, and they are both humbled and raring to go. They will receive rigorous training by old hands at the orchestra, and everything, from the honorarium to accommodation, will be taken care of. "They are incredibly talented. We are, in many ways, taking on the responsibility of honing these young musicians," says Bisengaliev. "The process of apprenticeship ensures that they inevitably become a part of our family. I will encourage them to participate in rehearsals and to play chamber music with the teachers. It is very important to be able to play with others. If we see development in their playing during the year, they may be able to perform at some concerts too. You cannot predict development. Sometimes it could be so quick that we might even decide to include them in the orchestra sooner than expected."

Viola player Gaurangi Aalambayan, 18, who comes in from Goa, always knew about the SOI but was



Viola player Gaurangi Aalambayan

The pandemic may have stalled live performances, but the hunt for orchestral players did not stop, and over the past few months, several new musicians have been selected to join the orchestra



Violinist Kalyanee Mujumdar

particularly enthralled when she attended a concert in 2020. “My days since the audition have been filled with excitement and some anxiousness. I hope to accomplish a greater sense of music to improve my playing and presentation. It will be a great experience,” says Aalambayan, who started learning Indian classical violin at age nine, but soon stopped due to the absence of teachers in Delhi. When her family moved from Delhi to Goa, she was exposed to the viola at an orchestra performance of Bach’s viola concerto. “I then started learning the viola at Kala Academy, Goa. The deep sound of the viola steers me towards it.”

Violinist Kalyanee Mujumdar, 19, who has joined in from Pune, feels fortunate to have been brought up in a musical family. Introduced to the violin at age nine after listening to the music of Yanni, she went on to study at the Suzuki School of Violin in Pune and the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, London. She has since performed with outfits

like the Bangalore City Chamber Orchestra. “I hope to enhance my musical knowledge and skills by learning under the musicians and to be a positive addition to the SOI. I’m looking forward to learning as much as I can from my fellow musicians—not just the musical aspects but also life skills like being in harmony with people from various cultures.”

Roshan Singh Chhabra, from Indore, brings his rich percussion skills to the mix. From being someone who had never seen any instruments other than a



Percussionist Roshan Singh Chhabra

Casio keyboard and tabla at school to transforming into an adept percussionist, his journey has been a fruitful one. “I feel fortunate to be here,” says Singh Chhabra, 25, who holds a diploma in music from KM Music Conservatory, Chennai, and a degree in music from Middlesex University, London. “Since

the audition, I’ve been practising, receiving lessons and been in awe watching the SOI rehearse the very same pieces I used to listen to on my headphones. My goal is to learn and contribute as much as I can. It’s a great opportunity to evolve as a musician with so many talented musicians, conductors and directors around me.”

New teachers of note

Come June, when the new academic year begins at the SOI Music Academy, Kazakhstani violinist Akmaral Zhangazina will play a vital role in shaping the next generation of orchestra players. She was invited by Bisengaliev and SOI Orchestra Manager Onay Zhumabayeva to join the ensemble last year. She played her first concert with the SOI at Prithvi Theatre, after which all concerts in Maharashtra were indefinitely postponed. Prior to this, she lived in Moscow where she started teaching the violin



Violinist Akmaral Zhangazina



Vocal educator Olga Vykhodtseva

while studying at the Moscow Conservatory and has since worked with various ensembles. At present, in Mumbai, she is busy with orchestra practice and recordings of performances at the NCPA for digital airing. But she will soon embark on an entirely new journey as a violin teacher at the academy. “Every student needs an individual approach and this is of great importance in becoming a musician,” she says. Zhangazina hopes to instil the importance of hard work and dedication in children as they open up to the world of music through repertoire for the violin.

Olga Vykhodtseva is yet another musician of repute who has joined the ranks of the SOI. A choir conductor by education and a vocal educator, she previously had a professional chamber choir and, in parallel, a vocal ensemble with a pop-jazz direction. She has also taught choral classes at the Tchaikovsky Music College of Almaty and the Kazakh National Academy of Arts. Over the past few years, she has worked closely with Bisengaliev to provide high-quality choirs

A fond farewell

As the SOI welcomes new players, it also bids goodbye to the musician couple Aigerim Beisembekova and Alpamys Bissengaliyev, who returned to Kazakhstan for new beginnings. The flautist and the saxophonist look back on their time in Mumbai and to them, the NCPA says, thank you for the music.

“It is amazing to think we have worked at the NCPA for almost five years. During this time, we have learned invaluable lessons. We are grateful to Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook, Marat Bisengaliyev, the entire SOI and all the amazing people we have met here for making us part of their family, for seeing our potential and always giving us new challenges and opportunities to learn and for giving us the confidence we needed to take the next step in our careers.

You took a chance on us when we were fresh out of conservatory. We are grateful to orchestra manager Onay Zhumabayeva who made our auditions at the SOI possible. We thought we knew so much after graduation, but the SOI was our real classroom: rehearsals, recordings, concerts, tours, workshops and teaching. We really enjoyed every single performance not only as part of the orchestra, but as soloists and as chamber musicians as well. When it comes to workshops, the NCPA does a lot of work in promoting Western classical music and introducing it to a large number of people. Our woodwind quartet has played so many concerts and conducted as many workshops and masterclasses to increase public interest across India.

We are really fond of all our students at the SOI Music



Academy. They make us proud. We are also grateful to the SOI musicians. While people know us as simply being good colleagues at work we know we are more than that. The role they played in our lives is monumental. Thanks for the continued support and guidance. We really appreciate it. We are excited for the challenges we have ahead, but we are sad to leave the NCPA. We are so proud of what we have built together, and we have really enjoyed working here.”

for major projects like the Karl Jenkins *Adiemus* concert in Kazakhstan, among others. More recently, between 2018 and 2020, she was the vocal coach at the Trivandrum Academy of Western Music.

“We didn’t have a voice teacher at the academy, so this is part of our strategy to eventually have a good children’s choir,” says Bisengaliyev. “We also want to engage students who are learning the piano. All other instruments have piano as the secondary instrument, whereas piano players do not have a secondary instrument. So I thought it would be good for those learning the piano to be a part of a choir,” he explains. Vykhodtseva’s vision for the SOI Music Academy is well in line with that of its music director. “We will try to create

“We will try to create a children’s choir at the academy since choir class is part of a complex of disciplines and an integral part of music education”

a children’s choir at the academy since choir class is part of a complex of disciplines and an integral part of music education.” Bisengaliyev also hopes to establish an amateur choir of adults backed by his belief in Vykhodtseva’s ability to create high-quality choirs. “We have many projects that require a choir. Together with the SOI, we can get started with new projects of a high standard,” he says.

Between practice, recordings and online lessons at the academy, there is much keeping the SOI players busy even during these uncertain times. The developments at the SOI and the NCPA at large are an indication of optimism and of moving onward and upward. One cannot be happier for both the ensemble and its co-founders who are using this unprecedented downtime in the most productive way possible. ■

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For a Bright Musical Future

From a total of nearly 900 applications, nine artistes were selected for the Citi-NCPA Scholarship for Young Musicians 2021-2022 to help further their career in vocal and instrumental music.

