

 NCPA

JANUARY 2023

# ON Stage<sup>®</sup>

VOLUME 12 • ISSUE 6



## First Notes

Music education at the NCPA

Connections India  
A theatre festival for the young

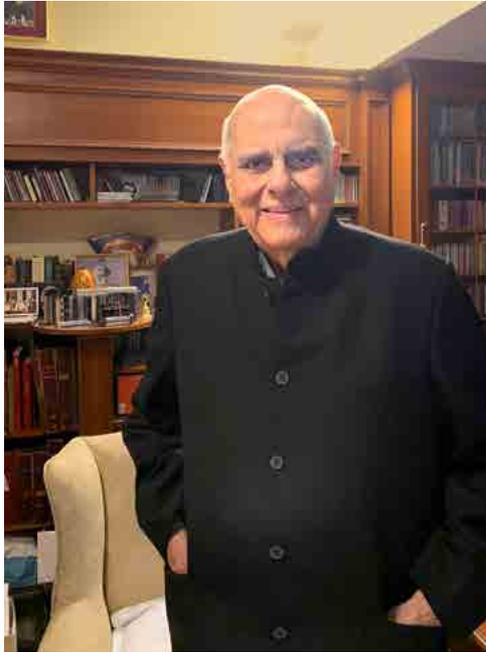
NCPA Mumbai Dance Season  
Bringing the community together

# India's Partner in Progress.

Supported 19.4 million individuals from  
low-income communities.



# Chairman's Note



There is an area of work at the NCPA which is not publicised but is of great significance in the development of young minds by mentoring them in the spheres of music, dance and theatre, and in the building of audiences by guiding newcomers towards a greater appreciation of our culture and that of other countries too.

Our intentions are steered by the belief that a nation of gravitas is built on the foundation of the importance it accords to the arts. And the endeavour goes a long way when work begins at a tender age.

We have also freely contributed our mite to the promotion of all forms of culture through this widely appreciated magazine and I hope that the efforts towards its expansion to artistic and other communities gain stronger support.

I am proud of the manner in which our heads of genres have enhanced the quality of our offerings. I would particularly like to express my joy at the Sangeet Natak Akademi's Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar in Odissi Dance received by Mrs. Swapnokalpa Dasgupta, Head of Dance Programming at the NCPA. Our congratulations to her.

The new year only promises to bring more of these painstakingly curated offerings while work continues on the education and outreach front.

Here's wishing that your 2023 is filled with all things bright and beautiful, and in which the arts play no small part.

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

**Khushroo N. Suntook**

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Khushroo N. Suntook

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*By Beverly Pereira*

# EXPLORATION BEYOND THE BORDER

**Manfred Weinberger – trumpet**

**Rahul Wadhvani – piano**

**Gino Banks – drums**

**Sheldon D'silva – bass**



**6th January 2023 | 7:00 pm**  
**Experimental Theatre, NCPA**



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# SOI CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Mikel Toms, conductor  
Alexander Ullman, piano



Mozart: Overture to *The Magic Flute*  
Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5 “Emperor”  
Schubert: Symphony No. 5

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An NCPA & Mehli Mehta Music Foundation Presentation

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# A Culture of Music

From the annual seminar on Indian music this month to a special programme for young minds, diverse educational initiatives are underway at the NCPA to support gifted musicians and build new audiences.

By Snigdha Hasan



*In addition to practice-based sessions on complex musical concepts, ancillary skills workshops are conducted regularly by the NCPA so talent does not have to lose out to the way of the world*



**A**t the opening concert of the *Aadi Anant* festival in December, Niladri Kumar in his brief banter with the audience spoke of how the plan for what to play that evening had changed moments earlier, in the wings. “We played Raga Shuddha Kalyan during soundcheck and Ustadji has just told me, ‘But we played it during soundcheck!’ So, here is Raga Hameer for you and we’ll see how the evening progresses.”

The evening progressed from a meditative exposition of what is often considered a late evening *raga* to a masterly dialogue between Zakir Hussain and Kumar through a bouquet of *ragas*, their instruments in complete surrender to their fingers

or the other way round; it’s hard to tell. There was playfulness—musical mischiefs one isn’t always privy to. There was virtuosity, with the tabla and the sitar taking turns and coming together in breathtaking crescendos. There were moments of reflection when all else, but the strumming and the *thirkan* on the *syahi*, ceased to matter.

This spontaneous turn of events is no rare occurrence in the world of Indian classical music that has improvisation enmeshed in its very fabric. But when maestros of such stature unite, the word ‘improvisation’ calls for a rethink, for it is barely an indicative term to describe how musicians choose to channel years of *riyaz* in a particular performance, sometimes, minutes before going onstage.

SHUTTERSTOCK

## Rigorous learning

Intense training and practice—the story of a young Hussain being awakened for *riyaz* by his father and tabla legend Ustad Allarakha at 3 am, dawn after dawn, is well known—is what lies beneath the tip of the proverbial iceberg of a career in music. At the NCPA, where the promotion, propagation and preservation of the arts is a holistic pursuit, performance is only one of the many facets of engaging with them.

Numerous programmes and initiatives in Indian music have been instituted over the years to facilitate education at various levels. For a serious learner of music, the commitment is lifelong and the decision to pursue a career in it is made knowing full well that the path ahead is far from easy. It starts

with securing the finances to pursue an education in music—a prerequisite that has robbed many gifted individuals of the opportunity to hone their talent. Thoughtfully designed scholarships at the NCPA seek to address this by inviting applications for advanced training in *khayal* and *dhrupad* forms of singing, and percussion and melody instruments. The entrees are screened and then judged by a panel of experts.

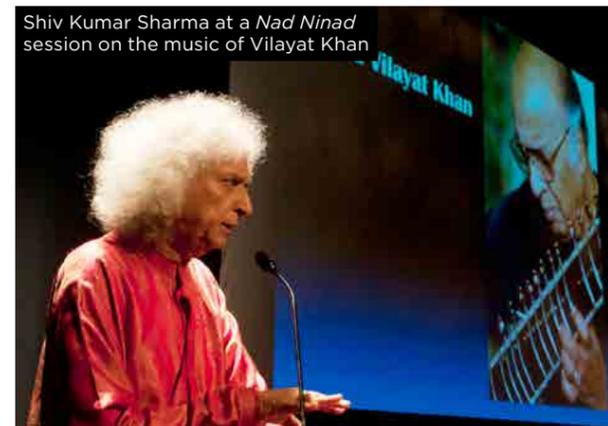
Legendary flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia in conversation with eminent sitar exponent Arvind Parikh under Meet the Maestro, a special interactive series



The 2018 seminar on *thumri, dadra* and allied forms featured stalwarts of Indian music



Shiv Kumar Sharma at a *Nad Ninad* session on the music of Vilayat Khan



**Not all children may grow up to be singers or musicians but early exposure means they will certainly have an ear for music**

The multifaceted *Guru-Shishya* programme takes the salient features of the centuries-old tradition of one-on-one teaching and adapts them in a modern context. Under Support to Gurus, for example, noted artistes receive financial support to train three promising disciples each; an education which may last several years. The programme is gratis for the disciples. The aforementioned scholarships and programme are supported by Citi.

Guru in Residence invites stalwarts of music to conduct intensive sessions on such niche themes as the performance aspects of *raga*, and *bandish* in Hindustani music, over three days. Participants, who may not always have access to these gurus based in other parts of the country, include a select group of music practitioners. Students of music attend these workshops as observers.

The NCPA's annual seminar in January, organised in collaboration with music institutes from across India, explores a specialised central theme with academic rigour through presentations, discussions and lecture-demonstrations by experts including well-known artistes and scholars. The seminar is open to all and sees practitioners, teachers, students and listeners of music in attendance. The two-day seminar this month has been organised in collaboration with the International Foundation for Fine Arts and delves into 'The Aspect of *Bhakti* in Indian Music Traditions'. The seminar goes beyond the well-known devotional aspect of *bhakti* and investigates

its impact on myriad other traditions from folk and classical to semi-classical and light music. Vocalists, instrumentalists, scholars and historians including Ajoy Chakrabarty, Devdutt Pattnaik, Shekhar Sen, Aruna Sairam, Suresh Talwalkar, Anup Jalota, Gaurav Gadgil, Dhanashree Lele, and such others will weigh in with insights on the centuries-old tradition from historical to performative perspectives.

The best of education, however, may not prepare one for the vicissitudes of a professional artiste's life. In addition to practice-based workshops supported by Citi to help artistes gain a clearer understanding of complex musical concepts, ancillary skills workshops are conducted regularly so talent does not have to lose out to the way of the world. Intellectual property rights, mental health, understanding branding and marketing, studio recording particularly in the wake of the paradigm shift during the pandemic are areas that have been covered in these workshops supported by HSBC.

### Informed listening

The arts straddle the worlds of inner peace, when performance is a solitary activity, and ecstasy, when shared with an audience that appreciates the *taiyari* and its outcome onstage. To help listeners in this process and develop new audiences, a spectrum of programmes has been designed. Guided listening

sessions under *Nad Ninad* make available the wealth of the NCPA's archival recordings to lovers of Hindustani music in Mumbai and elsewhere in India. Led by experts in the field, these widely popular sessions offer an understanding of the finer nuances of musical interpretation. An eight-part series of listening sessions on the artistry of Vilayat Khan was concluded in December.

Lecture-demonstrations on introduction to Hindustani music have been organised at centres of learning. Educational interventions such as these also serve as a platform for recipients of the abovementioned scholarship who are invited to demonstrate the performative aspects elucidated in the sessions.

Embracing the arts as an artiste or a listener has its seeds sown in childhood. The Music for Schools project was launched in 2014 to introduce young minds to the nuances of Indian music. The programme has since reached over 5,000 children across several schools in Mumbai, particularly where music is not part of the curriculum. Specially composed age-appropriate music is provided to the schools and students also learn the rhythmic aspect of the genre with a tabla player. Every year, students, many of whom hail from low-income backgrounds, come together to perform a concert at the NCPA. They are also invited to other performances through the year. Such exposure is integral to the learning arc for

students to be able to appreciate the commitment to an art form which ultimately shapes great artistes.

The Citi-CSMVS Museum on Wheels, a mobile museum project curated under the guidance of Dr. Suvarnalata Rao, Programming Head - Indian Music, NCPA, has been developed in collaboration with the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya. The mobile museum, which travels to the interiors of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa, features interactive models that make an array of musical concepts accessible to children. Not all of them may grow up to be singers or musicians. But music, as many studies have shown, aids the development of the brain, and early exposure means they will certainly have an ear for music.

As the concert moved from one high to another that December evening, Kumar asked the audience what they would like to hear. "Khamaj" and "Bhairavi" were heard the loudest. Hussain, who shared Kumar's claim over the best seat in the house, joined the *rasiks* in their request for Raga Bhairavi. The maestro teased the strings into a familiar excerpt and the audience grew euphoric. The evening had traversed the plain of the introspective *raga vistaar* to the interactive finale, completing the musical ecosystem of which the artiste and the audience are inseparable halves. ■

*The Aspect of Bhakti in Indian Music Traditions will be presented on 21st and 22nd January 2023 at the Experimental Theatre.*

# To the Musical East

Four musicians of the SOI travelled to Kalimpong to conduct a series of classes and performances at the Gandhi Ashram School in an effort to break through the geographical barriers of learning.

By Aishwarya Bodke

As four musicians from the Symphony Orchestra of India packed their instruments and cardigans to travel to the hills in December to teach music, it marked the beginning of a collaboration that will continue to take shape over the next year.

Over four days, cellist Yulia Gallyamova, violist Mark Nunes and violinists Deon D'Souza and Averell DeSouza, conducted a series of classes and performances for the students and teachers of the Gandhi Ashram School in Kalimpong, a hill town in the Himalayan foothills of West Bengal. A Jesuit educational institution, the school nurtures students of the local community as well as those from remote areas and difficult backgrounds, providing tuition-free academic and arts education.

Music is an integral part of the pedagogy at the Gandhi Ashram School, where the emphasis is on artistic expression and creative learning. The music programme is the beating heart of the school since it was founded by Father Edward McGuire. The school is devoted to building a solid foundation in three art forms—fine arts, drama and music. The choir and string orchestra of the school are loved for their performances locally, while also having played internationally.

About a decade ago, a fundraiser concert for the Gandhi Ashram School was conducted at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, by Virgil Sequeira, now the Principal and Assistant Director of the school. Marat Bisengaliev, Music Director of the SOI, attended the concert, which paved the way for a future of possibilities. Kushmita Biswakarma and Prayash Biswakarma, who went on to join the SOI, also happen to be alumni of the school.



Averell DeSouza, Mark Nunes, Yulia Gallyamova and Deon D'Souza from the SOI conduct a session with the teachers at the school



Mark Nunes with the students

The vision behind the initiative—which remains uniform across the vast outreach and educational work that the SOI carries out—is to help institutions in different corners of the country working towards the shared goal of music-making and producing skilled musicians.



Yulia Gallyamova works with a student



Morning assembly with the musicians

The itinerary included observation classes, workshops, orchestra sectionals and rehearsals, teachers' ensemble rehearsals, instrument instruction classes and morning assembly performances. Designing the schedule meant working with the school to accommodate what they felt would benefit their students. "The initiative was as much about performing for the kids as it was about teaching. Hundreds of kids study music there and they rarely have the opportunity to hear performances other than those by the students and teachers themselves. We were keen on having that performance aspect included," explains Xerxes Unvala, General Manager - SOI & Western Classical Music at the NCPA.

The initiative was met with great enthusiasm from the students. As the first string was struck in the morning assembly, the kids listened with rapt attention and watched in amazement at what they could achieve on their instruments. Sequeira elaborates, "The new school orchestra was extremely grateful as it was a big opportunity for them to set

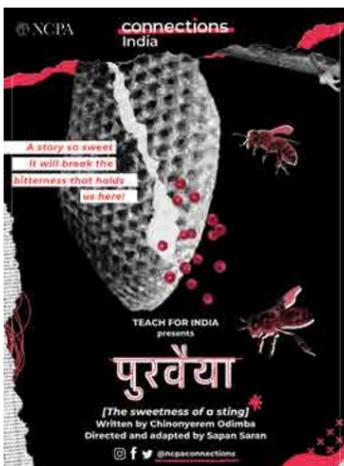
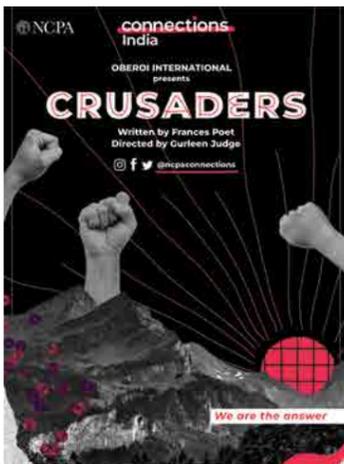
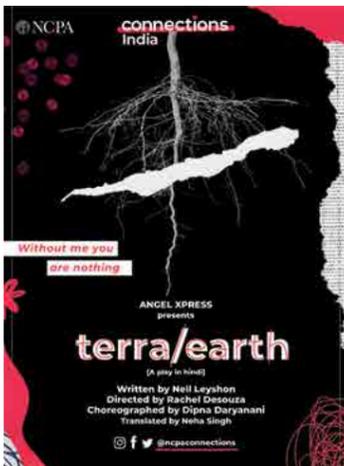
The vision behind the initiative is to help institutions in different corners of the country working towards the shared goal of music-making and producing skilled musicians

the ground for their performances next year. Our teachers were elated that they could finally play with someone better than them. It was an opportunity for them to learn and have musical conversations that are difficult with students they teach on a daily basis."

The musicians echoed the gusto, each one of them concurring with the brilliance of the students and their unmatched discipline. Talking about his experience with the students, D'Souza says, "We realised that their ability to take group lessons is fantastic. It's almost like the kids are hypnotised and only want to learn." Nunes seconds the sentiment. "The students are glued to what you are showing them and are really good at picking up things. Now that we know these kids, we can come back with a solid agenda," he says. To take this forward, teachers from the Gandhi Ashram School will be visiting the NCPA to observe the rehearsals of the orchestra as well as the working of the SOI Music Academy.

Along with being an educational exchange, the initiative is also a cultural one. As the sound of the sea travels to the hills, what follows is the exchange of ideas, traditions and warmth. The musicians fondly recall the breathtaking views, the chilly mornings, the delectable food and the sky turning dark before the evening could sneak in. They smile as they talk about playing Nepali folk music with the teachers and the students.

It is the universal language of music that bridges thousands of miles to create a shared space of knowledge and harmony. To push the boundaries of learning is what the educational initiatives of the SOI strive to achieve. Unvala rightly puts it, "It is important to realise that we are geographically limited, occupying the southernmost tip of Mumbai. These initiatives are a starting point to help the places that nurture music in the best way we can while building relationships with them. Ultimately, if there are more qualified musicians in the country, everybody wins." ■



# IT'S SHOWTIME!

Eight schools. Eight directors. Eight plays. The first edition of the youth theatre programme Connections India, in association with the National Theatre in London, is all set for a grand showcase at the NCPA.

Twenty-seven years ago, folks at the National Theatre in the U.K. felt the need to start a programme that would provide a playground for the country's young minds to engage with theatre. And thus, was born Connections, an annual, nationwide youth theatre festival that champions the talent of the theatre-makers of tomorrow.

In 2022, the NCPA joined the network of 300 theatre companies that shine a spotlight on 6,000 young people every year. Helmed by Anahita Uberoi, Creative Learning Director for Theatre and Shernaz Patel, Creative Learning Producer for Theatre at the NCPA, together with Bruce Guthrie, Head of Theatre & Films, Connections India unfolded over six months and is now ready with its first edition. The festival has been supported by Godrej Agrovet and BookASmile.

"We are delighted that the inaugural NCPA Connections India festival will take place at the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre. These plays by award-winning playwrights are incredibly relevant to the world of young people today. The festival will grow year on year to become a truly national movement here in India. The exciting and diverse range of themes the plays deal with are explored by the students and professional directors. Together they create an experience that encourages engagement of the imagination and pushes the creativity of the students. This is a festival about young people, performed by young people. It gives a voice to them and a platform for their world to be expressed. We look forward to seeing their work and welcoming them to the NCPA as part of this landmark festival," says Guthrie.

## Actors prepare

"Something we learnt along the way is that we don't need to be perfect, and how to have more confidence in ourselves. Teamwork was something we worked on and by the end, truly came together as one unit. An example of this is when we sang Ed Sheeran's 'Perfect' together for the first time, and bonded over it. Theatre gives us an opportunity to step out of our comfort zone and explore a wide range of emotions ...plus, it's fun!"

**Kahini Desai, Siddh Jain, Sia Sachdev and Mahika Poddar, Cathedral and John Connors School**

I have learnt the importance of collaborating with others and having more patience. I have also discovered that my friend who is silent in class changes completely as she enters the rehearsal room. She is full of energy, open to others working with her and not one to give up easily. With the help of theatre, I want to learn more, have the courage to speak to others and come face to face with the world, which until now, was contained within my room."

**Ansika Sahanis, Teach for India**

"We learned a lot and it was all fun and enjoyable. It has also been a great way for me to interact with people, who I never thought I would be friends with. Acting is one of my biggest passions, and it's so interesting, I could do it all the time. I can't wait to get more opportunities for being in theatre. I am very excited to see our final play put up, and what everyone else thinks of it."

**Ananya Merchant, Bombay International School**

## THE PROCESS

### Eight Plays

Specially commissioned by the National Theatre, U.K. Developed with input from young people—current, challenging and relevant

### Eight Directors

Professional theatre practitioners from Mumbai direct plays with inputs from two visiting directors from the National Theatre

### Eight Schools

Each director works with students and teachers of one school

### NT Directors

- conduct week-long workshop for directors and teachers
- participate in the rehearsal process
- give feedback after the school performances

### The Connections festival

The students get to perform at the NCPA, with production and technical support by the theatre

## Director's cut

"We need these initiatives now more than ever, especially for teenagers, who often find themselves isolated as a result of what they are going through at that age. Nothing brings people together like making a play does. Of course, one always wants to make the best play possible but here, one would want to create something which goes beyond that too—in a way that only a truly collaborative artistic process can."

**Gurleen Judge**

"The young actors came with two striking qualities: unparalleled energy and determination. We trained them to focus their energies, and build the physical and intellectual stamina needed to perform a full-length play. They responded very well to both, conceptual ideas and skill training, and slowly, like any professional production, we were able to build a shared vocabulary in the rehearsal room."

**Sapan Saran**

"Very quickly, it became more of a teaching role than a directorial one. Being willing and able to adapt was essential...When working with NGO students, exposure to diverse arts is as crucial, if not more, as creating the play. Our group went on two theatre excursions which made all the difference in the rehearsal room. Sometimes the end product doesn't matter much; it's building an open and authentic artistic vision with each child that became our goalpost."

