

ON Stage[®]

VOLUME 12 • ISSUE 8

The NCPA Soulful Blues

A splendid line-up

Screenings from the Met
The best of 2022-23 season

Living Traditions
Folk arts from Madhya Pradesh

Begum Akhtar
A voice to remember

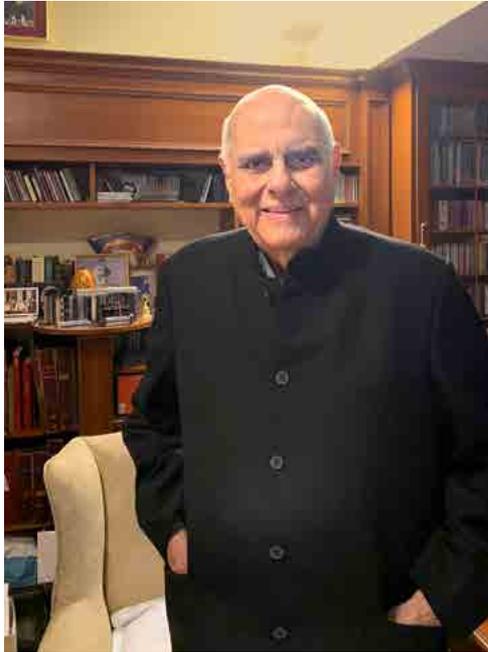


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Celebrating
the past, the present
& the future,
together.



Chairman's Note



The SOI gave its last concert of the Spring 2023 Season on 23rd February. We are proud of the progress made by our young musicians who have attained a degree of proficiency good enough to play in the main orchestra.

Shifting our focus from classical music to our other genre, International Music, the concentration will be on blues performed by two renowned groups at the first edition of the NCPA Soulful Blues festival.

In the world of Indian music, our esteemed colleague Zakir Hussain has been conferred the prestigious and richly deserved Padma Vibhushan. Our congratulations to him.

The redoubtable Dr. Suvarnalata Rao, as usual, has continued her educational initiatives. A seminar on various aspects of *Bhakti*, the result of her curatorial expertise, saw participation from Arvind Parikh and several stalwarts of Indian music, and was edifying for our members. She continues with a series of performances connected with the folk traditions of India and the inimitable voice of Begum Akhtar.

March is the month for reckoning the progress made by our students in Dance and here, I would like to congratulate the head of this genre, Swapnokalpa Dasgupta, who has brought together both young and senior artistes performing at their best.

While I do not normally write about programmes in my message, I am making this an exception since we are gradually breaking new ground and this is what we are all about.

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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All of nine years, Ayaan Deshpande from the SOI Music Academy has performed with the SOI Chamber Orchestra, given solo piano recitals and is all set to give his next in the land of Mozart as the winner of the Golden Key of Vienna Music Festival. The prodigy is being carefully nurtured by the SOI Music Director and teachers to share his gift with the world.

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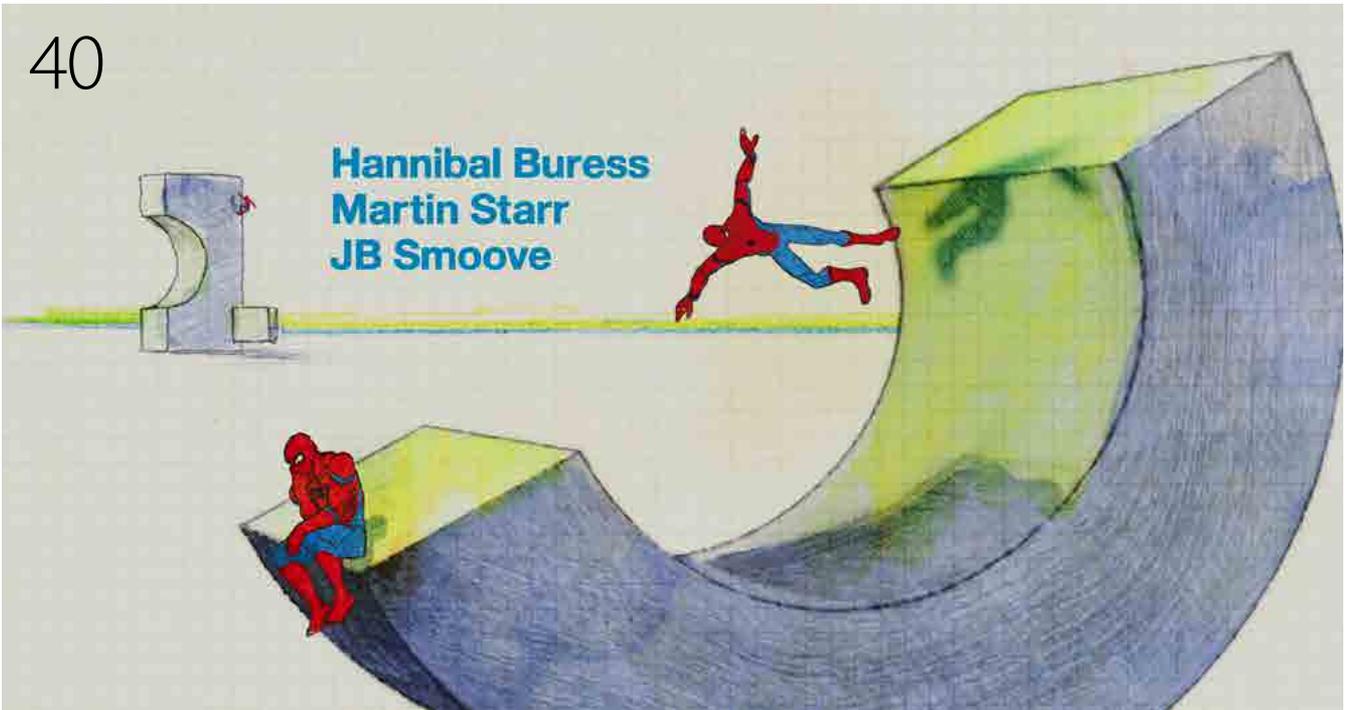
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We look forward to your feedback and suggestions. Please do drop us an email at onstage@ncpamumbai.com.

Catching the Groove

March marks the launch of the much-awaited NCPA Soulful Blues. We talk to the musicians who will paint the town blue at the two-day festival.

By Anurag Tagat

For the inaugural edition of the NCPA Soulful Blues, the line-up brings in pianist and keyboardist Beatrice Kahl, who conjures a synergy between pop and jazz with her group b.groovy, and vocalist, singer-songwriter Natalie Williams and the Soul Family Band, who wave the flag of Motown high and wide.

German musician Kahl is a versatile artiste who has multiple projects keeping her busy, with b.groovy touring the world in a variety of iterations. By her own admission, “Nothing is worse than stagnation, or routine reeling off a show.” With over two decades of experience performing and composing music, Kahl sees the beauty of pop and jazz, and as much as they may be looked at as polar opposites, she rightly points out that they have a lot of similarities as well. She talks about her love for artistes like Michael Jackson, Take That, Grace Jones, Eurythmics and George Michael who “at some point found fun spicing up pop melodies with jazz chords.”

Jazz-pop and soul are some of the closest ways to describe Kahl’s project b.groovy, which teams up with vocalists Joan Faulkner and David Tobin for Soulful Blues. It is a smaller set-up that is coming to Mumbai, but Kahl explains that the smaller alternatives have a special charm. “The style is always the same and comes from jazz-pop and soul music but the songs vary, so it never gets boring,” she says. The artiste says there is always improvisation within the pop song structures in their process of interpreting a work. One that is “creating a synergy that can excite audiences across genres.”

SEASONED PERFORMERS

Natalie Williams, the big draw on day two of the Soulful Blues festival, perhaps also relates to the sentiment of creating magic onstage. After all, her act—The Soul Family Band—is a 10-member juggernaut when it comes to Motown classics, and soul and blues compositions that they have released over the years. Seasoned performers in the residency circuit due to Soul Family

Sundays at the famed Ronnie Scott’s Jazz Club, The Soul Family Band is performing in India for the first time, making it one of the occasional times that the fiercely independent, do-it-yourself ethos-driven act is stepping out. Williams says, “We don’t have a manager or record company. Some of the things that come to us, come to me directly. Because we perform at such a prestigious venue (Ronnie Scott’s), a lot of people book us for parties and for various bits and bobs around the world.” The band’s bassist Robin Mullarkey has performed at the NCPA, supporting musician Jacob Collier in 2019. “He says it was his favourite gig he’s ever done,” Williams recalls of Mullarkey, who is also her husband.

Faulkner, who last visited the NCPA in October 2011 for Jazzmatazz, performed as part of The Three Ladies of Blues accompanied by the Gustav Csik Trio. Her connect with Kahl goes back to 2007, when they were playing with different acts at the Hamburg Opera Ball. Faulkner says, “Ms. Kahl and I have performed on the same stages several times. Today, female musicians are being recognised more than ever and Ms. Kahl is no exception. She has earned the respect of her colleagues and other singers. Expect a great time and a wonderful show with b.groovy.”

GROUP DYNAMICS

b.groovy have been involved in crossover projects with a large symphony orchestra, something Kahl recalls as “an extremely interesting and great experience”. At the core of it all, however, the artiste keeps her love for pop and jazz close to her heart. “I studied jazz piano, but at the same time I played in an ABBA cover band and in Top 40 bands to finance my studies. Pop music has always appealed to me and touched me emotionally,” she says. It helps a great deal that her bandmates and collaborators share the same vision as her. “We’ve been making music together since we were students, so we’ve been a well-rehearsed team for many years, and the best part is, we still like each other,” she adds with a smile.



Members of b.groovy including Beatrice Kahl (top row, centre)

With over two decades of experience performing and composing music, Beatrice Kahl sees the beauty of pop and jazz, and points out that as much as they may be looked at as polar opposites, they have a lot of similarities as well



Natalie Williams (second from right) and the Soul Family Band

The Soul Family Band is performing in India for the first time, making it one of the occasional times that the fiercely independent, do-it-yourself ethos-driven act is stepping out

It is a no-brainer that for Williams—who was nominated for a MOBO (Music of Black Origin) award in 2010 for being the Best UK R&B/Soul Act—her musical family is everything. She started the Soul Family Band as a means of playing her original material. “It was really cool to have that outlet where, at least once or twice a month, I could get together with my band. Some of the

core band members have projects with other singers in the group,” Williams notes.

The band usually performs a mix of originals and popular classics. “We do originals but also love obviously, our musical influences, so we’ve got Stevie Wonder, Chaka Khan, Aretha Franklin and then sometimes we do our own rendition of certain

songs like ‘Girls Just Wanna Have Fun,’” she says. It is never the same performance twice for Williams and band because the members—who have performed with everyone from Emeli Sandé to Amy Winehouse to Nitin Sawhney—have a jazz background that allows them to take solos. “Sometimes we’ll go off on a little musical journey and it’s really fun. It’s not like a pop gig where everything is three minutes and 30 seconds long. There’s a lot of openness within the band,” she adds.

Franklin is clearly going to be a commonly heard name at the Soulful Blues festival, with Kahl too mentioning that her b.groovy set will incorporate renditions of songs by the Queen of Soul. Another name checked by Kahl is the American R&B/soul/funk band Kool &

the Gang. Kahl compares the performance in Mumbai to the ones they give at German music festivals and at “giant dance parties” and notes that they have plenty of sonic flexibility. Williams, who had come down to India last for a quick gig in New Delhi and left the country within 24 hours, says the Soul Family Band are bringing “amazing musicianship, incredible vocal talent and a fun vibe” to their performance in Mumbai. Like Kahl, Williams promises, “It’s going to be full of energy. It’s going to have more intimate moments as well. We’re going to try and make it a really fantastic set for everyone.” ■

NCPA Soulful Blues will be presented on 18th and 19th March at the Tata Theatre.

COUNTING DOWN THE HOURS

THE 2022-23 SEASON OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA IS A GREAT MIX OF CONTEMPORARY WORKS AND CLASSICS. WE BRING AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRODUCTIONS THAT WILL BE SCREENED AT THE NCPA THIS YEAR.

By Dr. Luis Dias

The ongoing screenings season of the Metropolitan Opera in New York is being hailed by critics as “one of the best” it has produced in some time, and that is reflected in their screenings on offer at the NCPA. The Met: Live in HD season for 2022-23 began with a screening of Cherubini’s *Medea* at the Godrej Dance Theatre in January followed by Giuseppe Verdi’s *La Traviata* towards the end of the month. Pulitzer-winning American composer Kevin Puts’s *The Hours*, which had its world premiere as an opera-in-concert last November in Philadelphia, comes to Mumbai in March as part of the ongoing season.

A NOVEL PROJECT

The Hours is based on Michael Cunningham’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the same name, published in 1998, and on Stephen Daldry’s film adaptation of the book, which was released in 2002. The film had a superb cast with Meryl Streep, Julianne Moore and Nicole Kidman in the lead roles, with Ed Harris, Jeff Daniels, Miranda Richardson and Allison Janney as the supporting cast. It received nine Academy Award nominations including Best Picture, and a win for Kidman for Best Actress. The surging minimalist score by Philip Glass won the Anthony Asquith Award for Original Film Music at the BAFTA in 2003.

The idea for the opera arose from a conversation between soprano Renée Fleming and Puts when they were collaborating on his 2019 song cycle *The Brightness of Light*. The opera tells the story of three women from different eras who grapple with their inner demons and their roles in society. It centres on a single day in the lives of book editor Clarissa Vaughan (sung by Fleming, returning to the Met after a long hiatus) in New York’s West Village in the late 1990s; novelist Virginia Woolf (sung by mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato) in Richmond, England, in 1923; and housewife and mother Laura Brown (Kelli O’Hara, soprano and Broadway veteran) in Los Angeles in 1949. The tripartite setting of the opera is an essential aspect of its story.



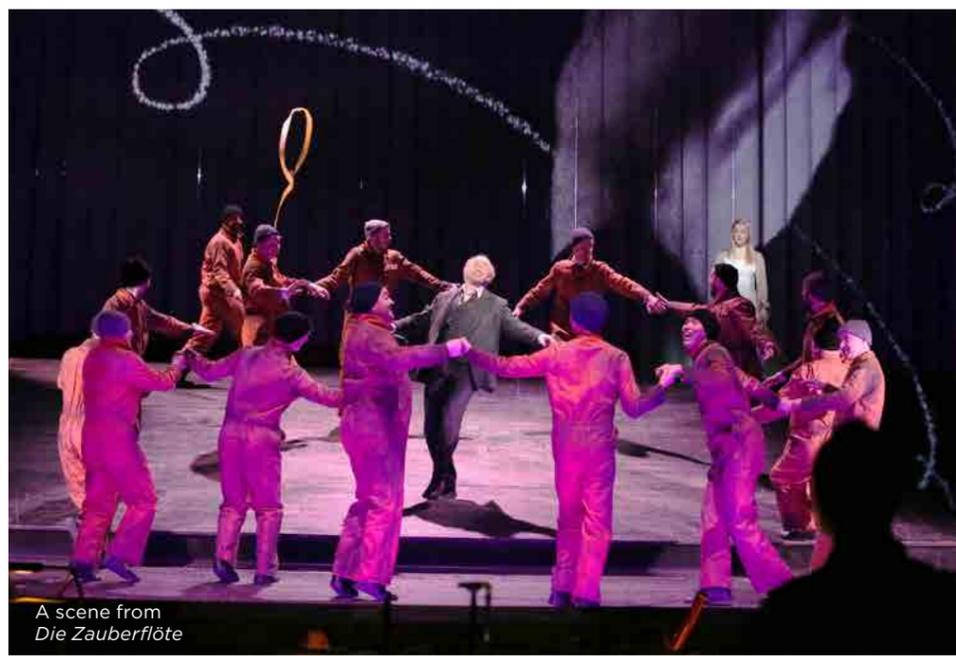
A scene from Terence Blanchard's first opera *Champion*

***The Hours* centres on a single day in the lives of book editor Clarissa Vaughan in New York's West Village in the late 1990s; novelist Virginia Woolf in Richmond, England, in 1923; and housewife and mother Laura Brown in Los Angeles in 1949**

from *IndieWire* praised Phelim McDermott's 'creatively staged production' and Tom Pye's 'clever set and costume design' adding that "gathering three of the singing world's most revered divas onto one stage for a rare collaboration... this alone is reason enough to see it."

OPERA IN JAZZ

Six-time Grammy award-winning jazz composer and trumpeter Terence Blanchard's second opera *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* (which was screened at the NCPA in June last year) created history in 2021 as the first opera by an African-American composer ever staged at the Met in its long history. His first opera, *Champion*, based on the life of African American welterweight boxer Emile Griffith, is the other contemporary work on offer this season. It also evolved from a conversation, this time between Opera Theatre of St. Louis (OTSL) and Jazz St. Louis.



A scene from *Die Zauberflöte*

Although you might guess from this partnership that the production is a combination of opera and jazz, Blanchard himself has described the work as an 'opera in jazz' rather than a 'jazz opera'. *The Denver Post*, in its review of the premiere production, called it "unrelentingly true to itself, over-the-top when it needs to be and unapologetic, just like Verdi."

Nézet-Séguin, who has increasingly supported the creation of new works, returns to conduct this opera. Bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green is the young boxer Griffith, who rises from obscurity to become a world champion, and bass-baritone Eric Owens portrays Griffith's older self, haunted by the ghosts of his past. Soprano Latonia Moore is Emelda Griffith, the boxer's estranged mother, and mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe is the bar owner Kathy Hagen.

THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

The other operas being screened are workhorses from the standard repertory, including much-loved works by Mozart from the 'mature' final five years of his lamentably short life. Conductor and contralto Nathalie Stutzmann, who was meant to make her Met debut in 2021 (cancelled due to Covid-19), will

finally debut this year with Mozart's tragicomedy *Don Giovanni* (1788) and *Die Zauberflöte* (1791).

Tony Award-winning director Ivo van Hove makes his Met debut as well, with this new staging of *Don Giovanni*. The tale of deceit and damnation is set in an abstract architectural landscape that explores the dark corners of the story and its characters. The opera has a star-studded cast led by baritone Peter Mattei as a magnetic Don Giovanni, alongside the Leporello of bass-baritone Adam Plachetka. Sopranos Federica Lombardi, Ana María Martínez and Ying Fang are Giovanni's conquests—Donna Anna, Donna Elvira and Zerlina—and tenor Ben Bliss sings Don Ottavio.