In a year that has been anything but usual, the auditions for the Citi-NCPA Scholarship for Young Musicians 2021-2022 were conducted in a novel manner too. The pandemic only propelled more artistes than ever before to apply for the scholarship, which the Indian Music department at the NCPA instituted in association with Citi in 2015-16 to provide monetary assistance to up-and-coming musicians to further their career.

From the 878 applications received from Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad, Sindhudurg, Raigad, Beed, Solapur, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Jamshedpur, Delhi, Haridwar, Jaipur, Vadodara, Gwalior, Kanpur, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Shimla, Ludhiana, Varanasi, Patna, Hubli, Dharwad, Sirsi, Shillong, Indore, Navsari, Orissa, Haryana, Goa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tripura and Assam, 58 were shortlisted for auditions. For the first round, the candidates were asked to share their biodata for the category of vocal (*dhrupad* and *khayal*) and percussion instruments (tabla and pakhawaj).

Unlike every year, the audition round was conducted by examining recorded videos of the recitals shared by shortlisted candidates. Videos from each of the four categories were judged by experts from the field who were invited to the Little Theatre in February — Baha'ud-din Dagar and Rajesh Sendh (*dhrupad*), Chetna Banawat and Neela Bhagwat (*khayal*), Vibhav Nageshkar and Praveen Karkare (tabla), Ashok Mhatre and Sadanand Naimpalli (pakhawaj).

The highest number of applications were received for *khayal* (532), followed by tabla (254), pakhawaj (52) and *dhrupad* (40). It is in view of the limited number of practitioners who take up *dhrupad* today that the department set a higher age limit for applicants aiming to pursue training in the vocal form.

The scholarship winners will receive an amount of ₹10,000 per month for a period of one year from April 2021 to March 2022. A standard amount of ₹750 was also offered to all candidates to cover the accompanists' fees and video recording expenses if any.

Meet the winners:

KHAYAL



Mansi Kulkarni

Born into a family of music lovers, Mansi Kulkarni learnt music from Anjali Deshpande and Vishwanath Dasharathe, and later under the tutelage of Shubhada Tai Paradkar, renowned vocalist of Gwalior-Agra-Jaipur *gharanas*, for eight years. Kulkarni has been conferred with several awards and has performed in many live concerts, festivals, and TV shows.

Ayesha Mukherjee

Ayesha Mukherjee is a student of Deboshee Bhattacharya and has previously trained under Ajoy Chakraborty and Ritesh Mishra of the Benaras *gharana* tradition. She has won many accolades and awards from a young age, including the National Scholarship from the Ministry of Culture in 2018.



Shruti Ramdasi



With overall training of 15 years in Hindustani vocal in *khayal* from gurus Upendra Karkhanis, Vinod Thakurdesai and Vandana Ahle, Shruti Chandrashekhar Ramdasi is also an exponent of light and semi-classical music. With a master's in music from S.N.D.T. University (Pune)

and Sangeet Alankar from Gandharva Mahavidyalaya (Miraj), Ramdasi has performed in different genres including classical and semi-classical music and *thumri* at many prestigious events.

Kasturi Deshpande



Kasturi Deshpande, a disciple of Arun Kashalkar and Gauri Pathare, started receiving training in classical music at the age of eight, beginning at home with her parents as her first gurus. She has many awards to her credit and is a recipient of the National Scholarship for Young

Artists (2011-13) for Vocal Classical awarded by the Ministry of Culture. This promising vocalist is pursuing a doctorate in Indian classical music and is backed by numerous performances and participation in state-level competitions across Maharashtra.

DHRUPAD

Trisha Sarbadhikary

Having trained in *dhrupad* for 10 years, Trisha Sarbadhikary has been a student of Kaberi Kar and Rathindranath Chakrabarty. Her professional qualifications include B.music and M.music from Visvabharati University, followed by B.Ed. from Institute of Education for Women, Hastings House. She has received a merit scholarship from Visvabharati University (2013-2018), National Scholarship from the Ministry of Culture (2018-2020) and 'B-high' grade from All India Radio.



TABLA

Pranav Gurav

Born into a family of musicians, Pranav Gurav took his initial tabla lessons from his father, Milind Gurav. Further, he received guidance from Nana Mulye for four years and trained under Suresh Samant for the next 10 years. Currently, he has been receiving advanced training in tabla



from Aneesh Pradhan, a noted tabla player of the Farrukhabad *gharana*. Gurav has been awarded the Centre for Cultural Resource and Training Scholarship to Young Artists 2016-17 by the Government of India.

Ketan Kalgi

Ketan Kalgi has trained in the percussion instrument under Dhananjay Patkie and Sunil Deshpande for 15 years. He has played a tabla solo on Vidyavani radio station and provided tabla accompaniment to a *khayal* vocalist for the radio. He has also given solo performances in several cities.



PAKHAWAJ

Shukracharya Jadhav

Having trained under Dasopant Swami Alandikar, Aravind Kumar Azad and Suresh Talwalkar for 17 years, Shukracharya Jadhav has completed his MA in Music (Pakhawaj) from the B.V.D.U School of Performing Arts in Pune. He stood first at the all-India university level in 2010 and received the third position at all-India university level in the West zone competition in Gwalior in 2010. ■





“NO MAGIC TRICK IN WRITING”

“...it’s all practice and rigour.” NCPA Theatre Head **Bruce Guthrie** catches up with British playwright **Simon Stephens** on his play *Sea Wall*, the process of writing and creation.

Tony Award-winning British playwright Simon Stephens is what one would call a modern poet. The writer of profoundly beautiful pieces including *Birdland* (2014), *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2012) and *Sea Wall* (2009), Stephens’s plays are a mirror of the chaos and fears that swirl within us.

A 40-minute-long monologue about a father’s relationship with loss, death and god, his *Sea Wall* was adapted for Indian audiences by NCPA Theatre Head Bruce Guthrie in 2019. Starring Jim Sarbh, the play, in two seasons, moved audiences to tears with the simple questions it asks about the way we grieve. *Sea Wall* is also the first play to be filmed and broadcast digitally, in NCPA’s attempt to adapt 2020’s pandemic-smear new reality.

Post the show, Guthrie got talking to Stephens about *Sea Wall*, writing and his process. Here are edited excerpts.

BRUCE: *Sea Wall* is truly a defining play. What was the moment in which the idea for the play crystallised in your mind?

SIMON: Around 2009, I got an email from Josie Rourke—who was then the Artistic Director of the Bush Theatre in West London—and she said she needed a play for one actor, in about a month, to be produced in natural light while the theatre was being renovated. I think restrictions are quite freeing for an artiste and so, in no more than half an hour, I agreed.

Jim Sarbh in the powerful monologue, *Sea Wall*, written by Simon Stephens and directed for the NCPA by Bruce Guthrie

ROSHAN W DUTT

In *Sea Wall*, when the protagonist's father-in-law finally explains what he thinks god is—that it is the space between two numbers, or in the way light falls on a city in the start and the end of an evening—there is the possibility for the numinous.

At the time, I was on holiday with my wife, three kids and my father-in-law, Martin, in his house on the west coast of France. My two sons, young men now, were eight and five at the time, and my daughter was a baby.