**Rachel D'Souza**

"You begin by seeing a student who would barely talk or respond to instructions get comfortable as time goes by and almost anticipate what I'm looking for and deliver that. The underconfident ones become a little more confident, the lazy ones become more agile because they aren't being marked on anything. It is hard for someone with no exposure to the arts to become a part of this ecosystem but I already know a few kids who have asked me about doing this more."

**Aakash Prabhakar**

"The process is very important. So, no matter who I'm working with, I want to make sure it is an enriching and fulfilling experience for all. I want whatever happens onstage to come from the actors themselves so they have a sense of ownership...It is really amazing to watch the way the kids open up and become more invested in the process."

**Sheena Khalid**



## Director's cut

"I work with the young generation a lot and usually, what is picked by schools is simpler like musicals or plays which are purely entertaining. But *Remote* was a thought-provoking script, something that is more real and hard-hitting. I had to approach this differently...When these young actors read the script, they instantly connected with the characters. Through the process of finding these characters, they somehow found a bit of themselves."

**Amey Mehta**

"My directorial approach was literally, one page at a time. All I had to do was change my own perspective and try and see the play through their eyes. And I saw a seismic shift in these young minds. They started bringing ideas to the table and the challenge began to be met head on. It is imperative to build a youth theatre movement not only to shape a culturally rich generation but also for us to better appreciate the different aspects of our own humanity."

**Trishla Patel**

"I had to approach my rehearsal process with the understanding that, for many of the students, I was initiating them into the world of acting and this experience may shape their career choices in the future...It was thrilling to see that students started to think "outside of their lines" where even those of them playing characters in the background in certain scenes would find new behaviour true to their character. At a time when humanity is seemingly the most divided, initiatives such as Connections India enrich the students with empathy and an experience that at such an impressionable age, has the ability to change their lives."

**Vishal Handa**

## Actors prepare

"I feel grateful to have been a part of Connections India, and I liked the experience. Something I discovered about myself is that I can dance, and I enjoy it. I would love to continue to be involved in theatre, as a performer and dancer."

**Anjali, Angel Xpress**

"I discovered that acting is not just an art to help find yourself, but also something where you have to lose yourself. I don't think we talk about this enough. To lose yourself and enter the world of someone else is immensely hard and only those who can actively do that can engage with their character. I was never able to lose myself to become someone else entirely, however, I would do the same in fragments. With this in mind, I would want to keep practising this art. However, I would also love to be involved in theatre by trying my luck with the backstage crew—the glue that brings the performance together."

**Suhana Mittal, Oberoi International School**

"I play Antler in *Remote*, an insightful play about young people. For that reason, I found it easy to connect with my character's sentiments, which helped me emote better. Although I have always enjoyed acting, Connections India let me truly savour the experience of being a core part of a play. Watching the lights come on while onstage is both a nerve-wracking and exhilarating moment—one I can only hope to experience again and again."

**Sana Dharamshi, Aditya Birla World Academy**

*NCPA Connections India festival will be held from 19th to 22nd January at the JBT Box. Schools interested in making this theatrical experience accessible to their students, or bring them to the NCPA to watch these plays could write to [connectionsindia@ncpamumbai.com](mailto:connectionsindia@ncpamumbai.com) or call 93720 98112*



# connections India

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# The Fabric of Dance

The upcoming edition of the Mumbai Dance Season is set to enthrall connoisseurs of the art form with programmes and cross-genre collaborations spanning a month.

By Akshaya Pillai

Swapnokalpa Dasgupta remembers it like it was yesterday. She has repeated this story over and over again, when asked about the spark behind kicking off the Mumbai Dance Season, in which the NCPA collaborates with the dance community of Mumbai in a one-of-its-kind month-long celebration. The story begins on the day she decided to create a dance presenters' forum that would help various dance groups align their dates and schedule performances across the city without having to force the audience to choose between different wonderful programmes. Behind this fraternity-building exercise, which was conceived

in 2018, is a contemplation of what constitutes the fabric of dance. Dance is not an isolated creative endeavour. It reflects the needs of the society it is a part of and can only thrive if it continues to evolve and engage with the audience.

Upon deeper reflection, the origin of the festival is to comprehend the elusive relationship between the artistes. "There was a time, not so long ago, when gurus did not want their disciples to go watch another dance performance. They feared it would adulterate their style and would affect the purity of their *gharana*. So, there was no habit of watching, imbibing or appreciating. In the past, prominent

artistes took pride in the admission that they did not watch their peers perform. 'I have my own shows, where do I have the time to watch others?' was the thought process," she explains before asking rhetorically, "If the students who are learning the art and performers who are practising it themselves don't go enjoy and encourage the art form, how can we complain that the audience is dwindling?" An auditorium full of dance practitioners is crucial in other respects too, she adds. "It is only when dance is watched by artistes and students who can critique the technique and other nuances that it can evolve."

Classical dance has survived major crises, including the anti-nautch laws, and found its way from flickering lamp-lit temple courtyards to state-of-the-art auditoriums. While we can be certain that artistes will find new ways to celebrate tradition through their art, it is necessary to ensure we adapt and innovate with changing times. In the '80s, Doordarshan, with its regular dose of traditional art forms programmes, helped bridge the gap between art and the common man. Veterans like Kathak exponent Shovana Narayan have said that the arts should be included in the school curriculum to increase aesthetic appreciation. But shouldn't reform begin at home? Shouldn't performers then take the first step to appreciate their peers? After all, aren't all dance forms permutations of the same five creative elements: body, action, space, time and energy?

This is where Dasgupta as the Head of Dance Programming at the NCPA decided to step in. She envisioned a season that is by artistes and for artistes—a space where all the performers would be students as well as hosts. A month-long celebration where dancers present, launch, debate and discuss, where the city of Mumbai is united by dance. "The NCPA is able to bring the dance community together because these individuals want to come together. Here, seniors are happy to watch juniors bloom," Dasgupta adds. For her, the festival is all about giving. "I get a bird's eye view of the dance community. I know when people are struggling with audiences. I know where things are going wrong and when the community is not feeling motivated."

In uniting the dance community, a thought must be spared for the many musicians who sit on one side of the stage, away from the audience and facing the performer but are an integral part of the



performance. If everyone wants to be a solo artiste, if everyone wants to only perform and not ably support the performer what would that mean for the future of traditional dance forms? The question of the quintessential creative duty towards the various performing and non-performing members of the community predates Dasgupta's concerns but she is here to ponder and come up with solutions. She is quick to draw comparisons with the film fraternity where "from the spot boy to the choreographer to the musician... everybody feels involved, recognised and even gets a share of the limelight. They feel proud of the end product and

Here and following pages:  
Glimpses of folk performances  
at the 2020 edition of the  
Mumbai Dance Season



**“The NCPA is able to bring the dance community together because these individuals want to come together; and here, seniors are happy to watch the juniors bloom”**



they identify with it. We also need to recognise and appreciate musicians accompanying the artistes. They play an important role.”

After a pandemic-induced hiatus, the NCPA Dance WhatsApp group, which was first created in 2015, has been abuzz once again. “Artistes spend the year wondering what they can present each year and when it finally happens, it is beyond just a performance. It is a larger-than-life engagement with NGOs, schools and many, many dance groups.” Each season brings together a mélange of live performances, dance workshops, research paper

presentations, lectures and outreach programmes in virtual and physical formats. The opening and closing ceremonies are held at the NCPA while the events in between are hosted by venues across the city. While many other dance initiatives at the NCPA moved online, the season didn’t. “The season thrives in the actual presence of the community. Organisers are in flux, moving from one part of the city to another to ensure a smooth run of events. That is indeed what makes the season a festival.”

New ideas and enthusiasm are brought into the world of dance with the new season. Each year,

**“This edition of the Mumbai Dance Season is an opportunity for all performers to come up with new associations and demonstrate how colour is an essential part of how we experience the world culturally”**



Dasgupta invites experts from diverse disciplines as guest curators for the season’s opening ceremony and finale. When Latasana Devi was first asked to work on a theme for this edition of the festival, her thoughts wandered back to an article she had read decades ago about how each one of Krishna’s *sakhis* would adorn only a specific colour assigned to them. Devi has been thinking about colours ever since. “Through these performances, we would like to interpret the many meanings and duties associated with each colour. And we will bring all these colours together like the Mumbai Dance Season brings all of us together,” says the veteran performer who has mastered not just Manipuri but also *Kartal Cholom* (cymbal dance), *Nata Seishak* (vocal training), *Pung Cholom* (drum dance) and a variety of martial art forms. Devi tells us that she looks forward to her day as a curator. “This is my first time curating and I am having so much fun. I am constantly reading up about different art forms and themes and thinking of how to incorporate them all into our programme. I am consciously trying to ensure that when we say colours, it doesn’t get interpreted as costume colours. This is an opportunity for all performers to come up with new associations and demonstrate how colour is an essential part of how we experience the world culturally.”

Kathak exponent Ranjana Phadke, who is also a graded artiste of Doordarshan and the founder of Kathakalaya, is the co-curator this season. This year’s opening will see two collaborative performances of Kathak with Bharatnatyam and Odissi with Kuchipudi. The other five dance forms in focus are *Bihu*, *Tipni*, *Lavni*, *Ghusadi* and *Ghumar*. “When we think of folk dance from Gujarat, the first thought is of *Garba* but very few of us dancers think of *Tipni*. So, this year we have decided to promote folk dance forms from across the country and have also made sure to include dance groups that have not performed under the NCPA banner before.” she adds.

Dasgupta insists that the curators do not perform in the same year; instead they are offered a chance to perform in the upcoming edition. Both Devi and Phadke could not be happier with this rule. Phadke says, “When you are performing, it is a one-person show and it involves a lot of stress which would be impossible to navigate along with the curatorial process. Besides, it is so exciting to meet different members of our community and focus all our energy into the making of this larger-than-life dance festival.” ■

*The opening ceremony of the 2023 edition of the Mumbai Dance Season will be presented on 19th January at the Experimental Theatre.*



The Mingus Big Band

# A Rarefied High

With each day different from the other, the 2022 edition of the NCPA International Jazz Festival was a musical page-turner. We bring you all that transpired at the three-day celebration.

**By Sunil Sampat**

It is said about jazz that for a listener it is best to 'let the music get to you' instead of trying to reach into the music. All one needs to do is listen well. The three-day NCPA International Jazz Festival, held on 25th, 26th and 27th November, was an ideal opportunity for doing just that: listening and letting the music come to you. The brilliant acoustics of the Tata Theatre and the performances of three magnificent jazz ensembles, two from New York and one from Germany, took the experience to a rarefied high for the discerning Mumbai audience.

When the Mingus Big Band took the stage on the opening night, it blew the audience away with the power of its sound. The 13-piece band played like a well-oiled machine on steroids. The high level of proficiency of each of the band members combined with precise arrangements, made for a sublime listening experience. One not



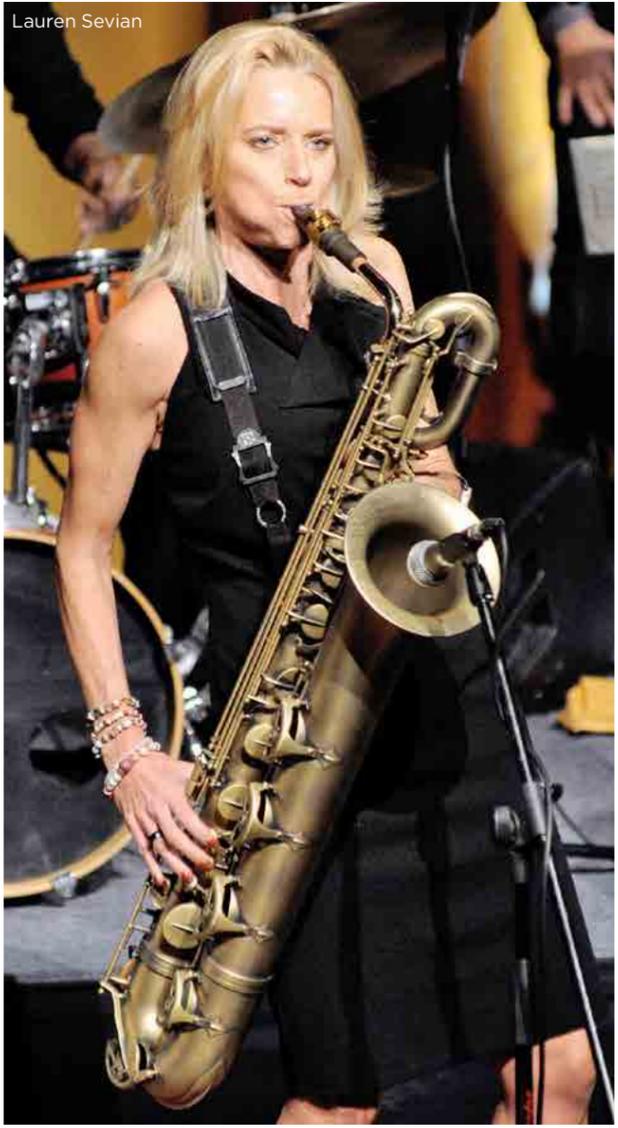
Theo Hill

only heard the music, but could also feel the power of Charles Mingus's compositions throughout the band's performance.

Mingus, apart from being a fine bass player, was also an extremely creative composer. The band opened

## When the Mingus Big Band took the stage on the opening night of the NCPA International Jazz Festival, it blew the audience away with the power of its sound

with Mingus's 'So long Eric' and went on to play classics such as 'Profile of Jackie', 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat', 'Tijuana Gift Shop' and 'Fables of Faubus', among others. The pattern was similar in each rendition; once the theme was played, long spaces were given to soloists. Each band member was featured during the evening. Notable amongst them were Robin Eubanks and Conrad Herwig on trombone and Philip Harper on trumpet, although each soloist did justice to their craft. Boris Kozlov playing the bass was the core of the unit and demonstrated Mingus's perspective in each composition. Two remarkable young ladies, Lauren Seviaan on the baritone saxophone and Sarah Hanahan on alto saxophone emphasised the need for more gender integration in jazz bands. Seviaan's baritone solos were brilliant.



Lauren Seviaan



As if the festival was crafted as a page-turning story, the high-energy opening day was followed by a calm, introspective recital from the Monty Alexander Quintet in a performance entitled From Jamaica to Jazz. Originally from the Caribbean island country, Alexander has been a veteran on the New York jazz scene for several decades and is one



of the finest contemporary jazz pianists. He used his subtle, deft touch to great effect in an evening of classy, sophisticated jazz playing. Beginning with a piano solo, Alexander brought his musicians onstage one by one to display different effects with duo and mainly trio formats. Backed by Luke Sellick on bass and a very classy Jason Brown on drums, Alexander produced some standards not often heard in a jazz concert. Starting with John Lewis's composition 'Django', written in dedication to the French gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt, Alexander went on to play his tribute to Frank Sinatra by playing two of his hits, 'I've Got You Under My Skin' and 'Come Fly with Me'. Interestingly, Sinatra was responsible for bringing Alexander to New York from Miami in his early years in America and mentoring him with club dates in the Big Apple.

The trio also played Duke Ellington's timeless favourite 'C Jam Blues'. Joaquín Rodrigo's famous 'Concierto de Aranjuez' has been a favourite of jazz musicians with Davis playing his famous rendition in 'Sketches of Spain'. The Monty Alexander trio played a moving version of this piece and it was one of the highlights of the festival. Alexander then got into the music from his native Jamaica, playing some music of the reggae legend, Bob Marley. With the full quintet now onstage, the band played 'No Woman No Cry' with guitarist Joshua Thomas vocalising the lyrics and a swinging Dennis Rollins on slide trombone embellishing the performance. Alexander also played crowd-pleasers like themes from the movies *Dr. No* and *Exodus* and calypso songs made famous by Harry Belafonte. His performance of two originals, 'River' and 'Hurricane' (playing the calm and then the fury of hurricane Charlie, which wreaked havoc in Jamaica in 1951) was excellent. Alexander and his band had the pulse of the audience and duly fuelled their interest.



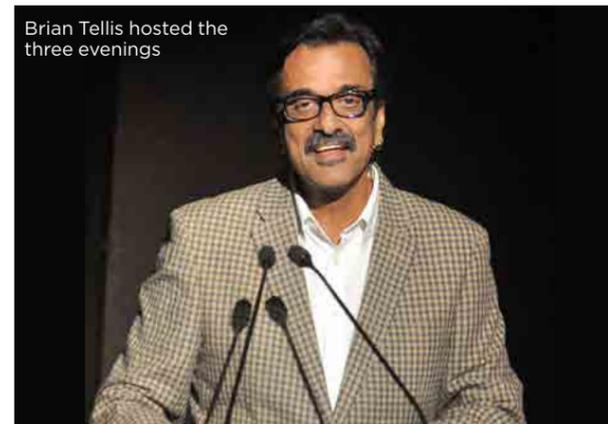
Here and above: Monty Alexander with his quintet

## **The Thilo Wolf Jazz Quartet, transformed into a quintet with the addition of vibrant vocalist Johanna Iser, dug into the swing songbook for their performance on the last day of the festival**

A Swinging Affair was the tagline for the Thilo Wolf Jazz Quartet that played on the concluding day of the festival. The band produced an evening of mainly swing jazz and played music that was familiar to the audience. The swing era in jazz refers to the period in the 1930s when big jazz bands, like those of Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller



Here and below: Snapshots from the concluding performance by the Thilo Wolf Jazz Quartet and Johanna Iser



Brian Tellis hosted the three evenings

and others, played in American dance halls. The Thilo Wolf Jazz Quartet, transformed into a quintet with the addition of vibrant vocalist Johanna Iser, dug into the swing songbook for the most of their performance at the NCPA. Norbert Nagel on

clarinet set the tone with a rousing version of Benny Goodman's famous, 'Stompin' at the Savoy'. He later switched to playing the flute and saxophone. Iser added a new dimension to the band's performance with three songs of love. Starting with 'This Can't Be Love' she moved on to 'The Man I Love' and 'There Is No Greater Love' and by now had the listeners in her corner, interspersing comments and asides between the songs.

Not many jazz concerts are complete without the music of Ellington. Wolf's band did justice to Ellington's 'It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)', with another fine vocal rendition by Iser. 'Sing, Sing, Sing', another of Goodman's gems, was played as an instrumental piece. In the original, drummer Gene Krupa stole the show with his now famous solo; at the NCPA, Jean Paul Höchstädter took centre stage and played a long crowd-pleasing solo on drums. At one point, Wolf abandoned his piano and joined the drummer in a dramatic 'drum battle' of sorts and completed a nice session of entertaining jazz. Worthy of mention was the quartet's version of the evergreen 'Summertime' by Gershwin. After an introductory vocal from Iser, the quartet played this standard in an upbeat version of a normally plaintive song; it demonstrated the freedom of jazz performance to take a standard and colour it subjectively.

The tradition of the NCPA International Jazz Festival dates back to 2011 when the first edition, then called Jazzmatazz, was held over three days. It has since been a regular annual feature with the exception of two years during the pandemic and has established the NCPA as a destination for high-quality international jazz. ■



# Music That Moves

The Symphony Orchestra of India and its founding music director Marat Bisengaliev have worked closely with Welsh composer, multi-instrumentalist and conductor Sir Karl Jenkins over the years.

We speak to Bisengaliev to learn about his long-standing association with Jenkins ahead of the upcoming SOI Spring 2023 Season that includes the India premiere of Jenkins's Requiem.

By Beverly Pereira

**B**ack in 2017, Karl Jenkins's fantastical *A/lem the Universe* was presented across two evenings in September at the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre. Originally commissioned by violin virtuoso and Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI) co-founder Marat Bisengaliev for the Expo 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan, the work for choir and orchestra enjoyed a spectacular international premiere presented by the SOI and Living Voices choir under the baton of Jenkins himself with soloists including Bisengaliev. The long-standing association between Bisengaliev, the SOI and the celebrated Welsh composer and conductor was conspicuous at these performances

at the NCPA. The ease with which Jenkins straddles musical genres—from Western classical to folk and jazz—was palpable too.

Aside from his ability to write music that draws from various cultures, Jenkins's music has enjoyed commercial success in the field of advertising. His compositions for the television commercials of De Beers and British Airways are hard to forget, as is the central theme song of the Delta Airlines commercial which Jenkins effortlessly developed into what would become his most celebrated choral work *Adiemus*. Written in 1994 and performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, it was released as the title track on the 1995 album



*Adiemus: Songs of Sanctuary*. With classical music as its foundation, the composition is tinged with African and Celtic melodies.

Jenkins isn't one to break barriers or be novel for the sake of it. "I don't aim to please people. Even if I did, I could never guess what they like. I'm true to myself and the style that I write, and it does happen to communicate with people—which is my greatest aim, really," said Jenkins in an interview with *ON Stage* in 2017. It is hardly surprising that the composer has enjoyed the status of having been in the UK Classical charts for 18 years and is widely recognised as one of the most performed living composers, as per a global survey in 2011.