Die Zauberflöte receives its first new Met staging in 19 years—in a bold avatar by renowned English director Simon McBurney that *The Wall Street Journal* called "the best production I've ever witnessed of Mozart's opera." The orchestra pit is raised to make the musicians visible to the audience and allow interaction with the cast. In his Met-debut staging, McBurney lets loose a volley of theatrical flourishes, incorporating projections, sound effects and acrobatics to match the spectacle and drama of Mozart's fable. The brilliant cast includes soprano Erin Morley as Pamina, tenor Lawrence Brownlee as Tamino, baritone Thomas Oliemans in his Met debut as Papageno, soprano Kathryn Lewek as the Queen of the Night and bass Stephen Milling as Sarastro.

The other operas being screened this season are workhorses from the standard repertory, including much-loved works by Mozart from the 'mature' final five years of his lamentably short life

Operatic tenor Sean Panikkar, who is of Sinhalese, Indian and Tamil ancestry, plays the supporting role of Leonard Woolf, Virginia's husband. The two-act opera begins with the chorus singing fragments of the opening line of Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (the working title of which was *The Hours*): "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself." Librettist Greg Pierce distils the essence of each personality, making every word count as he crafts duets and trios in which they traverse time and space through the lush orchestral colours of Puts's score.

The Met programme notes elaborate on the music: "In adapting Cunningham's novel, Puts sought to follow the shifting perspectives between the heroines while maintaining their separate dimensions—an ambition that can be uniquely accomplished with the tools of opera. The music for and around each of the heroines has a distinct style: a stripped-down quality for Woolf, with harmonic shifts mirroring her fraught mental instability; an appropriately light-pop sensibility for the oppressive suburban conformity surrounding Laura Brown; and a rich, colourful soundscape for Clarissa that evokes the vibrancy of urban New York City and alludes to

contemporary film and Broadway composers. Initially, these worlds exist as separate musical entities, but over the course of the opera, they transcend the boundaries of time and space and increasingly overlap, culminating in a climactic trio for the three women that encapsulates their diversities and commonalities."

"The great thing that opera can do is simultaneity," The Met's dramaturg Paul Cremo told *IndieWire*. "You can have three people in three different decades singing onstage at the same time. And that's something you can't really do quite the same way in a movie, unless you've got a split screen. So it presented a lot of really exciting musical and dramatic challenges." At a panel discussion about the opera in advance of its Met performance, conductor and Met Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin recalled what his mentor Carlo Maria Giulini had once said to him: "A great opera has to have a great libretto, great music and a great dramatic arc." He asserted that *The Hours* has all three, and quipped, "It's good, when it's called *The Hours*, to get the timing right."

The compelling drama was deemed by critics at its premiere as a "stunning triumph." Jude Dry

KEN HOWARD / OPERA THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS (CHAMPION); DONALD COOPER / ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA (DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE)



Clockwise from above: Scenes from *Fedora*; *Don Giovanni*; *Medea*; *La Traviata*

Richard Strauss's evergreen *Der Rosenkavalier* has Simone Young on the podium leading a dream cast with soprano Lise Davidsen as the aging Marschallin opposite mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard as her lover Octavian. Soprano Erin Morley plays Sophie, the beautiful younger woman who steals Octavian's heart while bass Günther Groissböck is Baron Ochs and baritone Markus Brück is Sophie's wealthy father, Faninal.

Another of Verdi's major opera is on the screening schedule. Daniele Rustioni conducts the composer's last work for the stage, *Falstaff*. Inspired by Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the production has a stellar cast: Michael Volle (baritone) is the rakish knight Falstaff; sopranos Ailyn Pérez and Jennifer Johnson play the shrewd women who put him in his place, while Hera Hyesang Park (soprano) and Bogdan Volkov (tenor) are the young couple Nannetta and Fenton.

Nézet-Séguin brings back Richard Wagner's masterpiece *Lohengrin* to the Met after 17 years. Tenor Piotr Beczala, in the title role of the mysterious swan knight, sopranos Tamara Wilson, Elena Stikhina and Christine Goerke with bass-baritone Evgeny Nikitin

and Groissböck round off a stellar line-up.

Another much-awaited revival (this one after 25 years) is Umberto Giordano's thrilling drama *Fedora*, led by conductor Marco Armiliato. Soprano Sonya Yoncheva plays the titular role of the 19th-century Russian princess, while Beczala returns as the ill-fated Count, with supporting roles sung by Rosa Feola (soprano) and Lucas Meachem (baritone).

Talking about the 2022-2023 season, Met General Manager Peter Gelb said: "Our lessons learned during the two years of the pandemic are that the future of the Met, and of opera, rely upon ceaselessly breaking new and diverse artistic ground. It's our path forward." The screenings on offer at the NCPA this season are a good example of this aspiration. ■

Kevin Puts's The Hours will be screened on 11th March at the Godrej Dance Theatre. It contains themes of suicide. If you or someone you know is considering self-harm, help is available from Samaritans Mumbai. Please visit www.samaritansmumbai.org or call +91 84229 84528. For information on future Met screenings, please visit www.ncpamumbai.com.



THE NCPA
**Soulful
Blues**
FESTIVAL

BÉATRICE KAHL
(b.groovy)
FEAT. JOAN FAULKNER
DAVID TOBIN
18 MARCH 2023

**NATALIE
WILLIAMS
& THE SOUL
FAMILY**
19 MARCH 2023

HOST BRIAN TELLIS

TATA THEATRE, NCPA | 6:30 PM



Queen of Hearts

An icon who paved the path for future ghazal artistes and female performers, Begum Akhtar's life story is as inspiring as her music. We explore a bit of both to understand the indelible mark she left on the world.

By Vidhi Salla

Singer extraordinaire Begum Akhtar received several accolades including the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Sangeet Natak Akademi award and multiple national honours, but the most enduring title she received was that of 'Mallika-e-Ghazal' (Queen of Ghazals). The ghazals she sang touched such heights of fame that writers and poets of the time—such as Shakeel Badayuni, Kaifi Azmi, Jigar Moradabadi, Sudarshan Faakir—wanted her to compose and sing their ghazals in her inimitable style. Equally adept at other semi-classical genres such as *thumri*, *dadra*, *hori* and *chaiti*, it was the way she infused both love and pathos in her singing that won the hearts of millions of *rasikas* and inspired artistes of several generations. Having been touted as a 'light classical' singer, Akhtar created a lasting legacy that even classical purists bowed down to. A trendsetter, she earned respectability for female performers and was the first female guru to take on *gandabandh shishyas*, thereby changing the age-old male tradition. She is also credited with adding *gayaki* or vocal idiom to ghazal that was usually recited in *tarannum* (lyrical poetry).

Ode to a master

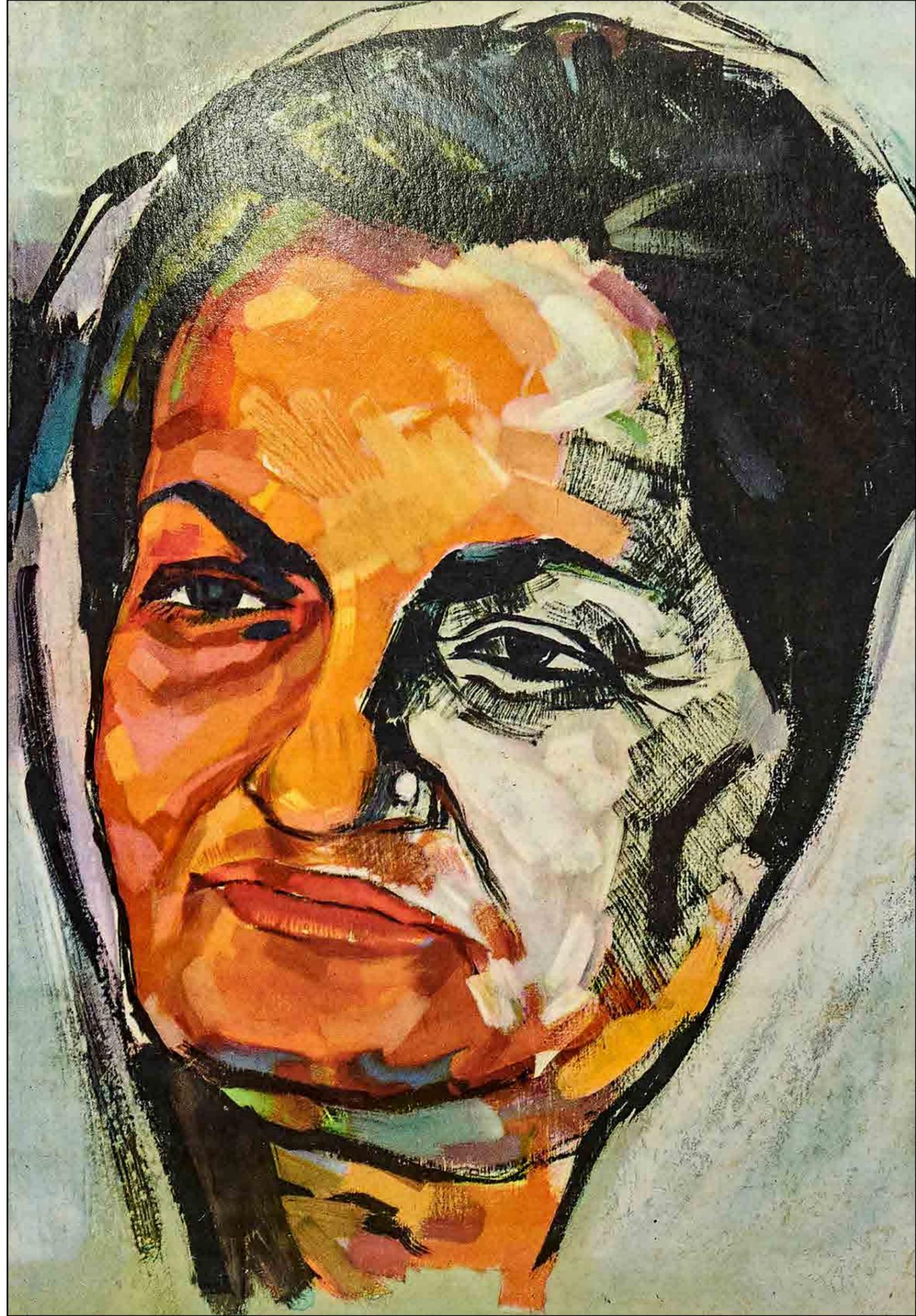
A tribute concert, titled *Aye Mohabbat*, curated by composer and sitarist Tushar Bhatia will be presented at the NCPA this month. During his stint as a producer in the 1980s at Music India and HMV, Bhatia had the privilege of producing quite a few albums of Akhtar from archives of private collectors as well as her personal collection. Explaining the genesis of the concert he says, "The inspiration came from the fact that the ghazal

has travelled a long way from its origins. In my humble opinion, Begum Akhtar was the pinnacle of the form which is being sung. Right from her early days till she passed away in 1974, she has cut so many albums and so many videos are available of her singing that we are privileged to have her music preserved so well."

The programme will feature Akhtar's masterpieces such as 'Aye Mohabbat', 'Diwana Banana Hai to', 'Koyaliya Mat Kar Pukar' and 'Mere Humnafas' which will be sung by vocalists Sraboni Chaudhuri, Shivani Vaswani and Aditi Banerjee, accompanied by Vanraj Shastri on sarangi, Sudhanshu Gharpure on harmonium and Mithilesh Jha on tabla. "The artistes have been trained by great masters including Shobha Gurtu and others. It is a fitting tribute from today's generation to a master musician. Begum Akhtar also sang in multiple languages such as Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Urdu, Bengali and Gujarati. We will try to present songs in a few of these languages to represent her repertoire," adds Bhatia. Explaining the essence of ghazal, he says, love has many shades and many experiences. "She has covered a whole gamut of emotions through her music and we feel those emotions when we listen to her music."

From Akhtari to Akhtar

The iconic singer's life is often viewed in two phases—before her marriage and after—characterised by two different names and arguably, two different performing styles. Born in 1914 in Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh, Akhtar was the daughter of Mushtari Bai, a well-known courtesan. Before she married and became Begum Akhtar, she was known as Akhtari Bai Faizabadi.



Mushtari Bai ensured that her daughter received the best musical *taleem* from various gurus that included Ata Mohammed Khan and Barkat Ali Khan of the Patiala *gharana*, Abdul Waheed Khan of the Kirana *gharana* and Ramzan Khan.

Musical patronage for courtesans under feudal India meant that the mother-daughter duo had to relocate many times to different cities that promised better opportunities and recognition for young Akhtar. After moving to Gaya, Calcutta and Bombay, the duo finally anchored themselves in Lucknow, by which time Akhtar had already cut several 78-rpm discs, acted and sung in Bollywood films and performed at a number of prestigious *baithaks* in royal courts. With ascending fame and hard-earned financial stability, Mushtari Bai made a personal and professional decision that became the cornerstone of Akhtar's future success. As described by historian Saleem Kidwai in an essay in the book *Akhtari: The Life and Music of Begum Akhtar*, edited by Yatindra Mishra, "Mushtari did not set up her daughter's *kotha* in the Chowk Bazaar, which was then, as it is now, most associated with *kothas* and *mujras*. Instead, she settled her on the edge of Hazratganj, the posh commercial hub of the colonial city, home to the influential elite. Mushtari had shrewdly positioned her daughter in one of Lucknow's exclusive

"Begum Akhtar's ability to be profoundly expressive while retaining impeccable accuracy melodically (what she herself in an interview calls *sur ki sacchai*) has been a great inspiration that I turn to again and again"

neighbourhoods to become the cynosure of the social and cultural life of the city." Akhtar became the most sought-after performer of her time, travelling all over the country performing for wealthy maharajas and zamindars. It is well-known of her that she maintained utmost dignity during her career as a courtesan singer, even showering her patrons with expensive presents as a reverse gesture of gratitude and lasting friendship.

By mid-20th century, courtesan culture was not only on the decline but was also being increasingly attached with social stigma. Akhtar's search for respectability as well as enduring love resulted in her marriage with barrister Ishtiaq Ahmed Abbasi in 1944. She became a Begum from a Bai which also meant there were now several curbs on her social and professional life, especially to do with performing music. She moulded herself into domestic life for a few years but her fame was difficult to hide from and, more importantly, she could not be kept away from music. Gradually, she reinvented herself as a suave, sophisticated singer of ghazals and *thumris* and brought the two forms of music out of royal courts and *kothas* on to concert platforms. Her popularity was such that everyone from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Sarojini Naidu and future

stalwarts of music including Pandit Jasraj, Bhimsen Joshi and Lata Mangeshkar became ardent fans of her singing.

Sweet torture

Akhtar's enigmatic personality and inimitable voice quality earned her an almost cult status. Bismillah Khan, a friend and a fan of Akhtar's, has been quoted as saying: "There was a strange attraction in Begum Akhtar's voice. This is known as 'akaar ki taan', which means that her voice would break a bit at the singing of 'aa'. And this was her virtue. But in classical music, this is considered a drawback. Once I said, 'Bai say something, sing something.' Begum started singing 'Niraala banra deewana bana de'. Once, twice after singing 'Deewana bana de' her throat pulled. I said, 'Ah! This is the sweet torture of your voice.'"

This 'cracking' in her voice became a signature quality of Akhtar's singing and was eagerly awaited by listeners. Renowned vocalist and composer Shubha Mudgal, who curated Akhtar's birth centenary celebration with leading tabla player Aneesh Pradhan at the NCPA in 2014, says, "Initially, I would try and even imitate the break in her voice as well as learn by rote every *alaap*, every variation she had recorded. Fortunately, better sense prevailed as I grew up and

realised that imitation gets you nowhere, particularly with an artiste as inimitable as Begum Akhtar. For me, her ability to be profoundly expressive while retaining impeccable accuracy melodically (what she herself in an interview calls *sur ki sacchai*) has been a great inspiration that I turn to again and again."

Akhtar had the unmatched ability to infuse emotions into poetry without compromising on the musicality or

raagdari in a song. In the book *Akhtari*, Kaumudi Munshi, a former student of Akhtar's, recalls the latter's words describing the effect that a performance should have on the audience, "Child, there should be a recounting in your singing. You are singing a poem, some words, literature, you should recount it, tell it. Your singing should tell the story. There should not be too many twirls and meandering; do not digress; that makes the literature complicated. Sing well, sing unreservedly; express yourself in such a way that the lyrics and the music are both clear. You don't want just the words and neither do you want just music."

What does it mean to celebrate Akhtar's legacy in current times? Mudgal certainly speaks for several artistes when she says, "For students of music like me, she is an icon whose immortal music continues to inspire us to immerse ourselves in the study of music and literature and in the process, enrich our individual journeys. A true celebration of her legacy would be to encourage artistes to showcase compositions inspired by her legacy and her aesthetic." ■

Aye Mohabbat will be presented 3rd March at the Experimental Theatre.



NCPA

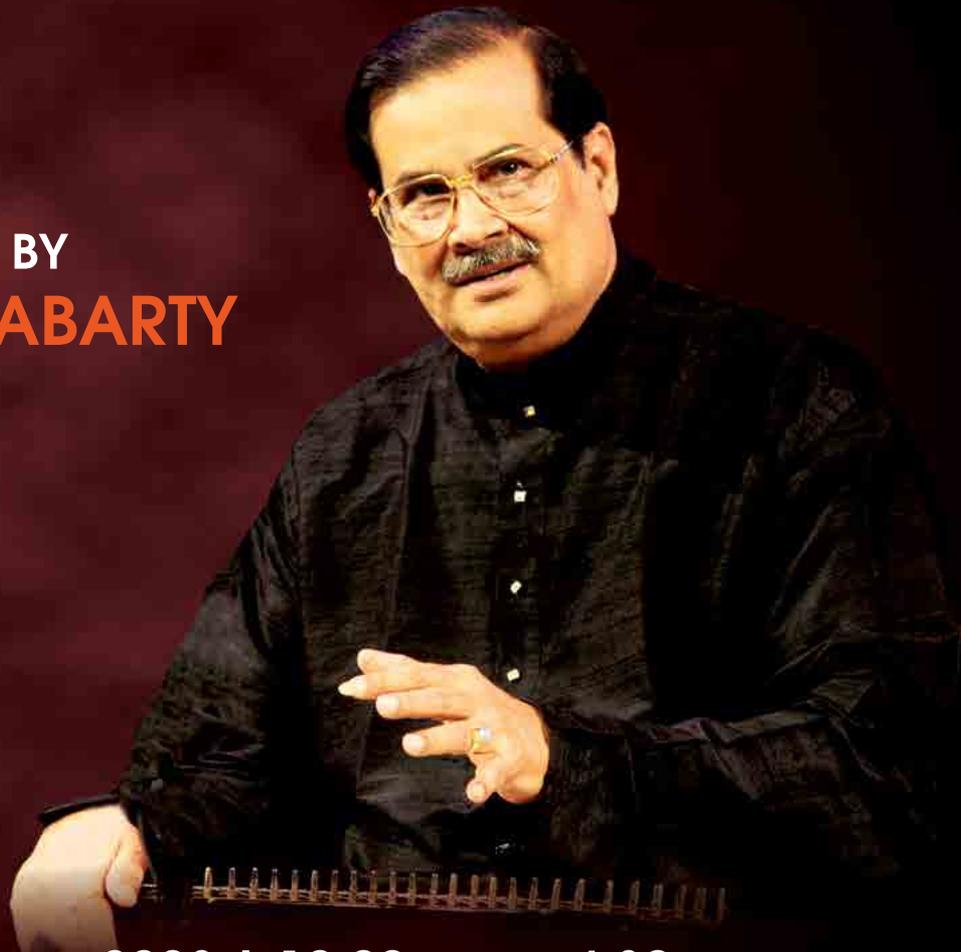


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Small Wonder

All of nine years, Ayaan Deshpande from the SOI Music Academy has performed with the SOI Chamber Orchestra, given solo piano recitals and is all set to give his next in the land of Mozart as the winner of the Golden Key of Vienna Music Festival. The prodigy is being carefully nurtured by the SOI Music Director and teachers to share his gift with the world.