One of those days my wife went to the supermarket and Martin, the kids and I went out to this little cove by his house for a swim. Martin said he would look after the kids while I went for a swim and while I did, he sat there reading this book on the history of China. I swam far out, turned to catch my breath and I noticed he wasn't paying attention to the kids at all! And I remember thinking, 'Martin, they are eight and five! You've got to pay attention to them because they are jumping around the rocks.'

And then I paused and said, 'Oh, *that's* interesting!' (laughs). Because while the idea that my child might die before me terrified me as a parent, as a writer I wanted to look into this space that frightened me most.

And so, I just thought, let me write this play, and let me write it for the very talented Irish actor Andrew Scott. As soon as I put him in my mind, I wrote it in about five days.

There's quite a significant interrogation about God in the play. Can you tell us about that?

At the time of writing, I was sort of undertaking a mental investigation of the nature of what God is. For most of my childhood, we never went to church, apart from funerals or weddings. I think I thought of God as a slightly grumpy Father Christmas and by the time I was 12 or 13 years old, I stopped believing.

Even now, I remain quite atheistic in my position, but it struck around the time of writing *Sea Wall* that my attitude towards God was peculiarly childish. That I had never really asked people who had faith, what God was for them. And so, I spent a certain amount of time in the last decade just considering that.

And so that interrogation, of 'What is God?', plays out in *Sea Wall*.

Especially, I think in that paragraph in which the protagonist's father-in-law finally explains what he thinks god is—that it is the space between two

numbers, or in the way light falls on a city in the start and the end of an evening, or in the way in which some people walk...Even repeating it now, I find it quite moving—that in the beauty of these things, there is the possibility for the numinous.

Let's trace back a bit in your life then. How did you get started as a playwright?

I never wanted to be a playwright. I wanted to be a songwriter, like the writers who meant most to me when I was growing up.

I wrote songs for seven, eight years as a teenager. It was only when I went to university that two things happened. One, I realised that I had a genuinely dreadful singing voice (laughs). Two, in a pathetic and ultimately entirely futile attempt to meet the cool kids and beautiful girls I started going to the university drama society. And although the girls never talked to me, the cool kids never noticed me and the plays were awful, it introduced me to an art form, the potential of which I was really taken by.

So, did you write your first play in college? What was the journey to your first production?*

I wrote my first plays at university. I put them on and directed them myself with student actors. By the time I left university, I kind of realised that if I ever did anything in my life, other than being a playwright, I would be in some way disappointed with myself. And that felt like an incredible thing to have to live with (chuckles), especially because my family was not in a position to be able to pay for me to do that. But I decided to not compromise. And so, I went to live in Edinburgh, formed a band with this guy, met my girlfriend, carried on writing plays and just got a load of side jobs.

It was finally after seven, eight years of working in bars, working in cafés, trying to write but nobody being interested in what I was doing, that I finally got through. It was really frustrating, but actually looking back, I think those were the years that define me most as an artiste. Because having that impulse and the motor to keep going when everybody is ignoring you and sending you rejection letters is what truly propels you ahead (smiles warmly).



British playwright
Simon Stephens

And then if it stays, I'll start the research process. This can be reading books, interviewing people, going to places, reading other plays, looking at art, looking at music...Having done the research stage, I'll start looking for a character. I'll try and find the character whose story I want to tell, and from the character, build narrative and from the narrative, build structure.

And then the final thing I'll do is write the dialogue.

How do you write? How do you do that magic trick? Do you feel like it just flows? Is it a conscious thing or a subconscious thing?

Very, very conscious. I'm quite sceptical about the notion of magic. I don't think any kind of magic works in the arts. I think it's practice and rigour. You make plays by working, not by summoning something from the ether.

“You don't go to the theatre to learn about the world; you go to the theatre to learn about yourself”

Do you have single moments of inspiration? Is there a moment that makes you think, okay, I need to write a play about this?

Peter Brook, the Anglo-French director, coined a phrase that he calls 'a formless hunch'. That's a phrase I have always liked because it makes a lot of sense in describing my experience of writing ideas. I start with something vague and uncertain that has no shape. It feels like the idea is somehow behind my left shoulder, and I will eventually reach for it...It can be wanting to write for an actor. It can be an image... *Blue Bird* (2012) was, what's the worst thing that can happen to a father and combining that with London taxi drivers at night. In *Sea Wall* (2009), the starting point was being asked to write a play that could be performed in natural light. So, it can be anything.

What follows next?

The most important thing for me after I have had the idea is to just leave it. Don't do anything. Don't make notes. Do other stuff, walk the dog, make the kids dinner, write daily, do rehearsals for another show. If the idea is any good, it will stay. If it's not stayed, it was never a good enough idea for a play.

Lastly, what kind of theatre do you yourself enjoy?

I love different types of theatre. I always go to the theatre to have my head kicked in or my heart broken. I have great faith in the art form.

I love it. I miss it deeply. Deeply. I can't wait for it to return. I love Broadway musicals when they are good and made of heart and not money. The Royal Court Theatre is as close as I have come to a church. I love Shakespeare when it is made with the sense of anarchy, sexuality and devilry with which they were written. I love Chekhov when the people producing Chekhov understand that this is an artiste writing about sex and death; not people swanning around in linen dresses (laughs).

I don't really enjoy going to the theatre to consider ideas. I go for mess and confusion. You don't go to the theatre to learn about the world. You go to the theatre to learn about yourself. Because you want to consider your own, think about what it is to be alive for a while and how magical and awful it is at the same time. ■

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Sea Wall had a series of online screenings in February and March 2021, with more screenings coming up soon. This interview has been transcribed and written by Shayonnita Mallik.

Music to the Ears

From Italy to Hong Kong to the rural hinterland of India, music lovers rejoiced in Indian and Western classical music concerts presented under the NCPA-Citi Online Edition that brought much-needed respite from the absence of live performances.



Zakir Hussain



Mr Khushroo N. Suntook (left) with the CEO of Citi India, Mr. Ashu Khullar (right)



From top to bottom:
Marat Bisengaliev;
Zane Dalal;
Hariprasad Chaurasia



Great effort, Team NCPA and Mr. K.N. Suntook!
- *Vinita Shridharani*

Thank you, Citi Bank and NCPA, for giving us the opportunity to enjoy such beautiful concerts at home, especially when we are missing live concerts!
- *Meera Athavale*

Being an NCPA member for decades, I know that if the NCPA is presenting an event, it would invariably be perfectly executed and feature maestros.
- *Kim Singh on Aadi Anant - Masters of Percussion*

I am based in the U.K. Always look out for NCPA shows as India visits are not permitted. Thank you, NCPA team.
- *Shyam Sippy*

Speaking of Zakir Hussain, words will fall short because his reputation is beyond the world of words.
- *Satyam Khaire*

Just love hearing the sarangi, so glad it is alive and well!
- *Durga Bor*

What a vibrant piece of music! The dexterity of the violinist and the pianist was a treat to the eyes! Way to go, SOI! Bravo.
- *Sarita Ragade on Mendelssohn: Concerto for violin and piano in D minor featuring Marat Bisengaliev and Roberto Prosseda*

I live in the rural area of Hyderabad. Did not know such an organisation existed. Will now relax with the concerts. Thanks, NCPA.
- *Prasad Jata*