## A remarkable bond

Bisengaliev and Jenkins have enjoyed a longstanding association that goes back to a period prior to 2005. "I had heard a lot of Jenkins's music on television, but I didn't know who had made it at the time. I

asked Chris Craker, my producer at Sony BMG, who told me that it was Jenkins and that he knew him very well. I asked to be introduced to him. At the time, I was with the West Kazakhstan Philharmonic Orchestra through which Khushroo got to know me in London," says Bisengaliev recalling Chairman Mr Khushroo N. Suntook's visit to the U.K. when he heard the violin virtuoso and the orchestra for the first time. He invited them to India and this

eventually led to the creation of the SOI.

Back in London, one thing led to another and Bisengaliev found himself at Jenkins's personal studio Mustache in the Soho district armed with a recording of Jenkins's own *Palladio*. Bisengaliev had recorded it with his orchestra in the Kazakh city of Uralsk shortly before the meeting. "After the first meeting, he asked if we were available to do a recording of a composition he had written at London's Angel Studio. I managed to get the support

from Air Astana in Kazakhstan and eventually brought my orchestra to London," says Bisengaliev, who travelled to Wales and London to be closely involved in the orchestral parts prior to the recording.

The recording in question turned out to be Jenkins's Requiem that he had written in 2004. It would go on to become one of his most highly acclaimed albums. The premiere took place at London's Southwark Cathedral in 2005 with the West Kazakhstan Philharmonic

Orchestra and soloists like Clive Bell on the shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute), Catrin Finch on harp, Nicole Tibbels (soprano) and Bisengaliev on violin.

## Light in lieu of darkness

A requiem, especially in the Roman Catholic church, is a mass for the repose of the souls of the dead, and many a composer has used this idiom for

**"Karl Jenkins doesn't view music as purely classical...he writes music that is truly democratic and loved by the majority"**



centuries. Jenkins's *Requiem*, dedicated to his late musician father, integrates Japanese haiku with the movements of the Catholic mass for the souls of the dead, and is performed by a choir and orchestra. "In general, I have set the usual Latin movements but in keeping with my trait of drawing from other cultures, I have also set five Japanese haiku 'death' poems. Such poems are usually to do with nature, have a single idea, and consist of 17 syllables divided 5-7-5 over three lines," says Jenkins on the website of his music publisher Boosey & Hawkes.

"One can think of it as a beautiful expression of life and death," Bisengaliev tells us. "It incorporates the oriental way of thinking about death—that it is not tragic, but can be something that is pure and spiritually eternal. You will notice that his work is different from any other requiem because of the lightness with which it looks at the concept of death. It is treated as something that's not the end of the cycle in Japanese and Buddhist traditions. His work shows us that death can be looked at as the beginning of a new life, a reincarnation that's not typically dark."

## Jenkins and the SOI

When the SOI was established in 2006, Jenkins's works found their way to the NCPA. The Welsh composer's 'Cantus Insolitus' was part of the SOI's repertoire in its very first season. Many still reminisce about the opening of the Spring 2009 season with the Karl Jenkins Anniversary Concert, where Jenkins first presented his music in a big production with the SOI and Living Voices choir at the NCPA. The programme included *Adiemus: Songs of Sanctuary*, *Palladio*, as well as *Sarikiz*, one of the many violin concertos he has written over the years for Bisengaliev. "Working with the SOI was wonderful and Marat suggested we use the bansuri instead of the quena for a special Indian sound," Jenkins later said in an interview with *ON*

*Stage* about the 2009 performance.

The following year, in 2010, two of Jenkins's works were performed at the opening concert of the SOI's ninth season. Music aficionados, both those inclined to Western classical music and otherwise, were left in awe of the compositions. "Jenkins manages to incorporate the best of all worlds. He doesn't view music as purely classical and is easily able to use elements of folk music too. He makes us realise that music doesn't need to be put in a bracket. He writes music that's truly democratic and loved by the majority," says Bisengaliev.

## A full circle

Next month, at the India premiere of *Requiem*, Jenkins will bring his holistic vision to the stage. There will be more than one choir as per usual, including the Living Voices choir, the NCPA adults' choir, The Bangalore Men, Capella Bangalore and Delhi Chamber Choir. Reflecting Jenkins's signature cross-genre and experimental style, a children's choir with students from the SOI Music Academy will sing the haiku sections instead of female voices, while a bansuri will replace those parts written for the Japanese bamboo flute. Bisengaliev, who has worked relentlessly to piece together the mosaic of choirs, soloists and the SOI at large, will conduct the *Requiem* and will appear as solo violinist on Jenkins's compositions including *Air* and *Energy* prior to it. "Jenkins writes music that's incredibly spiritual and for the heart. Even in Japan where he's popular, his music is sold under healing music. I do feel that his music heals," says Bisengaliev. Bringing together over 150 performers, this much-awaited concert will reflect the true manner in which Jenkins's music serves as a unifying force, both literally and metaphorically. ■

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*The SOI Spring 2023 Season will feature two performances of Karl Jenkins's Requiem.*



PHOTO CREDIT ALLARD WILLEMSSE

# PIANO RECITAL



by Alexander Ullman

Gibbons Four Pieces

Ravel *Pavane pour un infante défunte*

Franck Prélude, Choral et Fugue

Liszt Sonata in B minor



**12th January 2023 | 7:00 pm**  
**Experimental Theatre, NCPA**

**An NCPA & Mehli Mehta Music Foundation Presentation**

# News from the NCPA

## Giving Culture its Due

At the recently concluded RedInk Awards by the Mumbai Press Club that honour excellence in Indian journalism, senior journalist and Chairman of the press club, Mr. Gurbir Singh, set the tone for the evening by raising pertinent questions about the current state of the media in his opening speech. The Jamshed Bhabha Theatre at the NCPA, which has hosted several editions of these awards, saw stalwarts and young, intrepid journalists, united in their endeavour to bring the truth to light, share the stage. The ceremony began with a performance by musicians of the Symphony Orchestra of India, which the distinguished audience greatly appreciated.

A new award to honour writing on the arts was instituted this year—a decision that emerged from the suggestion made by Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook, Chairman, NCPA, in his conversations with Mr. Singh. “The performing arts are given scant respect by way of financial support, since they do not create revenue, and in a country obsessed with technology and monetary results, journalists, writers and others who specialise in this sphere, are not very well compensated and/or rewarded,” said Mr. Suntook, as he addressed the audience and, with Justice B.N. Srikrishna, gave the first-ever award in the Arts category to Vinay Aravind (Fifty Two; print/online) and Namdev Anant Katkar (BBC



Justice B.N. Srikrishna and Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook give the RedInk Award in the newly instituted Arts category

World; television/video). “While a start has been made by instituting this award, it may be necessary to develop this sphere further by creating a team of journalists wholly dedicated to this cause, that specialises in critiquing the arts. The amount distributed with this award may be followed up by other corporations and organisations, in promoting specific forms of art which they may wish to support. I wonder if, like in Austria, the arts can be on the front page. It is only with your assistance that we can promote and extend to our citizens the sheer beauty and potential happiness that can grow from performing and appreciating different forms of art in India to a much larger scale,” he concluded. ■



Mrs. Swapnokalpa Dasgupta was awarded the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar in Odissi Dance

## In Recognition

It is a matter of pride for the NCPA to share the news that Mrs. Swapnokalpa Dasgupta, our Head of Dance Programming, has received the prestigious Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar in Odissi Dance conferred by the Sangeet Natak Akademi for the year 2019. (The announcement was made recently in the wake of the pandemic.) This is a heartening development and testament to the work that she has done as an artiste and as head of department at the NCPA. Our congratulations to her. ■

## A Fitting Finale

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya marked its centenary in 2022. While the celebrations began at the venerable museum in January last year, they concluded at the NCPA in December with an evening of performances by the SOI Chamber Orchestra and Odissi guru Ratikant Mohapatra’s Srjan. Mr. Eknath Kshirsagar, Chairman, CSMVS, Mr. Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Director General, CSMVS, and Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook, Chairman, NCPA, addressed the audience.

Dr. Jamshed Bhabha, the NCPA’s founding father, was also the Chairman Emeritus of what was then the Prince of Wales Museum. A connoisseur of the fine and performing arts, Dr. Bhabha’s vision for the two fine institutions of this city and country is a cherished association that the CSMVS and NCPA share; a bond that has grown stronger over the years. Whether it is the Indian Music department’s work with the museum



Chitra-Vitanam by Srjan at the finale programme of the CSMVS centennial celebrations

in curating educational projects for young minds, or the SOI and the music academy’s performances under the dome of the imposing structure, it is a fine example of the constant dialogue that must take place between cultural organisations. ■

## In Support of the Arts

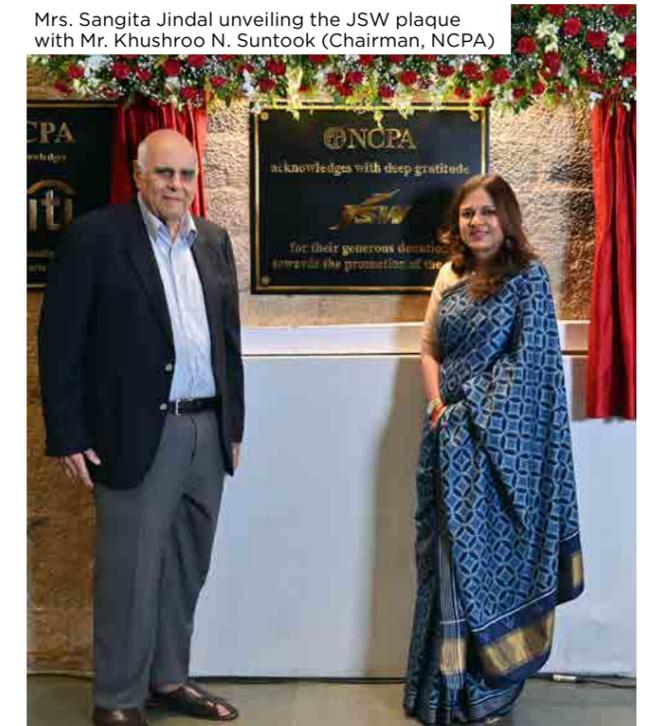
For the role that art plays in the emotional and intellectual nourishment of society, it remains largely unsung. In the wake of the pandemic, the steadfast support of individual and corporate patrons to artistes and performing arts centres is more critical than ever before.

Despite the odds, organisations like the NCPA, remain committed to preserving and promoting India’s rich and vibrant artistic heritage. Unlike many artistic activities worldwide, which are supported hugely by their own governments that steadily provide grants, the NCPA has to depend on donations from various parties. Primarily it was the Tatas, spearheaded by Dr. Bhabha, who not only established the organisation but also continue to support its activities. Other institutes, both corporate and many individuals, have made contributions through their personal trusts and supported the NCPA.

The latest major addition to this distinguished list is the generous donation made by the JSW Foundation, spearheaded by Mrs. Sangita Jindal. Over the last three decades, the JSW Foundation, the social development arm of the JSW Group, has contributed substantially to the encouragement, education and support of art and sporting activities. Mrs. Jindal began her journey as a patron of the arts under the guidance of Dr. Bhabha when she started the Jindal Arts Creative Interaction Centre (JACIC) at the organisation in 1994.

In recognition of this support, a plaque in the name of JSW was unveiled in the Tata Theatre foyer at the NCPA on 8th December by Mr Khushroo N. Suntook and Mrs Jindal.

“We appreciate Mrs. Jindal’s contribution and commend her commitment to the arts. We hope that the NCPA goes one step further in convincing



Mrs. Sangita Jindal unveiling the JSW plaque with Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook (Chairman, NCPA)

organisations to absorb the result of their support so that artistes and their families feel confident that a meaningful career in the arts is possible. I am sure that we can count on our patrons, including JSW, to consider this aspect of supporting the spread of our culture,” said Mr. Suntook. “The time I spent at the NCPA helped me grow in different directions. JSW’s endowment to the NCPA is a way of ensuring that its robust tradition of nourishing art practices continues. It is also a token of gratitude for the guidance and support I got from the institution,” said Mrs. Jindal. ■

## A Global Forum

The 2022 edition of the Beijing Forum for Performing Arts, initiated by the China National Centre for the Performing Arts, with the purpose of building a multilateral exchange platform for cultural organisations across the world, was held over two days in December. Chairman Mr. Suntook was invited to deliver a speech in the opening session, where heads of globally renowned institutions discussed the theme 'New Concepts - Fostering the Future of the Performing Arts Industry'. From the educational initiatives at the NCPA to efforts directed at building

new audiences and the reformatory role of the arts were some of the topics Mr. Suntook addressed in his well-received speech. Other speakers included WANG Ning, President, China National Centre for the Performing Arts; Dominique Meyer, CEO, Teatro alla Scala; Louise Herron AM, CEO, Sydney Opera House; Francesca Hegyi, Executive Director, Edinburgh International Festival; Adela Dubra, President, Servicio Oficial de Difusión, Representaciones y Espectáculos. For more information, please visit [www.beijingforum.art](http://www.beijingforum.art) ■

## A Treat for the City

NCPA@ThePark was inaugurated in March 2022 as an initiative in association with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to celebrate the return of live performances to physical spaces after the lockdowns and welcome the audiences back to

theatres. After an overwhelming response to the first edition, NCPA@ThePark has returned for its second edition, bringing the NCPA experience to green spaces across the city.

The first weekend of December saw the Bandra Fort



The SOI opens the second edition of NCPA@thePark at the Bandra Fort Amphitheatre



A packed house on day one of NCPA@thePark at the Bandra Fort Amphitheatre



Ramneek Singh, accompanied by musician Abhin Joshi, during UnErase Poetry's evening of Spoken Word on day two



Helly Shah recites poetry on love, hope and life



Priyanka Barve presents a bouquet of musical forms like thumri, ghazal, natyageet and popular film music



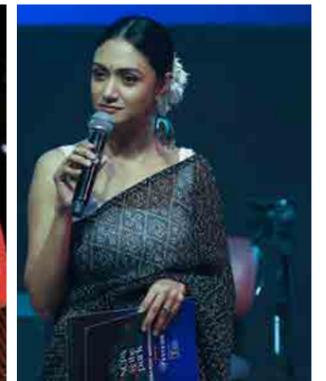
The Adil Manuel Collective, joined by vocalist Subhash Kamath, for day two



(From left) Vinayak Vispute, Assistant Commissioner BMC H West Ward; Liana Deboo, Marketing Manager for Westside; Yogesh Rane, Site-Head, XBKC; and SV Phene, Consultant to the Chairman, NCPA



Radio Jockey Rohini Ramnathan hosts day one of NCPA@thePark



Shruti Das hosts the second day featuring Priyanka Barve and UnErase Poetry

Amphitheatre come alive with performances by the Symphony Orchestra of India, Adil Manuel Collective, Priyanka Barve and UnErase Poetry. Over two pleasant evenings under the palm grove, generously made available by the BMC, the packed amphitheatre saw enthusiasts hum along and tap their feet to the beats—many of whom had marked their calendars for it while some just paused for the music and never left. This response is the *raison d'être* of initiatives such as these. Music, dance, poetry and theatre should not only be

contained within closed auditoriums but what our public spaces ought to be infused with. It is what quality time spent outside of work should be made up of.

This edition has been presented by Westside. The associate sponsor was X BKC. Citi was the CSR partner for 'Priyanka Barve Live in Concert'. The next stop is the Cooperage Bandstand on 7th and 8th January where an exciting blend of events across genres awaits you. Please visit [www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com) for more details. ■

# Laughter in a Can

A new documentary captures priceless moments of laughter, pain and glory when legends of the Parsi theatre community in Mumbai allow the camera to follow them in rehearsal rooms and onstage.

By Meherzad Patel

The term “it’s in the can” comes from the olden days when movies were shot on film and then rolled into a can. Directors were better prepared and actors knew they had limited takes as there was no concept of digital shooting. If you took too many takes, you ran out of film.

Parallel to that world was the world of thespians embracing the stage and being prepared beyond a shadow of a doubt. Actors who would work as cashiers in a bank to earn their daily bread spent their evenings rehearsing for a play, an enterprise that paid you such little money that it barely covered the cost of travel, food and time spent at said rehearsal.

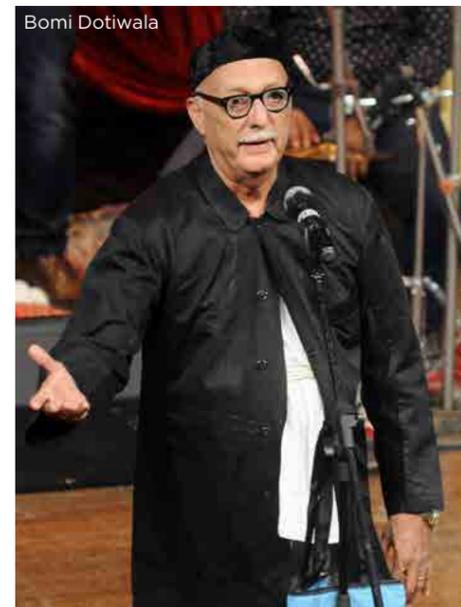
Someone somewhere realised that these theatre actors were a great bet for film. They would be better rehearsed due to the disciplined regimen embedded into their lifestyle, and the financial lure allowed them to say yes in a heartbeat. The result? You saw these stage disciples playing character roles in films. Those who could not get a break, managed to find a job abroad or simply retired into the sunset.

Cut to 2012. A group of octogenarians (and no, that isn’t a non-vegetarian Parsi eating octopus as a delicacy), after almost three decades of saying goodbye to the stage, were being coaxed to come back for one last hurrah. A noted journalist and ardent theatregoer by the name of Meher Marfatia wrote a book titled *Laughter in the House: 20th-Century Parsi Theatre* that had memories in words and photographs of the golden era of Parsi theatre. What is special about Parsi theatre? It is regular theatre, but better. A Parsi play is written with one aim in mind, to make you chuckle and giggle and while in your seat, do a wiggle. There is no moral of the story, or a single worry. The plot is always farcical and the actors whimsical. Unlike today, when Parsi plays are usually presented only in August and March, back then, the Parsi population wasn’t comparable to that of the tigers.

So, Meher wrote this book and everyone in that book decided to get back onstage. Mind you, the risk was massive. Firstly, age wasn’t on their side. Practically speaking, rehearsals need energy and in your 80s, it is not something that comes easily. Secondly, the chances of you not being present



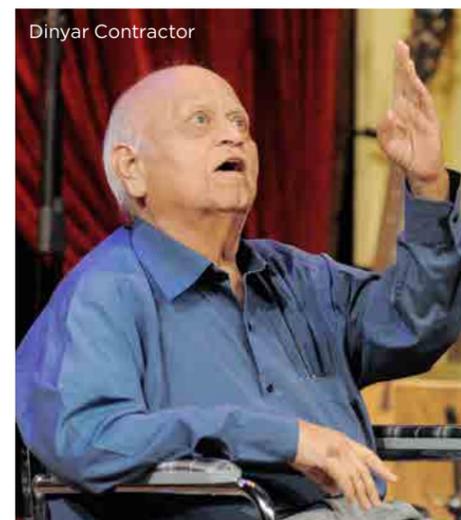
A still from the documentary *The Show Must Go On*



Bomi Dotiwala



Ruby Patel and Jasmin Siganporia



Dinyar Contractor



A scene from *The Show Must Go On*

**A Parsi play is written with one aim in mind, to make you chuckle and giggle and while in your seat, do a wiggle**

on the show day are higher. Add to that, the very stubborn Parsi theatre motto—the show must go on. Which means, come rain, shine, flood, or even Covid, the play will happen. Okay, maybe not Covid.

Now, can you imagine what these rehearsals would have looked like? Imagine being well set in your ways, and having to adjust to the egos of people, succeeding and managing to keep calm and perform and perform and perform and perform (yes, they managed to pull off four sold-out shows). Nobody, not even the actors themselves, expected that result. Obviously with any successful show, comes a sequel. This time, they prepared. The world needed to see that preparation. Someone somewhere had an eerie vision to cover this for posterity. Thank that visionary for what you’re about to read next.

So, *Laughter in the House - 2* starts rehearsals and the awesome foursome—Burjor Patel, Ruby Patel, Bomi Dotiwala and his wife Dolly

Dotiwala—pick up the script. Holding a camera is Divya Cowasji. Mind you, when you watch this film, you don’t feel as though it is a making of a play documentary. It feels like you’re sitting there in the rehearsal room. Divya has made some brave decisions to not make it simply look hunky dory and happy-go-lucky. As a theatre director myself, I can assure you that the kind of tempers flying in the rehearsals shown on film are not staged and are not pleasant to be a part of either. Yet, to have the courage to sit with a lens pointed at someone getting a firing from the director and find a way to humanise it and bring out the emotion in the moment is what sets this film apart.