Celebrations are in order as Ayaan Deshpande, a student of the SOI Music Academy, has been chosen as the winner of the Golden Key of Vienna Music Festival this year. After receiving his diploma and medal, he will be performing at the Winners' Gala Concert held at the majestic Ehrbar Hall in Palais Ehrbar in August. The concert hall has witnessed performances by the greats of Western classical music, including Brahms, Bruckner and Mahler. In addition to the Gala Concert, Deshpande has been invited to perform in a public recital dedicated to Mozart at the Bösendorfer Hall in Mozarthaus. Having also won the second prize in the composition category, he will perform at the World Composers' Concert in addition to taking masterclasses with professors from the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts.

The news comes as testament to something that those in the Western

classical music community at the NCPA knew all along: Deshpande has a gift and it ought to be shared with the world. The nine-year-old wunderkind's love for music began at the tender age of five when he started learning vocal Indian classical music. It was only in 2020 that his natural flair for the piano was discovered. Through the many lockdowns induced by the pandemic, he developed an interest in learning to play the instrument and started off with a 61-key keyboard. Amazed by his grasp of music and the sheer desire to play, his parents—Tanmay and Ashwini Deshpande—were compelled to enrol him on a music education programme that could give him wings.

Deshpande joined the SOI Music Academy in May 2021 and has been learning the piano under the nurturing tutelage of Aida Bisengalieva since. Although their first meeting had to be a virtual one, Bisengalieva recalls noticing even then that he was different. He learned musical grammar in no time and his repertoire now includes composers like Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Chopin.

"He has a good pitch and brilliant

memory with a natural command of the instrument. These are all pieces of a puzzle that when put together make the portrait of a good pianist. Kids get tired sooner and can often be distracted, but Ayaan displays profound interest and attention. He has the simplicity of a child and the seriousness and strength of a grown-up. It is very rare," Bisengalieva tells us.

Their unique student-teacher relationship has also broadened his horizons as a musician. Deshpande knows his taste in composers and has already composed a sonata, a waltz, a nocturne and a few other pieces. "I have been teaching piano for 40 years, and with experience, I know that only kind words and patience can help kids grow. With Ayaan, my role is to support him and make him believe that he is exceptional," Bisengalieva elaborates.

Bisengalieva does not fail to commend the devotion and commitment of the little pianist's parents. Prioritising his music education is a part of the smallest of their decisions. They homeschool him so that he can focus on his training within flexible hours. Their overwhelming support is also felt in their attendance at the many concerts and recitals at the NCPA. "After every concert, I can see him all inspired. Listening to new music and compositions encourages new ideas in him, so we make sure we take him to every concert," says Ashwini.

With a quiet demeanour and gentle fingers on the keys, his commanding presence onstage is nothing like his delicate frame. His first public performance was at the Tata Theatre in November 2021, with the SOI Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Marat Bisengaliev. In July 2022, Deshpande gave his first solo piano recital in an intimate set-up on the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre stage with the audience seated around him. He performed works of Mozart, Chopin, Debussy and one of his own compositions, leaving the listeners

stunned, even emotional. His subsequent recital at the Poona Music Society in August, where he performed the diverse programme to a packed hall, was met with love and thunderous applause.

Speaking about Deshpande's prowess, Bisengaliev says, "I'm always shocked at how he plays all the octaves with his tiny fingers. What distinguishes him from other prodigies is that he is the music." It is this belief in his musicality that reflects in the SOI Music Director and academy founder's encouragement of the budding pianist through performance opportunities and

enabling of masterclasses with renowned international pianists.

Deshpande's debut on the prestigious stages of Vienna is, therefore, not only a matter of pride but a step forward in showcasing the growth of Western classical music education in the country. His audition, where he played Impromptu No. 1, Op. 29 by Chopin, was unanimously appreciated by the jury. "You are a very gifted young musician who is also perfectly educated. You exposed a great palette of dynamic and agogic nuances, beautiful tone colours, singing legato, and

very impressive phrasing for the melody, especially via the middle section..." reads the invitation congratulating him.

Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook, Chairman, NCPA and co-founder of the SOI, speaks of the importance of the delicate handling of such talent. "Young Ayaan is a formidable talent. His innate musicianship and interest in classical music is in itself a great contributor to his present abilities. It is sincerely hoped that he will be led wisely and not too quickly so that the full bloom of his maturity emerges at the right time." ■

For the Record

In the first instalment of a new series, **Jimmy Bilimoria** discusses a work from the Stuart-Liff Collection he oversees at the NCPA. This month, he analyses the theatricality of Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca*.



looking for Angelotti. By the end of the act, Cavaradossi is implicated. The rest of the plot revolves around Tosca's futile attempts at negotiating with Scarpia to release Cavaradossi which end tragically.

None of Puccini's operas has aroused more hostility than *Tosca* perhaps because of its brutality; yet its position in the central repertoire has remained unchallenged. It is theatrically and musically gripping from start to finish; it presents the composer's most varied and interesting soprano role.

Tosca is a credible woman of the theatre, capable of genuine dignity. In 'Vissi d'arte', her famous aria in Act 2, she says that she has lived for art and love and asks of God why He allows the suffering of the innocent. Nowhere is she more moving than in Act 3 in which she imagines herself to be in command of the situation and all she has to do is to teach Cavaradossi how to act. All the more heart-rending is her discovery of the truth.

In 1895, Puccini saw the play *La Tosca*, written by the French dramatist Victorien Sardou, performed in Florence with Sarah Bernhardt (for whom it was written) in the title role. By the beginning of 1898, he had the libretto and was able to begin work on the first act. He was concerned with the authenticity of detail. A priest briefed him regarding the 'Te Deum' being sung in Roman churches, the order of the Cardinal's procession. Puccini made a special journey to Rome to hear for himself the effect of the matins bells from the ramparts of Castel Sant'Angelo.

The work is a character drama and the

tragedy springs from Tosca's abnormal jealousy. Without this fundamental trait in her, Scarpia could not have worked his devilish ways. One can witness with vengeance the torture scene, the execution, an attempted rape, a murder and two suicides. In all, there are four corpses—Angelotti, Scarpia, Cavaradossi and Tosca.

To listen to *Tosca* on record (LP) or CD, I would strongly recommend the version with the following singers: Giuseppe Di Stefano as Mario Cavaradossi; Maria Callas as Floria Tosca; Tito Gobbi as Baron Scarpia, with La Scala Orchestra & Chorus conducted by Victor de Sabata. I feel that there is a certain chemistry between these singers that has brought forth the essence of the drama in this rendition. Outstanding *Toscas* have included Geraldine Farrar, Maria Jeritz, Maria Caniglia and later, Callas whose performances with Gobbi as Scarpia became legendary. ■

The NCPA houses the world-famous Stuart-Liff Collection of 6,000 books, 11,000 LPs and 12,000 CDs on Western classical music. This collection was generously donated to the centre in 2009 by Vivian Liff, on behalf of George Stuart and himself, as a gesture of their friendship with Chairman Mr. Khushroo N. Suntook, an avid collector and connoisseur himself. The collection is an invaluable source for research by musicologists and students as well as for general music lovers. The library housing the collection is open from 10 am to 5.15 pm on weekdays.

Giving Flight to Dreams

The dance programme *Nrityaprichay*, conducted by the NCPA for underprivileged children in schools across Mumbai, is making the arts essential to education.

By Reshma O. Pathare

Known to be a universal language that breaks the barriers of caste, creed, culture and nationality, dance—that unhindered form of expression—is as much a vibrant mode of movement as it is an exuberant outlet for expression. When taught from a young age, dance also becomes an empowering way to understand one's heritage.

This has been one of the main motivations behind *Nrityaparichay*, a dance training programme conducted by the NCPA for underprivileged children in schools across Mumbai. Conceptualised by Swapnokalpa Dasgupta, Head of Dance Programming, the initiative has benefitted young learners in more ways than one. "With the support of our Chairman Mr. Khushroo Suntook, *Nrityaparichay* began in 2015 with 20 children from the Seva Sadan Society, an organisation dedicated to empowering girls from impoverished backgrounds. From 2016, we began taking weekly classes for children at various schools around Mumbai," says Dasgupta.

Starting with six schools, including the Bal Jeevan Trust (Vakola), Dharmveer Sambhaji Vidyalaya (Vikhroli) and Dnyandeep Seva Mandal High School (Nerul), *Nrityaparichay* enabled a year-long training programme in two folk dance forms and one classical dance form under the tutelage of established exponents like Gauri Sharma Tripathi and Anonna Guha (Kathak), Latasana Devi (Manipuri), Dasgupta and Shubhada Varadkar (Odissi) as well as teachers from dance institutes for various forms such as Rajasthani folk, *lezim*, etc.

An inspiring trajectory

A combination of the teachers' dedication and the



students' zest to learn drives *Nrityaparichay*. In spite of challenges like limited or un-roofed spaces to practise, the students began showcasing their skills in diverse dance forms by performing onstage very early on. They trained in forms like *manjira nartan*, a dance with cymbals that includes devotional singing and dancing in praise of Radha and Krishna; *gotipua*, considered to be a precursor to Odissi; and martial art forms like *Thang-Ta* and *kalaripayattu*. Soon, opportunities to perform at renowned events such as the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival and the Sanskruti Arts Festival came along.

"The students were buoyed by the expert training they were receiving, the praise they were being showered with at festivals and the exposure they were getting by observing their teachers teach and choreograph. They watched performances of great dancers such as Kumudini Lakhia and Leela Samson. Seeing it all come to life onstage—the make-up, expressions and costumes—was an enriching experience for them," says Dasgupta. It was this exposure and on-the-job training that catapulted two students of Manipuri dance to receive the Darshana Jhaveri scholarship, while a few other students became assistant teachers of the *Nrityaparichay* initiative.

Things were going smoothly till the pandemic hit in 2020. However, the *Nrityaparichay* team soon adapted itself to continue classes online. Dasgupta says, "The support we received from the students and their kin



was exemplary. Many children would train in front of a small mobile screen with a curtain drawn behind. In fact, we encouraged them to take part in the online dance competition of the Chembur Durga Puja Association. More than 400 students participated enthusiastically by

creating stylish videos of their performances."

Back with a bang

With the pandemic hopefully behind us for good,

Nrityaparichay is back to training students in person. Today, the initiative is involved with 12 schools, including Milind Vidyalaya (Powai), Sree Narayana Guru Central School (Chembur) and Swami Shamanand High School (Ghatkopar), among others. This month, the students are set to captivate audiences at their annual performance to be presented at the Experimental Theatre.

Recognising that continued engagement in art forms like dance requires tangible motivation, *Nrityaparichay* is now offering an opportunity to students to learn for three years instead of one. They will be able to complete a junior diploma in dance from institutes affiliated to the state government. Upon completion of the diploma, they will be eligible for extra marks on their Class 10 aggregate, which would be a game changer while applying to colleges for higher studies. "We want dance to become a tool of empowerment for our students. They should be keen to pursue it beyond just a hobby. We have seen tremendous interest and potential in students through the years," says Dasgupta. In a world where children are often asked to choose between academics and the arts, this aspect of *Nrityaparichay* is a valiant effort to make the arts essential to education. According to Dasgupta, "Through the implementation of this credit system, if we can give wings to the children's educational dreams, it will, I am sure, motivate them towards long-term engagement in the arts, which is a win-win situation for all of us." ■

Manipuri in the Mountains

At an arts festival organised in Saudi Arabia, dancers and drummers from Manipur performed under the aegis of the NCPA to represent India on the international platform.

By Reshma O. Pathare

The new year arrived with an interesting opportunity for the NCPA to represent India at the second edition of the Qemam International Festival for Mountain Performance Arts in Saudi Arabia. The

eight-day festival in January, hosted by the Saudi Theater and Performing Arts Commission, aimed to give international exposure to performing arts from the mountains. It received enthusiastic participation from 14 countries including India, Morocco, South Korea and China.

Vibrant encounters

Speaking about their experience of participating in this festival, Swapnokalpa Dasgupta, Head of Dance Programming at the NCPA, says, "All thanks to our Chairman Mr. Khushroo Suntook who encouraged us to participate after Aleksandra Mituireva, CEO and Founder of SAMIT Event Group, connected with him. After some deliberation, Deepa Shinde (Manager of the Dance Department here at the NCPA) and I decided to showcase Manipuri dance forms. Even though Manipuri forms like *Raas Leela*, the martial art *Thang-ta*, the *Dhol Cholam* and *Pung Cholam* have such a rich heritage, their global exposure has been limited when compared to other classical dance forms like Kathak or Bharatanatyam. Our idea received a hearty response from Latasana Devi. Through her Kaina Foundation, she put together a group of 15 male and female dancers from Manipur, choreographed the sequences and prepared them in every way."

Latasana Devi, a senior exponent of Manipuri dance forms and an empanelled artiste of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), says, “It was amazing to showcase the Radha-Krishna Holi, the flora-fauna of Brindavan, drum dances using various types of percussion instruments and cymbals, and *Thang-ta*, all in a span of 45 minutes.” The performance had to be continuous and the festival stipulated that all dancers must be onstage throughout. To make this possible, she explains, “We literally had to place statues onstage to allow a few dancers to change costumes for the next part of their dance sequence!”

Challenges surmounted

The journey started with Shinde leading the contingent to participate in the Carnival March on Art Street in the mountain city of Abha. “I felt so proud to walk along the vehicle with the Indian flag, with dancers performing on the makeshift stage built thereon,” she shares. The artistes performed for seven days at various venues in the region of Asir, such as the Historical Tabab area, Bin Adwan Heritage Village and Qasr Malek, among others. Before the performance, however, came the familiarisation. “The local people had never heard of Manipuri dance and music. So, we began with explaining to them the cultural significance, the type of instruments used and so on,” adds Shinde.

The warm welcome aside, there were several hurdles that the team had to overcome. “We were performing on stages that would sometimes be too small or built on uneven ground. The food, language, weather was different. We were travelling to different locations every day. However, kudos to our team who took everything in their stride. The drum dancers performed wearing white T-shirts for the first time ever [as social norms do not allow bare torsos in public performances]. The drummers had to improvise their act to meet the spatial challenges of every new performance such as landing within the confines of the stage. The dancers worked at top speed to change costumes and continue their performance even in the biting cold,” she says, with justified pride.

New avenues

The performers too savoured the unique opportunity to showcase their talent before an international audience. One of the senior artistes, Yumnam Bhumeshwor Singh, says, “I have performed on many international platforms in my life but this festival was unique as we were also able to witness Arab culture and performances.” For another artiste, Khaidem Olivia, it was a dream come true to perform on an international stage for the first time, even though it was difficult to dance barefoot on small stages wearing the *pot/oi*, a costume worn by gopis in Raas-Leela. Singh also found it challenging to perform



the acrobatic Dhol Cholam and Pung Cholam on hard surfaces. But both of them express gratitude to the NCPA, the organisers, their teachers and the audience for being supportive and enabling them to learn from the experience.

To add to the diversity of the festival was a golden opportunity, feels Dasgupta. “There were challenges, but we had full faith in our mentor and students, and they outdid themselves. Mr. Suntook had encouraged us to participate in this festival saying ‘sky is also not the limit’. We’re happy that we could prove his words true, while getting to work with an all-woman team of organisers in a country which is steadily working towards modernisation even while keeping its traditions and culture intact.” ■

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The set design by Francis O'Connor includes floating platforms for the actors, room on the stage for the orchestra and several elements of Soviet symbolism



LIGHTS, COSTUME, SOUND, ACTION

Ahead of its second run at the NCPA this month, the creatives behind the production of Tom Stoppard's *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* talk about their craft.

During one of the few moments with all the characters on the stage together, it is the lighting design by Rick Fisher that guides the audiences' eyes



Set design, Francis O'Connor

As a designer when you read a play, you're looking for a visual reference...maybe an object or a phrase that triggers an image and leads to a design solution. With *EGBDF*, the symbol was immediate—the Triangle. It is an instrument, an essential prop in the action, but to me it represents the three central characters: Sacha, his father Alexander Ivanov and the schizophrenic patient Ivanov. There are also three locations: the cell, the schoolroom and the doctor's office. I thought I could usefully incorporate the triangle into the design of these spaces.

Performing in the vast space at the NCPA, we needed to decide on a solution that allowed the orchestra space to play but also allowed the actors to be seen and heard and provided focus for the action. Bruce [Guthrie, director] and I loved the idea of having the actors play above the level of the orchestra. This allowed us to focus on the individual scenes by making floating platforms. The platforms themselves are triangles but the metal frames are also made up of triangular shapes. In a small way, the platform/tower design references Tatlin, the early Soviet artist.

This platform solution allowed for a very dynamic staging above, within and around the orchestra. I thought the set should have a kinetic quality in the way the platforms moved but also in the way the set responds to the music, hence the floating triangle above the platforms. Three LED strips move throughout key moments in the play, a visual realisation of the orchestral sound. It looks smooth out front but there are six crew members backstage carefully coordinating ropes and pulleys.