Such a wonderful platform to promote promising youngsters. Thank you, NCPA!
- *Shailaja Ganguly on the Promising Artiste Series featuring Ninad Daithankar and Om Bongane*

Kudos to your relentless service to the world of art and music, NCPA!
- *Vilas Deshmukh*

Bringing young talent to masses via electronic transmission which is easily accessible is a great service to artistes as also the audience.
- *Krishna Gupta*

Great performance, bravo! The young students in the orchestra did a wonderful job!
- *Raikhan Iskendirova on students of the SOI Music Academy in the Mendelssohn concert*

Many many thanks to the NCPA for providing a stage to such talented budding artistes of tomorrow. We feel assured that our musical treasure is in safe hands.
- *Vaman Patankar on the Promising Artiste Series featuring Krushna Salunke and Aparajita Chakraborty*

My fellow music teachers and I attended Zane Dalal's session the day before the show. He explained the nuances of Rimsky-Korsakov, the European take on Eastern music and each movement to us. Thank you, NCPA, for sharing this wonderful performance! I informed my students as soon as I got the notification.
- *Kumarsambhab Maiti on Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade performed by the SOI under the baton of Zane Dalal*

I have enjoyed Hariprasad Chaurasia's performance many times. This is a delightful piece recreating primal forest sounds. The masterful fusion jazz in the end shows his versatility.
- *Krishnalekha Sood*

In the last five years, since moving to Mumbai, the best moments were at the NCPA. And last week in hospital with Covid, these 8 pm concerts were really looked forward to!
- *Behram Kabrajee*

Notes from a Musical Exile

Isolation appears to have taken an unexpected turn for the Resident Conductor of the SOI, **Mikel Toms**.

The longer the current lockdown drags on, the more you may have noticed my increasing resemblance to Napoleon. Certainly, once a fortnight, as I stand beslippered in my back garden, sawing away at my isolation beard in the reflection of the kitchen window, the likeness is arresting. To be clear, though, it isn't (to the relief of my Russophone colleagues in the orchestra) that I've marched on Moscow yet. Nor have I (perhaps to the disappointment of our Indian audiences but certainly to the relief of my next-door neighbour Hugh) established an anti-British alliance with the Sultan of Mysore.

It's early days, though.

No, yesterday while watching a video of the most recent performance I gave with the SOI and making notes on what might be improved and what could be done differently next time, I was struck by the image of the Emperor of France in his final years of exile, marooned on the remote island of St Helena, refighting the battle of Leipzig with a box of tin soldiers, working out how he might have turned the whole thing round in his favour.

Later the same day, I found myself scrambling over (to be honest, through) a hedgerow pursued by a herd of cows over whom I was convinced, only minutes earlier, I had developed some sort of cow-whispering hold during the course of the pandemic. Sure enough that evening, I read how Betsy Balcombe, a schoolgirl befriended by Napoleon on St Helena, recalled hiking with him through a meadow of similarly English cows. "One of the cows, the moment she saw our party, put her head down and her tail up, and advanced

An engraved illustration depicting Napoleon Bonaparte at St Helena



On reflection, I feel that what Napoleon really needed on his breezy South Atlantic outcrop was a Zoom account

a *pas de charge* against the Emperor. He made a skilful and rapid retreat, and leaping nimbly over a wall, placed that rampart between himself and the enemy."

It is all, I think we can agree, uncanny.

On reflection, I feel that what Napoleon really needed on his breezy South Atlantic outcrop was a Zoom account. Just this morning, from my breezy North Atlantic outcrop, I spoke with my NCPA colleagues across three continents and we refined, without recourse to tin soldiers, our strategy

for concerts, recordings and touring over the coming weeks and months. I wonder if Napoleon's stay on St Helena would have been quite so final had he adequately addressed his video conferencing requirements.

It could be, however, that I've been looking at the wrong island. St Helena was Napoleon's second exile. His first was to the Mediterranean island of Elba where he was kept under guard for just under a year. He then absconded to France where he re-crowned himself Emperor and generally wreaked havoc for a few more months until he was definitively dispatched to the other side of the planet.

Of course, it's not up to me to characterise my return to Mumbai as a wreaking of musical havoc. Modesty requires I leave that distinction to others. All I will say is that I'm very much looking forward to seeing you once again in India and I am delighted that each passing day is one day closer. ■

Pandit of Playback

This month marks the 102nd birth anniversary of legendary Bollywood singer Manna Dey. Vidhi Salla explores the singer's multifaceted career and the strong roots of classical music that revealed themselves in the songs he sang.

For the film *Basant Bahar* (1956), music directors Shankar-Jaikishan appointed Manna Dey to sing the raga-based tracks of the film. One such song, 'Ketaki Gulab Juhi', composed in Raga Basant was to be a *jugalbandi* between Bhimsen Joshi and Dey. The latter was terrified at the thought of not only singing with one of the stalwarts of Indian classical music, but also defeating him in the *jugalbandi* which was required of the song sequence. He squarely refused the offer and allegedly even disappeared with his wife for a few days to avoid singing the song. After much persuasion from Joshi, who also suggested they practise together, Dey relented. Finally, when the song was recorded, Joshi had nothing but praise for Dey's effortless rendition of the song and his improvisations within the raga. While ardent fans of the singer lament how he never received the recognition he deserved as a playback singer, Dey was unmatched when it came to classical numbers and was a favourite among music composers. He imbibed the quality of his uncle and legendary actor-singer-composer Krishna Chandra Dey, of singing classical music in a way that would appeal to the layperson.

SEEDS OF MUSIC

Prabodh Chandra Dey, whose *daak naam* (nickname) 'Manna' became his *bhaalo naam* (good name), was born on 1st May, 1919, in North Kolkata into a musically inclined family. His paternal uncle, popularly known as K.C. Dey, doted on him and had musical aspirations for his favourite nephew. Under the tutelage of his uncle, a naughty prankster turned into a dedicated musician who left an indelible mark on the music industry. In his autobiography, *Memories Come Alive*, Dey writes, "To

me, music is God—the sole source of inspiration and knowledge. I live for music. Yet, I spent a large part of my childhood wrestling with my friends and picking up fights. Music never appealed to me at the time... The musical ambience of our ancestral house was instrumental in effecting the turnaround from a mischief-monger to a music-maker. It inculcated the desire in me to excel in music." After completing his graduation from Kolkata University, Dey began receiving singing lessons from his uncle as well as from Dabir Khan, whose lineage has been traced back to Tansen. When K.C. Dey moved to Mumbai, it was natural that his nephew-protégé followed him.

Dey made his foray into playback singing with the 1942 film *Tamanna* while assisting his uncle on the music of the film. The song was a duet with the then star Suraiya called 'Jaago Aayee Usha' and was an instant hit. Dey received his first solo break with the 1943 film *Ram Rajya* when K.C. Dey refused the offer because he sang playback only for films he was acting in. By the 1950s, Dey was singing for Bengali as well as Marathi films, his strong linguistic talent flourishing as a result. He was very particular about enunciating the lyrics of a song clearly and audibly.