You might wonder, was she filming this secretly? Were these actors just not aware that they had a camera pointed in their face? Why? Because of how unabashed and open they seem. The kind of behaviour that makes for great entertainment and viewing, but needs you to be brave to allow yourself

Burjor and Ruby Patel



**Because of how unabashed and open they seem, you might wonder, was this being filmed secretly? Were these actors just not aware that they had a camera pointed in their face?**



Hormuzd Ragina and Danesh Khambatta

that was an unexpected turn in the entire storyline. The house is reduced to tears that evening. And all of this is captured on film.

Deviate a tad bit and you find the film heavily documenting the wise words of Ruby and Burjor Patel. You cannot be reading *ON Stage* and not know who they are. They are the First Lady and Big Daddy of the stage. Burjor was the reason this play got produced and Ruby, true to her name, is precious for the Parsi community. Their daughter, Shernaz Patel, not only took on the entire production of this play, she showed everyone that despite being a star in her own right, there is no replacement to being humble and being a stagehand.

Now, this is the connection between Burjor, Ruby and myself.

They approached me to write a sketch for them. The premise? Tata had just returned to aviation and the joke going around in the Parsi community was that the Vistara airline wasn't Parsi at all. So, the sketch was: Burjor and Ruby send a video of them pleading Ratan Tata to make the airline more Parsi by changing the way the air hostesses dress to the meals on flight to the holy water that Parsis drink. For the uninitiated, holy water is water that makes you...well, if you know you know.

Sitting in that audience, looking at these two delivering that sketch, I had no clue this would probably be their last performance together onstage as a couple. Come Covid, we lost them both within the span of a year. Today, we have them on film, and every time I see that scene of them together, I cannot help but wonder, is Divya a soothsayer? Did she know this was going to happen?

Today, a decade later, *Laughter in the House* is truly in the can, but sits fresh in the minds of the Parsis. The film ensures that. It is one of those plays that cannot have fresh faces and younger actors, because the audience did not come for the jokes and the production; they came to see their golden oldies bring joy and laughter in the house again. ■

The Show Must Go On will be screened on 3rd February at the Godrej Dance Theatre.

to do that in front of a camera. A camera that is capturing your idiosyncrasies for good. Simply put—all your antics are in the can. So, everything from the director sharing a candid moment with an actor, to actors being goofy and clumsy and messing up lines to breaking down in rehearsals...it is all on film.

If it was me directing the play, in the middle of an argument, I would slam that camera shut as I would not want anybody to see that. Sam Kerawala and the gang had other ideas. Rightly so. Why hide the true emotion of a show? This is where the poetic foresight of this film comes into light. Divya, and every soothsayer, wasn't prepared for what was going to happen with this play. If I was watching this on Netflix, I would say it is staged.

So, Dotiwala is that man. That man I referred to at the start, the one who was a character actor in a famous film. The film? *Munna Bhai M.B.B.S.* He is that old Parsi uncle playing carrom with Sanjay Dutt. Now, imagine him onstage. Hilarious and having the audience eat out of his hand. The man refuses to do any theatre anymore, but a tribute to his guru and mentor Adi Marzban, meant that refusing wasn't an option. He does well in *Laughter in the House* and along with his wife Dolly, is rehearsing for the sequel. If you did not know the situation, you would never second-guess his professionalism. His full name is Mr. Bomi 'the-show-must-go-on' Dotiwala. When you watch the film, you will understand why. Come show day, he performs, and then does a song



# Jo Dooba So Paar

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with aRANYA Production

A musical daastaangoi on the life  
and times of Amir Khusrau

Language: Hindi, Urdu, Persian, English

Producer: Manav Kaul

Writer: Ajitesh Gupta

Music: Mohit Agarwal

Directors: Ajitesh Gupta & Mohit Agarwal



15th January 2023 | 4:30 pm & 7:00 pm

Experimental Theatre, NCPA

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

# Behind the Lens

Ahead of the screening of *Chhayaankan - The Management of Shadows*, Hemant Chaturvedi speaks to **Aishwarya Bodke** about his documentary on the unsung art of cinematography, and the years spent making it.



**W**ith a hearty smile, S.M. Anwar narrates how he had to do about 30 retakes of the iconic scene in Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay*, where a young Dharmendra is teaching Hema Malini the art of plucking mangoes by shooting them off the tree. "*Dharam ji ko pyaar ho gaya tha*," he chuckles.

At a poignant moment, Govind Nihalani recalls assisting V.K. Murthy in 1964, not too long after Guru Dutt had passed on. Dutt and Murthy were a dreamy duo, "like Spielberg and Kaminski." When Nihalani asked Murthy how he was coping, he responded, "I cried. For myself more than for him."

Such are the stories that make up Hemant Chaturvedi's heartfelt and deeply personal documentary *Chhayaankan - The Management of Shadows*. A noted cinematographer, Chaturvedi paints a tribute to the unsung pairs of eyes behind the camera and the cinema of yesteryears. The documentary plays out as a 138-minute-long conversation between 14 cinematographers; conversations that bear the comfort of people talking to one of their own, with the freedom of not having to explain. Hilarious anecdotes and teary-eyed tales emerge. Decades of the Hindi film industry unfold as they tell their stories, each diverse yet similar. And all along, you are a fly on the wall.

The talking heads are interspersed with shots of landmarks of the Mumbai film world. Sepia-tinted frames of Mehboob Studios, Ranjit Movietone,

Filmistan, R.K. Films and Studios kindle a sense of reminiscence, of pieces of history lapsing in time. Chaturvedi wanted to capture them before their essence is lost.

Like most of the subjects in the documentary, Chaturvedi was an accidental cinematographer. He spent three decades in the industry and having worked on acclaimed films like *Company*, *Maqbool*, *15 Park Avenue* and more, decided to bid farewell to cinematography in 2015 to focus his attention on still photography and passion projects. His Single Screen Cinemas Project, for which he visited and documented single-screen theatres over two years in remote corners of the country, is nearing completion. Having covered 950 cinemas, he wishes to touch 1000 soon. Stunning photographs aside, the project chronicles the journey of people who have spent lifetimes in cinemas as projectionists, ticket sellers and ushers.

Here is an excerpt from a conversation with Chaturvedi ahead of the screening of the documentary.

**ON Stage: You finished shooting in January 2016. What did the seven-year-long journey for the film to be completed entail?**

**Hemant Chaturvedi:** I have always felt that cinematographers don't get the recognition they deserve. We are often forgotten. When I quit cinematography in 2015, I was determined to leave a

tribute to my peers. I originally wanted to feature 17 cinematographers, but we lost three of them in the last few years. Having left the profession less than a year ago had taken an emotional toll on me. When I would sit and watch the interviews, I somehow found myself being non-objective and unable to revisit the profession I had left behind. In 2017, I finally got out of the slump but got busy with still photography. Sometime in 2021—during the second lockdown—I received the news that Ishwar Bidri had passed away. Nadeem Khan, another cinematographer in the documentary, had been in a coma for nearly two years and I had no clue. The oldest of the lot, Peter Pereira, had already lost his vision. The average age of my cast members is between 75 and 80 years. It finally struck me that if I didn't make the film soon enough, they wouldn't even be able to watch it and that would be shameful. So, I got my act together.

**"I always felt that cinematographers don't get the recognition they deserve and was determined to leave a tribute to my peers"**

**OS: There is only one actor—the ethereal Waheeda Rehman—among 14 cinematographers in the film. How did she find a place in the documentary?**

**HC:** I got to know Waheeda Rehman while shooting Aparna Sen's *15 Park Avenue*. She and I got talking and became friendly. She shares a special camaraderie with her cinematographers and has always been extremely respectful of them. A fine photographer herself, she has been doing still photography for about 65 years, back when we had Rolleiflex cameras. I felt the need for a perspective from the other end as well. It tells us how the actors look at their photographers. Waheedaji instantly agreed. Hers is the only interview that has been used in its entirety in the film. She lends an interesting and nostalgic angle to it.

**OS: Govind Nihalani speaks about technology metamorphosing from a limitation to now an asset that challenges filmmakers to push boundaries. Would you agree?**

**HC:** Absolutely. In the 20th century, it was the cameraman challenging the technology, questioning the possibilities. It is the other way around now. It is almost intimidating because the only limit is your imagination.

**OS: My favourite parts of the film were all the times Peter Pereira appeared on the screen. His portions play in monochrome. Was there a specific reason?**



**HC:** Peter Pereira was sort of a *sutradhar* in the film. He is the first one to appear in each section. The black-and-white look was my way of giving him a sense of exclusivity. He is the oldest member in the cast; *unke zamane ki izzat deni chahiye*.

When I interviewed Peter uncle, he was 88. He is 94 now. I must tell you a small anecdote which makes my hair stand on end each time I think of it. As he started losing his eyesight, he had to stop working. It was tragic and ironic for someone who had been the eyes behind the camera and spent decades doing pathbreaking work. He was Amitabh Bachchan's favourite cameraman. The day he went blind, nobody called him or visited him. He felt forgotten.

His nephew, Lenny, is a close friend and he put me in touch with Peter uncle for the film. He would lapse into silence sometimes and be erratic with his responses. The film, as you know, took many years to complete. He had been quite ill since. I asked Lenny to play the film for him. Lenny tells me how years ago, before my interview with him, Peter uncle thought that his career had been a complete failure if he had not managed to sustain human relationships. The fact that nobody cared any more was a huge let-down. But he was ecstatic after watching the film, saying that he feels immortal. This—and as is the case with most of these cinematographers—is the only interview that exists of him. The first time that they were not behind the camera but in front of it. ■

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*Chhayaankan - The Management of Shadows will be presented on 19th January at the Little Theatre.*

# ‘ARTISTES ARE SOCIAL DOCTORS, THEY DESERVE MORE’

Three academics set out to examine the effects of the pandemic on the livelihood of artistes. What they uncovered is how little the life and livelihood of artistes is sometimes valued in India.

By Shayonnita Mallik

At the start of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, as cities went into lockdown and a cloud of anxious, panicked fear descended on citizens around the world, three academics—D. Parthasarathy and Dr. Sharmistha Saha from IIT Bombay and Dr. Kanika Khurana from the University of Mumbai, took on a mammoth task. Foreseeing the catastrophic consequences of the then unfolding pandemic, they set out to map its effects on the hitherto unmapped sphere of the arts in a paper titled *Performing Arts Industry: The Economic and Livelihood Implications on Artistes and Cultural Impact on Society due to COVID-19*.

Funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), the soon-to-be-released paper is a significant document that highlights not only the devastating effects of the pandemic on the arts sector, but also quantifies policy gaps that leave it crippled.

We spoke to one of the authors, Dr. Saha, about the research process and its results. Excerpts from our conversation with her:

**ON Stage: Dr. Saha, how did this study come to be?**

**Dr. Sharmistha Saha:** In 2020, my colleague Kanika and I were working on the possibility of creating a platform—online or offline—where artistes could be helped in order to create networks amongst themselves. Around then, the first lockdown was announced. This, we realised, was affecting artistes in a very big way. Kanika suggested we do some foolproof research to map how a digital platform could help in such situations. But soon, we realised that the problem is far deeper because of limited digital awareness. So, we changed the nature of our study entirely and decided to look at the livelihood impact of the pandemic on performance artistes. This study was then picked up by the ICSSR.

**OS: You have mentioned that even beginning the study was tough. Tell us more.**

**SS:** As we started working, we realised that there is no study whatsoever on the livelihood of performing artistes in India.\* We (society) do not think of the work an artiste does as work that generates a livelihood and requires to be paid a living wage. In its 2016 report, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) projected that the performing arts industry would be worth ₹275 billion in the year 2018. Despite this colossal valuation, we have never looked at artistes as members of the working class; or studied how they live or sustain themselves. For example, consider the number of studies undertaken to map how different sectors were impacted by the pandemic. Yet, none covered artistes.

**OS: Would the first step then be to ‘define’ the artiste?**

**SS:** Correct. An artiste is not just a person who provides pleasure to us through entertainment or spiritual upliftment. An artiste is more like a “social doctor”—someone who keeps society *rejuvenated*; keeps us sane. In India, the arts are often deeply intertwined with the practice of life itself. Performing arts are sometimes presented on a stage, sometimes in the streets and sometimes as a ritual (such as drum players in prayer meetings). So, we need to look beyond the stage.

**OS: Could you expand on how you looked beyond the stage?**

**SS:** First, we decided that any performative form that earns an artiste their livelihood—whether it is partially or fully—is a performing art. Second, we decided to look not just at ticketed performances on a proscenium stage, but also ritualistic performances—anything that involves the body, is a live face-to-face interaction with an audience, and generates a livelihood for the performer. Third, since we had budgetary, time and pandemic restrictions, we could not, naturally, consider all of India’s many art forms.

**OS: Did you then choose a representative sample?**

**SS:** Yes. We defined six different communities from across India to represent caste, region, gender and language, as well as traditional/contemporary, theatre/dance/music and folk/classical art forms. For the urban sector, we picked theatre in Pune. For the mixed sector, we chose the dance schools in Kolkata. We looked at the *Purulia Chhau* dance, which happens in rural West Bengal and Jagran Gondal, a Maharashtrian art form that cuts across urban, semi-urban and rural

demographics and is often considered more a ritual, than a performing art. We also looked at a specific region—Kabir Chaura in Varanasi, where a number of traditional classical musicians and dancers live. And finally, we took Kerala’s traditional Mohiniattam as an example of evolving traditional form because the dance, which used to be performed by women, now has male dancers, too. Apart from these, we also looked at the festival circuit in Delhi, which provides a huge stage and enables livelihoods for a number of Indian artistes.

**OS: How were age and gender represented in the sample?**

**SS:** The age group of over 50 per cent respondents was between 18 to 30 years, a little more than 20 per cent was 30 to 40, a little more than 10 per cent was 40 to 50, and only about 1 per cent above 80. We interviewed 64 per cent men, 46 per cent women.

**OS: And what would you consider to be the main takeaway?**

**SS:** The depth of the rural-urban divide. We had expected this, but had not realised it would be quite so stark. During the pandemic, for example, a number of urban artistes came up with alternative livelihoods such as teaching. Rural artistes, though, despite being keen to learn, were largely unfamiliar with the digital medium. Even those that became aware, had no idea how revenue could be generated over Zoom classes, or videos posted on YouTube or Facebook. We also found in our survey that most uneducated artistes come from the rural area.

**OS: Would it be fair to say that rural artistes were the worst hit?**

**SS:** Yes. And this is a symptom of how rural areas are generally ignored. We saw this with healthcare services during the pandemic. There was also a steep drop in patronage for rural artistes during the pandemic. They were out of jobs, and even the few festivals that were secretly organised paid a pittance.

**OS: Is the government working on this?**

**SS:** Before they start any work, it is important for them to define what performance arts mean, and who an artiste even is. Many of the artistes we spoke to asked for the creation of an artiste’s registry. So far, any effort by the government has been quite unsystematic.

**OS: What else can the government do?**

**SS:** A popular response was that the government could make arts and culture mandatory in school syllabi and hire artistes as teachers. This would not only be a good opportunity to stabilise the livelihoods of performers, but also keep traditional art forms alive.

**OS: We have discussed the negatives, were there any silver linings?**

**SS:** Yes. The pandemic gave performers the time to access information on YouTube and look at clippings from around the world. A few of them were also forced to go digital, which will only benefit them in the long

## Some findings

- More than half of the respondents reported that they had no source of income—neither from the performing arts nor from alternative sources during the first nationwide lockdown.
- Performance-based earnings, the most common source of earnings for performing artistes, continues to provide earnings to only half the number of artistes as compared to the pre-pandemic period.
- Adverse impact on income has been seen in the food consumption and purchase patterns of respondents when they had to curtail their consumption and shift to cheaper foods in many cases.
- While digital devices were used by a large number of rural respondents, they were used mainly for consumption of content and not for transmission of their own practice to the digital medium.

run. Some respondents said that though online classes were a life saver, it was not a sustainable model. An artiste told us, “I made sure one thing I didn’t do was sell my art for free.” This highlights how online classes are often expected to be cheaper or free.

**OS: Tell us about the process. How did the three of you divide responsibilities?**

**SS:** I come from a background of performance studies, which means I look at performances as cultural texts. I helped define what the performing arts community is like, what it means to study the arts, who an artiste is and how we define various categories. Apart from being a trained dancer, Kanika has a PhD in the management of performing arts. She took care of the qualitative and quantitative data, their working and statistics. Professor Parthasarathy, meanwhile, is a very senior scholar. He helped us conceptualise the framework for the study, because ultimately, what we were doing was a sociological study.

**OS: A bulk of this project was carried out through the pandemic. How did that work out?**

**SS:** All of us were working online through the pandemic. We hardly met each other or the research assistants working with us because there were such strict restrictions in terms of travel. We also had to carry out the bulk of the interviews on phone and over Zoom. Most of us had never worked in this complete online mode before. So, the pandemic showed us a different way of working, just like the artistes who found their own alternatives. ■

*\*In a similar endeavour in 2021, completely independent of the study featured in this article, the NCPA commissioned a study to understand the state of production arts in India and the working conditions of professionals in the sector. This led to *The Art of the Possible*, a professional development and upskilling programme for designers, technicians and managers in the performing arts.*

# THE PEOPLE'S SINGER

From a childhood spent in Mumbai to the time she sang with jazz bands in Chennai's nightclubs before she made Kolkata her home, a new biography explores the life of one of India's first and most-loved pop stars, Usha Uthup.



**I**t was a rainy evening in June 1967. In the nightclub Nine Gems [Chennai] situated in the basement of three cinema theatres on Mount Road—Emerald, Blue Diamond and Sapphire—a gig was underway. With hair down to the waist, deep emotive eyes, a twenty-something Usha was belting out a number wearing a green and yellow saree, ruby-like vermillion/sindoor and light green bangles. She was accompanied by the Jazz Standard Band, singing...:

*Never know how much I love you,  
Never know how much I care,*

*When you touch . . . you give me fever . . .  
I get a fever that's so hard to bear . . .*

The rain had stopped outside. But the furore inside Nine Gems wasn't coming to an end. Like there was no tomorrow. Can a girl sing in such an unusual, larger-than-life voice?...The Jazz Standard Band was done for the evening. Usha came and sat next to her family members. The owner of Nine Gems, hotelier Yashwant Vikamsi, was amazed... [He] requested Usha if she could, even if for a week, sing for the nightclub. In response, Usha playfully looked at her quietly chuckling maternal aunt, Leela Nadhan, who

she lovingly called Jippi Ma. That night, she had accompanied her maternal aunt and uncle to the Nine Gems. The band was tuning their instruments when all of them entered the nightclub. Suddenly after a while, Jippi Ma said in a caressing tone, 'Usha! You go and sing! Go, go!'

Everything happened in a moment. Like a bolt of lightning amid dark clouds, the chords of the Jazz Standard halted for a bit and picked up pace again. Usha began singing. It was a rich, vigorous voice. That rainy evening, in Nine Gems' velvety, enchanting light, India's first female pop singer was born.

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The year 1968 was quite a turbulent and significant one for India and the world. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy who persistently fought for human rights were killed. The Beatles-inspired film *Yellow Submarine* was made. The first crewed spacecraft Apollo 8 orbited the moon in the same year. Amid all these seminal events, India's first pop singer was shaping up.

After finishing school, a young, playful Usha was married off at the age of eighteen. She was pursuing a degree from Bombay's Sir J.J. School of Art, which she had joined in 1965. Despite studying at an art school, her sixth sense kept telling her that her future lay in music and not in colours. Usha remembers the year 1968 when the world-famous Mahalia Jackson visited Bombay for a show. She was famous as the 'Queen of Gospel'. Usha loved her songs.

The American Center, Voice of America and the US Information Centre had organised Mahalia's performance. That day, after requesting the organisers, Usha went backstage at the venue where Mahalia Jackson was waiting to go on stage. Usha sang a few lines of Mahalia's famous song 'It Don't Cost Very Much' for her. Mahalia was so elated listening to Usha that she said, 'You will sing the same song with me on the stage right now.' However, the shyly reluctant Usha said, 'I doubt that I will be able to sing given your command over the phonetics.' But Mahalia was adamant. She kept insisting, 'I am sure you will manage. No more discussion. Come with me and sing.' ...

It was an overwhelmingly rare moment when Mahalia Jackson addressed the audience, 'This is Usha. She is my daughter! She will sing with me today.' That day's performance is an ethereal memory, still vividly alive in Usha's body and soul. Mahalia, who touched many souls with her song 'Take My Hand, Precious Lord' that triggered a gush of emotions, pain and sadness, was one of the first, among others, who supported and encouraged Usha. By making her sing alongside her, Mahalia, in a way, ceremoniously took Usha under her wing. She had awakened the rainbow hidden within the aspiring singer. Earlier, Usha had sung jingles for kids. Her siblings at home, and friends and dear ones outside, used to poke fun at her for her unusual, unique

voice, which they jocularly said sounded like actor and wrestler Dara Singh's. However, her performance with Jackson left everyone astounded.