I needed something with a vivid neutrality against which these elements could play. The red flag that is also a theatrical curtain seemed apt. It is treated to

look a little scarred and burnt. The Soviet hammer and sickle looks imprinted on this huge cloth; look closely though and you realise the image is cut out of the cloth and the glittering gold is behind it. I love the moment when the pompous Colonel appears backed by the golden cloth. It is such a short scene given an epic arrival, I think it has earned such a theatrical moment.

I've loved making this work with the team here in Mumbai. I particularly enjoyed the last few days finishing off the set build in the car park somewhere below where you will watch the play. That was a first for me!

There is a beautiful simple moment at the end of the play...instruments rise out of the orchestra and seem to dance above the space. It's nothing, but everything. It's a point where action, design, music and moment merge, it's a little magical, a little like my memory of making this piece with these people.

Lighting design, Rick Fisher

In every stage production, lighting is an important element to help tell the story, set the mood, direct focus for the audience, as well as provide illumination. I like to think of it as the glue that holds all the elements together and directly connects the stage to the audience.

In addition to this task, the set designer Francis O'Connor added a very dynamic sculptural lighting piece (three strips of tubing that were stuffed with LED lighting) that could form and reform into many different patterns during the course of the play, reflecting the shifting realities and location of the story as it develops and unfolds. We used brightness and colour to keep these pieces of the triangle and the three triangular platforms alive during the play, the choice of colours being such that it helps the

audience know where to look on a crowded stage with a full orchestra.

Apart from two manually operated follow spots, we used old and new types of lighting to illuminate the story and reflect the variety of realities and interpretations that the play creates. The brilliant team from the NCPA as well as Associate Lighting Designer and Programmer Rob Halliday, and Assistant Lighting Designer Akshay Khubchandani installed and focused over 120 different lighting fixtures, some automated and some controlled via radio waves, for this production.

Sound design, Andy Collins

When I was first approached by Bruce Guthrie, my initial response was that the sound design for *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* should be empathetic to the piece. It is a play for 'actors and orchestra', after all. The design was not about embellishment or amplification but rather enhancing both the orchestra and the performers bringing the two mediums together in a seamless manner.

As it is a piece that is not regularly performed, research options were limited. I started by listening to the original album and of course analysing the script and score. Early on in the process, I was able to work with the conductor, Mikel Toms, and the music supervisor, Matthew Scott, as well as the SOI team to create a firmer vision of the musical language of the production. It was clear from the outset that the music and dialogue (much of which is underscored) was quite cinematic in its style and that I needed to create a sound design which allowed the audience to easily follow the actors and the orchestra on their dynamic journey.

Obviously, one of the main issues was that the whole symphony orchestra would be onstage in full view entwined within the action. This is a very unusual situation to be in. There is a reason orchestras

are normally in an orchestra pit. There was a lot of conversation about how we would seat the players to both suit them and the play. They need to be able to hear one another and see the conductor at all times. The SOI were very accommodating about working with these particular challenges.

As well as liaising with the music department, I was also working with the audio team at the NCPA for the first time. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology, we were able to start talking a long time before I actually arrived in India, organising the equipment and staffing required. Once in Mumbai, the sound engineer/operator, Nikhil Verghese, and I began to attend rehearsals to learn the show. For a production like this, the sound operation is very detailed and multilayered with many more cues than a regular play. A lot of this style of work was new to the team at the NCPA but they embraced it and, indeed, excelled at it.

Overall, it was a pleasure to create and execute a sound design for a production such as this and I am very much looking forward to being able to hear the piece live again this March.

Assistant sound designer, Nikhil Verghese

When I first got Andy's emails, I was instantly curious to speak to him. His idea of playing with delays to make the sound psycho-acoustically perceivable to the human ear in such a way that it makes the situation appear realistic and raw, is what I understood being in that centre spot where beautiful theatre was blending with mesmerising orchestral vibe.

We had some gruelling sessions while rehearsing initially at the Cama Hall, finding ways to achieve the desired result in the most reliable manner while preparing our show file. But it all eventually fell in place when we were at the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre, thanks to Andy's subtle work and sincerity



Character- and era-specific sketches and swatches created by costume designer Pallavi Patel

that kept us well-prepared for every eventuality.

Being a sound engineer, I too have always sought to find ways to keep the audience engaged by trying to add something to a situation being portrayed, so working on this project with Andy was the perfect amalgamation of desire and intent.

It has been an honour to be a part of this marvellous production and a team that is really hard working. Bruce has led the way beautifully and I am excited for the second run and working once again with Mr. Andy Collins.

Costume design, Pallavi Patel

I love making vintage clothing so it was a treat to work on this production. The design process was very smooth, thanks to Bruce, who got me on board since the first reading. Meeting the actors and then starting to sketch is always the best thing. I could design as per their body types and physical features.

Francis's exquisite scale model, which was a replica of the stage, complete with details like the scaled-down orchestra chairs, was a huge help. I could put a fabric swatch on that stage and see the look in a tactile way. It also helped me form colour groups—maroon and blue for the school, cream and grey for the cell, stark white for the doctors and black formal for the orchestra.

The costumes of the Teacher and Doctor were designed to be inconspicuous. I researched Soviet doctors and teachers from '70s and wanted the characters to be lost in the crowd. The uniforms of the schoolchildren were designed to be authentic, based on the numerous photos I referred to from that period. I finally used a white shirt, blue bottom, red scarf, badges on the arm and a belt (which, to let you in on a secret, is actually the Bharat Scouts belt). Believe it or not, the design has not changed since the 1920s, or perhaps even earlier.

Another fun costume was that of the Colonel. I had worked on *Wozzeck* in college and remember designing for the Captain, a pompous character, a uniform filled with medals. Alas, that was only a sketch then. For EGBDF, I could bring to life all those badges. The design resonated here with the Soviet government's military supremacy. I used a variety of techniques like laser cutting, embossing, making metal trims, printing, and making graphics for the medals as per the period of the Colonel's service.

As for the patients, since asylums were used as a political move to suppress dissidents, I tried to take it a little further back in time than the '70s to make it look like an archaic measure. However, to make it realistic, I kept the collar large—very '70s—with a Russian cut, a drooping one without the stand. For the fabric, I fused cotton gauze and greige cotton. The uniform has a one-size-fits-all feel to it and looks appropriately worn out.

The most challenging part was the shoes for the patients. It took us a long time to get them right. After trying slip-ons, rough-looking lace-up ones and combat boots, we finally customised the shoes from rough leather, so that they were slightly ankle hugging. I aged the leather before making the shoes to give them a soft and vintage feeling.

The finale costume was added very close to the end of rehearsals. Neil Bhoopalram's rehearsal of the last scene was magical. He used his own clothes and Bruce had this idea that in the final scene, Neil should take off the prison uniform to reveal an everyman look as he totters and stands up. A T-shirt and jeans. There is a very interesting history of denim in the Soviet Union and the Cold War, something you might like to read about. ■

Every Good Boy Deserves Favour will be presented from 9th to 12th March at the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre.



Andy Collins's empathetic sound design honours the uniqueness of the play that demands the orchestra remains onstage and is a character unto itself

The Spirit of Community

A folk festival at the NCPA will present cultural, linguistic and traditional flavours of Madhya Pradesh in a showcase of indigenous art forms.

By Aishwarya Sahasrabudhe

Through their celebration of indigenous cultures, festivals and aesthetics, *lok kala* or the folk arts nurture a plethora of musical, dramatic, literary and dance traditions that are rooted in the everyday experiences of a community, whose spirit thrives on bringing people together through unbounded artistic expression. These traditions across Indian provinces are enmeshed in local and regional flavours so that individual art forms have their own dialect, movement vocabulary, attire and musical instruments. A folk art then becomes a marker not only of a distinct performance practice but also of a community's language, rituals, identity and even its socio-cultural conundrums.

Lok kala literally means 'art of the people' and in keeping with this understanding of the folk aesthetic, the practice of folk arts has endured and even sustained multiple social, cultural, political and economic upheavals at times to transform and adapt itself at every historical turn, much like the changing attitudes of the people and the region it represents. Yet, most of the folk art forms continue to retain an essence that describes and revels in the vibrant traditions of a community, keeping intact the form and style inherent to its practice.

A two-day showcase at the NCPA this month is set to celebrate several such folk traditions from Madhya Pradesh casting a spotlight on three regions, Malwa, Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand, to bring to audiences the sublime and diverse flavours of folk arts from the central province of India. These folk forms, marking the artistic and regional diversity of Madhya Pradesh, will be presented as part of the NCPA's Living Traditions, an annual performance series which features folk traditions from different corners of India. The Living Traditions: Festival of Madhya Pradesh will showcase 95 folk artistes hailing from three different areas of the state, practising varied aesthetic styles, in dance, music and drama performances that celebrate the coming together of an indigenous community spirit.



The dance form of *Gangaur* (pictured here) is one of the many distinctive folk forms from Madhya Pradesh

DIVERSE TRADITIONS

As he coordinates and communicates with the numerous artistes and performing troupes from Madhya Pradesh gearing up for Living Traditions, Premswaroop Tiwari notes that the three regions chosen for this two-day festival are home to such a wide range of art forms that the two-hour recitals across two days will serve as a mere *jhalak* or glimpse into them. "If you choose to look only at one region, say Bundelkhand, there is so much to showcase that even a week-long festival won't be enough," he quips, while describing how the festival will then highlight two folk forms from every region.

The *lok natya* and *lok sangeet* (folk drama and folk songs) from Baghelkhand will feature traditional songs and folklore immersed in regional beliefs and rituals that have been passed down through generations.

These *paramparagat* songs (inherited compositions) sung in the Bagheli dialect and brought forth by artiste Roshni Prasad Mishra's troupe will feature a compendium of verses, singing of time passing and seasons going by.

Unfolding the different phases of life, the performance will include wedding songs like the *anjuri* or *banna-banni*, and the *mundan*, which marks infancy and the *karma geet*, describing a ripe harvest, among other lyrical tunes. *Latmarba* or *laath maarne vala*, the folk drama of this northeastern region of

The Living Traditions: Festival of Madhya Pradesh will showcase 95 folk artistes hailing from three different areas of the state in dance, music and drama performances that celebrate the coming together of an indigenous community spirit

miraculous potentials of his powerful gift. A traditional *lok natya* filled with dialogue and verse, it will also bring to life the local idiom of the region through the *boli*, or the Bagheli dialect, coupled with a significant sociocultural backdrop against which all folk art must find expression.

Madhya Pradesh, will take off from the belief that if a child is born with feet coming out first, it carries magic in those feet. *Latmarba* tells the story of a local lad, Jiyaman, whose life undergoes great transformation when he realises the

The artistes hailing from Malwa will bring to the Mumbai stage the popular tradition of Kabir *Gayan*. Bhajans composed by Kabir, steeped in spiritual philosophies, will be sung by Jagdish Boriala's ensemble and embedded in Malwa's musical renditions, they will bring forth certain regional flavours even as the singers carry forward the enduring legacy of articulating through song and rhythm the symbolism underlying the works of this *Bhakti* poet.

Yet another Malwi folk tradition of *Gangaur* will be a mesmerising treat—a dance traditionally performed by young women as a prayer to the divine Shiva and Parvati during a nine-day-long festival in *Chaitra*, the first month of the Hindu calendar. The practice of *Gangaur* straddles boundaries of the western region of Madhya Pradesh and south eastern regions of Rajasthan, but what is unique to its practice in the former is the Nemadi dialect.

A tradition that has trickled down through generations, *Gangaur* finds its roots in Nemadi practices that include making idols of Gan (Shiva) and Gauri (Parvati) and dancing to rhythmic beats by propping mandals on the dancers' heads. The *Gangaur geet* performed during *Chaitra Navratri*, Tiwari adds, narrate stories about deities like Brahma and Saraswati, Vishnu and Lakshmi. Traditionally, the dance form also symbolises the ritual of *bidaai*, or the custom of a newly wedded girl bidding goodbye to her maternal home. Narrating the folklore of Goddess Parvati, whose husband Shiva—known in colloquial renditions as King Dhaniyar—comes to take her away to her marital home, the folk dance is immersed in *abhinaya* and lyrical verses which celebrate at once, a good harvest and Parvati's happiness.

For their part, the artistes from Bundelkhand will be immersed in performing a *lok natya* adapted from the stories of Munshi Premchand. Translated into Bundeli, the play *Sadhu Ghisu Mare Na Madhau*, is a dramatised rendition of Premchand's *Kafan* and *Poos ki Raat*, two complex narratives on oppression and poverty that are among the novelist's most profound works. The theatrical adaptation woven into the traditional repertoire of *saang* or *swang* is rooted in *naqal* (mimicry), simultaneously engaging and provocative.

Accompanying the dramatists will also be dancers from the northern region of Madhya Pradesh performing the *Raee nritya*, a folk dance that celebrates childbirth, weddings and other festivals and features veiled performers rhythmically moving to the beats produced by 13 musicians striking vibrant notes of the mridanga, nagada, jhaanjh and algoja.

FAMILIAL LEGACIES

While most young dancers performing *Gangaur* hail from the less privileged sections in Malwa, today, Tiwari notes, many of them are educated girls who have received years of training in the form. In many regions of Madhya Pradesh, artiste families continue to dedicate themselves entirely to the practice and performance of their *lok kala*. Tiwari elaborates on the community of *Raee* practitioners, "Suppose there are four or five girls in a house, three will be married off but at least one will train in the dance form." A highly energetic recital performed to a quick tempo, *Raee's* movement vocabulary is made up of fast-paced pirouettes and circular movements that demand agility and swiftness from dancers swaying to the complex rhythmic cycles of the mridanga. Practitioners of the dance form live together in a small village, Tiwari explains, and promote their art across multiple cultural spaces throughout the year. The community of musicians, like the mridanga player or the jhaanjh *vadak*, inhabit neighbouring villages and it is during festivals, performances and ritual celebrations that the two communities of dancers and musicians come together.

As folk music, dance and drama perform the function of binding communities, so too families of performing artistes arduously work towards preserving these age-old art forms to ensure their relevance through generations. There remains a steady stream of younger performers taking up folk traditions too so that Tiwari says of the dancers and dramatists coming to the NCPA, "Here is a grandfather, son, granddaughter and even an uncle..." all training together for the Living Traditions festival.

He emphasises that the purpose of bringing people together remains at the core of the practice of folk art. If a few people gather at a village *chaupaal* to sing and dance, "then 20 others will join them." There are no stringent norms of *guru-shishya parampara*, instead, artistes learn by observing and emulating each other. And herein lies the sheer freedom of *lok dharmi kala*, art rooted in the life worlds of its people, so that structures and boundaries crumble away as folk artistes continue to welcome diverse influences, embracing with complete abandon a blend of traditional art and contemporary shifts. ■

Living Traditions: Festival of Madhya Pradesh will be presented on 10th and 11th March at the Experimental Theatre.

LIVING TRADITIONS

Festival of Madhya Pradesh

Supported by
Govt. of Madhya Pradesh, Directorate of Culture



10 March 2023

Kabir songs by
Jagdish Boriala group



Raee folk dance by
Devki Ram Kushwaha group



Bundelkhandi folk drama by
Sandeep Srivastava group



11 March 2023

Bagheli folk songs by
Roshni Prasad Mishra group



Gangaur folk dance by
Vishal Sakalle group

Bagheli folk drama by
Neeraj Punder group



Experimental Theatre, NCPA | 6:30 pm

Tickets on [bookmyshow](https://bookmyshow.com)



 NCPA

PIRAMAL
DILIP
art
gallery

The NCPA announces the opening of the new Dilip Piramal Art Gallery

In its 35th year, the Piramal Art Gallery at the NCPA, a pioneer among photo galleries in India, reopens as a state-of-the-art venue for photography this March. Renamed in honour of its kind donor whose generous support enabled the refurbishment, the **Dilip Piramal Art Gallery** will continue the rich legacy of nurturing photography in India and showcasing the best from around the world through exhibitions, workshops and talks.

The inaugural exhibition is a three-part series on the ongoing mega transportation projects in Mumbai. 'Connecting the Unconnected', on the Mumbai Metro Line 3, chronicles the journey of the "New Lifeline of Mumbai" and has been curated in collaboration with the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (MMRCL). It showcases a glimpse of the inner workings of this engineering marvel, before the project goes underground and away from the public eye.

Exhibitions on the Mumbai Coastal Road Project and the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, curated in collaboration with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) respectively, will follow soon. All three projects that are coming to life simultaneously are the result of will, resources and technological expertise. While they have been in the making for some time now, many Mumbaikars are unaware of the actual nature of work being carried out or the innovation and technological challenges of the projects. The exhibitions will showcase the behind-the-scenes journey of this infrastructural undertaking that will change the transportation dynamics of the city and the quality of life of the citizens of Mumbai.

'Connecting the Unconnected'

An exhibition on the Mumbai Metro Line 3

The Dilip Piramal Art Gallery reopens on
2nd March 2023 | 12 noon to 8 pm



Chennai Diary

A dispatch from the *kutcheri* season in the time of the ebbing virus.

By Kamala Ganesh

The mundane act of booking a ticket to Chennai last December became suffused, for me, with unusually keen anticipation. The tradition of the annual music 'season' there is nearly a century old. As a regular, I had missed the buzz and warmth of the concert or 'kutcheri' experience during the pandemic years. *Sabhas*—organisations for performance of classical music and dance—had either suspended or truncated their activities and moved into online mode in 2020 and 2021: an unprecedented happening.

The Chennai Season

The yoking together of classical music concerts into a festival by several influential individuals and groups in Chennai coalesced into a 'season' in the late 1920s. Organised musical activity in the form of the public concert, called a *kutcheri*, under the aegis of *sabhas*, was emerging in South India by the turn of the 20th century. The All-India Music conference was held during the 42nd session of the Indian National Congress in Madras in December 1927. It led to the formation of the

Madras Music Academy, a comprehensive and rigorous institution for teaching, performance and propagation of Indian classical music. Many new *sabhas* sprouted and a full-blown music and dance season was born.

The concert season in Chennai focuses primarily on Carnatic music and, to a lesser extent, on Bharatanatyam. It has come to include allied forms like dance-drama, *Harikatha*, *Tevaram* and Pasuram hymns, devotional music, as well as Hindustani music and classical dance forms from various regions. Distinguished artistes as well as up-and-coming performers find a place in it. From the start, it has embraced both performance and academic study. Many *sabhas* hold talks and lecture-demonstrations, usually in the mornings. Historical, theoretical and practical issues in various forms of music and dance including folk and contemporary are debated.