He went to great lengths to learn Urdu and Farsi from a tutor named Sayyid saab before singing qawwalis and ghazals. His penchant for perfection is evident in his diction in one of his most famous qawwalis, 'Na Toh Karwaan Ki Talaash Hain', from *Barsaat Ki Raat* (1960) composed by Roshanlal Nagrath (more famously known by his first name, Roshan). In his seven-decade career, Dey recorded more than 3,500 songs. Apart from Hindi and Bengali, he sang in a number of languages including Assamese, Gujarati, Marathi, Malayalam, Kannada, Punjabi, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Magadhi, Maithili, Konkani, Sindhi and Chhattisgarhi.

"You listen to my songs. I listen only to Manna Dey's," singer Mohammed Rafi had once famously said to his fans



A MAN OF RAGAS

Among the many classical compositions sung by Dey, the one that often comes to mind is the Roshan composition, 'Laga Chunari Mein Daag' from *Dil Hi Toh Hai* (1963). Sahir Ludhianvi wrote the lyrics of the song which were based on Kabir's poem, 'Chunari mein parri gayo daag piya'. Rajesh Roshan, popular Bollywood composer and Roshan's son, recalls in an interview, "He [Dey] was like this batsman who walks in, hits a match-winning sixer and walks out to the roar of the crowd." Dey would often finish learning and recording a film song in less than two hours and sometimes in one take.

He attributed a lot of his achievements to the rigorous classical training he received from his uncle and many other gurus throughout his lifetime. Among the many raga-based renditions of Dey, some of his best ones include, 'Poochho Na Kaise Maine' in raga Ahir Bhairav from *Meri Surat Teri Aankhen* (1963), 'Bairan Ho Gayi Rain' in Jaijaiwanti from *Dekh Kabira Roya* (1957), 'Tu Pyar Ka Sagar Hai' in Darbari Kanada from *Seema* (1955) and the uplifting 'Bhor Aayi Gaya Andhiyara' in Ahilya Bilawal from *Bawarchi* (1972), to name a few.

Dey expressed openly, in several interviews, how producers pressured music directors to choose the relatively popular singers Mohammed Rafi and Mukesh for the lead over him. As a result, Dey's voice was typecast into singing for other characters in the film or whenever a song demanded a classically trained

DID YOU KNOW:

• Manna Dey's trademark fur cap was gifted to him by a fan from Kashmir. Once during winter, when the singer was performing a concert in the state, he was shivering on stage from the biting cold. A fan from the audience, stepped onto the dais and offered him a brown fur cap that Dey gladly accepted. Since then, he always wore it as a mark of respect towards that kind gesture.

• Manna Dey was a highly capable composer as well. Early in his career, he composed music for a number of mythological films, which he was embarrassed to be associated with, never once mentioning that he made music for such "pious and serious films."

voice. This led to the incidental creation of a genre in which Dey fit perfectly: the classical-comic singer. Take for instance, the song 'Lapak Jhapak Tu Aa Re Badarwa' from *Boot Polish* (1953). This classical piece hinting at ragas Miyan Ki Malhar and Darbari Kanada is pictured on David Abraham Cheulkar who is regaling his fellow balding jail inmates with a *bandish* (classical composition). With perfect *taans*, Dey's voice sings comical lyrics that appeal to the rain gods to bless the barren heads of the inmates so that the droplets of water may sprout new hair growth: "Boondan Se Tu Baal Uгаа De." More memorable perhaps is the humorous singing competition in 'Ek Chatur Naar' from *Padosan* (1968) between a Carnatic singer played by Mehmood, voiced by Dey, and a Hindustani classical singer portrayed by Sunil Dutt, voiced by Kishore Kumar. 'Phool Gendwa Na Maaroo' from *Dooj ka Chand* (1964) and 'Hato Kahe Ko Jhooti Banao Batiyan' from *Manzil* (1960) are along similar classical-comic lines.

ONE VOICE, MANY FLAVOURS

Despite the strong association with raga-based songs, Dey was equally at ease with all kinds of compositions. He sang the rock 'n' roll number 'Aao Twist Karein' with as much ease as the folk tune 'Chalat Musafir Moh Liya Re', blended mischief with mockery in 'Dil Ka Haal Sune Dilwala' and instilled longing for the country in 'Ae Mere Pyaare Watan'. Unlike his peers—Rafi, Kumar and Mukesh—Dey was never associated with any one hero, or even "hero songs" for that matter. Music directors could not cast his voice into any one mould, and this allowed the singer to be fluid and experimental. Composers like Shankar-Jaikishan and S.D. Burman explored this rare quality of Dey to the fullest. Soon, music makers were composing songs specifically for Dey and when he did playback for the hero in a film, the songs invariably became legendary. He sang 'Yeh Raat Bheegi Bheegi' and 'Pyaar Hua Iqrar Hua Hai' for Raj Kapoor at a time when singer Mukesh was considered the voice of the actor. He immortalised 'Zindagi Kaisi Hai Paheli' for Rajesh Khanna in the decade when a majority of Khanna's songs were sung by Kumar.

"You listen to my songs. I listen only to Manna Dey's," Rafi had once famously said to his fans. Composers S.D. Burman and Anil Biswas maintained that Dey could sing any song sung by Talat Mehmood, Rafi, Kumar or Mukesh...it was this protean quality of his that made him unique. Throughout his lifetime, Dey received many accolades and awards including the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, several National Awards, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award and the Bongo Bibhushan Award. His non-film work stands out as prominently, within which, voicing poet Harivanshrai Bachchan's *Madhushala* is a much-admired rendition. Above all, what he held most dearly were his values of always giving his uncompromised best, taking no shortcuts whether it was recording music, performing live shows or giving interviews. Dey leaves behind a legacy and outlook that is unparalleled, having inspired many artistes along the way. ■

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SUBHANKAR CHAKRABORTY/HINDUSTAN TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

GLIMPSES OF MAHARASHTRA

Brimming with culture, natural wonders and a novel heritage, the western Indian state is a riot of colour. Twelve photographers have brought their work together to give an expansive vision of what Maharashtra stands for.



A Gudi Padwa procession at Girgaum in Mumbai. Photo by Deepak Bartakke

The rich cultural heritage of Maharashtra has been sustained over centuries by generations of people with unique customs and traditions that are diverse and colourful in equal measure. The Arabian Sea washes its shores on one side while the mountains of the Sahyadri range create enchanting terrains. Maharashtra is home to Warli painting, one of the oldest forms Indian folk art as well as architectural wonders like the Ajanta and Ellora caves.

Over centuries, the people of this land have left behind a diverse body of literature, song and dance—including *abhangs*, *bharud*, *ovi* and other folk forms like *lavani* and *tamasha*. An equally eclectic collection of crafts have also been a vital part of the state. From intricate

wooden toys to the circular artistry of ganjifa cards, from dhurrie-weaving to bamboo-based crafts, the peoples of Kolhapur, Pune, Aurangabad and other places have invested generations in perfecting their local crafts. For instance, the art of weaving Paithani sarees dates back to the 17th century.

On the occasion of the 62nd anniversary of Maharashtra Day, that commemorates the formation of the State of Maharashtra, twelve renowned photographers, all members of The Photographic Society of India, bring you glimpses that are teeming with all that is singularly Maharashtrian. The exhibition has been curated by Gajanan Dudhalkar and will be held at the Piramal Gallery, NCPA, when normalcy returns.