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[Usha] never got the safety net of film songs, but despite that her songs have mass appeal because of the festivity in her voice. It is said her vocal style ushers in joy and is trouble for sadness. That is why during her shows when she asks her audience, 'Okay? Ready to rock?', the reply is always in the affirmative. On the map of popular music, Usha has been the queen for decades. Yet she is modest and often smiles and says, 'In films, I have mostly sung for the bad girls. But it's God's grace that despite that, people have always loved my songs.' Then after a pause she smiles in the same enticing manner and says, 'You know what the cat sitting on the tree says to Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*? It says, "Well-behaved women rarely make history." I love to sing wild songs.'

In the beginning, Usha used to wonder what kind of singer she should be to be accepted by the people. Neither could she be called a playback singer nor was she a nightclub singer. But in time, she was recognised as a pop singer. It was a common belief that a pop song means a fast-paced and loud English song. Slowly and steadily, she changed this misconception and proved that pop songs do not have to necessarily be in English. Also, that pop songs aren't always loud, but can also be melodious and meaningful. Many famous songs sung by her like 'Fever', 'California Dreaming', 'Godfather', 'Love Story', and the most recent of songs, 'Skyfall', aren't fast-moving at all.

She also sang many popular songs in a variety of Indian languages and believed that they conveyed a message. She started asking audiences during her performances, 'The lines of "Rambha Ho" . . . Jitna tum pyaar se jee loge utni hii zindagi . . . The time lived with love is life . . . Is that meaningless? Doston se pyaar kiya . . . We loved our friends. Is that just an entertaining noise?...In direct conversations with the audience, she addressed and dismissed the objectionable connotations associated with pop songs and evoked respect for them in people's hearts.

However, in the last few years during interviews when she was asked, 'Are you an ethnic singer? Are you a jazz singer? Or are you a pop singer?' Her response was, 'I am a people's singer. I am totally a gypsy. I am a nomad of music.' ■

*This is an excerpt from The Queen of Indian Pop: The Authorised Biography of Usha Uthup (2022; Hardback, 290 pages; ₹599), written by Vikas Kumar Jha, translated by Srishti Jha. It has been edited for length and clarity. No part of this excerpt may be quoted or reproduced without prior written consent from its publisher, Penguin Random House.*

# The Performing Arts Dispatch

A series on houses of culture from around the world. In focus this month: The Minack Theatre.

As the ‘Humming Chorus’ was played during a performance of Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly* at the Minack Theatre, Butterfly gazed longingly out to the sea, looking for Pinkerton to return. Fate played director when a three-masted yacht sailed into the bay, lit by the moon. A fine example of the great outdoors and the performing arts teaming up to concoct a moment of sheer beauty, these are now quotidian occurrences at the Minack. The stage, in fact, is all that fits the range of vision at this sublime amphitheatre in Porthcurno, southwest Cornwall. The 90-year-old venue embraces outdoor theatre under the stars in all its splendour on a cliff by the ocean.

The dramatic open-air arena, with its natural contours, subtropical gardens and asymmetrical stage, makes it an unusual space. Zoë Curnow, Executive Director, emphasises that while all outdoor performances are challenging, being on the cliffside creates additional demands, as well as incredible advantages. The silver trail of moonrise over a dark sea is an effect that regularly outshines some of the best lighting design in the world. A noisy sea, high wind or an occasional thunderstorm, however, can become a different sort of a showstopper. Many performances have been gatecrashed by a pod of dolphins crossing the bay or a cheeky seal bobbing around the Minack rocks. “Sometimes we just have to stop a performance until the wildlife decides to move on,” says Curnow.

Companies bringing their productions have to get their heads around not only the unusual layout and the lack of a back to the stage, but also the oddities that audiences are less aware of. The fact that upstage is a much stronger playing position than downstage, and that the audience is steeply raised above



A scene from *Calvino Nights*



A scene from *The Scarlet Pimpernel*

the stage level, compelling the actors to keep their heads tilted up at all times, is a detail that can never be lost. The best shows are always those that embrace the Minack’s unique environment as part of the experience.

The unconventional stage is a labour of love of the founder and the ‘master builder’ Rowena Cade. After losing her father in the First World War, Cade moved to Cornwall, where she built her home, Minack House, still visible on the clifftop. When a local production of *The Tempest* needed a stage, she offered her cliff garden, oblivious to what would in fact be the beginning of her legacy. Much of the theatre was built with her

hands—cutting rocks, carrying sacks of concrete mixed with sand from the beach and engraving complex designs into the terraces with an old screwdriver. Several features of the stage as they exist today were created for a production of *Tristan of Cornwall* in 1951, while the stage right balcony was built for *Romeo and Juliet* in 1974.

“Cade is the inspiration for everything that we do at the Minack. Her physical legacy is all around us in every stone and piece of concrete,” says Curnow as she speaks of the Rowena Cade Exhibition at the Minack devoted to telling her exceptional story. With visual displays, reminiscences, artefacts, guided tours,

STEVE TANNER (CALVINO NIGHTS); LYNN BATTEN (THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL)



The Minack Proms



A scene from *The War of the Worlds*

interactive performances and treasure hunts, the exhibition journeys through Cade’s life, most of which was spent building the theatre. Actor Mark Harandon has spent about a decade playing the role of Billy Rawlings, Cade’s gardener and first helper. He tells visitors the story of the long friendship between the genteel Cade and the Cornish gardener.

The arena that Cade built in the winter of 1931-32 was designed for a week-long run of *The Tempest*. The 2022 season at the Minack saw a return of the production along with a special exhibition dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the theatre, coming full circle. Over these nine decades, the Minack has overcome myriad obstacles unique to a performing arts space of its kind. The metal rods embedded in the concrete with high salt content to give them strength corroded over time. In the 1990s, the stage had to be strengthened and re-laid as it was in danger of sliding

*The silver trail of moonrise over a dark sea is an effect that regularly outshines some of the best lighting design in the world*

into the sea. More recently, the dressing room had to be completely demolished and rebuilt. “Every winter, we have to repair the damage caused by wind and water. We still mix concrete by hand and create the finish exactly the way Cade did. However, we use commercial materials now, not sand from the beach,” Curnow tells us.

In addition to being a theatre, the Minack is also a visitor attraction and carries out a range of education and outreach work. Curnow explains, “The Minack grew out of the local community, and it is imperative that we use its success to support the development of the performing arts in Cornwall. With free

workshops and Shakespeare festivals for local schools, we also run acting classes for disadvantaged children and young people who have experienced trauma and loss, as well as a class for adults with special needs.”

With all that the Minack does, it leaves a lasting impression on visitors—audiences and artistes alike. It would only be fair for Curnow to leave us with a memory that could not have been made elsewhere. As a midnight matinee of *Titanic - The Musical* unfolded onstage to mark the centenary of the loss of the ‘unsinkable’ ship, the performance was meticulously timed so that the moment the ship hit the iceberg would be 100 years to the minute from the actual event. But what transpired was something that went beyond the show flow. The audience arrived to find piles of ice heaped around the terraces because the theatre was hit by a violent storm of hailstones earlier that afternoon. Surprisingly, it did not melt. An accident of weather in April created an effect that the most elaborate production plans could not match. During the performance, a dark shape slipped into the bay and when the crew of the Titanic fired off their distress flares, they were answered by more flares from the sea as the Penlee Lifeboat appeared off the Minack Rock. A training exercise had been arranged to coincide with the performance. The night etched itself as a souvenir people took home that night—a unique Minack memory. ■

- Aishwarya Bodke

# Performing Arts: Western classical music

A monthly column that explores any and every aspect of the performing and visual arts. This month, **Jonas Olsson**, conductor of Cappella Bangalore and The Bangalore Men, discusses the nitty-gritty of forming and sustaining a choir.

**Three thousand nine hundred and twenty.** That is approximately the number of hours I have spent in choir rehearsals since I started singing in the Gothenburg Cathedral Boys' Choir at the age of 11. On top of that come concerts, performances, camps, tours, recordings, exams and various other things related to everything that is a choir. Combined with studies in musicology at the University of Gothenburg and years of vocal studies, this experience gives me fairly solid ground to stand on when it comes to potentially leading a choir.

Nevertheless, every time someone proposed the idea, my response was always a solid no. To my mind, it was unthinkable that I should do what "my" choir conductors do—people whom I admire and respect greatly. I could never envision myself being able to control a united force of 40 singers and lead them through their musical journey and take responsibility for their vocal development and evolution. Still, here I am, heading two choirs: Cappella Bangalore, formed in 2019, now with 24 ladies and The Bangalore Men, soon to turn seven years, with 20 tenors and basses. This is the story of my own journey as a choir conductor, but it is also the story of two choirs that started off as a weekend activity and now do over 15 performances every year singing music spanning eight centuries.

In 2015, I had the opportunity to become associated with The Bangalore School of Music. I had been working and residing in India since 2006 and had performed with various choirs and also done quite a few recitals on my own. However, being brought up in the Swedish choral tradition, I had started to feel that I was missing the Scandinavian sound and ways of working in the choir setting. I started toying with the idea of launching a choir, but quickly pushed it aside for reasons stated above. However, my Swedish vocal coach and



dear friend persistently kept nudging me to nurture the idea and to try it out. Late in 2015, I contacted a few of my fellow singer colleagues from various choirs and checked whether they would be interested to join a project and do a concert or two. Since my choral education had mainly been in the boys' choir (and later the male choir)—a genre that was close to my heart—I decided to try to do something with this slightly more unusual 'instrument', and in February 2016, seven singers met for the first rehearsal of what was to become The Bangalore Men.

Our first concert was "A Cappella through the Ages" which we had the opportunity to, in a short period, perform in both Bengaluru and Puducherry. The repertoire for our first concert series was mainly centred around medieval to Renaissance and early Baroque works. Music that isn't that easy to perform well, to be honest, and requires a high level of precision, control and musical maturity. In retrospect, I do have to say, some of the

choices for the programme weren't the best ones. That concert taught me the first lesson I have carried with me since: when working with choirs, **choose repertoire wisely.**

When working with a choir as a conductor, we need to view it as our instrument—an instrument that we have the responsibility to "play" at its best. The repertoire choice is imperative. I often work with "effective" music, which isn't overly challenging, but is both singable for the choir as well as pleasing to the ear for the audience. Combining this with a few more difficult pieces for a concert programme makes it possible for both us and the audience to learn and grow. Understanding the complexity of repertoire from different eras is a must for a choir conductor because that helps create a base repertoire that can then be reused and topped off with musical cherries of various kinds.

And what do we then need to do for a concert once we have found our suitable repertoire? Well, it all starts with a **vocal and musical foundation.** Imagine you are building a house. You don't quite start with hanging pictures or choosing wallpaper before the foundation is secured. The same goes for a choir. If we don't spend ample amount on the foundation, which for us is vocal technique, music theory and music history, we might be able to pull off some concerts, but the learning process is slow and eventually we will come to a level from which we cannot proceed further. Don't skimp on the basics is my simple advice. Music theory and music history can easily be made part of every rehearsal in a fun way. Stay innovative in the learning process, maybe through online quizzes, guest speakers, workshops, games, anecdotes and storytelling. Making the singers take responsibility for their own learning makes them the best students.

And ah, yes, the students or the singers as they are. This brings us to our

third and final aspect—the **choir as a social context.** Why do people sing? What motivates them? A choir is such an interesting social microcosm, and it is our responsibility as conductors to recognise that, in order to make every singer the best version of her- or himself. Don't get me wrong. A choir is still a collective effort, but that doesn't mean every singer has a need to be seen (and heard). How can this be done? Well, I try to have individual chats with my singers at the start of the year, to understand how they feel about singing

with us, any challenges they have and to give feedback to me as conductor. Another way is to work with small individual assignments (not necessarily always of the vocal kind). Someone might be great at designing posters or is great at logistics for tours, or makes for a good compère at a concert. Think out of the box, to make sure every singer finds their place in the whole and feels treated with respect and dignity.

Our journey with The Bangalore Men and Cappella Bangalore over the years has broadly been based on these

three principles, even if the life of working with choirs is of course more complex and interesting and fun than can be summarised in a brief article. My concluding words are another attempt at encapsulating this experience—music shall be built from joy; from joy we build music! ■

*Cappella Bangalore and The Bangalore Men together with the Living Voices choir, NCPA adults' choir and Delhi Chamber Choir will be performing with the SOI in the Spring 2023 Season.*

## Recommended Volume

Every month, **Sujata Jadhav**, Head - Libraries & Documentation Centre at the NCPA, introduces a must-read book from the NCPA Reference Library. Here, she recommends a collection of poetry in translation that is essential to Pashto literature.

**The Pilgrim of Beauty: Selections from the Poetry of Abdul Ghani Khan Translated and published by Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada**

At the centre of Abdul Ghani Khan's poetry is what feels like a never-ending quest for beauty, truth, humanism and self-realisation. *The Pilgrim of Beauty*, a selection of Khan's poetry, translated by Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada, mirrors this pursuit.

Khan, a Pashtun artist and philosopher, studied at Rabindranath Tagore's university in Santiniketan. He was a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly till 1947 and fought for the cause of the Pashtun in British India. According to the official website of the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khan was arrested for his political motivations by the Government of Pakistan in 1948 and spent the next six years in various prisons around the country. It was during this time that he wrote what he considered was his best work *Da Panjray Chaghaar*. Much of his poetry reflects the struggles of the Pashtun people and some of his most popular works have been turned into songs that have introduced generations of listeners in Pakistan and Afghanistan to humanism, aesthetics and mysticism.

The translator, author and publisher of this book, Sahibzada, was a lifelong friend of Khan. After retiring from public service in Pakistan, Sahibzada turned

his attention to translating the works of his poet friend. Extensively researched, the book also includes a summary of the literary criticism of his work. Sahibzada has translated poems on various themes such as beauty, humanism, a love of the land and people, the mysteries surrounding life and death, the pain of separation and the joy of reunion and the quest to find the existence of God. Where necessary, the author has added explanatory notes that provide historical and literary context to the poems.

Khan's poetry not only has the power to give voice to that which is silent but also relies on images of warmth, ecstasy and pleasure to call upon and empower the reader's senses. He charts his own course in poetic expression by staying away from the Western sonnet-like rhyming couplets called *ghazals* in Pashto, Persian and Urdu poetry. Instead, he focuses on *nazams*, or poems that are narrative and descriptive in addition to rhyming. Even in death, Khan finds beauty. Since death unites the creator with the created, for the poet it becomes a symbol of God's mercy upon us.

Let death overtake me  
Whenever it will;  
It will find me prepared  
With a flower in hand  
Or mounted upon  
A snorting steed;  
Or a gun in hand,  
Or quill and ink;  
And drowned in laughter.

The cares of this world,  
Whatever's in store,  
Is enough, no more!  
Let death overtake me  
Whenever it will...

The artistic and intellectual gems by Khan remained hidden from the wider world because few of his Pashto-language poems were translated into other languages. While it is next to impossible to do justice to a poet as complex as Khan in translation, this book is important because it shines the spotlight on the rich work of a poetic genius by making it available to readers in English.

Sahibzada, who dedicated years to studying and translating Khan's poetry into English, says his work is acutely relevant in today's global warfare situations. His poetry, Sahibzada has said, resonates with the message of peace, which if realised will benefit all of us today. ■

*The NCPA Reference Library is open to visitors from 10 am to 5.15 pm on weekdays. The reference library membership is complimentary for NCPA Members and Friends of the SOI. The books and LPs in the Stuart-Liff music library are available for reference to Friends of the SOI at no cost. The reference library membership is open to the general public at a nominal annual fee of ₹500/- (April-March). Casual membership for visitors (for outstation visitors only) is available at ₹100/- per day. For more information, please call 022-6622 3715.*

# Kaleidoscope

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

## A starry night

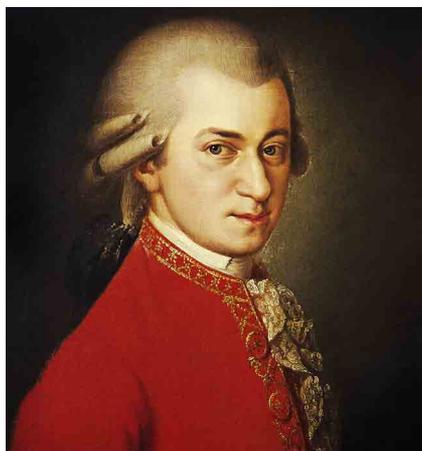
The winners of the 2022 International Opera Awards were announced recently in a splendid gala ceremony as the opera world came together at the Teatro Real in Madrid. This year's celebration, which included an illustrious line-up performing works from some of the most beloved operas of all time, marked the first time the ceremony has taken place outside the U.K. Two opera houses from Ukraine, the Lviv National Opera and the Odessa National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, were jointly given the Company of the Year award. It was to acknowledge their courage and resilience in fostering the performing arts through the ravages of war and being a pillar of hope. British mezzo-soprano Dame Janet Baker was honoured with



the Lifetime Achievement award, while soprano Nardus Williams was awarded the Rising Talent award. Among the winners were French soprano Sabine Devieille and French baritone Stéphane Degout. Daniele Rustioni was presented with the Conductor award. Glyndebourne's production of *La Voix humaine/Les Mamelles de Tirésias* took home the New Production award. For more information, please visit [www.operaawards.org](http://www.operaawards.org)

## Happy Birthday, Mozart

As per tradition, the Tokyo Sinfonia Orchestra will ring in the new year with its annual concert to mark the birth anniversary of legendary composer Mozart. The birthday concerts will take place at the Tokyo Masonic Center on 25th and 26th January. Distinguished soloists, including Richard Roberts, Natsuko Haga and Kae Sugihara will



enthrall audiences. The programme will feature Violin Concerto No. 4 in D Major, K. 218 (*Military*), Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major, K. 219 (*Turkish*), and Concertone for 2 Violins & Strings in C Major, K. 190. Both concerts will be conducted by Robert Rýker, Founder of the Tokyo Sinfonia. For more information, please visit [www.tokyosinfonia.com/en](http://www.tokyosinfonia.com/en)

## To Broadway

Regarded as the world's longest-running play, Agatha Christie's murder mystery, *The Mousetrap*, will finally make its Broadway debut this year. The gripping whodunit, which audiences at the NCPA experienced in 2018, has been a London staple for 70 years since it first premiered at the West End in 1952, interrupted only by the pandemic. The Broadway outing will be a co-production between the U.K. producer Adam Spiegel and American producer Kevin McCollum, along with a new cast. The New York audiences, however, will



be treated to some of the original sights and sounds from the 1952 production. The only surviving piece of the original set—the mantelpiece clock—will also be brought down to the Big Apple. To mark its 70th anniversary, an extensive U.K. tour with 70 stops is also currently on its run. For more information, please visit <https://uk.the-mousetrap.co.uk/>

## Grace and tradition

In Madhya Pradesh, February lights up with a celebration of Indian classical dance traditions at the prestigious Khajuraho Dance Festival. The Chitragupta Temple and the Vishvanatha Temple in the district of Chhatarpur are the usual performance sites. Beginning on 20th February, the seven-day festival invites acclaimed classical dancers, singers and musicians



to Madhya Pradesh to showcase exquisite performances against the backdrop of historical monuments. Organised by the Department of Culture through Ustad Alauddin Khan Music and Arts Academy, Bhopal, the internationally recognised dance festival not only dedicates itself to providing a stage for young dancers but also acts as a platform for art and craft work from surrounding villages, folk traditions and more. For more information, please visit <https://chhatarpur.nic.in/en/festival/khajuraho-dance-festival/> ■

- Aishwarya Bodke

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- ▶ Acknowledgement in the SOI programme books and on the SOI website
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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  
Tel.: 66223719

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

\*For more information on these and other membership packages, please refer to the upcoming issues of **ON Stage** and log on to [www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com)



## Membership Application form

**Dear Supporter of the Arts,**

As we emerge from the pandemic, it is a pleasure to see you in our theatres and join us in celebrating the return of live performances after what has been a long and trying pause.

The arts and the artistic community need you now more than ever. After what they have been through, the very fact that theatres and performing spaces have reopened, supporters are returning and cheering them on means so much to them. The community that makes a live experience what it is, is many times more than what you see on stage and interact with at venues. There is an unseen army that supports the magic of every live performance that brings you to our theatres.

As an organisation committed to preserving and promoting India's rich and vibrant artistic heritage in the fields of music, dance, theatre, film and photography, we are pleased to let you know that during the two years that have been the toughest for a performing arts centre, like ours, we stood by each of those precious people that give you the experience that keeps bringing you back to the NCPA.