The atmosphere in Chennai during the sacred month of Margazhi (mid-December to mid-January) is special, dedicated to devotional and spiritual activity. There is an influx of artistes and *rasikas* from other southern states



and increasingly from their diasporas as well. There are currently at least 30 formal concert venues. Scores of other venues are temporary, in makeshift spaces, in school halls, temple precincts, open-air spaces in parks and in homes. Concerts are ticketed, but there are also free concerts. Performances are held through the day, with the evening slots marked as most prestigious. While concert-hopping, with its amusing social side, is not uncommon, the serious *rasika* can hope for a rich, immersive experience. The fraught economics of small *sabhas* and politics of *sabha* culture and the need for an overhaul is a separate story.

Attitudinal shift

In December 2022, the season reopened formally after two years. In the various *sabhas*, there was a subdued air of excitement. The swish of colourful saris and the animated discussions in the canteen on 'who is in' and 'who is out' were part of the usual froth. But there was real change too. I got a whiff of this in all the *sabhas* that I visited, in the earnestness of the audience. Chennai audiences for classical music are always knowledgeable, albeit with a self-congratulatory touch. Their applause is highly calibrated—it comes at just the appropriate moments and in appropriate measure. It is as though a collective and coordinated musical mind is at work. This time around, it seemed that the forced isolation of two years had led to introspection among both listeners and performers. The listening intensity of the audience was higher. The frequent shuffling out and shuffling into the hall was palpably absent. The ambience was quieter, but the clapping was less tardy and more grace marks were given. From the 'not-quite-up-to-the-mark-but-let's-give-him-a-legs-up' kind of encouraging clap to the 'all-said-and-done-Sanjay-is-Sanjay' kind of glorious applause, there was a whole range which precisely matched my own reaction. It was subtle acknowledgement that this was a heritage to be cherished. A generosity of spirit, in the manner of thanksgiving, hovered in the air.

This did not mean that more people were attending concerts after the pandemic gap. The concerts of star performers with top billing drew capacity crowds. Tried and tested formats, like the Ramayana dance-drama series at Kalakshetra, were also popular. A craving for

The atmosphere in Chennai during the sacred month of Margazhi is special...there are at least 30 formal concert venues while temporary venues include makeshift spaces, school halls, temple precincts, open-air spaces in parks and in homes

familiar comfort perhaps. For other performances, the audience strength was variable. At a well-known *sabha*, as the curtains went up on the young talented musician, there was not a single person in the audience. This is not an apocryphal story. At *Bharath Kalachar*, Srikala Bharath's sprightly, well-researched educational dance-drama on the freedom fighters of the Madras Presidency opened to a dismal single-digit audience. After half an hour, only about 20 per cent of the seats were occupied. The parking and security personnel at the Music Academy noted that the density of cars parked was on the whole less than earlier years, except for concerts by the likes of Ranjani-Gayatri, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Malavika Sarukkai. The membership, comprised mostly of senior citizens, was probably still wary of stepping out. But tickets sold to non-members at the counter was higher than usual. Younger, middle-class, casual listeners were coming in moderate strength.

Introspection and change

Some of the star musicians like Bombay Jayashri Ramnath and Aruna Sairam did not sing in any concert during this season. Sudha Raganathan missed out some concerts. Each had a proximate personal reason. But it seems that the pandemic might have triggered a period of reflection. T.M. Krishna had stopped singing during the season a few years ago, questioning the very fundamentals of the commercial concert format. Subrahmanyam sang only in a few select concerts this time. He has recently started his own YouTube channel, with access based on subscriptions. Many of his concerts are now digital. In effect, he has bypassed the *sabha* structure (barring a few exceptions like Music Academy, Kalakshetra, Tamil Isai Sangam and Brahma Gana Sabha) and reached out to his enormous fan base directly. Sairam did not sing in this season, simply because she wanted a break. She had been singing for 40 years, never missed a season, always away from home, performing, even on New Year's Eve. It is true that there is a pressure on senior performers to sing in a number of concerts in a variety of *sabhas*, within a short period, in order to remain competitive. The pace



Bharatanatyam exponent Narthaki Nataraj, who was awarded the Padma Shri in 2019



Vocalist Sikkil Gurucharan's recital at the Isai, Iyal, Nataka Vizha 2022-23 conducted by Sri Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha, Chennai



The *rasikas* at this year's edition of the festival were a mix of old members and young, casual listeners

and pressure tend to affect creativity. A jaded feeling sets in. Periodic soul-searching is important; it is likely to be productive and catalyse fresh musical thinking.

Meanwhile, it was heart-warming to listen to the many talented singers from a younger generation whose concerts sparkled. Sriranjani Santhanagopalan, Kunnakudi Balamuralikrishna, Ramana Balachandran, Amritha Murali and others drew both crowds and critical acclaim.

A presentation that moved a capacity audience was by Narthaki Nataraj, the Bharatanatyam artiste who has worked long and hard for acceptance as a transgender woman both in society and in the dance world. A disciple of the illustrious K.P. Kittappa Pillai, she titled her lecture-demonstration 'Ithuvum Athu' (meaning 'this too is that'). She spoke in mellifluous Tamil, without a word on her identity and her struggles. Her speech was an exposition of the ideas of the

saints who composed *Tevaram* and *Tiruvachagam*, of philosophers, like Suddhananda Bharati, and *siddhas* who sang of dissolving the limits of the body and the tyranny of embodiment while merging with the absolute or ultimate reality. Her dance gestured to her core idea: 'This (her) embodied self too is That'.

Overall, one got the feeling that *rasikas* and artistes were cautiously glad to return to the old format of going to a concert. The digital mode had helped them to tide over a difficult time, given them a chance to rethink. But the ability of an in-person concert to anchor one's attention, to give a sense of intangibles like the audience mood and artiste's transcendence and convey the feeling of being amidst a like-minded community was unique. N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman of the Board of Tata Sons, offered another viewpoint in his valedictory address at the Music Academy. Digital is here to stay, he said. Studies have shown that a robust online presence results in higher footfall in performing spaces. For those who might not be able to attend a concert in person, we can enhance the quality of a digital concert using any number of technologies available now, he added. We need to work on how to marry them to replicate the feel of a complete *kutcheri* experience.

Can that ever happen? ■

Kamala Ganesh is an eminent sociologist based in Mumbai. She is a student of Carnatic music and has written on it for the Economic and Political Weekly. She has edited the book Jafferkhani Baaj: Innovation in Sitar Music by sitar maestro Abdul Halim Jaffer Khan.

It was heart-warming to listen to the many talented singers from a younger generation whose concerts sparkled...Sriranjani Santhanagopalan, Kunnakudi Balamuralikrishna, Ramana Balachandran, Amritha Murali and others drew both crowds and critical acclaim

The Birth of the Progressives

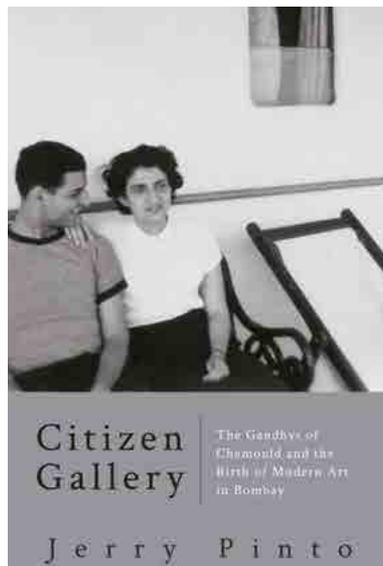
A chronicle of the pivotal role played by Kekoo and Khorshed Gandhi in the development of modern art in the city, *Citizen Gallery: The Gandhys of Chemould and the Birth of Modern Art in Bombay* by Jerry Pinto provides a riveting glimpse into the world of art and its creation, business and passion. We present an excerpt from the book: these are Kekoo Gandhi's words, as told to his granddaughter Anisha Imhasly.

Among the European painters who came to India during the War was Walter Langhammer, an Austrian. He was a contemporary of the famous painter Oskar Kokoschka, who was professor of the Academy in Vienna in the 1930s. There was this Parsi girl called Silloo Vakil from Bombay who was studying with him and she used to say to him, 'Walter, you must come to India one day,' and he would say 'Ja, ja.' So when Hitler came along and he had to leave Austria, he wrote to Vakil, saying that he would like to come to India. And she walked into the office of Sir Francis Low, editor of *The Times of India*, and said, 'I am the daughter of Rotarian Vakil and I would like you to promise me something.' She was cheeky enough to do that. The result was that Langhammer was appointed as the first art director of the TOI. The year must have been 1936. And at the time it had the only colour annual number.

Langhammer fell in love with the light and colour of India and all the young artists. Here, he would often say, he saw a future in the modern art movement—he felt it was all over in Europe. So people like Ara, Raza, Husain, Souza and Raiba, the great names of the Indian Progressive Art Movement, became his students. Every Sunday, it was open house at his studio on Nepean Sea Road.

He would tell them what makes a good painting. He would share his experiences of Europe and tell them about events in the art world, seen at first hand. They found a windfall in this readymade teacher. And he had so much love and affection for them. It was not just the artists alone—the people around them too were responsible, in a way, for the birth of the Progressives. There were factors like the excitement over the prospect of impending Independence, the feeling that now Indian artists would not have to go through Westminster, that India would have its own embassies in different parts of the world, and that we would be able to make our own connections.

Remember that in those days, Indian artists had no means of going abroad or of following trends in Europe. Of course, there were magazines, but the unexpected arrival of all these Europeans—most of them Jews fleeing from Austria—really started the Progressive movement off. Apart from Langhammer, there was Dr. E. Schlesinger and Rudy von Leyden, both German. Rudy was the chief PRO of Volkart Brothers, a Swiss trading company based in India, and he had a younger brother, A.R. Leyden, a sculptor who styled himself as a painter after Langhammer and was called 'little Langhammer'. They had



arrived before Langhammer because their father foresaw the arrival of Hitler by two or three years. They were all warm and outgoing people, generous too. The founder chairman of Larsen & Toubro, a Danish gentleman called Holck Larsen, was one of the earliest art patrons. They were also the 'in people' of the time. They were written about in the papers very often.

With Langhammer came a lot of professionals, doctors...a sort of mini-influx of Jews. They valued art and provided patronage. Schlesinger was so attached to Mohan Samant, one of the Progressive artists, that he would travel by local train to Goregaon to see what he was up to. They had a great enthusiasm for Indian artists—who else was interested?—and they pioneered buying. They were not the only foreigners to influence the new art movement.

Towards the end of the War, with operations ongoing in North Africa, Italian POWs were brought in by the British and domiciled in camps all over India. Captain Dust, an Englishman, decided that these able-bodied men should be put to some work. Among them were car mechanics, painters and waiters. He selected those who could use a brush and formed a separate unit in the army called MURART. The idea was to get them to paint and use their work across all army establishments in South Asia. Dust went to [Lord Louis] Mountbatten with a proposal and, imaginative as he was, Mountbatten accepted the idea and put him in charge. He was given a building at Chakala near Sahar airport. The POWs were equipped with soft boards and were asked to paint. That is how these Italian men started creating paintings here in Bombay.

Meanwhile, back on vacation from Cambridge (I never went back) during the War, I met a Belgian gentleman who had landed up in India called Van Damme. His father had been a framer and restorer of the great Flemish masters. He had heard a news story back home about the many gods and goddesses that Indians kept in their homes. He knew that India would be a captive market to sell frames. Our acquaintance led to the establishment of the Chemould Framing Factory in 1940. He gave me know-how, we got the finance together and my brother Russy and I set up the factory. ■

This is an excerpt from Citizen Gallery: The Gandhys of Chemould and the Birth of Modern Art in Bombay (2022; Hardback, 328 pages; ₹899), written by Jerry Pinto. No part of this excerpt may be quoted or reproduced without prior written consent from its publisher, Speaking Tiger.

Credit Where Credit is Due

We dive into the world of compelling title sequences in film, television and on the web through conversations with the people behind these works of art in their own right.

By Aishwarya Bodke

Pass by the sea enveloping Mumbai every day. Stuffed in a taxi with five other people—all of us on our way to work—there is, all at once, a momentary calm before the day begins and chaos in the hurried anticipation of it. The five-minute ride from the train station encapsulates the city. As morning haze mingles with murk above the sea, an inherent restlessness makes up most of it. If life in Mumbai had a title sequence, this would be it. They say when you get used to a city, the eyes shift from the sidewalks to the screens. Mumbai is one city that fights you to it.

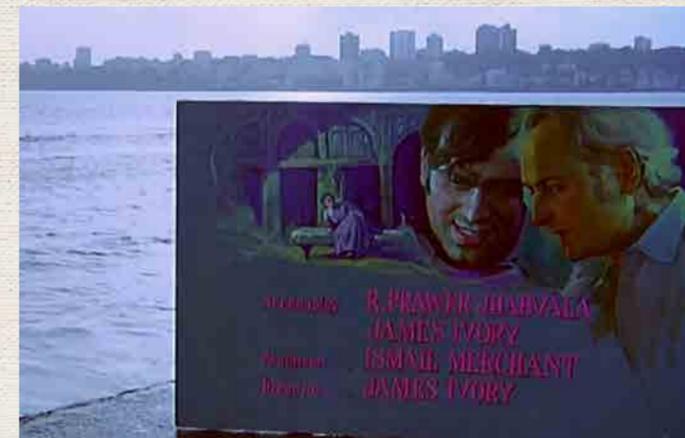
It is no surprise then that the title sequence of *Bombay Talkie*, a 1970 drama by Merchant Ivory Productions, does not have to fight for our attention. One of the most endearing and original sequences, the credits roll out as hand-painted canvases of the cast and crew, across the landscape of southern Mumbai. With sombre music by Shankar-Jaikishan, they capture the Bombay of the time. While the film embraces what forms an inseparable part of the city—Bollywood—the unique opening credits pay homage to the cultural significance of film posters in the '70s. They were not just posters but paintings, and the city an art gallery.

Another film, nearly four decades later, carries its essence in the unusually long opening credits. A film about films, Zoya Akhtar's debut feature, *Luck by Chance*, opens with a slow and relaxed montage dedicated to those who often remain unseen in the business of movies. Portraits of junior artistes, sound recordists, tailors, guards,

ticket sellers, projectionists and caterers make this title sequence what it is. The shots are playfully juxtaposed with relevant credits. Although the faces in the frames are smiling, the melancholia of unrequited dreams in the maximum city is ubiquitous.

Often woefully underappreciated, these sequences form the first few moments of the film and do more than credit the team. Originally started as remedies for piracy concerns, they slowly became cards carrying the names of the cast and inter-titles between scenes in silent films. Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton classics with white lettering on a plain black background instantly come to mind. The arrival of sound in films did not change the uniformity of the format of the titles dramatically. *Casablanca* opens to a static map of Africa in the backdrop as the credits roll out to the tunes of the French National Anthem. Satyajit Ray's *Jalsaghar* presents titles as the camera hypnotically zooms into an oscillating chandelier.

Opening credits now double up as significant narrative devices. They set the mood for what is to follow and represent the underlying core of the movie. They promise something. American filmmaker and graphic designer Saul Bass, a pioneer of title design in films, described it as a way of conditioning the audience so that when the film began, the viewers would already have an emotional resonance with it. After his highly acclaimed work for *The Man with the Golden Arm* in 1955, he went on to deliver some of the most iconic title sequences in Alfred Hitchcock's movies, including



Psycho, *Vertigo* and *North by Northwest*.

The title design renaissance of the 1990s could not have been achieved without the brilliantly crafted opening credits of David Fincher's films. Designed by Kyle Cooper, the glitchy and unsettling title sequence of *Se7en* with close-ups of razor blades and dead skin was revolutionary. The imposing credits of *Panic Room* by creatives from ComputerCafe and The Picture Mill and the cryptic lettering of *Zodiac's* title cards designed by Bruce Schluter and Eric Ladd remain equally memorable.

Today, as movie-watching becomes



increasingly dependent on streaming platforms, there has been a natural shift in the consumption of title sequences. Despite shorter attention spans and the unreasonable need for brevity at times, some standout sequences have made the audiences marvel at them and skip the 'skip intro' option. We talk to two game changers in the field of title design who have had a role to play in the resurgence of the celebration of title sequences.

Studio Kokaachi is run by Pratheek and Tina Thomas out of their charming home office in Kochi. It is named after Kokaachi the monster, a regular visitor in the tales of central Kerala when little kids would be fussy at mealtimes. Years later, Pratheek and Tina discovered that Kokaachi are actually gentle creatures. Starting as a publishing house focusing on comics and graphic novels, they ventured into animation and design almost serendipitously. Malayalam filmmaker Aashiq Abu spotted their work at a café in Kochi partially owned by him and invited them to work on the animation sequences for his upcoming film *Gangster* (2014). They

The opening credits of *Bombay Talkie*, featuring hand-painted canvases of the cast and crew positioned across southern Mumbai, pay homage to the cultural significance of film posters in the '70s. They were not just posters but paintings, and the city an art gallery

Oscar-winning filmmaker and graphic designer Saul Bass, a pioneer of title design in films, described it as a way of conditioning the audience so that when the film began, the viewers would already have an emotional resonance with it



Toshi Kodama, Creative Director at Imaginary Forces

went on to do the animated epilogue and the gaming sequences for Mani Ratnam's *OK Kanmani*, which received much praise.

True to their journey, Studio Kokaachi's primary motivation remains storytelling. Co-founder Pratheek says, "It is always a means to tell a story within the greater story." Each element of the title design is there for a reason. In the opening credits of Akhtar's *Gully Boy*, Studio Kokaachi decided to go with a hand-drawn font that is a melange



Pratheek and Tina Thomas, creators of Studio Kokaachi

of English and Hindi languages, and of Latin and Devanagari scripts. The protagonist Murad is a rapper brought up in the gullies and *bastis* of Mumbai. The credits reflect his lingo and style of writing. A mishmash of cultures, like Mumbai.

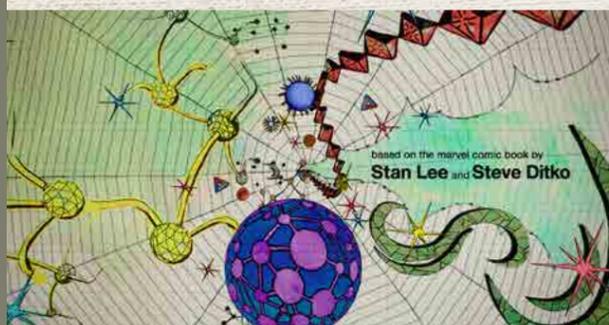
Pratheek emphasises the importance of the coming together of various arts to make a title sequence. "We are writers. The overall vision would be ours but what is seen on the screen cannot be achieved without the team of designers and animators we work with. For us, the joy lies in the collaboration," he tells us.