A leopard on the prowl at the Tadoba National Park. Photo by Sudhir Gaikwad



Kathi Holi in Nandurbar is celebrated with gusto by tribal communities in the neighbouring villages who dance the night away in their traditional attire before *Holika dahan* at dawn. Photo by Rajendra Waghmare



A bullock cart race at a village near Jejuri in the Pune district.
Photo by Vaibhav Jaguste



The shepherd community observes the Shri Vitthal Birdev annual yatra at Pattan Kadoli village near Kolhapur, infusing the air with turmeric as part of the rituals.
Photo by Gajanan Dudhalkar



The biodiversity hotspot of Kas plateau near Satara is known for several varieties of wildflowers and butterflies endemic to the region.
Photo by Kedar Bhide



A morning shot at the Gateway of India.
Photo by Subhash Jirange



A performance during a lavani festival in Aurangabad shot in slow shutter speed.
Photo by Kishor Nikam



The historic Pratapgad Fort.
Photo by Sudhir Nazare



A cloud-swaddled Tamhini Ghat near Pune during the monsoon.
Photo by Prakash Dudhalkar



A half-immersed Ganesha idol at Girgaum Chowpatty; this was the first such shot captured in Mumbai, made possible by riding the boat to the immersion point for tall idols near Walkeshwar.
Photo by Mukesh Parpiani





The Acid Test

With elements of funk, soul, hip-hop and a lightness of sound that appealed to listeners of pop, rock and jazz, acid jazz and the sub-genres associated with it, were celebrated around the world for a decade, before fading into obscurity. By Narendra Kusnur

Simon Bartholomew of The Brand New Heavies, considered to be pioneers of the London acid jazz scene, in performance at the Liverpool Music Week

By the late 1980s, jazz promoters had realised that the younger generation was not taking to the genre in large numbers. Listener tastes focused on mainstream pop and heavy metal, both of which had reached new heights. Something needed to be done to attract them.

There had been earlier attempts to create an interest. The jazz-rock fusion boom of the early 1970s, led by Miles Davis, Weather Report, Mahavishnu Orchestra, violinist Jean-Luc Ponty, guitarist Larry Coryell and pianist Chick Corea, had a successful run.

Towards the end of that decade, smooth jazz also became popular, thanks to guitarist George Benson, saxophonist Grover Washington, Jr., flugelhorn player Chuck Mangione and the group Spyro Gyra.

That generation had moved on by then, and the challenge was to get newer people into jazz. Industry-watchers noted that in the late 1980s, many youngsters were listening to funk, hip-hop and dance music, and that the club culture had caught on. That was when they felt blending these genres with jazz would be a good idea.

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Innovation

The short-lived sub-genre called 'rare groove' made way for the more popular style of 'acid jazz'. The term was attributed to French-born, U.K.-based broadcaster and DJ Gilles Peterson, who formed the label Acid Jazz Records with DJ Eddie Piller. It had nothing to do with the term 'acid rock', which referred to 1960s rock music associated with psychedelia and hallucinogens.

The term caught on after Acid Jazz Records released a compilation blending jazz with funk and

From the late 1980s till the end of the century, acid jazz, ska jazz and hip-hop jazz acquired many new listeners but the audience profile, which was younger, now preferred to listen to music at clubs

spoken word. Being heavily rhythmic, it spread across London clubs and soon spawned its own variants in other regions. Meanwhile, ska jazz took off in Jamaica. It was a blend of jazz and ska, a precursor to reggae. When the 1960s group The Skatalites, with their generous horn section, came back in the 1980s after a hiatus, they popularised this new genre of music.

With hip-hop becoming popular in the U.S., it was natural to blend it with jazz elements. This was how hip-hop jazz or jazz-rap came about. The first successful example was the 1985 release of the track 'Jazz Rap, Volume 1' by the group Cargo led by pianist-vibraphonist Mike Carr. Over the next few years, many others followed, often lacing hip-hop songs with samples of popular jazz tunes. A new sub-genre was thus created.

From the late 1980s till the end of the century, acid jazz, ska jazz and hip-hop jazz acquired many new listeners. The audience profile was different from the past, as youngsters now preferred to listen to music at clubs or restaurants, and though they also bought records, it wasn't with as much fanaticism or frequency as those who collected mainstream jazz. However, London venues, like the Wag Club in Soho and Dingwalls in Camden, and later, The Blue Note at Hoxton Square, had many takers for acid jazz. And though it was essentially a British movement, acid jazz spread to the U.S. and Japan too.

Diversification

Keeping that in mind, let's look at these sub-genres in some detail. One of the biggest acts to come out of the acid jazz scene was The Brand New Heavies, an acid jazz and funk group formed in 1985 by Simon Bartholomew and Andrew Levy. With N'dea Davenport on lead vocals, they were an instant draw. The Heavies tasted success with their self-titled debut album, but later, the vocalists kept changing, and so did the mix. After using a larger funk influence on earlier recordings, they began incorporating hip-hop in a larger way. Davenport, of course, returned much later, and was featured in their 2019 single 'Getaway'.

If the Heavies were a huge name on the club circuit, another acid jazz-funk act, Jamiroquai, achieved

Integrating elements of jazz, soul and funk, the New York-based band A Tribe Called Quest changed what was possible to create within the realm of hip-hop



Doo-Bop, Miles Davis's posthumously released album, used hip-hop elements, and pianist Herbie Hancock's 1994 album *Dis Is Da Drum* followed in a similar style

worldwide fame through its music videos. Led by vocalist Jay Kay, who stayed on despite numerous line-up changes, its style was characterised by sounds taking influences from black music and lyrics dealing with social issues. The videos 'Virtual Insanity' and 'Cosmic Girl' from the 1996 album *Travelling Without Moving* were hits. Though Jamiroquai used a lot of funk, critics observed that they didn't have much of an obviously identifiable jazz sound. For the lay listener, its tunes could also pass off as pop, because of their catchiness. This was an argument made

against some other groups too, and it was felt the style of acid jazz was too loose and vague.

Yet, some groups blossomed in the mid-1990s. For those new to the genre, three acts worth trying out are Incognito, Courtney Pine and James Taylor Quartet (not to be confused with the famous singer). All of them have a considerable jazz quotient, and Incognito actually drew a large audience a long time before the term acid jazz became common. They were called a jazz-funk band till then. Pine, on the other hand, is a multi-instrumentalist who led the band Jazz Warriors, whereas the James Taylor Quartet started with a strong dose of funk roots but diversified into a more eclectic mix after acid jazz became popular.

Modernisation

If acid jazz was popular in London's clubs, ska jazz moved from Jamaica to New York. Some of the prominent acts in the American city were Victor Rice, New York Ska-Jazz Ensemble and David Hillyard & The Rocksteady Seven. In London, bassist-composer Gary Crosby formed Jazz Jamaica with much success. Soon, the genre spread to Holland, Italy, Australia and South Korea. The speciality of ska jazz was that it retained the basic ska or reggae sound

of Jamaica, but used a lot of horn arrangements and jazz improvisations. Even for lay listeners, it was vibrant, happy music, something one could dance to.