Today, we turn to you, dear friend and supporter of the arts, and request you to do your bit in supporting the larger cause of keeping the performing arts—live and alive!

By becoming a member of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, you will make a commitment to this cause and your support will go a long way, not only in the area of live performance, but will also help in our various educational and outreach initiatives which ensure that the gift of the arts enriches all sections of society.

As India's role on the international stage expands, the NCPA has been investing in the country's cultural future. In developing the Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI), the NCPA has given the country its first and only professional orchestra. In addition to this, the NCPA produces, collaborates and curates with the best to bring you a wide range of world-class experiences across theatre, music, dance and film.

We invite you to join us on this exciting journey by being a Friend of the SOI or a Silver member of the NCPA. Kindly refer to the details in the panel on the left. We request you to fill in the form below and submit it along with recent passport-sized photograph/s to the Membership Department. You can now apply for membership/become a Friend of the SOI online. Please log on to [www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com) for details. For any queries, please contact the Membership Department.

I wish to become a: (Please tick one of the boxes below)

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.....

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Telephone: ..... Mobile: .....

Email: ..... Date of Birth: .....

Occupation: ..... Company: .....

Cheque No.: ..... Date: .....

Drawn On: .....

Date: ..... Signature: .....

## For the Record

ON Stage brings you edited excerpts from the *NCPA Quarterly Journal*, an unsurpassed literary archive that ran from 1972 to 1988 and featured authoritative and wide-ranging articles. This month, **Denis Comper** writes a brief history of sound recording.

*A special ceremony at UNESCO House on 18th April 1977 followed by a week-long exhibition marked the centenary of the invention of sound recording. Organised by the International Federation of Producers of Phonograms and Videograms (IFPI) and the International Music Council, both UNESCO affiliates, the ceremony had for its main speaker Edgar Faure, President of the French National Assembly, who drew attention to the coincidence between the discoveries by Charles Cros, the French poet, and Thomas Edison, the American engineer. "This (coincidence) is not surprising," Faure said. "No invention is achieved by an individual in isolation, but rather by mankind in its entirety." Thanks to the invention of sound recording, "a new relation with the past has been established, a new dimension of culture has been realised," said John E. Fobes, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO. He mentioned UNESCO's role, working with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the International Labour Office (ILO), in drawing up the Rome Convention, adopted in 1961, for the protection of the rights of performers, producers of phonograms and broadcasting organisations, and the 1971 Geneva convention, drawn up by UNESCO and WIPO, against unauthorised duplication of phonograms. Also taking part were K. L. Liguier-Laubhouet (WIPO Deputy Director-General), S. K. Jain (ILO Deputy Director-General) and Francois Minchin (IFPI Chairman). In the following article, Denis Comper of IFPI briefly surveys the history of sound recording.*

Ever since mankind became aware of the beautiful sounds of the environment and was inspired to invent music, attempts have been made to discover means of capturing those sounds. Explorers' tales are full of references to marvels like the South Sea sponges into which one could whisper, squeezing the sponge to hear the voice again, but presumably, only once. Or the mysterious boxes of the Chinese mandarins designed to contain spoken messages which could be heard when

the lid was opened. Cyrano de Bergerac waxed eloquent over a miraculous book which would speak to a student listener. According to him, the use of such books explained the high standard of education enjoyed by the inhabitants of the Moon.

But for all the many stories, myths and legends, the very number of which demonstrates the intense desire of mankind to be able to store sounds, nobody succeeded until one hundred years ago. Admittedly, at various times from the Middle Ages onwards, craftsmen of great skill have constructed machines which can produce music, and even sounds imitating speech, but the musical performance is always peculiar to the machine itself, owing nothing to a human musician.

*At various times from the Middle Ages onwards, craftsmen of great skill have constructed machines which can produce music, and even sounds imitating speech, but the musical performance is always peculiar to the machine itself, owing nothing to a human musician*

In 1857, a Frenchman of Scottish descent, Leon Scott, built a machine which could translate sound waves into patterns of wavy lines drawn on the surface of a rotating cylinder. He called it the *phonautograph*. It could not replay what it had heard, but it is reliably reported that Queen Victoria was amused; so Scott can truly be said to have scored a minor triumph and, indeed he had, in a very practical sense. For exactly 20 years later, in 1877, another Frenchman, Charles Cros, was inspired by Scott's work.

Cros was one of those clever people who have the undoubted ability to invent things, but seem to lack the essential energy and drive to make their ideas accepted. He was a poet who had already invented the method of three-colour photography and, in consequence, he knew something about photo-engraving. On 18th April 1877, he completed a paper in which he proposed a method of recording sound and a process by which that sound could be replayed. He submitted his paper to the Académie des Sciences in Paris on 30th April. On 5th December, his paper was accepted by the learned academicians.

Cros, however, did not persevere with his invention. No machine was ever built to his design. His process has never been put to test. It is said he could not afford the fee necessary to obtain the patent to protect his interests. Whatever the real reason, the conclusion must be drawn that neither Cros nor anyone else saw the immense significance of what he had invented. Polite interest was expressed and a little ecclesiastical enthusiasm on the part of L'Abbé Lenoir who wrote a piece about it in the October issue of *La Semaine du Clerge*, but nothing more.

### Birth of the speaking machine

During this same year of 1877, an American, Thomas Alva Edison, had also discovered, almost by accident as it were, a means of replaying sound. He was developing a means of sending high speed telegraph messages recorded on paper tape, the forerunner of the punched tape system used today for high-speed telex transmissions. Edison noticed that running the tape at a rate faster than the intended speed produced a sound of its own.

It takes a genius to recognise the potential in such an accidental phenomenon. Edison was certainly a genius. In August 1862, he was a 15-year-old itinerant candy-seller waiting on the railway station of Mount Clemens, Macomb County, Michigan, when the stationmaster's baby son strayed

American President Warren G. Harding recording his voice on a phonograph in 1922



into the path of a shunting boxcar. Edison snatched the child to safety. His reward was to become a permanent house guest of the stationmaster, Jock Mackenzie, and to be given a crash course in railway telegraphy, thus achieving a childhood ambition.

In a very short time, Edison became the ace telegraphist of the Grand Trunk line on the Detroit to Port Huron section. His talent as an inventor quickly showed itself. In 1870, he was granted one of his many patents for an improvement to the "ticker tape" system so vital to the efficient working of the booming American stock market. The Gold and Stock Telegraph Company paid him the immense sum of \$40,000 and Edison was rich enough to buy and equip his first laboratory at Newark, New Jersey. His success continued until, in 1876, he moved to new premises a short distance away in Menlo Park where the phonograph was born. Of all his many inventions, Edison is best known throughout the world for this one, the invention of the speaking machine. There are many names of people who made invaluable contributions to the establishment and development of recorded sound. Edison's exact contemporary, Alexander Graham

Bell, for example, the inventor of the telephone, his cousin, Chichester Bell, and his collaborator, Charles Tainter. There are many, many others.

### A creation in its own right

So, the mechanical means of recording and replaying at will the world's sound heritage was invented. But it took many years for mankind to appreciate the true value of the invention. At first it was regarded merely as an amusing novelty. Against determined opposition from the stenographers of the day, efforts were made to exploit the potential as a dictating machine. Almost 80 years were to pass before sound recording became a creative art in its own right, 80 years marked by ruinous law-suits alleging patent infringements, the great slump of the 1920s, the rivalry of radio, two world wars, the counter-attraction of the cinema. It was the people's demand for music, brought to them through sound recordings, that saved the record business. In the last 20 years, the record business has undergone a revolution. Today, a sound recording is a work of creation in its own right, involving performers, the producer, engineers. Like a butterfly in amber,

the talent of the great artiste can be preserved for all times.

But all is not as happy as might be with the record business. It all stems from the fact that, in the beginning, nobody took this invention very seriously, not even the inventors. Edison quickly got bored with it, finding the invention of the electric light more rewarding. He returned to it very quickly when he thought his supremacy in the field was threatened by Bell. But they were only making copies, not original and unique performances on record as we do now. Not so surprising, therefore, that we had to wait until the General Conference of UNESCO held last November, in Nairobi, that is 99 years after the invention, for a protocol to be adopted which at last recognises sound recordings as cultural material qualifying for all the privileges and protection so long enjoyed by the book. The book, whatever its contents, is cultural material, but not sound recordings, until just now. The record business has been accepted, and it is a well-earned privilege. ■

*This article first appeared in the NCPA Quarterly Journal in September 1977 (Vol 6, Issue 3) courtesy UNESCO Features.*

# Programme Guide

January 2023

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



**citi | NCPA**  
**|| aadi anant ||**  
*from here to eternity: festival of indian music*  
CELEBRATING THE GURU-SHISHYA TRADITION

The twelfth edition of Citi-NCPA *Aadi Anant* festival

**Bombay Jayashri Ramnath (vocal) with Amrit Ramnath (vocal)**  
**Tata Theatre**  
**Saturday, 7th January – 6.30 pm**

The two main branches of Indian classical music—Hindustani and Carnatic—are similar in their fundamental approach to melodic and rhythmic organisation (*raga* and *tala*), yet they are distinct traditions; distinguishable on the basis of some concepts, styles and forms, poetry and song repertoires, intonation, ornamentation and instrumentation. The Carnatic tradition is predominantly practised in the five southern Indian states.

**Bombay Jayashri Ramnath** represents the fourth generation of music practitioners in her family. Mentored by stalwarts like **Lalgudi Jayaraman** and **T. R. Balamani**, **Jayashri Ramnath** has a distinct style of her own. Her training in both Hindustani and Carnatic traditions coupled with her creativity has resulted in diverse musical experiments. Besides being a celebrated performer of Carnatic music, she has also carved a niche for herself in eclectic genres of world music. Her innate feel for melody as well as poetry has allowed her to blossom as a remarkable composer, especially for dance productions. She is also known for her work with children, spreading awareness about music,

and also using music for therapeutic purpose in autistic children.

Since the age of four, **Amrit Ramnath**, son and disciple of **Jayashri Ramnath**, was privileged to be groomed in both violin and vocal music by his mother's mentor, **Lalgudi Jayaraman**. Additionally, he has also trained in Western classical music (piano and violin) and sings diverse styles of Indian music in many languages. With popular releases, such as *Moon Child*, *Jago* and *Dharati Ma*, today, **Amrit** is an acclaimed singer, composer and producer in the field of independent music. In this recital, **Jayashri Ramnath** and **Amrit** will present, individually and together, a specially curated repertoire spanning an array of forms of Indian music.

**Tickets:**  
**₹720, 540 & 360/- (Members)**  
**₹800, 600 & 400/- (Public)**  
**(Inclusive of GST)**

**Shankar Mahadevan with Siddharth and Shivam Mahadevan**  
**Jamshed Bhabha Theatre**  
**Sunday, 8th January – 6.30 pm**

The world of Indian music is rich with diverse traditions, forms and genres; from primitive to folk, devotional, popular, classical, semi-classical and contemporary music. Besides variance that is evident with respect to elements of melody, rhythm and lyrics, each of these expressions has well defined aesthetic norms and idioms that shape its musical identity.

Therefore, in order to explore any specific genre effectively, it is essential for a performer to have an in-depth training and understanding of its aesthetics. While there are many artistes who specialise in a specific

genre of music, it is rare to find expertise that spans across several of these genres. Only well-trained and creative musicians with an extensive exposure to a wide range of traditions coupled with exceptional talent can explore a canvas of multitude of genres and forms.

Having trained in Carnatic and Hindustani semi-classical music, and also being exposed to rock, pop and jazz traditions, **Shankar Mahadevan's** innovative work reflects a range of influences from East to West, from traditional to Bollywood and from devotional to folk. **Mahadevan** is also a celebrated composer known for his landmark Bollywood films. For the popular Marathi film, *Katyar Kaljat Ghushi* (2015), he has not only given music but has also depicted the character of a master musician.

Joining him in this concert are his two sons. The elder son, **Siddharth**, is a playback singer known for his performance in Hindi as well as regional films. Notable among his work is an award-winning song from the film *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (2013). Taking after his illustrious father, he is also fast emerging as a creative composer. **Shivam**, the younger son, has established himself as a singer with films like *Dhoom 3* (2013), *Katyar Kaljat Ghushi*, etc.

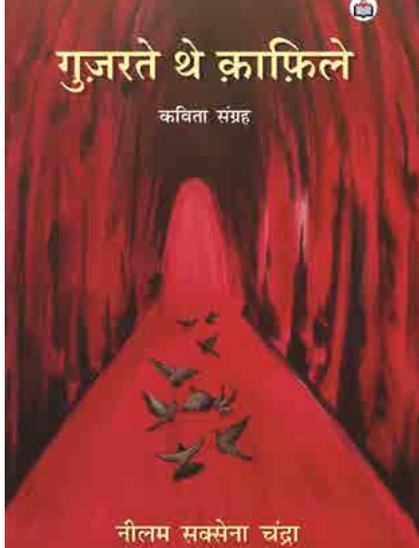
The trio will present a bouquet of musical forms from Carnatic music, *bhavgeet*, *abhang*, *ghazal* to Sufi, folk, rock and hit film songs.

**Tickets:**  
**₹2,160, 1,800, 1,440, 1,080 & 720/- (Members)**  
**Rs.2,400, 2,000, 1,600, 1,200 & 800/- (Public)**  
**(Inclusive of GST)**

**Box Office now open**

## MULTI ARTS & PRESENTATION

Guzarte The Kafile, 6th,  
Stuart-Liff Collection Library, NCPA



### New Book Discussion

Guzarte The Kafile

By Neelam Saxena Chandra

Stuart-Liff Collection Library, NCPA

Friday, 6th – 4.30 pm

### An NCPA Presentation

The 50 poems written by Maharashtra Hindi Sahitya Samiti winner, **Neelam Saxena Chandra**, in the poetry collection *Guzarte The Kafile* will surely touch your heart.

Chandra is an Indian Railway officer, working as Chief Electrical Engineer at Mumbai. She is an Engineering graduate from VNIT and has done her post graduate diploma in IM&HRD and also in finance. She has completed a summer course in finance from the London School of Economics. She has authored seven novels, nine short story collections, 37 poetry collections and 15 children's books. More than 2,000 of her stories/poems/articles have been published in various international and national journals, magazines, etc. An award-winning author, she writes in English and Hindi, and holds a record with the Limca Book of Records - 2015 for having the highest number of publications in a year in English and Hindi. She was listed in Forbes as one of the 78 most popular authors in the country in 2014. Her poem was also placed at number seven in a contest organised by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness, USA) in 2021.

Admission on a first-come-first-served basis.

## INDIAN MUSIC



Zakir Hussain, 6th, Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

### Zakir Hussain

Taufiq Qureshi

Vijay Prakash

Purbayan Chatterjee

Sangeet Haldipur

Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Friday, 6th – 6.30 pm

Presented by

**Sahachari Foundation Events**

Supported by **Julius Baer**

**Allana**

Internationally renowned tabla maestro **Zakir Hussain**, known for his extraordinary ability to engage in musical dialogue with artistes of diverse traditions, will lead an ensemble featuring **Taufiq Qureshi** (percussion & djembe), **Vijay Prakash** (vocal), **Purbayan Chatterjee** (sitar) and **Sangeet Haldipur** (keyboard), in a fusion of melody, rhythm and improvisation.

Tickets:

₹1,800, 1,620, 1,296, 972, 720 & 450/- (Members)

₹2,000, 1,800, 1,440, 1,080, 800 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

## INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

### Exploration Beyond the Border

Experimental Theatre

Friday, 6th – 7.00 pm



Manfred Weinberger, 6th, Experimental

### An NCPA Presentation

**Manfred Weinberger** – trumpet

**Rahul Wadhvani** – piano

**Gino Banks** – drums

**Sheldon D'silva** – bass

Spend your evening listening to original music composed by a leading jazz trumpet player from Austria, **Manfred Weinberger**, and jazz pianist from Mumbai, **Rahul Wadhvani**. This music is deeply influenced by strong European harmonies and melodies subtly interwoven with Indian and Brazilian rhythms. Apart from their original music, also expect their arrangements of some of the popular jazz standards in their own style. Joining Weinberger and Wadhvani is one of the leading rhythm sections of India, **Gino Banks** on drums and **Sheldon D'silva** on bass.

Tickets:

₹675 & 450/- (Members)

₹750 & 500/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office now open

## SCREENING



Medea, 7th, Godrej Dance Theatre

### Medea

by Luigi Cherubini

Opera Screening (170 mins)

Sung in Italian with English Subtitles

Godrej Dance Theatre

Saturday, 7th – 1.00 pm

## An NCPA – The Metropolitan Opera (New York) Presentation

Luigi Cherubini was an Italian-born composer who lived most of his adult life in Paris. He skilfully navigated the radically changing tastes in music and politics in those years and in his day, was greatly admired by Haydn, Beethoven, Rossini and Chopin. With its world premiere taking place at the iconic Théâtre Feydeau, Paris, in 1797, Cherubini's *Medea* is a fiery retelling of a seminal Greek myth. *Medea* is as compelling as it is disturbing, never more so than when the title character enacts her revenge on her unfaithful lover by taking the lives of their two children. Cherubini composed the opera at the tail end of the French Revolution, and as such, it fills a musical and dramatic gap between the noble gravitas of 18th-century theatre and the more visceral beauty of later Romantic operas.

Conductor: **Carlo Rizzi**

Cast: **Sondra Radvanovsky, Janai Brugger, Ekaterina Gubanova, Matthew Polenzani & Michele Pertusi**

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office now open

## THEATRE



## Comedy for Comedy's Sake

Stand-up Comedy

English/ Hindi  
(90 mins)

Experimental Theatre  
Saturday, 7th – 7.00 pm

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

After four shows that were performed to a full house, Comedy for Comedy's Sake is back with another stellar line-up. The show is produced by Comedy Ladder in association with the NCPA.

Performers: **Shreeja Chaturvedi, Jeeya Sethi, Gursimran Khamba, Sahil Shah, Shamik Chakrabarti & Siddharth Dudeja**

Suggested age: 16+

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office now open

## THEATRE

## Jeene Bhi Do Yaaro

Hindi Play (110 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Sunday, 8th – 4.30 pm & 7.30 pm

The promise of a sweet future together, walking hand in hand into the sunset forever. This is what romantic dreams are made of. The husband-to-be, to impress his sweetheart, will go out of his way to do everything she demands. The list is endless, from buying chocolates, flowers, movie and dinner dates to extravagant shopping. But what happens after marriage? The same sweetheart becomes a nag. The man knowing well that the end has been achieved becomes lax and takes his wife for granted. Watch the dynamics of this post-marriage situation in *Jeene Bhi Do Yaaro*.

Written & directed by **Om Katare**

Cast: **Om Katare, Prashant Upadhyay, Sailee Gaikwad, Anup Balyan & Akanksha Gupta**

Produced by

Yatri Theatre Association

Age: 18+

Tickets:

₹630 & 450/- (Members)

₹700 & 500/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office now open

## FILM



## Mandi

Hindi Film (178 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Tuesday, 10th – 6.30 pm

The Indian Express Film Club screening in association with NCPA

Shabana Azmi plays Rukmini, the madam of a bordello. The most talented among Rukmini's girls is Zeenat (Smita Patil), the illegitimate daughter of a famous singer, and Rukmini is determined to turn her into a great concert performer.

Director: **Shyam Benegal**

Producers: **Lalit M. Bijlan & Freni Variava**

Cast: **Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil & others**

The film screening will be followed by a discussion with Shubhra Gupta, Film Critic, *The Indian Express*.

Admission on a first-come-first-served basis. NCPA Members do not have to register and will be given entry on display of membership card.

## SCREENING



## Leopoldstadt

by Tom Stoppard

Theatre Screening

(Approx. 140 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Wednesday, 11th – 6.00 pm

## An NCPA-National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

**Tom Stoppard's** Olivier Award-winning new play *Leopoldstadt* is a passionate drama of love, family and endurance. It is directed by **Patrick Marber**. At the beginning of the 20th century, Leopoldstadt was the old, crowded Jewish quarter of Vienna, Austria. But Hermann Merz, a factory owner and baptised Jew now married to Gretl, a Catholic, has moved up in the world. We follow his family's story across half a century, passing through the convulsions of war, revolution, impoverishment, annexation by Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. A company of 40 actors represents each generation of the family in this epic but intimate play. Filmed live on stage in London's West End, *Leopoldstadt*, called 'magnificent' by *The Independent*, should not be missed.

### Tickets:

₹360/- (Members)

₹400/- (Public)

Box Office now open

## FILM

### Short Film Corner

Short Film Screenings

Little Theatre

Wednesday, 11th – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with White Wall Screenings



Clockwise from top: *Shahtoot*; *Distorted Mirrors*; *Spaces*; *Agamugam*; *Why? Maa!*

## iTALES

5 Filmmakers | 5 Films | 5 Minutes

This is an anthology of five short films by Indian women filmmakers. All the films have been entirely shot on iPhones with one month of production time after an edition of the Art of Filmmaking workshop conducted over Zoom, in which 29 women were mentored by Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf and the AR Rahman Foundation. These films were chosen as the top five out of all the submissions from that batch.