Benedict Cumberbatch



SPIDER-MAN
No Way Home

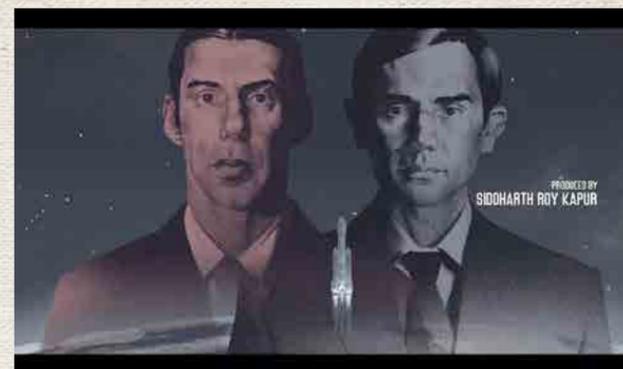


based on the Marvel comic book by
Stan Lee and Steve Ditko



director of photography
Mauro Fiore, ASC

The title sequence of *Spider-Man: No Way Home* by Imaginary Forces has been made to look like a high school kid's sketches on graph paper



PRODUCED BY
SIDHARTH ROY KAPUR



Clockwise from above: Studio Kokaachi's work for *Anjali Kahaniya*; *Rocket Boys*; *Ghost Stories*; *Rocket Boys*

Most of the duo's brainstorming sessions occur on long drives in Kochi, spending time by the sea and perusing comics. Their extensive body of work on the streaming giants—most striking of which are *Rocket Boys* and anthologies including *Ghost Stories* and *Paava Kadhaigal*—carved a niche for them.

Across the oceans, in another coastal city and the home of Hollywood, we spoke to Imaginary Forces—a true force to reckon with when it comes to title sequences. Some of their most loved work includes titles for *Mad Men*, *Cowboy Bebop*, *Spider-Man: No Way Home* and the most streamed show in 2022, *Stranger Things*. Toshi Kodama, Creative Director at Imaginary Forces, believes it's about capturing the mood of the film. "It's similar to a composer finding the perfect set of notes to pull the audience into the world. We do it visually."

In more ways than one, title sequences can be the overtures to the story. Music is an undeniable part of them, making a distinct, often emotional impact on the viewer's memory. It gives the film or the show a musical identity. They signify an almost ritualistic practice when it comes to beloved TV shows like *Seinfeld*, *Game of Thrones* and the more recent *The White Lotus* and *Scam 1992*.

Imaginary Forces has mastered title design for both, theatrical movie franchises where



audiences look forward to opening and end credits as well as streaming shows. Their most memorable work, interestingly, remains simple in execution. "But simple is hard to achieve," asserts Kodama. *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, for instance, uses Helvetica for the credits. The idea behind the sequence was to make it feel like a high school kid's sketchbook. Since the protagonist Peter Parker is MIT-bound, the sketches are all done on graph paper. "In our research, we saw heavy use of Helvetica on the covers of high school notebooks. The typeface captured the right mood. There's no other typeface that is as universally used in high school notebooks as Helvetica. It seems so obvious but we probably looked at 100 different typefaces before we came to this conclusion," Kodama elaborates.

Historically, title sequences have not only been an important part of visual popular culture but also strong indicators of art movements of the time. With the influx of many approaches to opening credits meandering from mad to minimalistic, one cannot pigeonhole them. Kodama, however, tends to lean towards ideas that are timeless. "I think the best titles cross over into the zeitgeist of pop culture but I don't think too much about industry trends," he says.

While serving the greater purpose of the film, a title sequence also serves as a carrier of artistic sensibilities and the weight of anticipation of what's to follow. It might be a single component in the orchestra, but it is the first one you hear. ■

The Performing Arts Dispatch

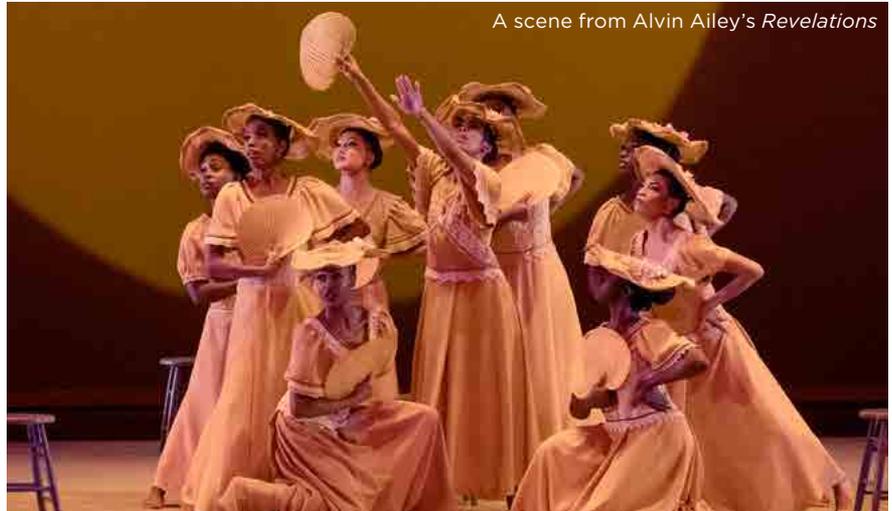
A series on houses of culture from around the world. In focus this month: the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. **By Aishwarya Bodke**

The year is 1958. The Kaufmann Concert Hall on the 92nd Street Y, New York, transforms into a sporting house. Dance, play and romance ensue to the sound of the blues as the night passes, petering out only to the sound of trains and church bells at daybreak. *Blues Suite*, the sixth ballet of a 27-year-old Alvin Ailey, premieres to much acclaim and becomes the performance that launched the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Recognised by a U.S. Congressional resolution as a “vital American cultural ambassador to the world,” the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has been an apostle of the African-American experience and the enrichment of modern dance. What started as a small group of dancers persevering to tell their stories—‘blood memories’ as Ailey described them—and overcoming the absence of black performers in the dance space, now stands tall as a leading performing arts institution that has made its mark in over 70 countries. In addition to being the Principal Dance Company of the New York City Center, the Ailey company performs annually at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Fox Theatre in Atlanta and the Zellerbach Hall at UC Berkeley, among other well-known venues.

The defining repertoire of the dance theatre focuses on themes reflecting human longing and facets of the Black experience set to diverse original scores. The choreography often blends together modern dance, ballet and jazz. Though technique is key to the choreography, the emotion that runs through these themes always gets its due.

Although Ailey created 79 ballets, one of his earliest works, *Revelations* (1960), prevails as the company’s signature piece, also lending its name to Ailey’s autobiography. A seminal work, *Revelations* was born out of the choreographer-cum-activist’s “blood memories” of a childhood in rural, segregated Texas and the Baptist Church, abounding with gospel music. Produced



A scene from Alvin Ailey’s *Revelations*

in the midst of the roaring civil rights movement, the piece is a formidable expression of Black identity, entrenched deeply in grief and joy. Over the years, the company has performed *Revelations* hundreds of times. The dancers carry in their bones not only the choreography but also the weight and historical relevance of the piece.

For Ailey, performance was protest. As a Black queer artiste, his revolt was never separate from his art. Even after his demise, the dance theatre has consistently presented ballets pertaining to socially and politically charged moments in history. Works such as *Tracks* and *Love Stories* portray the lives of Black, queer couples. More recently, *Exodus* by choreographer Rennie Harris dives into the Black Lives Matter movement.

Before his untimely death in 1989, Ailey passed the mantle to Judith Jamison, who brought remarkable success to the institution over two decades. Now the Artistic Director Emerita, Jamison was succeeded by Robert Battle in 2011 as Artistic Director. Battle’s refreshing leadership has broadened the Ailey repertoire, replenishing it with new as well as traditional works. “We celebrate the fact that we have not just survived but thrived. That is what this company has always done in times of tumult. We meet the moment; we transcend place and time and circumstance,” he has said.

Today, the Ailey organisation includes Ailey II, a performing company of emerging young dancers and choreographers, founded in 1974. The educational division comprises the Ailey School, which prides itself on having one of the most extensive dance training programmes. Ailey Extension was launched in 2005 to offer dance and fitness classes to the public with the opening of Ailey’s permanent home—The Joan Weill Center for Dance. The comprehensive community outreach programmes strive to bring dance to classrooms and different communities.

After successful seasons packed with premiering works in Toronto, Washington, Atlanta and Philadelphia last month, upcoming performances will be presented at the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University in Chicago, the Detroit Opera House and the San Diego Civic Theatre, among others.

Ailey had once said that one of America’s richest treasures is the “sometimes sorrowful, sometimes jubilant, but always hopeful” African-American cultural heritage. It is this hope that forms the core of Ailey’s masterpieces. It is perhaps the capacity of dance to overwhelm the senses that makes it a potent vehicle for expression and dissent. While there is much to be angry about, there is equal parts of hope to armour it with. ■

Kaleidoscope

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

Par excellence



As per tradition, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs announced the winners of the Padma Awards on the eve of Republic Day. The list of 106 awardees this year honours notable work in diverse disciplines and fields of public service, including art, social work, medicine, literature and education. Tabla legend Zakir Hussain has been conferred the Padma Vibhushan, along with five other distinguished recipients. This becomes his third Padma Award after receiving the Padma Shri in 1988 and the Padma Bhushan in 2002 for outstanding contribution to the field of music. Hussain, who is on the NCPA council and has been associated with the organisation since the day of its inception, has enthralled and inspired audiences with his artistry over the decades. Among the Padma Bhushan recipients are veteran playback singers Vani Jairam, who passed away in February, and Suman Kalyanpur. They are part of a total of 19 women who find a place among the awardees this year. Coomi Wadia, arguably the first female conductor of choral music in India, has been conferred the Padma Shri. Wadia has been leading the Paranjoti Academy Chorus since the baton was passed on to

her by her mentor Dr. Victor Paranjoti in 1967. Having shared a longstanding association with the NCPA, one of her most memorable concerts remains the one in 2017 at the Tata Theatre, celebrating 50 years of her conductorship of the chorus. For more information, please visit www.padmaawards.gov.in

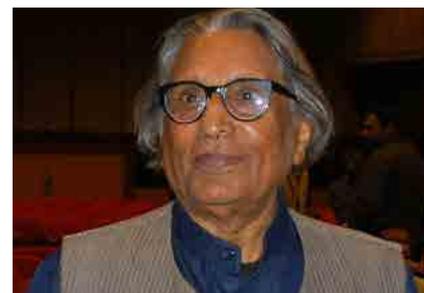
Starry, starry night

This year brought to Mumbai *Van Gogh 360*, an immersive exhibition featuring one of the most influential figures in the history of Western art. Running until 3rd March, it features a chronological, narrative display journeying through Vincent van Gogh's formative years and the psychological turmoil that eventually ended with him taking his life. The display leads to a room of projections, light and sound playing with dramatic brushstrokes and imagery. As classical compositions play in the background, 'Almond Blossoms', 'The Potato Eaters', 'Café Terrace at Night' and 'Vase with Fifteen Sunflowers' create a visual treat. The final moments bring alive his beloved work, 'The Starry Night'. Tragically, that is where the exhibition ends. A visual presentation is all we get, the immersive dimension of the experience conspicuous by its absence. The expectations of a sensory show consuming complete attention are let down. The display leading to the projections fails to convey the intricacies of his paintings, focusing too much—if not only—on his suffering. That his work was remarkably impressive not because of his misery but despite it is a point that seems to have been missed. However, the success of the exhibition in itself stands as a testament to his art. The expo, which is already a global sensation, will be continuing its India debut in the cities of Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru,



Jaipur, Kochi and Lucknow, among many others. For more information, please visit vangogh360.in

In memoriam



The world of Indian architecture is poorer as Modernist architect and educator Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi passed away earlier this year. He was 95. Doshi possessed a profound understanding of the subcontinent and its people, which is enmeshed into his oeuvre comprising projects which include educational institutions, affordable housing, performing spaces, cities and townships. He established the School of Architecture in 1962 in Ahmedabad—now a part of the CEPT University—where it was a common sight to see the corridors filled with musicians, scientists, artists, authors and sculptors. The school continues to nurture pedagogy infused with his values and philosophy, and love for the liberal arts. It embraces a multi-disciplinary approach with open classrooms encouraging free exchange of ideas. His most famous works include Amdavad ni Gufa, an underground art gallery in collaboration with M.F. Husain, Premabhai Hall and Tagore Memorial Hall—all in Ahmedabad. In 2018, Doshi became the first Indian architect to be awarded the Pritzker Prize. Among his many badges of honour are the Royal Gold Medal, France's highest civilian honour, and the Aga Khan Award. His prolific work travels beyond his structures to the local customs, materials and climate. He had once said, "my buildings are not pure and clear but designed to anticipate changes." He saw his buildings as living entities that can have conversations with the people that will inhabit them. They speak now of his legacy too. ■

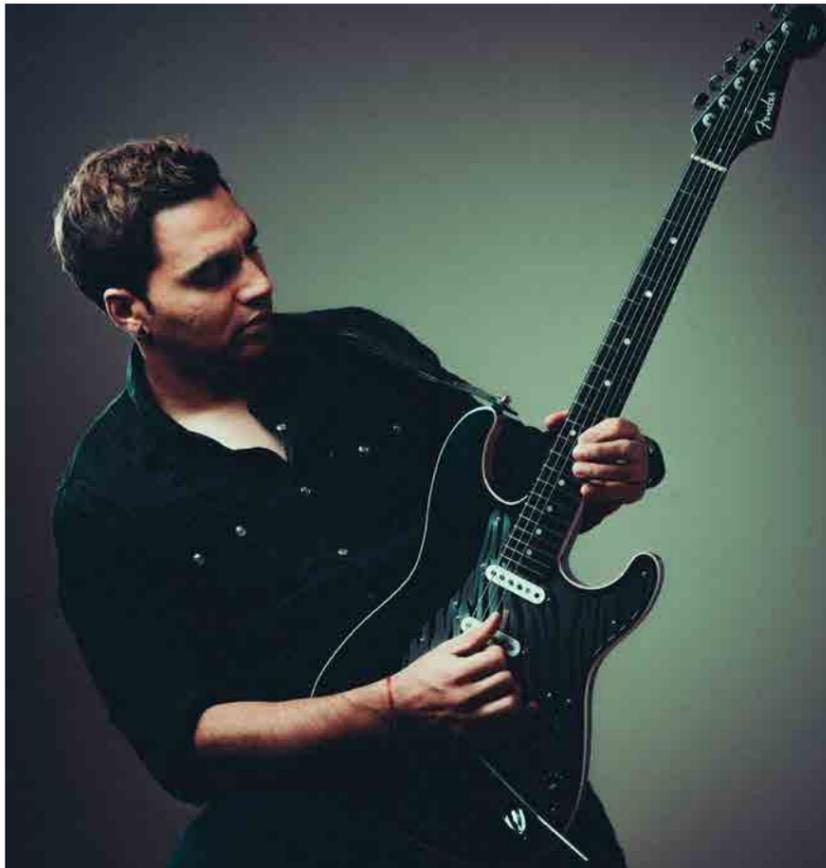
Performing Arts: International music

A monthly column that explores any and every aspect of the performing and visual arts. This month, **Akshay Chowdhry** asks a pertinent question about creation in the age of instant access and gratification: where do we go from here?

Everyone knows that old adage: change is the only constant. It is the perpetual state we are all in. Yet in today's musical climate, there seems to be an inexplicable longing to recapture and emulate the glories of the past. This is not a natural phenomenon but one possibly engineered by tastemakers and labels who want to recreate the magic of Led Zeppelin or Nirvana for the current generation.

Greta Van Fleet, a decade-old act based out of Michigan, recently performed at the first edition of Lollapalooza in Mumbai and were roundly criticised for being highly derivative of Led Zeppelin. The lead singer often wears a 'flower power' Robert Plant-style outfit and the guitar player sways and plays eerily similar riffs and solos with his back arched à la Jimmy Page. Yet, in the same breath, they are lauded for being faithful to a tried-and-tested sound. Can a band be both derivative and original at the same time? Therein lies the rub. This kind of pseudo controversy leads to further head-bobbing and backlash on social media where everyone seems to have an expert opinion on everything and chaos ensues, ensuring clicks and likes for both publisher and artiste.

Over the years, rock 'n' roll has been morphing into various genres and sub-genres. The blues have always been the backbone and foundation for rock 'n' roll—after all it's just the blues, only sped up and heavier, right? Not always. Also, how much faster, heavier and technical can we go now that it's all been done? This is where taste comes in, and seems to be sparingly used. Real rock music, the kind that is truly revolutionary, has usually been a reaction to what is currently popular. You cannot manufacture this in a stuffy office of a music label no matter how hard you try. With all the marketing gimmicks in the world, it is still the music that needs to hold up to both the ear of the listener and the pulse of the times.



Before the internet, access to Western rock music was not that simple in India. I would try to get cassette tapes and CDs of albums from Palika Bazaar, a slightly dodgy underground market around Connaught Place in Delhi. As a teenager during the late '90s, it was only natural to gravitate towards grunge, alternative and of course, nu metal/tough guy rock. There was a genuine thrill when I somehow managed to get the new Rage Against the Machine, NIN (that's Nine Inch Nails for Gen Z), Korn and Limp Bizkit albums after weeks of waiting and play them all the way back home on an ancient device called the discman. I would then record them on 'mix tapes' to share with friends in school. Now in 2023, these albums are just another

download on your phone. Almost seems bizarre to tell someone today of the effort we had to take just to be able to listen to something.

It makes you wonder: Do listeners get less out of the music today? The answer may be a big no for me and many others, I presume. As a musician, when I study somebody's music, I try to understand not just tone, amp settings, licks and scales, what colour of plectrum they prefer, etc. but also their intent and influences. The reason for this is simple—all artistes are a product of their influences, teachers, gurus and heroes. What emotional connection did they have to the piece? It is trying to understand their inspiration that leads you to chase your own muse and be

SIDDHANT SHEKHREY

inspired yourself. Was there a personal tragedy or was the piece composed in the backdrop of political uncertainty and war? (Think Chopin.) This leads to further discovery of genres and acts and through that history, you avail of life lessons, books, biographies and a deeper appreciation of their life and your own.