Hip-hop jazz, a derivative of acid jazz, was a focused mix of rap and jazz. So we had rapping vocal stretches played against a backdrop of trumpet, saxophone and double bass. After the band Cargo released 'Jazz Rap Volume 1', the group Gang Starr came out with 'Words I Manifest', sampling Dizzy Gillespie's famous 'A Night In Tunisia'. The groups A Tribe Called Quest, Us3, De La Soul and Dream Warriors later helped popularise the style, and rapper Guru did a series of collaborations in his *Jazzmatazz* series with jazz artistes like trumpeters Donald Byrd and Freddie Hubbard, saxophonist Branford Marsalis and vibraphonist Ron Ayers.

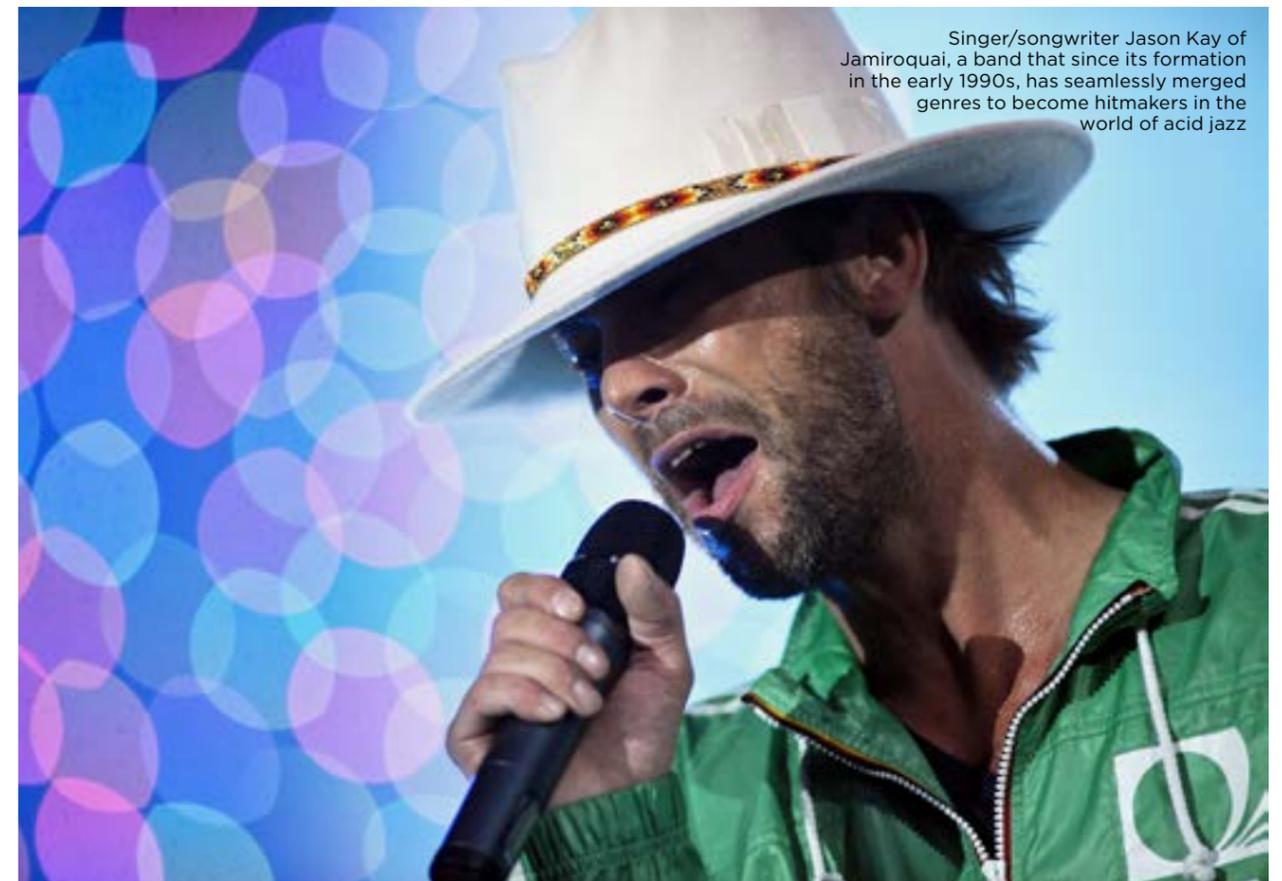
Interestingly, some renowned jazz musicians took to hip-hop jazz seriously. *Doo-Bop*, Miles Davis's posthumously released album, used hip-hop elements, and pianist Herbie Hancock's 1994 album *Dis Is Da Drum* followed in a similar style. Marsalis collaborated with many hip-hop artistes too.

The three sub-genres had their run in the 1990s, but rapid developments in musical styles worldwide changed the scenario towards the end of the decade. Because of the increasing use of electronics and changing patterns in live deejaying, new forms of jazz started springing up. Electronic jazz or nu jazz became the new fad and acid jazz slowly made its way out. The musicians of the genre either adapted to the change or played to smaller audiences.

For the decade or so that it lasted, acid jazz and the other blends had their good moments. Today, one can access a lot of their sounds on YouTube or various streaming platforms. The genre of music can be picked up any time, more so if you are in a mood to party. Jazz, after all, is timeless. ■

Essential acid jazz albums

1. *The Brand New Heavies* by The Brand New Heavies, 1990
2. *Positivity* by Incognito, 1993
3. *Travelling Without Moving* by Jamiroquai, 1996
4. *In The Hand of the Inevitable* by James Taylor Quartet, 1995
5. *Hi-Bop Ska!* by The Skatalites, 1994
6. *Skaravan* by Jazz Jamaica, 1993
7. *Low Blow* by New York Ska-Jazz Ensemble, 1996
8. *Doo-Bop* by Miles Davis, 1982
9. *Dis Is Da Drum* by Herbie Hancock, 1994
10. *Guru's Jazzmatazz, Vol 1* by Guru, 1993



Singer/songwriter Jason Kay of Jamiroquai, a band that since its formation in the early 1990s, has seamlessly merged genres to become hitmakers in the world of acid jazz

Kaleidoscope

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



The maestro in Milan

It has to be a momentous occasion when Zubin Mehta and the Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala come together to make music. On 4th April, Mehta conducted a fully masked Teatro alla Scala Orchestra in an audience-free concert of Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 3 in D major and Anton Bruckner's monumental Symphony No. 9 in D minor, which was live streamed for a limited time on the Milan-based venue's website, and its Facebook and YouTube channels. The concert has been lauded for, among other things, its 'carefully shaped' details. Mehta, who has shown a deep affection for Bruckner in his decades-long career, has said how he was introduced to the music of the Austrian composer when he first came to Vienna at 18. 'This is the sound I carry with me all my life,' he once said of the composer's oeuvre. For more information, visit www.teatroallascala.org

A fair affair

At a time when we have seen postponements and cancellations of art fairs around the world, it is reassuring to know that Art Busan is going ahead, albeit in a different manner. From May 14th to 16th, the international art fair will see only 6,000 visitors instead of the usual 60,000 but for the rest of us, Art Busan has partnered with Artland, a company that provides an online gallery for artists and 3D virtual tours for aficionados. The art fair has been serving as a platform for Korean artists,



and has, since its launch in 2012, proven to be an important cultural event that not only discovers boundary-pushing artists but also introduces them to the world. For more information, visit www.artbusandesign.com