### Shahtoot

Hindi Film with English Subtitles

*Shahtoot* is based on the real story of Mohammad Iqbal, a daily wage migrant labourer and his differently abled son. When a sudden nationwide lockdown is announced, father and son are forced to begin a treacherous journey of more than 250 miles on foot to their village in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. Their story is representative of the stories of millions of migrant workers who, as the national lockdown was announced without warning in 2020, suffered and were forced to walk back home, with many dying on the way of hunger, thirst and road accidents.

Directed by **Savita Singh**

Producer: **Vikram Turkhad, Manoj Singh & Savita Singh**

Script/DOP: **Savita Singh**

Editor: **Hemanti Sarkar**

Cast: **Farrukh Seyer & Vishal Prajapat**

### Why? Maa!

Hindi Film with English Subtitles

Saabir is a young, critically acclaimed writer, stuck on the last few pages of his forthcoming novel and indecisive about its end. Having lost both his parents, a vivid dream encounter with his mother makes him realise which path to choose. This story is a take on the conflict of choice between what this world has made him versus the values and belief system his mother has left behind.

Directed by **Pooja Shyam Prabhat**

Producer/Script:

**Pooja Shyam Prabhat**

DOP: **Urvi Desale**

Editor: **Sujit Kanojia**

Cast: **Pranjai Jain & Pooja Shyam Prabhat**

Music: **Osho Jain**

### Distorted Mirrors

Marathi Film with English Subtitles

The *Lavani* is an art form performed mainly by women. Today, it is most known and referred to by its erotic form, which has largely survived to this day. Performers across the board belong to the Kolhathi community. This story narrates the internal struggle of *Lavani* dancers between the illusory and real world. The women know for sure the hard realities of life but they still sketch fairy tales with their regular visitors who just come for entertainment, imagining that one day they will have a family with one of them. Sometimes they fall into their own trap and end up having children with one of these regular visitors, which makes their life much more complicated. Hope is the only driver which keeps their world alive.

Directed by **Rajshri Deshpande**

Producer: **Rajshri Deshpande**

DOP: **Nirman Chowdhury**

Editor: **Nirman Chowdhury**

### Agamugam

Tamil Film with English Subtitles

A lonely woman poet who has been living hermit-like without any human contact finds herself at an unexpected turn of life faced with unexpected desires. The melodramatic style of the turn focuses more on unrecognised emotions and expands her life between reality and fantasy.

Directed by **Kutti Revathi**

Producer: **Raja Narayanaswamy, Poet Amsavalli & Haja Mohideen**

Script: **Kutti Revathi**

DOP: **Raja Bhattacharjee**

Editor: **B. Lenin**

Cast: **Chrylsheelaa Christopher, Vamsi & Pappu**

### Spaces

Tamil Film with English Subtitles

*Spaces* is a five-minute film that was shot on an iPhone. It is a fun take on what happens in a house after the

husband retires and the wife has to take on the extra burden of having an extra hand at home. The loving husband only tries to help, but things go downhill when the OCD-stricken wife is suddenly faced with the unrelenting company of her caring husband.

Directed by **Madhumitha Venugopal**  
 Producer: **Madhumitha Venugopal**  
 Script: **Madhumitha Venugopal & Senthilnathan**  
 DOP: **VS Prabanchan**  
 Editor: **Rakesh Lenin & VS Prabanchan**  
 Music: **Saran Raghavan**  
 Cast: **Lizzie Antony, Cable Shankar & Sowmya**

The film screenings will be followed by a discussion.

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

#### WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC



Alexander Ullman, 12th, Experimental

### Piano Recital by Alexander Ullman

Experimental Theatre  
 Thursday, 12th – 7.00 pm

#### An NCPA & Mehli Mehta Music Foundation Presentation

Winner of the Franz Liszt International Piano Competition in Budapest in 2011, British pianist **Alexander Ullman** is praised for his subtle interpretations and refined technical mastery. He has impressed audiences and critics worldwide with his deep understanding of the scores he interprets, his elegant touch and crystalline phrasing.

#### Programme:

Orlando Gibbons: Four Pieces  
 Ravel: *Pavane pour un infante défunte*  
 Franck: Prélude, Choral et Fugue  
 Liszt: Sonata in B minor

Tickets:  
 ₹720 & 450/- (Members)  
 ₹800 & 500/- (Public)  
 (Inclusive of GST)  
 Box Office now open

#### THEATRE

### Three Women

English Play (105 mins)  
 Experimental Theatre  
 Friday, 13th – 7.00 pm

What happens when a time-travelling, sultry ghost of Kadambari Devi (Rabindranath Tagore's sister-in-law) whizzes across centuries to guide two of Tagore's fictional characters, Charu and Bimala, to better outcomes in love and life? Inspired by three of Tagore's heroines, this musical, set to folk-pop beats with live singing and Manipuri dancing, has reached international heights, soon to become a cross-over film. Back to the NCPA on popular demand, this production has been celebrated around the world as one that regales, humours and astounds audiences as a spectator's delight.

Production: **Isheeta Ganguly**  
 Written & directed by **Isheeta Ganguly**  
 Cast: **Perna Talwar, Kohmal Khanna & Archana Patel**  
 Produced by **Neerupama**

Tickets:  
 ₹900, 720 & 450/- (Members)  
 ₹1,000, 800 & 500/- (Public)  
 (Inclusive of GST)  
 Box Office now open

#### WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

### SOI Chamber Orchestra

**Mikel Toms, conductor**  
**Alexander Ullman, piano**  
 Tata Theatre  
 Saturday, 14th – 7.00 pm



SOI Chamber Orchestra, 14th, Tata Theatre

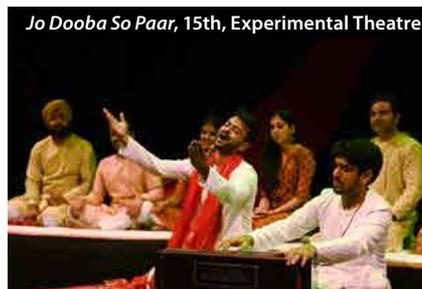
#### An NCPA & Mehli Mehta Music Foundation Presentation

British pianist **Alexander Ullman** will perform with the SOI Chamber Orchestra conducted by **Mikel Toms** in a programme featuring beloved works of Beethoven and Schubert in special arrangements for chamber orchestra.

Programme:  
 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5 "Emperor"  
 Schubert: Symphony No. 5

Tickets:  
 ₹1,080, 720 & 450/- (Members)  
 ₹1,200, 800 & 500/- (Public)  
 (Inclusive of GST)  
 Box Office now open

#### THEATRE



Jo Dooba So Paar, 15th, Experimental Theatre

### Jo Dooba So Paar

Hindi, Urdu, Persian (100 mins)  
 Experimental Theatre  
 Sunday, 15th – 4.30 pm & 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with aRANYA Production

A musical *daastaangoi* on the life and times of Amir Khusrau, *Jo Dooba So Paar* throws light on the human that he was, his relationship with his guru Nizamuddin Auliya and the advent of *qawwali* through them.

The interesting anecdotes and

tales woven in a *daastaan* accompanied by live *qawwali* singing give insight into the essence of Sufism and the importance of the eternally relevant message of love among humankind.

Produced by **Manav Kaul**

Writer: **Ajitesh Gupta**

Music: **Mohit Agarwal**

Directors: **Ajitesh Gupta & Mohit Agarwal**

Harmonium: **Mohit Agarwal & Ashish Mishra**

Performers: **Rattan Deep, Ashish Mishra, Jitendra Singh Rajput, Shalaka Redkar, Manasi Bhawalkar, Sonakshi Singh, Shimli Basu, Rigved Singh Maurya, Mohit Agarwal & Ajitesh Gupta**

Dholak: **Mrunmay Chavan**

Tabla: **Naynesh Pimpale**

Production: **Sumit Chandel & Kamran Khan**

**Tickets:**

**₹675 & 450/- (Members)**

**₹750 & 500/- (Public)**

**(Plus GST)**

**Box Office now open**

## DANCE

### NCPA Mumbai Dance Season 2023

Opening of Mumbai Dance Season 2023

(Approx. 90 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Latasana Devi, 19th, Experimental Theatre



Ranjana Phadke, 19th, Experimental Theatre



Thursday, 19th – 6.30 pm

#### An NCPA Presentation curated by Latasana Devi and Ranjana Phadke

The NCPA Mumbai Dance Season is a community engagement initiative started by the NCPA in 2018 in association with the entire dance community in the city. The season is back as a month-long celebration of dance. The opening event will be curated by Latasana Devi and Ranjana Phadke.

Born in Manipur, **Latasana Devi** was initiated into Manipuri dance at the age of eight. She received her early training at the prestigious Manipuri Nartanalaya in Imphal under the guidance of Guneswari Devi. In 1980, she began intensive training with the renowned Bipin Singh, Darshana Jhaveri and Kalavati Devi in Kolkata. In addition to the above, Latasana Devi has learned *Kartal Cholom* (cymbal dance) from Ojha Choabhal Singh, *Nata Seishak* (vocal training) from Ojha Lakpati Singh and *Pung Cholom* (drum dance) from Ojha Birmangal Singh. She is well-versed in dance and martial art forms, music, as well as drum-playing. She has a deep and abiding interest in the Manipuri dance form. In 1994, she received a junior fellowship from the Department of Culture, Government of India, to conduct research in the field of classical Manipuri dance. A top-grade artiste and an accomplished performer for Doordarshan, she is also an impanelled artiste of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

**Ranjana Phadke** completed her post-graduation course (Nritya Alankar) in Kathak from Gandharva Mahavidyalaya and pursued a B.Sc. (Statistics) from Pune University.

Phadke has been a performing Kathak artiste for the last 16 years. She has had the privilege to perform at the Pune Festival, Pt. Ram Marathe Festival, Thane Municipal Corporation Festival, festivals organised by the Cultural Affairs Directorate, the Maharashtra Government, and Apna Utsav, to mention a few. She has also given performances in the U.K. and Netherlands. As a Kathak artiste, Phadke has choreographed and presented a number of ballets and dance dramas. She has choreographed Kathak items in group forms, which she presents along with her students. All these items include the training that she and her senior disciples, have been undergoing for the last 10 years. Phadke choreographed dances on poems penned by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at a special programme presented in Pune and has also performed on invitation for the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Nehru Centre, ISKCON and the Karnataka Sangh.

**Admission on a first-come-first-served basis.**

## FILM

### Reality Check

Documentary Film Screening

Little Theatre

Thursday, 19th – 6.30 pm

#### An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with Cinema Collective

The Reality Check film series promotes and encourages documentary filmmakers in India, whose work reflects life and culture in the country today in a provocative blend of creativity and integrity.



Clockwise from top left: Baba Azmi; Barun Mukherjee; Jahangir Choudhury; Govind Nihalani

## Chhayaankan -The Management of Shadows

English/Hindi Film with English Subtitles (138 mins)

This documentary looks at the lives and creative journeys of 14 senior cinematographers from the Mumbai film industry, who were active mainly between 1962 and 2012.

Cinematographers are among the most easily forgotten and neglected members of the film crew. Very few have been celebrated for their passion and commitment, and very few people are even aware of the trials and tribulations they go through.

Made by a former cinematographer, this film is an insider's view of the profession, and it touches on a variety of subjects. From ethics and aesthetics, techniques and technology, to teamwork and inspiration. Interspersed with personal anecdotes, this is arguably the first and only film made in India on this subject. While it is a pity that so many cinematographers have faded from our memories, these 14 individuals will survive the test of time and remain visible in this film, along with all the stalwarts they mention during the conversations.

Produced & directed by  
**Hemant Chaturvedi**

**The film screening will be followed by a discussion.**

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

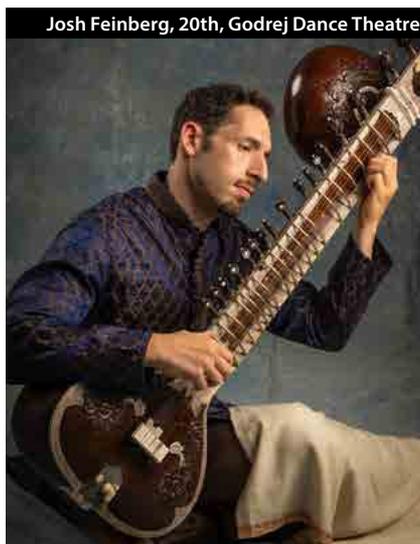
### INDIAN MUSIC

## A Sitar Recital by Josh Feinberg

Godrej Dance Theatre  
Friday, 20th – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation  
Supported by Chowgule Industries Pvt. Ltd.

Josh Feinberg began his musical training at four with Western classical and jazz on piano and bass in New York City, studying with some of the most accomplished musicians on the scene. He was hailed as a prodigy performing



Josh Feinberg, 20th, Godrej Dance Theatre

in jazz venues and concert halls across New York. In his teens, Feinberg fell in love with the music of Ali Akbar Khan and Nikhil Banerjee, and shifted his focus to sitar and Hindustani music while pursuing his Bachelor's degree from the New England Conservatory of Music.

Feinberg is a student of the Maihar *gharana* and has earned the love and respect of connoisseurs of Hindustani music as well as art-music communities around the world. One of the first non-Indian musicians to be accepted as a leading performer, he has learned with Ali Akbar Khan as well as Aashish Khan, Alam Khan, Tejendra Majumdar, Dr. Peter Row, Dr. George Ruckert, James Pomerantz, Warren Senders and Vijaya Sundaram. He teaches both in person and online to students around the world and also serves as the executive director for Jalsaghar, a non-profit organisation he established in 2017 to promote South Asian classical music.

**Admission on a first-come-first-served basis.**

### INDIAN MUSIC

## The Aspect of Bhakti in Indian Music Traditions

Experimental Theatre  
Saturday, 21st & Sunday, 22nd –  
10.00 am to 5.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation in  
collaboration with the International  
Foundation for Fine Arts

Since ancient times, the aspect of *bhakti* has been the mainstay of Indian



The Aspect of Bhakti in Indian Music Traditions, 21st & 22nd, Experimental Theatre

culture and it is but natural that the element of devotion has its reflection in almost all music traditions prevalent in India. Besides *bhakti* sangeet, a genre which is completely identified with devotion and dedication towards the Ultimate Creator and/or the Guru, there are myriad other traditions from folk and classical (art) to semi-classical and light music showing a marked influence of *bhakti* philosophy in varied measures.

Starting with the period around 1500 AD, this seminar aims to explore different genres and forms of music to understand the relevance of the element of *bhakti*. Besides academic deliberations by experts on the origin and history of different forms, there will be ample demonstrations offered by reputed practitioners of respective genres.

Well-known artistes and scholars like **Ajoy Chakrabarty, Devdutt Pattanaik, Sharda Sinha, Shekhar Sen, Aruna Sairam, Gaurav Gadgil, Suresh Talwalkar, Uday Bhawalkar, Anup Jalota, Shruti Sadolikar, Dhanashree Lele, Pradeep Jyoti Mahanta, Charudatta Aphale** and others will deliberate on the origin, history and practice of different genres and forms with ample demonstrations.

**Admission on a first-come-first-served basis.**

### SCREENING

## La Traviata

by Giuseppe Verdi  
Opera Screening (180 mins)  
Sung in Italian with English Subtitles  
Godrej Dance Theatre  
Saturday, 21st – 1.00 pm

An NCPA – The Metropolitan Opera  
(New York) Presentation

In a remarkable career spanning six decades in theatre, Giuseppe Verdi



*La Traviata*, 21st, Godrej Dance Theatre

composed 26 operas, at least half of which are at the core of today's repertoire. Verdi's *La Traviata* survived a notoriously unsuccessful opening night to become one of the best-loved operas in the repertoire. Following the larger-scale dramas of *Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore*, its intimate scope and subject matter inspired the composer to create some of his most profound and heartfelt music. The title role of the "fallen woman" has captured the imaginations of audiences and performers alike with its inexhaustible vocal and dramatic possibilities—and challenges.

Conductor: **Daniele Callegari**

Cast: **Nadine Sierra, Stephen Costello & Luca Salsi**

**Tickets:**

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office now open

## SCREENING



*Prima Facie*, 25th, Godrej Dance Theatre

## Prima Facie

Theatre Screening

(Approx. 120 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Wednesday, 25th – 6.00 pm

An NCPA-National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

**Jodie Comer**, who won the Emmy for *Killing Eve* and a BAFTA for *Help*,

makes her West End debut in the U.K. premiere of **Suzie Miller's** award-winning play *Prima Facie*. Tessa is a young, brilliant barrister. She has worked her way up from working-class origins to be at the top of her game; defending, cross-examining and winning. An unexpected event forces her to confront the lines where the patriarchal power of the law, burden of proof and morals diverge. *Prima Facie* takes us to a place where emotion and experience collide with the rules of the game. **Justin Martin** directs this solo tour de force, captured live from the intimate Harold Pinter Theatre in London's West End.

**Content Advisory:** Contains sensitive subject matter including references to sex, violence and rape.

Age: 18+

**Tickets:**

₹360/- (Members)

₹400/- (Public)

Box Office now open

## THEATRE

## Salaam Noni Appa

English Play (90 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Sunday, 29th – 4.30 pm

Based on Twinkle Khanna's charming short story, 'Salaam Noni Appa' from her bestseller *The Legend of Lakshmi Prasad*, this is the delightful and heart-warming tale of an autumn romance. Noni Appa, a mature widow, and her sister Binnie are polar opposites, whose world after marriage, children and widowhood is once again a shared one in which they laugh, bicker, fight, love and spend their days in a familiar, comfortable, if staid, manner. And then one day, Noni Appa suddenly finds herself falling in love with a married man a few years younger than her and is torn between choosing companionship over respectability. *Salaam Noni Appa* is a play about breaking stereotypes, being open to new adventures, being true to oneself and rediscovering what makes life really worth living.

Written by **Twinkle Khanna**

Adapted by **Adhir Bhat**

Directed by **Lillete Dubey**

Cast: **Lillete Dubey, Yateen Karyekar, Jayati Bhatia, Rishi Khurana & Gillian Pinto**

A Primetime Theatre Co. Production

Age: 12+

**Tickets:**

₹675, 585 & 450/- (Members)

₹750, 650 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office: 26th December for Members & 29th December for Public

## THEATRE

## Dance Like a Man

English Play (90 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Sunday, 29th – 7.30 pm

*Dance Like a Man*, 660 shows on and performed across five continents, tells the fascinating story of Jairaj and Ratna, two Bharatanatyam dancers past their prime whose story is contrasted with that of their daughter Lata, who is on the brink of establishing herself as a brilliant dancer. Her imminent success creates tension and jealousy, and the audience is drawn into the dark secrets of family relationships and conflicts between generations. The play probes the surface of the characters to question their deeper motivations, but the mode is comic rather than tragic, even though the concerns are serious, and you are never sure whether to laugh or cry.

Written by **Mahesh Dattani**

Directed by **Lillete Dubey**

Cast: **Lillete Dubey, Ananth Mahadevan, Suchitra Pillai & Joy Sengupta**

A Primetime Theatre Co. Production

Age: 12+

**Tickets:**

₹675, 585 & 450/- (Members)

₹750, 650 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office: 26th December for Members & 29th December for Public

# What's Next

February & March 2023

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

**SOI** symphony  
orchestra of  
india

## Spring 2023 Season

Patron: Citi India

## Orchestral Concerts

Saturday, 4th February – 7.00 pm

Sunday, 5th February – 5.00 pm

Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

**Marat Bisengaliev**, conductor

Karl Jenkins: Requiem  
and other works

Wednesday, 15th February – 7.00 pm

Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

**Evgeny Bushkov**, conductor

**Plamena Mangova**, piano

Weber: Overture to *Der Freischütz*  
Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No. 1  
Brahms: Symphony No. 3

Sunday, 19th February – 5.00 pm

Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

**John Axelrod**, conductor

**Alim Beisembayev**, piano

Beethoven: Leonore Overture No. 3  
Rachmaninoff: Rhapsody on a theme of  
Paganini  
Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6

Thursday, 23rd February – 7.00 pm

Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

**John Axelrod**, conductor

**Adam Walker**, flute

Dvořák: *Othello*, concert overture

Mozart: Flute Concerto No. 1

Dvořák: Symphony No. 7

Tickets:

₹3,600, 2,880, 2,250, 1,575, 900 &

450/- (Members)

₹4,000, 3,200, 2,500, 1,750, 1,000 &

500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

## Recitals

Monday, 13th February – 7.00 pm

Experimental Theatre

**Plamena Mangova**, piano

Friday, 17th February – 7.00 pm

Experimental Theatre

**Alim Beisembayev**, piano

Tuesday, 21st February – 7.00 pm

Experimental Theatre

**Adam Walker**, flute

**James Baillieu**, piano

Programme details of the above  
recitals to be announced shortly.  
Please check on the NCPA website  
[www.ncpamumbai.com](http://www.ncpamumbai.com) or at the  
box office.