The numbers clearly suggest there are more music listeners than ever before. Which raises an important question—where do we go from here? Technology has made it immeasurably easier to create music, but what kind of music are we, as artistes, choosing to create? As an electric guitarist, if you play more than three sweep-picked arpeggios, you are definitely a 'shredder devoid of feel and emotion' and that means

you only listen to Yngwie Malmsteen. That's a joke, of course. In my opinion, with all this freely available music and music instructional courses, why would you NOT try and add more styles and genres to your repertoire? From Indian classical to heavy metal, I personally find something to draw from a variety of genres to keep that dreaded writer's block at bay.

But does this always resonate with listeners? Does it even reach them? For instance, take fusion music, which combines Western and Eastern instrumentation and vocals, and tends to fall by the wayside unless promoted heavily. It is relegated to World Music sections in the rare record store that still stands. Most barely hit the Heatseekers

Albums chart on Billboard, let alone making an impact on pop culture. So, in the fast-evolving world of instant gratification and performances to gain likes and views, is there space for the catharsis and revolution that characterised music like rock and the blues that we are trying to recreate? ■

Akshay Chowdhry is a composer, singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist based in Goa. He was involved in the independent music scene as part of the band Barefaced Liar. He is the founder of Three Kings Recording Studio and creates music for advertising agencies, television and film. To know more, please visit www.akshaychowdhry.com

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 comprehensive interviews detailing the inspirations and motivations of forty jazz musicians.

Living the Jazz Life: Conversations with Forty Musicians About Their Careers in Jazz

By **W. Royal Stokes**

Published by

Oxford University Press (2000)

Music historian, journalist and author W. Royal Stokes was best known for his masterful interviews with jazz musicians. His book *Living the Jazz Life: Conversations with Forty Musicians About Their Careers in Jazz* is a compact overview of the genre comprising interviews with some of the most significant music-makers of our time. Stokes, whose work can perhaps be best described as passionate and descriptive, instead of critical, has called the book not just an oral history but a collection of portraits of artistes "who have played significant roles in the development of the music", making it interesting for connoisseurs as well as readers new to the genre.

Stokes's contribution to chronicling the history of jazz has been invaluable. He has spent over 50 years writing about it for publications like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Jazz Times* and *DownBeat*, among others.

His other books on the genre include *The Jazz Scene: An Informal History from New Orleans to 1990* (Oxford University Press, 1991) and *Growing Up With Jazz: Twenty-Four Musicians Talk about Their Lives and Careers* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

For *Living the Jazz Life*, he conducted in-depth interviews with 40 musicians, keeping the emphasis on, in his own words, early development. "It is, I think, extremely important to learn about these formative years," he writes in the introduction. "I have rarely seen much attention to this period of a jazz artiste's life..." It is a void he has addressed successfully in this book.

Stokes concentrates on first inspirations, first musical partnerships and, more broadly, the always fascinating subject of childhood and youth in general. This provides plenty of room for musical insights, some of which are so interesting that the reader might like to see them taken a bit further.

The book is divided into nine categories: Musical Families, Saxophonists, Pianists, Singers, Composers, Strings, Other Climes, Blues and lastly, Comedy and Jazz: Two Sui Generis. The interviews illuminate the

lives of artistes like Jackie McLean, Loui Bellson, Diana Krall, Cyrus Chestnut and Ingrid Jensen, to name a few.

Author, journalist and jazz critic, Nat Hentoff has said about this book: "W. Royal Stokes has contributed invaluable to jazz history from the inside. *Living the Jazz Life* is particularly unique because it focuses on how these diversified players became jazz musicians." According to another reviewer, it is 'like a long jam session.' It is also, according to the author, not only a series of accounts about the artistes featured within it, but also "about the societies and cultures from whence they sprang". ■

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 (outstation visitors only) is available at ₹100/- per day. For more information, please call 022-6622 3715.

The Rhythms of Language

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. In the concluding instalment of a two-part series, **P. L. Deshpande** writes about his reimagination of the works of George Bernard Shaw and Bertolt Brecht to successfully adapt them for a Marathi audience.

While translating *Pygmalion*, the problem was of a different order. The core of the play is language, and the mimic in me was fascinated by this opportunity to play with the nuances, the pronunciation, the stress, the word order in our language. Think of the Marathi spoken in the Shahpur area near Belgaum. Its inflection is so endearing. The whole point here was not to criticise any of the varieties spoken but to project them, with fun and affection. My instincts guided me to a language with rich pictorial potential. I remember, years ago, waiting for a service motor at the stand in Shirval, near Shahpur. Two farmers were arguing vehemently and then the one who had the last word said, "Now, speak up. So, your wheel has got stuck?" Shaw's language has the force of an intellectual argument. I depended for impact on words and their associations, on usage where grammatical rules proved insufficient. For instance, *hota* (was) is regarded as the correct pronunciation and *vhata* as incorrect. But by what logic is the negative *navhata* accepted as correct?

The speech of Dagdoba (Doolittle) offered plenty of scope for several down-to-earth and homely images, with a slightly rural flavour. (I'm not in the habit of speaking once this way and again that way, like the folds of a dhoti when it is tied round the waist...Does the mango tree alone boast of leaves? Doesn't the castor tree also have leaves? Sure, both have leaves. But have you ever heard of castor leaves decorating entrances?) Here was an opportunity for assonance, alliteration, rhyme and I used it to the full.

And, of course, there is the end of Act Three, when the creative energy in me ran away with the words. Manjula (Eliza) is still smarting under the humiliations she has received at the hands of Dr. Ashok (Higgins). Alone on the stage, she breaks out in lines directed at him. A little diffident at first, "The lizard's bounded by a hedge. Can the lapwing

swallow up the sea?" She is overreaching herself perhaps. But then her fury spills out. "Wait awhile, your pot of sins is now full. And it's time I taught you a good lesson." She fantasises, imagining herself a queen, and Ashok, the victim, pleading for mercy and receiving a reprieve. The lines are brisk; they are accompanied by swift action. Bhakti Barve (who plays Manjula-Eliza) struts about on the stage and invariably wins the applause of spectators.

In this adaptation, I did not merely 'domesticate' the original. I had to update it. In *Pygmalion*, during the visit to the house of Higgins's mother, Clara says that she finds Eliza's 'new small talk' delightful. I replaced this by 'the new language of the angry generation'. It hit

The core of Shaw's Pygmalion is language, and the mimic in me was fascinated by this opportunity to play with the nuances, the pronunciation, the stress, the word order in Marathi

the mark. Vasant (Freddy in *Pygmalion*) is doing his B.A. in Sanskrit. The type is established at once. The image conjured is not that of an erudite scholar but of a single innocuous male student in a class of girls. Once the updating process begins, you bring in the last cinema show, the jackpot, *matka*, everything. I have seen a Ramlila production where Hanuman walks from shop to shop collecting kerosene for the burning up of Lanka. There are all those jibes against hoarding and black markets, and the audiences do not think of it as an anachronism but accept it in their stride.

But, on the whole, the mood of the adaptation is implicit in the title. 'Ti Phularani', Balkavi's poem. It's a charming moment. Manjula (Eliza) has

learnt to recite the poem. But she insists that when Ashok (Higgins) recites it, the words sound beautiful. She starts reciting the poem. The other two join in. These are moments with a touch of lyricism: the image of the *Phularani*, playing on the carpet of green grass, with a shy glance at the sun in the sky. The fields, the forest, the beasts are soon asleep. A love-strain is heard afar in the sky and there is the gift of a tender kiss on the ground. There is just a hint of a bond between two disparate and distant things, with Dr. Joshi (Pickering) aptly reciting the lines about the evening breeze which has guessed this relationship.

Ever since I read it, the poem has been one of my favourites. I remember that in 1950, I wrote to B. S. Murdhekar asking him to translate it and send it to Walt Disney. I was enthralled by the delicacy of the tie between the sun and the *Phularani*. The title came in a flash as the only possible one for a flower-seller and the text of the poem crept in to add a touch of tenderness to the play. A line-by-line analysis of the poem is hardly necessary. It is a matter of total comprehension. The poem echoes the ties being formed, but left unspoken in the play. I admit I paid little heed to Shaw's long essay at the end of the play. Perhaps, the Fabian in him might have felt a twinge of guilt at the 'romantic' possibilities in the play. I stuck to the text and while adapting it, I experienced the joy of discovering the nuances, the facets, the rhythm of my own language.

Of course, it can be argued that my version lacks the intellectual stature of Shaw's original. I confess that I did not find in *Pygmalion* traces of that intellectual element so evident in *Saint Joan*. There, only the first scene is hilarious (about the hens beginning to lay eggs as soon as the captain agrees to take Joan to the Dauphin). But many of the other scenes contain a good deal of argument. Some of it is based on the concept of nationhood: whether one

Professor Higgins and Eliza Doolittle in a scene from a 1997 production of *Pygmalion* at The Albery Theatre



should be loyal to the feudal lord and the Church or to God, the king and the nation. Joan even refers to God giving us "our countries and language", almost equating the idea of a nation with a common language spoken by its people. Medieval ideas are seen replaced by a new concept of nationhood. *Pygmalion*, too, makes the point that the way a language is spoken determines the class of the speaker. There is discussion around this point, but it is all in a lighter vein, and very enjoyable. Middle-class morality is ridiculed but without a trace of bitterness, the way our *tamasha* folk satirise the respectable and the educated. And, in the main, language aside, it is centred around a person's desire to be considered not just a guinea pig but a human.

Adapting *The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht posed an altogether different problem. I was attracted by its music, the bite in the satire. There is no 'black' humour in the play. Instead, there is exuberance, abandon. Of the many plays of the Berliner Ensemble that I had witnessed, the one that I found really grim was *Mother Courage*. I was reminded of our women in Marathwada, whose life-business it is to exist. Their only problem is one of survival...

Now turning to *Teen Paishacha Tamasha*, my adaptation of *The Threepenny Opera*. Once music becomes an integral part of a play, it ushers in norms of its own. In this particular case, our traditional music (including *natyasangeet* and *bhavgeet*) would have

proved inadequate for the content of the play. Jabbar Patel was absolutely right in using pop, jazz, rock. This music supplied the harshness needed to project the satire in the work. But Jenny's songs called for another, very different treatment. I took Madhuri Purandare, who played the role, to Vasant Rao Deshpande. He taught her to acquire the strength and projection of the *tawaiifi* voice (which, in the old days, had to carry all the way down the lane). She quickly absorbed what Deshpande had to teach her. In the seventh scene, she comes right up to the edge of the stage, looks at the spectators straight in the eye and relates her story. "If some of you ladies cared to visit me, you might find your husbands or fathers in my bed. To be poor is a sin, to be poor is a curse, to be poor is agony. As we sell our bodies, God stands before us in the form of *bhakri*." Spectators are moved by the direct, unsentimental delivery.

In Teen Paishacha Tamasha, my adaptation of The Threepenny Opera, our traditional music (including natyasangeet and bhavgeet) would have proved inadequate...Jabbar Patel was absolutely right in using pop, jazz, rock

That kind of presentation, in the sophisticated sphere of music, used to come so naturally to Siddeshwari Devi.

The play is called a *tamasha* but I did not think of it in terms of that particular folk form. I conceived it in the broader sense of a *tamasha* as spectacle or performance. In the text, I came to the point at once. 'One paisa for song (*gan*), the second for dance (*nach*), the third... the third as a bribe (*tach*).'

I tried to bring the experience into the orbit of life in Bombay. The early hours of the morning. The police and the assistant editors on night shifts, the night duty nurses, the actors, the *tamasha* folk (who turn night into day), and of course, the drama critics, and the Gurkha watchman will now lie down to sleep. The women clerks in the milk booths, the newspaper vendors, the municipal sweepers, the temple priests and the announcer of the first *sabha* of AIR will now embark on the day's work. I tried in every possible way to localise and 'domesticate' the play. Janumama (Peachum) makes no bones about the achievements of his Training Centre for Beggars. "Other educational institutes lure innocent youngsters with prospects of employment. We frankly declare that we teach our students how to beg and thus ensure them a living wage." The announcement of Malan (Polly), in her capacity as Chairman of the Mutual Benefit Bank, that the days (and especially the nights) of petty thefts are over, that for thieves it is sounder policy now not to break open safes and raid banks; they should start and control banks themselves. She continues, "The feudal mode of individual action must now make way for joint ventures in consonance with a democratic era." The henchmen of Ankush (Macheath) sitting in a board meeting in their new role as 'respectable' social figures are easy to recognise. The spectators immediately identify them with the directors of co-operative banks, known for embezzlement and fraud.

The barbs against hypocrisy, the edge of social criticism is retained, as in the first two adaptations, but reinforced by vibrant music which laces the instructive element in the play with fun and merriment. ■

This article first appeared in its entirety in the NCPA Quarterly Journal in September 1979 (Vol 8, Issue 3).

Programme Guide

March 2023

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

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

THEATRE



Taranjit Kaur, 2nd, Experimental Theatre



Sainee Raj, 2nd, Experimental Theatre

UnErase's Women's Day Special

English/Hindi (100 mins)
Experimental Theatre
Thursday, 2nd – 8.00 pm

An NCPA Off-Stage Presentation

This year, celebrate International Women's Day with some heart-warming verses and stories by UnErase Poetry. They are back with their flagship event, the UnErase Women's Day Special, celebrating women and breaking gender norms. From stories of gender to tales of sexuality, from poetry that brings us closer together to words that inspire and empower, this Women's Day is about the journey.

Performers: **Taranjit Kaur, Priya Malik, Sainee Raj & Vanika Sangtani**

Music by **Abhin Joshi**

Suggested age: 16+

Tickets:

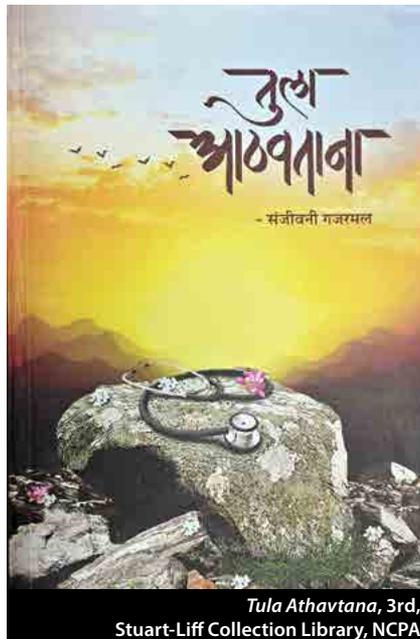
₹539/- (Members)

₹599/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office now open

MULTI ARTS & PRESENTATION



Tula Athavtana, 3rd,
Stuart-Liff Collection Library, NCPA

New Book Discussion

Tula Athavtana
by **Sanjivani Gajarmal**
Stuart-Liff Collection Library, NCPA
Friday, 3rd – 4.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

When life took a harsh unexpected turn during the pandemic, **Sanjivani Gajarmal** endured the irreparable loss of her beloved husband, Dr. Shivram Gajarmal, whose sole purpose in life was giving back to society, with great courage. In an attempt to keep his legacy alive, she created *Tula Athavtana*, a memoir of his life (of which all copies have been sold out).

Gajarmal is the daughter of an army veteran from Khataav, a small village in Satara, where she grew up in a loving family as the youngest of six siblings. After graduation, she came to Pune to complete a Master of Arts, specialising in Marathi literature and history, from the renowned SNDDT College. She was the university topper of her batch and for her marks in Marathi, received the Chancellor's Gold Medal Prize along with other two awards—the Smt. Laxmibai Vithal Gokhale Prize and the Late Sau Indirabai P. Dikshit Prize. She holds a special interest in the field of Marathi literature and Indian history.

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

INDIAN MUSIC



Begum Akhtar, 3rd, Experimental

Aye Mohabbat – Celebrating the music of Begum Akhtar

Curated & presented by

Tushar Bhatia

with **Sraboni Chaudhuri, Shivani Vaswani, Aditi Banerjee and group**
Experimental Theatre
Friday, 3rd – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Main sponsor:

Oilmax Energy Pvt. Ltd.

Aye Mohabbat is a concert dedicated to

NCPA Silver Membership (inclusive of GST):

Annual Membership	Rates (₹):
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	14,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Couple	24,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Family (A couple & two children aged 6-21)	35,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen (Individual)	8,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen (Couple)	12,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Artiste (Across all genres. Belonging to the artistic community with an affiliation to an artistic group. Discretion for recognition as an artiste rests with the NCPA)	8,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Defence Personnel	8,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Student (6-21 years)	8,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Differently Aabled	1,500

Special Membership Packages

Special Membership Packages	Rates (₹):
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Membership	On Request
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Membership	On Request

Membership Benefits:

- ▶ Avail generous discounts on tickets for events and workshops
- ▶ Enjoy three-day priority booking facility
- ▶ Access privileged seating to more than 36 free events in a year across various genres.
- ▶ Receive a personal free copy of the NCPA's monthly arts magazine and programme guide, **ON Stage**, couriered to your doorstep
- ▶ Receive advance e-mail notification of events
- ▶ Get a personalised membership card and gain free access to the NCPA Books and Music library
- ▶ Enjoy exclusive discounts offered by our brand partners
- ▶ Exclusive invite to two members-only shows
- ▶ Exclusive invite to an annual members' night
- ▶ Avail 25% discount on two tickets during your birthday month
- ▶ Avail 5% discount on food and beverages served at the NCPA café & restaurant when launched

Friend of the SOI (Membership Rates inclusive of GST):

Annual Membership	Rates (₹):
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	25,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Couple	45,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Family (A couple & two children aged 6-21)	60,000

Friends of the SOI will also be deemed Silver members of the NCPA. In addition to the above-mentioned benefits, they will enjoy:

- ▶ Acknowledgement in the SOI programme books and on the SOI website
- ▶ Two tickets to any two concerts of the SOI Chamber Orchestra in the year*
- ▶ Priority booking advantage (6 days before public & 3 days before NCPA Silver Members)
- ▶ Invitation to one private reception every year
- ▶ Access to the NCPA Library and the Stuart Liff library
- ▶ Access to the Members' Bar at SOI season concerts
- ▶ Exclusive offers with our brand partners

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



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 for details. For any queries, please contact the Membership Department.

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

Silver member of the NCPA

Friend of the SOI

Name:

Joint Member Name (in case of couple membership):

Address:

.....

Pin Code:

Telephone: Mobile:

Email: Date of Birth:

Occupation: Company:

Cheque No.: Date:

Drawn On:

Date: Signature:

the legendary singer **Begum Akhtar** (1914-1974).

The presenter, music composer and sitarist, **Tushar Bhatia**, has researched extensively and produced a number of albums of Begum Akhtar for HMV, Music India and Sony Music. **Sraboni Chaudhuri, Shivani Vaswani** and **Aditi Banerjee**, who will be performing at the concert, are well-trained established singers.