Storytellers of rural India

A 63-year-old woman walks several kilometres each day serving as a librarian in a remote village in Kerala. In Kullu, a festival is celebrated with a deer costume, the beats of the dhol and nagada, and long walks in the dark. A local teacher and guide reminisces about the onset of monsoon in his village in Maharashtra that always coincides with the hatching of bioluminescent fireflies. These are the stories of rich and diverse cultures and, in one of the most uplifting responses to the ongoing pandemic, a new website is finding ways to 'create a revenue stream for affected communities [in rural India] through digital journalism' while also serving as a repository for oral traditions. To read stories from across India, or to volunteer or contribute to the initiative, visit www.voicesofruralindia.org



The French touch

Full of charm, vigour and humour, *Coppélia*, a ballet about unrequited love, jealousy and misunderstandings, has remained a favourite with audiences since its first performance in Paris in 1870. When dancer and choreographer Roland Petit reimagined *Coppélia* in 1975, he immersed the already acclaimed ballet in a world that was unmistakably French—literally, by moving the setting from a village in Poland to a garrison town in France, and figuratively, with choreography that couldn't belong anywhere else. This month, the New National Theatre in Tokyo is bringing the vibrancy of Petit's version to the stage of the Opera Palace, their main opera house, and it promises to be fun, fabulous and very, very French. For more information, visit www.nntt.jac.go.jp/english/productions/ballet/coppelia-2021.html ■

- Vipasha Aloukik Pai



The Performing Arts Dispatch

A series on houses of culture from around the world. In focus this month: Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay

Separated by half a century and united in their mission, there is a common thread that runs through the history of the NCPA in Mumbai and the Esplanade in Singapore. Both sit on reclaimed land where once the waters of the Arabian Sea and Singapore Straits respectively flowed and both have made every inch of the space count.



Affectionately called the Durian for its unmistakable spikes, the Esplanade promotes the performing and visual arts through not only its array of indoor and outdoor venues, including rehearsal spaces, but also through its team of art advocates who work towards cultivating the arts scene. Three festivals representing the main cultures of Singapore—Malay, Indian and Huayi-Chinese—were introduced at inception and remain integral to the Esplanade’s programming. Nineteen years into existence, it is one of the world’s busiest arts centres, hosting about 3,000 performances a year—a number that it was continuing to build on when the pandemic struck.

Rachelle Tan, Director, Venues & Planning, The Esplanade Co Ltd and AAPPAC (Association of Asia Pacific Performing Arts Centres), Secretary-General, tells us more.

How did the Esplanade engage with its audience during the lockdown?

As the national performing arts centre, we are committed to keeping the arts accessible to everyone every day, through our daily free performances. Going digital enabled us to keep that promise when live performances ceased, and the arts centre was closed from April to June 2020. We had to find alternative ways to sustain engagement with our audiences. One of them was through Esplanade Offstage (www.esplanade.com/offstage). The content-rich website, launched in October 2019 is an all-access backstage pass and insider’s guide to Singapore and Asian arts and culture, featuring videos, podcasts, stories and more. The onset of Covid-19 gave us the opportunity to accelerate our plans to stream performances in 2020, to bring live performances into the online

space and unlock the treasure trove of performances in our digital archives.

Another channel we have utilised is SISTIC Live for pay-as-you-wish videos, to cultivate new audience habits of paying for digital performances. Three notable Singapore theatre and dance productions from our archives were released on the platform in May 2020. Audiences could watch for free or buy a ticket on a pay-as-you-wish basis. More than 5,000 tickets were issued, and all proceeds went to the arts groups behind the productions.

These are made possible as Esplanade had embarked on a digital transformation journey six years ago to become the leading ‘Digital Performing Arts Centre’ for Singapore and Asia. We recognised the need to leverage the digital sphere, to reach new and international audiences.

What kind of preparations were made for the Esplanade to reopen? Will programming continue to be a hybrid of online and live performances?

We have been working closely with the authorities as well as our partners, artistes and hirers in preparation for the resumption of small-scale performances with live audiences at Esplanade. Our safety management measures have also been in place since the beginning of the pandemic as the Esplanade Mall and our public spaces have remained open, and our performance venues have also been open for recording and rehearsals since July 2020. These include temperature screening and the use of a contact tracing application at all venues, increased frequency of cleaning and sanitisation of our venues and equipment as well as adhering to the safe-distancing practices for artistes and staff backstage. To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for audiences, stringent

measures, including socially distanced seats and staggered arrival and exit, were put in place.

Programming and producing performances for the digital platform have entailed a whole new way of thinking and working that is distinct from that of live performances. This ranges from how the programme is conceptualised and filmed, to

navigating intellectual property rights in the digital space, to retooling Esplanade’s venues and spaces for the live-streaming of performances. This has served as a foundation for continued digital engagement, even when live performances resumed at the centre since November 2020.

While the digital medium allows us to reach a wider audience, we know that it can never replace the immediacy and community of the live experience. We will continue to programme hybrid festivals with both digital and live components.

What are some of the key learnings during this period that will continue to guide the functioning of the Esplanade?

Thanks to our earlier digital transformation efforts, we were able to pivot quickly when the pandemic struck. Our digital engagements have become increasingly important in widening our reach and growing new audiences. We’ve learned that we need to continue learning—to have the courage to experiment and imagination to explore and to create. The hybrid performance model is in its infancy. Digital plus live performances bring richer and more meaningful arts experiences for audiences. Artistes also gain both a wider reach and an opportunity to deepen engagement with audiences through their works, as well as stretch their creativity. We will need to find the right balance and a sustainable operating model as there are higher cost implications, digital fatigue, as well as more demands technically and in terms of preparation. Nonetheless, hybrid is the way to go and we remain excited about the possibilities ahead for art-making, programming and engagement with the communities we serve. ■

- Snigdha Hasan

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Membership Application form

Dear Member,

This is a reminder to renew your membership for the next annual term. Renewals are open for memberships that have expired. You also have the option of renewing your membership for the next two years. In order to keep all information up to date and recent, we request you to please fill in this membership form in order to renew your membership. Kindly submit this form along with **recent passport-sized photograph/s and your membership card/s to the membership department. You can now renew your membership online. Log on to www.ncpamumbai.com for details. For enquiry on new membership, please contact the Membership Department.**

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Joint Member Name: (in case of couple membership)

Membership No.

Address:

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Telephone: Mobile:

Email: Date of Birth:

Occupation: Company:

Date: Signature:



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Dear Friend of the SOI,

Thank you for your continued support of the Symphony Orchestra of India. We'd like to take this opportunity to remind you that it is time to renew your association with the SOI. Renewals are open for memberships that have expired. **Please check the validity on your card.** In order to keep all information up to date, we request you to please fill in this renewal form along with a recent passport-sized photograph and submit it to the Membership department at the Tata Theatre. A new SOI card will be issued to you immediately.

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Cheques for both NCPA and SOI should be drawn in favour of 'National Centre for the Performing Arts' and submitted along with a stamp sized photograph to:

The Membership Department, Tata Theatre, NCPA, NCPA Marg, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400 021.

Email: membership@ncpamumbai.com
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** GST of 18% (9% CGST & 9% SGST) is applicable on fees for all membership categories (for NCPA & SOI) from July 1, 2017.



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