Tickets:

₹1,080, 720 & 450/- (Members)

₹1,200, 800 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office: 6th January for

Benefactors/Friends of the SOI, 9th

January for NCPA Members & 12th

January for the Public

## INDIAN MUSIC



L. Subramaniam, 1st February, Tata Theatre

## Percussion Symphony

by L. Subramaniam & group

Tata Theatre

Wednesday, 1st February – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation in association  
with Saroj Jhaveri Foundation

While remaining rooted in Carnatic or South Indian music, the internationally renowned violinist and composer, **L. Subramaniam**, has collaborated with legendary musicians across the world and made pioneering efforts in the field of Indo-Jazz fusion.

The evening's fare includes a selection of Subramaniam's popular compositions and features a unique percussion symphony. In addition to the percussion sounds as practised in different parts of India, the composition also features Hindustani and Carnatic vocal percussion segment (*bols / shollukattu*) adorned with five different rhythmic subdivisions (*panchanadais*).

Interestingly, this development is laid on the tapestry of a *ragamala*, evoking different aesthetic sentiments (*rasa*). The rich content of violin solos and interludes with other melodic instruments leads to a pulsating climax.

Besides the violin maestro, the concert will feature percussionists like **Anindo Chatterjee** (tabla), **Ramanamurthy V.V.** (mridangam),

**Ganesh Kumar** (kanjira), **Satya Sai G** (morsing), **N. Radhakrishnan** (ghatam) and **Prasad Kulkarni** (octapad) along with a dholak artiste. Enriching the melodic canvas led by the violin are **Frijo Francis** (piano), **Atul Raninga** (keyboard), **Alwyn Fernandes** (guitar) and **Ninad Mulaokar** (bansuri).

**Tickets:**

₹675, 450 & 270/- (Members)

₹750, 500 & 300/- (Public)

**Box Office: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public**

**DANCE**

**The 33rd Pt. Durgalal Festival**

**Tata Theatre**

**Sunday, 5th February – 5.00 pm**

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with Samved Society for Performing Arts

The Pt. Durgalal Festival pays homage to Uma Dogra's guru and mentor Durgalal, doyen of the Jaipur *gharana*. The evening will host a grand performance of Bharatanatyam by Meenakshi Srinivasan and Kathak by Gauri Diwakar. Dogra is the founder and Managing Trustee of the Samved Society for Performing Arts to promote Indian classical dance and music.

**Meenakshi Srinivasan** is a Bharatanatyam dancer based in Chennai. Srinivasan's individual approach, technique and creativity are characterised by a distinctively sensuous geometry. As quoted by the press she is, "a dancer who embodies both sensitive and playful qualities through a dynamic presence on stage." As a dancer and choreographer, Srinivasan's ability is versatile with both the purity and sanctity of traditional



repertoire as well as her own individual skill and approach to contemporary themes using the language of Bharatanatyam. Her strength relies on her ability to correlate different disciplines of the arts and she has worked with various artistes—composers, musicians, scholars and writers on new choreographic works.

**Gauri Diwakar's** elegant and graceful moves, striking facial expressions and powerful presence on the stage leave her audiences spellbound. Diwakar has been the recipient of many prestigious awards. An 'A' grade artiste with Doordarshan, she is credited with a number of noted solo performances. She is also an empanelled artiste with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

**Tickets:**

₹360, 270 & 180/- (Members)

₹400, 300 & 200/- (Public)

**Box Office: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public**

**SCREENING**



**The Book of Dust - La Belle Sauvage**

(Approx. 180 mins)

Theatre Screening

Godrej Dance Theatre

**Wednesday, 8th February – 6.00 pm**

An NCPA-National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

Elevator pitch: Set 12 years before the epic *His Dark Materials* trilogy, this gripping adaptation revisits **Phillip Pullman's** fantastical world in which the waters are rising and storms are brewing. Two young people and their dæmons, with everything at stake, find themselves at the centre of a terrifying manhunt. In their care is a tiny child called Lyra Belacqua, and in that child lies the fate of the future.

Directed by **Nicholas Hytner**

Adapted by **Bryony Lavery**

**Tickets:**

₹360/- (Members)

₹400/- (Public)

**Box Office: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public**

**INTERNATIONAL MUSIC**



**Harmonies in Time**

Featuring **Trilok Gurtu &**

**Castle in Time Orchestra**

**Tata Theatre**

**Thursday, 9th February – 7.00 pm**

An NCPA & Mixtape Presentation

*Harmonies in Time* is a full collaboration between the percussion master **Trilok Gurtu** and the **Castle in Time Orchestra**. The piece researches the prehistoric in music. It brings out the relationship between a solo player as an individual and the tribe. It uses Indian composition (*kaida*) that was written for the human voice and the tabla and translates it to Western orchestral instruments. It uses complex polyrhythms from Africa in addition to a stormy fugue from classical Europe. It uses a language of improvisation that was devised in rehearsal as a way to communicate without words while performing, therefore, creating music on the spot. The result is 80 minutes of an unusual collaboration between cultures and generations. *Harmonies in Time* premiered at the Mekudeshet Festival in Israel in 2017.

**Tickets:**

₹1,800, 1,350, 1080, 900, 720 & 450/-  
(Members)

₹2,000, 1,500, 1,200, 1,000, 800 & 500/-  
(Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office: 9th January for Members &  
12th January for Public

**DANCE**

## Finale Evening of the NCPA Mumbai Dance Season 2023

Tata Theatre

Friday, 10th February – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation curated by Debi  
Basu and Kamalika Guha Thakurta

The season finale will feature performances by eminent artistes and institutions from Mumbai as well as established young performers. **Debi Basu** is an eminent Odissi dancer and co-founder of Samyuktam, an organisation dedicated to the enrichment and promotion of Odissi. She imbibed this art form under the guidance of the great Odissi master, Kelucharan Mohapatra. Basu has been a critically acclaimed performer for more than three decades.

**Kamalika Guha Thakurta** is an artiste who has been exploring varied performance spaces with different creative art-based tools. In dance, she has trained in Odissi and Rabindrik Nritya (an amalgamation of different forms popularised by Rabindranath Tagore, primarily to give expression to his songs through movement). Through Srijon, the institute she founded in Mumbai in the year 2010, Thakurta actively works to propagate the teachings and



Debi Basu, 10th February, Tata Theatre



Kamalika Guha Thakurta,  
10th February, Tata Theatre

philosophy of Tagore through both music and dance. As an actor, she began her career in Kolkata, with films by renowned directors like Goutam Ghose and Rituparno Ghosh. Later, she moved to Mumbai and subsequently carved a place for herself in the Hindi television industry and has been a part of several popular series.

**Tickets:**

₹360, 270 & 180/- (Members)

₹400, 300 & 200/- (Public)

Box Office: 9th January for Members &  
12th January for Public

**INDIAN MUSIC**

## Sama'a: The Mystic Ecstasy

Festival of Sufi Music

10th to 12th February

An NCPA Presentation

*We rarely hear the inward music, but are  
dancing to it nevertheless!* - Mevlana Rumi

Based on the mystical branch of Islam, Sufism preaches peace, tolerance and pluralism. Music is regarded as a way of deepening one's relationship with the Creator, and hence longing to dissolve the physical realm and transcend into the spiritual Universe with *Sama'a*, the practice of listening to music, chanting and whirling, finally culminating in spiritual ecstasy. Sufi music is practised in different regions of the world through an array of forms.

## Rangreza: A Musical Presentation based on Sufi Poetry

Concept & narration:

Suhail Akhtar Warsi

Singers: Girish Sadhwani &

Pooja Gaitonde

Experimental Theatre

Friday, 10th February – 6.30 pm



Suhail Akhtar Warsi,  
10th February, Experimental Theatre

The pain of separation from the Creator is at the core of Sufi lyrics and music. Themes and styles established in Arabic, Persian and Punjabi-Sindhi poetry have had an enormous influence on poetry and music throughout the Sufi world.

While saint-philosophers like Rumi, Lal Dedh, Kabir and such others, have fervently expressed their love and longing for the Divine through their poetry, we find similar thoughts also being echoed in works of others like Mir, Ghalib, Tukaram, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and many *Bhakti* poets across ages in numerous languages.

*Rangreza* portrays hues of the ultimate truth as revealed by numerous philosophers from Amir Khusrau, Baba Bulleh Shah and Meera Bai, to Guru Nanak, Shahbaz Qalandar and such others who wrote in various dialects such as Awadhi, Saraiki, Behawalpuri, Multani, Hindustani, Hindavi and Punjabi.

In a style that has a harmonious blend of traditional and contemporary musical elements, the presentation will showcase the similarity of thoughts underlying the diverse poetic works, highlighting the universality of the truth.

**Tickets:**

₹450 & 360/- (Members)

₹500 & 400/- (Public)

## An Ode to Rumi: Presentation based on the Poetry of Mevlana Rumi by Kabir Bedi

Experimental Theatre

Saturday, 11th February – 6.30 pm

Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi (1207-1273), popularly known as Mevlana Rumi, was a 13th-century Persian poet, jurist, theologian and Sufi mystic who composed one of the crowning glories of Persian literature, which profoundly affected the Persian cultural sphere of Khorasan.

Although originally written in Persian,



Kabir Bedi, 11th February, Experimental Theatre

Rumi's poems have been widely translated into many international languages including Urdu and Punjabi. His works transcend national and ethnic borders and seem to be relevant even today across varied cultures.

Blessed with a sonorous voice, **Kabir Bedi**, one of India's best-known international actors, will read a selection of poetry penned by Rumi. The presentation will be divided into five parts: The Seeker, Finding Love, Tasting the Divine, The Awakening and Union with the Divine.

Concept & design: **Jai and Taru Talwar**

**Tickets:**  
₹450 & 360/- (Members)  
₹500 & 400/- (Public)

### **Rumiyana: A Journey Within**

**Presented by The Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust**

**Direction & design: Dadi D. Pudumjee**

**Text & animation: Shaaz Ahmed**

**Music: Sandeep Pillai**  
(English - 60 mins)

**Experimental Theatre**

**Sunday, 12th February – 3.30 pm & 5.30 pm**

*Rumiyana* is a multimedia musical puppet theatre performance based on Mevlana Rumi's work, *Masnavi*, whose influence transcends national borders and unites people of all races, nationality, gender across the globe, owing to the universality of his thoughts.

Enacted by two performers, the master and the student, the performance is synergised with dancers, puppeteers and visual theatre with specially composed music.

The dialogue of the story which is narrated on the threshold of a door unfolds a journey within, to unravel the path outside. Four stories emerge out of

a single narrative to tell a tale of seeking and receiving, from being the light to spreading light to shining bright—the unity of vision.

The presentation, which includes animations and projections, explores the concept of pluralism and the unity of all existence as one. It uses metaphors of soul, body and shadow to realise the idea of the true self. It promotes unity, love and peace by the celebration of diversity, for there are, as many ways as there are seekers.

**Tickets:**  
₹450 & 360/- (Members)  
₹500 & 400/- (Public)

### **Within: Songs of the Sacred By Sonam Kalra & The Sufi Gospel Project**

**Tata Theatre**

**Sunday, 12th February – 7.30 pm**



Sonam Kalra, 12th February, Tata Theatre

Delve into a deeper understanding of the true meaning of Sufism as **Sonam Kalra**, a multifaceted singer and composer, seeks to blend the many voices of faith, through poetry, prayer and music to create one universal voice of faith.

In this presentation, prayer and poetry from different languages and religions come together to create a sound that touches every soul. The mystic poetry of Sufi poets like Kabir, Bulleh Shah, Amir Khusrau and Zaheen Shah Taji are presented to highlight the one absolute truth; that God is within. Where the call to Allah finds resonance in the ever-soothing Sikh morning prayer and Vedic chants, where the poetry and ideologies of Sufi mystics from across the world find common ground across time and region, and where Indian classical sounds seamlessly flow into Western accompaniment.

Thus, the lines between religions are blurred through the beauty of note and music, revealing that no matter what

the language of the lyrics or the ethnicity of the sounds, there is but one language, the language of faith. And that, is the universal truth.

**Tickets:**  
₹540, 450 & 360/- (Members)  
₹600, 500 & 400/- (Public)  
(Inclusive of GST)

**Box Office for the Festival: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public**

### **THEATRE**



Taking Sides, 25th February, Experimental Theatre

### **NCPA Presents the Company Theatre production Taking Sides**

**English Play (125 mins)**

**Experimental Theatre**

**Saturday, 25th February - 5.00 pm & 8.00 pm**

The play is set in post-World War II Germany, during the period of 'denazification'. While on the surface the play is about the investigation of a world-famous music conductor of that time—Wilhelm Furtwangler—it takes on larger discussions and motifs spanning music, art, culture, life, politics, morality, ethics and more.

Written by **Ronald Harwood**

Directed by **Atul Kumar**

Assistant Director: **Vara Raturi**

Light Design and operation by

**Rahul Joglekar**

Cast: **Atul Kumar, Sukant Goel, Mallika Singh, Kashish Saluja, Kashin Shetty/Kenneth Desai & Richa Jain**

Costume, Production & Backstage:

**Kanchan Khilare**

Production Manager: **Rahul Kumar**

**Tickets:**  
₹720, 540 & 450/- (Members)  
₹800, 600 & 500/- (Public)  
(Plus GST)

**Box Office: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public**

## INDIAN MUSIC



*Raga Rang* by Parthiv Gohil,  
25th February, Tata Theatre

### Raga Rang: Raga-based songs from Hindi films of yesteryears by Parthiv Gohil & group

Tata Theatre

Saturday, 25th February – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation in association with Sahachari Foundation Events Supported by Kotak

In memory of Mrs. Krishna Khatau Supported by Rukmani & Kishan Daiya Foundation

This thematic presentation showcases gems of poetry and musical works featured in old Hindi films that are based on classical *ragas* and *raginis*. These timeless melodies continue to enthrall listeners even today.

Having trained with several reputed masters like Laxmipati Shukla and Zia Fariduddin Dagar, **Parthiv Gohil** went on to become a playback singer performing for a host of films like *Devdas*, *Saawariya*, *Vaada Raha* and others. Other projects include participation in the iconic song 'Phir Mile Sur Mera Tumhara' and MTV performance with reputed artistes. Notable among the numerous awards received by Gohil include best playback singer for Gujarati films in 2007 and 2009.

Gohil and his group will present a special selection of *geets* and *ghazals* written by iconic lyricists and composed by legendary film music composers of the yesteryears.

Tickets:

₹1,080, 900, 720 & 450/- (Members)

₹1,200, 1,000, 800 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office: 26th January for Members & 29th January for Public

## THEATRE

### Every Good Boy Deserves Favour

An English Play for Actors and Orchestra (60 mins)

Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Thursday, 9th March – 7.00 pm

Friday, 10th March – 5.00 pm & 7.00 pm

Saturday, 11th & Sunday, 12th March – 3.00 pm, 5.00 pm & 7.00 pm

An NCPA Production in collaboration with the Symphony Orchestra of India

A dissident is locked up in an asylum. If he accepts that he was ill and has been cured, he will be released. He refuses. Sharing his cell is a real lunatic who believes himself to be surrounded by an orchestra. As the dissident's son begs his father to free himself with a lie, Tom Stoppard's darkly funny and provocative play asks if denying the truth is a price worth paying for liberty. The play premiered in 1977 as a part of Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee celebrations. This rarely performed masterpiece features a 40-piece orchestra playing live onstage.

Written by **Tom Stoppard**

Music by **André Previn**

Directed by **Bruce Guthrie**

Cast includes: **Deepika Deshpande Amin, Sohrab Ardeshir, Neil Bhoopalam, Mihaail Karachiwala, Denzil Smith & the Symphony Orchestra of India** conducted by **Mikel Toms**

Tickets:

₹450/- onwards (Members)

₹500/- onwards (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public

## SCREENING

### The Hours

by Kevin Puts

Opera Screening (175 mins)

Sung in English with English Subtitles

Godrej Dance Theatre

Saturday, 11th March – 1.00 pm

An NCPA – The Metropolitan Opera (New York) Presentation

A compelling new opera about three women in different times and places, *The Hours* is based on the Pulitzer Prize-

winning novel by Michael Cunningham and the Academy Award-winning film adaptation that followed. Both the book and the film make heavy reference to an earlier novel, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, which forms a sort of parallel background narrative. The opera uses Woolf's and Cunningham's magisterial prose as a departure point from which to explore ambiguities and fluidities that cry out for musical expression.

Conductor: **Yannick Nézet-Séguin**

Cast: **Renée Fleming, Kelli O'Hara, Joyce DiDonato, Kathleen Kim, Sylvia D'Eramo, Denyce Graves, John Holiday, William Burden, Sean Panikkar, Kyle Ketelsen & Brandon Cedel**

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office: 9th February for Members & 12th February for Public

## INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

### The NCPA Soulful Blues

Tata Theatre

Saturday, 18th March & Sunday, 19th March – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

The much-awaited festival, NCPA Soulful Blues, debuts in March 2023. The festival will feature acclaimed international artistes that have made their mark in the MOBO house of fame, promising to make it a memorable two days of blues and soul, with host Brian Tellis.

The line-up includes MOBO-nominated artiste **Natalie Williams** and the **Soul Family Band**, **Beatrice Kahl+b.groovy** with **Joan Faulkner** and **David Tobin**.

18th March: **Beatrice Kahl+b.groovy** with **Joan Faulkner** and **David Tobin**

19th March: **Natalie Williams** and the **Soul Family Band**

Get ready for a soulful evening with the best of blues in the city that has none.

Tickets:

₹1,350, 1,080, 900, 720 & 450/- (Members)

₹1,500, 1,200, 1,000, 800 & 500/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public

# Events at a glance

January 2023

Day	Date	Time	Event	Venue
Fri	6th	4.30 pm	New Book Discussion <i>Guzarte The Kafil</i> By Neelam Saxena Chandra	Stuart-Liff Collection Library, NCPA
Fri	6th	6.30 pm	Zakir Hussain (tabla) Taufiq Qureshi (percussion & djembe) Vijay Prakash (vocal) Purbayan Chatterjee (sitar) Sangeet Haldipur (keyboard)	
Fri	6th	7.00 pm	Exploration Beyond the Border	
Sat	7th	1.00 pm	<i>Medea</i> by Luigi Cherubini Opera Screening Sung in Italian with English Subtitles	Godrej dance theatre
Sat	7th	6.30 pm	CITI-NCPA <i>Aadi Anant</i> : From Here to Eternity (7th & 8th January)  Bombay Jayashri Ramnath (vocal) with Amrit Ramnath (vocal)	TATA THEATRE
Sun	8th	6.30 pm	Shankar Mahadevan with Siddharth and Shivam Mahadevan	
Sat	7th	7.00 pm	Comedy for Comedy's Sake Stand-up Comedy English/Hindi	
Sun	8th	4.30 pm & 7.30 pm	<i>Jeene Bhi Do Yaaro</i> Hindi Play	
Tue	10th	6.30 pm	<i>Mandi</i> Hindi Film	Godrej dance theatre
Wed	11th	6.00 pm	<i>Leopoldstadt</i> by Tom Stoppard Theatre Screening	Godrej dance theatre
Wed	11th	6.30 pm	Short Film Corner Short Film Screenings	

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



Day	Date	Time	Event	Venue
Thu	12th	7.00 pm	Piano Recital by Alexander Ullman	
Fri	13th	7.00 pm	<i>Three Women</i> English Play	
Sat	14th	7.00 pm	SOI Chamber Orchestra Mikel Toms, conductor Alexander Ullman, piano	TATA THEATRE
Sun	15th	4.30 pm & 7.00 pm	<i>Jo Dooba So Paar</i> Hindi, Urdu, Persian	
Thu	19th	6.30 pm	NCPA Mumbai Dance Season 2023 Opening of NCPA Mumbai Dance Season 2023	
Thu	19th	6.30 pm	Reality Check Documentary Film Screening	
Fri	20th	6.30 pm	A Sitar Recital by Josh Feinberg	Godrej dance theatre
Sat & Sun	21st & 22nd	10.00 am to 5.00 pm	The Aspect of <i>Bhakti</i> in Indian Music Traditions	
Sat	21st	1.00 pm	<i>La Traviata</i> by Giuseppe Verdi Opera Screening Sung in Italian with English Subtitles	Godrej dance theatre
Wed	25th	6.00 pm	<i>Prima Facie</i> Theatre Screening	Godrej dance theatre
Sun	29th	4.30 pm	<i>Salaam Noni Appa</i> English Play	
Sun	29th	7.30 pm	<i>Dance Like a Man</i> English Play	



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