The evening will showcase some popular *ghazals*, *dadras* and *thumris* from Akhtar's repertoire covering multiple languages, from Urdu, Bhojpuri and Awadhi to Bangla. The song selection will include masterpieces like 'Aye Mohabbat', 'Divana Banana Hai To', 'Koyaliji Mat Kar Pukar', 'Mere Humnafas' and such others. Highlighting the uniqueness of her works, Bhatia will also share stories of personal interactions with people close to her, along with some interesting anecdotes about this celebrated master-musician.

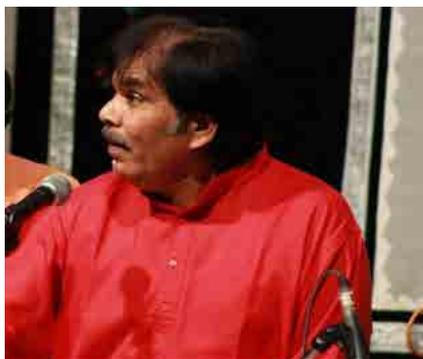
Tickets:

₹315 & 225/- (Members)

₹350 & 250/- (Public)

Box Office now open

INDIAN MUSIC



Harish Tiwari, 4th, Experimental Theatre

Hindustani Classical Vocal Music

by **Harish Tiwari** of Kirana Gharana
Experimental Theatre
Saturday, 4th – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation in association with Kilachand Foundation

Initially trained by Thakur Chaubey, Ajay and Nandlal Baranashi, **Harish Tiwari** was privileged to be groomed in the Kirana *gharana* style by its great doyen Bhimsen Joshi. Endowed with

a strong voice that is reminiscent of his legendary guru's, his singing has impressions of his mentor's inimitable style too. Tiwari is a lecturer of music at Delhi University and has been a regular performer on AIR, Doordarshan and prestigious music festivals across India.

Tickets:

₹315 & 225/- (Members)

₹350 & 250/- (Public)

Box Office now open

DANCE

RasaKeli (Krishna & Gopis - A Love Story)

A Sattriya Ensemble
(90 mins)

Experimental Theatre
Sunday, 5th – 7.00 pm

RasaKeli brings to stage the transcendental love story of Krishna and the Gopis as never seen before. This latest production of acclaimed Sattriya exponent **Prateesha Suresh** is an interpretation of the compositions of the 15th-century saint, Srimanta Sankardeva. The union of Krishna and the Gopis is considered by many as the highest philosophy of devotion. The retelling of Keli Gopal's poetic composition 'Rasa Krida' is part of the age-old tradition preserved in the *Sattras* of Assam. Capturing the authentic spirit of its origins, Suresh spent half a year in Assam perfecting the choreography, music composition, costume and stage design with Assamese dancers before its upcoming premiere in Mumbai.

Group:

Pratishruti Foundation Repertory

Directed & choreographed by

Prateesha Suresh

Produced by **Pratishruti Foundation**

Tickets:

₹360, 315 & 180/- (Members)

₹400, 350 & 200/- (Public)

Box Office now open

THEATRE

Women Slay Wednesday

Stand-up Comedy

English/ Hindi (90 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Wednesday, 8th – 7.00 pm



Radhika Vaz, 8th, Godrej Dance Theatre



Seema Golchha, 8th, Godrej Dance Theatre

An NCPA Off-Stage Presentation
In collaboration with Comedy Ladder

To celebrate International Women's Day, Comedy Ladder and the NCPA will present Women Slay Wednesday, a comedy special with an all-women's line-up which will not only make you laugh but also make the men pay more because women love discounts.

Hosted by **Jeeya Sethi**

Comics: **Radhika Vaz, Abira Bath, Niv Prakasham, Seema Golchha, Pavitra Shetty & Supriya Joshi**

Suggested age: 16+

Tickets:

Women:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Men:

₹675/- (Members)

₹750/- (Public)

Box Office now open

DANCE

NCPA Umang

Bhumi by **Avijit Das** and

Putanaa by **Swarada Bhavé & Eesha**

Pinglay

Godrej Dance Theatre

Thursday, 9th – 6.30 pm



Avijit Das, 9th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Bhumi

Avijit Das was initiated into classical dance at the age of five under the guidance of Sanaka Biswas of Santiniketan in West Bengal. With a keen interest in Kuchipudi, he joined the Kuchipudi Art Academy founded by the legendary Vempati Chinna Satyam. He also learned from several senior disciples of Satyam. Within the short span of a decade, he established himself as a young Kuchipudi dancer of international repute. He has founded the KimAham School of Dance in Bengaluru for the promotion of classical dance. Das is the recipient of the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar by the Sangeet Natak Akademi for his contribution to Kuchipudi. With immense conviction in modern interpretations of classical dance, he challenges his audience to rejuvenate their sense of aesthetics.

Putanaa – Appearances can be deceptive...

The quality of life lies in what is presented on the surface and what stirs within. The masks of faces, behaviours and emotions that we wear are a mere reflection of what we wish to present. But there is always more than what meets the eye. The storms raging within us are covertly silenced by our external appearances. The dualism of one such mythological character comes to light in this production. She was highly possessed by a strong but wrong intention to kill the Lord, but with the strength of her pure and genuine feelings, she attains *moksha*. She searches for who she is, while unfolding and undoing the many dark layers of her conflict, her *dwandwa*.



Swarada Bhave & Eesha Pinglay, 9th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Concept: **Swarada Bhave**

Choreography: **Swarada Bhave & Eesha Pinglay**

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

DANCE



NCPA Nrityaparichay 2023, 9th, 14th & 15th, Experimental & Tata Theatres

NCPA Nrityaparichay 2023

Classical Dance Training for School Children

Annual Performances by Students
Experimental Theatre

Thursday, 9th – 3.00 pm

Tata Theatre

Tuesday, 14th & Wednesday, 15th – 3.00 pm

NCPA *Nrityaparichay* is a CSR initiative, supported by corporate organisations, which seeks to impart classical dance

training to underprivileged children. Apart from training for nine months, students are also provided with a rich understanding of the traditions and customs of the place of origin of each dance form. The programme encompasses visits to the NCPA to watch dance performances by renowned artistes and provide necessary exposure in terms of technicality in relation to dance. Students learn a particular classical form which culminates in a stage performance by them at the NCPA. With successful programmes for the last six years, the NCPA currently has projects running across 12 schools in Mumbai. Students of *Nrityaparichay* perform on a regular basis with their teachers in recognised dance competitions and festivals.

Schools supported by Godrej Agrovvet present Odissi & Kathak
Schools supported by Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. present Kathak, Manipuri, Odissi & Bharatanatyam.

Admission on a first-come-first-served basis. NCPA Members will get preferential seating till 2.50 pm.

THEATRE

Every Good Boy Deserves Favour

An English Play for Actors and Orchestra (60 mins)

Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Thursday, 9th – 7.00 pm

Friday, 10th – 5.00 pm & 7.00 pm

Saturday, 11th & Sunday, 12th – 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

Every Good Boy Deserves Favour, 9th to 12th, Jamshed Bhabha Theatre



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:

₹2,205, 1,755, 1,350, 900 & 450/- (Members)

₹2,450, 1,950, 1,500, 1,000 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

The Jazz Masters Listening Sessions

Little Theatre

Friday, 10th – 5.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

A series of listening sessions will be presented by the International Music Department. The first session will be conducted by Sunil Sampat, a member of the NCPA Jazz Advisory Committee, with guest speaker Ashok Gulati, ex-General Secretary of Jazz India.

The session will feature jazz evergreens Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald, each a pillar around which revolves a lot of this music's tradition.

Louis Armstrong (along with Duke Ellington) was the leader of the jazz movement from the 1920s into the 1970s. **Ella Fitzgerald**, known as 'The First Lady of Jazz' set the benchmark for vocal jazz which endures till today. The contribution of Fitzgerald and Armstrong to the 120-year history of

jazz is substantial and their body of work is enormous.

In this listening session, the music of these jazz giants will be featured in recordings and visuals and will be interspersed with facts, anecdotes and interesting stories from their careers.

Admission on a first-come-first-served basis. NCPA Members will get preferential seating till 5.20 pm.

INDIAN MUSIC

Living Traditions: Festival of Madhya Pradesh

Experimental Theatre

Friday, 10th & Saturday, 11th – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Supported by Govt. of Madhya Pradesh, Directorate of Culture

India is perhaps the most musical and musically diverse region in the world. This diversity is evident in the folk traditions associated with different regions. Through this festival, we try to showcase these traditions. This year the focus is on Madhya Pradesh.

Madhya Pradesh, meaning central province, is the second largest Indian state by area. With around 30% of its land under forest cover, the region is home to as many as 10 national parks replete with diverse flora and fauna. The state is also rich in mineral resources and has the largest reserves of diamond and copper in India. With three world heritage sites declared by the UNESCO, the region is known for its Hindu and Jain temples, like the ones at Khajuraho, embellished with stone carvings and sculptures. It is also a land of several languages, including spoken ones by different tribes of *adivasis*. Having been associated with legendary musicians like Tansen and Baiju Bawra, Madhya Pradesh is noted for its classical and folk art forms.

Over two days, 95 artistes comprising six well-known troupes from various parts of Madhya Pradesh will present music, dance and folk theatre forms. Each presentation will be introduced with an appropriate sociocultural and aesthetic context.

Friday, 10th – 6.30 pm

Kabir songs by Jagdish Boriala group

The works of Kabir (c. 1425-1505) and other saint poets have had pride of place in the cultural heritage of the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. These are preserved and propagated through an oral tradition of the region. Couched in Malwi language, the musical renditions are based on diverse melodies, reflecting a folk flavour characteristic of the region.

Raee nritya by Devki Ram Kushwaha group

Raee is a popular dance form prevalent in the region of Bundelkhand and parts of Uttar Pradesh. Performed by veiled female dancers, it is meant to celebrate victory in war. The movements of the body and feet are accompanied by vocal music and instruments like the algoja, mridanga and daphali.

Bundelkhandi folk drama by Sandeep Srivastava group

Translated from the works *Kafan* and *PoosKiRaat*, originally written in Hindi by the great novelist, Munshi Premchand, *Sadhau Ghisu Mare Na Madhau* is a theatrical adaptation presented in the folk style of Bundelkhand.

Saturday, 11th – 6.30 pm

Bagheli folk songs by Roshni Prasad Mishra group

The Baghelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh has had a long tradition of performing songs that are associated with different rites of passage from birth to death. The group will present songs such as *sohar*, *anjuri*, *mundan*, *barua*, *madba*, *banna-banni*, *karma* and such others associated with various stages in human life.



Bagheli Folk Songs, 11th, Experimental Theatre



Gangaur Folk Dance, 11th, Experimental Theatre

Gangaur folk dance by Vishal Sakalle group

Performed during the first month of the Hindu calendar (*Chaitra*), the festival of *Gangaur* celebrates the union of lord Shiva (*Gan*) and his consort, goddess Gauri or Parvati. Bedecked in colourful costumes, both married and unmarried women dance merrily to the accompaniment of rituals and folk songs, seeking the blessings of the holy couple.

Bagheli folk drama by Neeraj Punder group

Based on a traditional belief that a child born with its feet coming out first has magic in its feet, *Latmarba* is a folk story of one such person, Jiyaman. At first, unaware of his miraculous power, he struggles through life. However, upon realising the gift that he is endowed with, his life changes forever. Presented through the medium of Bagheli songs and dance, this folk drama conveys a socially significant message.

Daily Tickets:

₹180 & 135/- (Members)

₹200 & 150/- (Public)

Box Office now open

SCREENING



The Hours, 11th, Godrej Dance Theatre

The Hours

by Kevin Puts

Opera Screening (175 mins)

Sung in English with English Subtitles

Godrej Dance Theatre Saturday, 11th – 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 it. Both the book and the film make heavy reference to an earlier novel, Virginia Woolf's 1925 work, *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 now open

THEATRE

Perfect Family

Hindi Play (110 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Sunday, 12th – 4.30 pm & 7.30 pm

What Anil Arun Kumar (AAK) received in legacy from his forefathers was the idea of perfection. His father had drilled into his head that if any work has to be done, it must be done perfectly. An imperfect person, according to his father, is living the life of a rotten vegetable. AAK looks at his family through the lens of perfection and finds that everything that is happening is wrong. Neither his wife nor his children are perfect as per his understanding, which is why he feels disconnected from them. Will his family ever be able to understand his point of view? Will the dream of a perfect family handed down by his forefathers ever come true? Or will it continue to remain an unfulfilled

dream? Will AAK be able to achieve this feat in this lifetime or will he have to come back in another?

Written & directed by **Om Katare**

Cast: **Om Katare, Aishwarya Sakhuja, Sahil Ravi, Additti A Narkar, Naman Mukherji & Harshal Singh**

Produced by **Yatri Theatre Association**

Tickets:

₹630 & 450/- (Members)

₹700 & 500/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office now open

THEATRE

The Class Act

English Play

Tata Theatre

Sunday, 12th – 7.00 pm

The play is a comedy that takes place in an acting workshop. The students come from the four major religions of Mumbai: the stern Hindu theatre veteran, the young Muslim boy, the bachelor Parsi man and the happy-go-lucky Christian from Goa.

Written & directed by **Meherzad Patel**

Cast: **Sajeel Parakh, Danesh Irani, Afshaad Kelawala, Danesh Khambata & Maanvi Gagroo**

Produced by **Silly Point Productions**

Tickets:

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

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

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

INDIAN MUSIC

Guru in Residence

Masterclass on 'Bandish' in Hindustani music conducted by **Ajoy Chakrabarty**

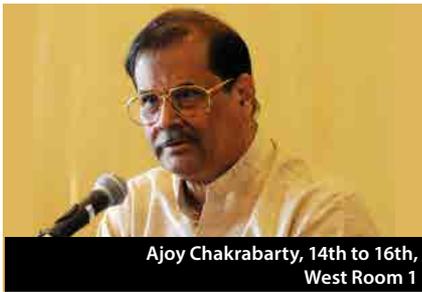
West Room 1, Above Jamshed Bhabha Theatre, NCPA

Tuesday, 14th to Thursday, 16th - 10.00 am to 4.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

In partnership with HSBC

Under this educational initiative, a senior guru is invited to impart advanced



Ajoy Chakrabarty, 14th to 16th, West Room 1

training to a select group of music practitioners. **Ajoy Chakrabarty**, doyen of Patiala *gharana*, will conduct a workshop on *bandish* in classical and semi-classical music.

An eminent vocalist who has had the privilege of training with great masters like Gyan Prakash Ghosh and Munawar Ali Khan, Chakrabarty has been a guru to several students at the ITC-SRA and Shrutinandan, Kolkata.

Applications are invited from vocalists of Hindustani music (*khayal* and/or *thumri*). Preference will be given to those with at least a 'B' grade of the AIR.

A limited number of students will be admitted to participate in the workshop.

A limited number of students will also be enrolled as observers.

Registration starts on

1st February 2023

Registration fees:

For Participants: ₹1,500/- (inclusive of GST) for 3 days

For Observers: ₹300/- per day

For more details:

Please call on 9324360502 or write a mail to indianmusicworkshops@ncpamumbai.com

FILM

Astitva

Hindi Film with English Subtitles (109 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Thursday, 23rd – 6.30 pm

The Indian Express Film Club screening in association with the NCPA & NH Studios.

Astitva is a 2000 drama movie that tackles the basic issue of marital relationships where a pleasant family picture is disturbed when one day Aditi unexpectedly receives a fortune willed to her by her music teacher.

Director: **Mahesh Manjrekar**



Astitva, 23rd, Godrej Dance Theatre

Producers: **Jhamu Sughand & Rahul Sughand**

Cast: **Niki Aneja Walia, Tabu, Mohnish Bahl, Sachin Khedekar, Namrata Shirodkar, Kishore Nandlaskar, Sunil Barve, Smita Jaykar, Ravindra Mankani, Resham Tipnis, Sandeep Mehta & Gulfam Khan**

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



The Crucible, 15th, Godrej Dance Theatre

The Crucible

by **Arthur Miller**

Theatre Screening (Approx. 180 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Wednesday, 15th – 6.00 pm

An NCPA – National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

A witch hunt is beginning in **Arthur Miller's** captivating parable of power with **Erin Doherty** (*The Crown*) and **Brendan Cowell** (*Yerma*). Raised to be seen but not heard, a group of young women in Salem suddenly find their words have an almighty power. As a climate of fear, vendetta and accusation spreads through the community, no one is safe from the trial. **Lyndsey Turner** (*Hamlet*) directs this contemporary new staging, designed by Tony Award-winner **Es Devlin** (*The Lehman Trilogy*), from the Olivier stage of the National Theatre.

Age: 15+

Tickets:

₹360/- (Members)

₹400/- (Public)

Box Office now open

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC



Johnny Guitar, 15th, Tata Garden

Movies Under the Stars

Johnny Guitar (1954)

Film Screening

(Col - 110 mins)

Tata Garden

Wednesday, 15th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA & Film Heritage Foundation Presentation

Richard Brody in *The New Yorker* described **Nicholas Ray's** *Johnny Guitar* as "one of the greatest Westerns". **Joan Crawford** takes centre stage as Vienna, a saloon owner with a sordid past. Vienna has built a saloon outside of town and she hopes to build her own town once the railroad is put through, but the townsfolk want her gone. When four men hold up a stagecoach and kill a man, the townspeople, led by Emma Small (**Mercedes McCambridge**), come to the saloon to lynch four of Vienna's friends, the Dancin' Kid and his men. Vienna stands strong against them, and is aided by the presence of an old acquaintance of hers, Johnny Guitar (**Sterling Hayden**), a guitar-strumming ex-gunfighter who has a history with Vienna and who is not what he seems.

Director: **Nicholas Ray**

Screenplay: **Philip Yordan**

Cinematography: **Harry Stradling Sr**

Cast: **Joan Crawford, Sterling Hayden & Mercedes McCambridge**

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

FILM

Reality Check

Documentary Film Screening

Little Theatre



From the Shadows, 16th, Little Theatre

Thursday, 16th – 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.

From the Shadows

English, Hindi & Bengali Film with English Subtitles (70 mins)

Leena relentlessly spray-paints silhouettes on public walls tagged #missing, Hasina accompanies rescued girls across international borders. Parallel narratives intersect to reveal a sliver of hope when women challenge a powerful trafficking nexus operating in a country in which a child goes missing every eight minutes.

The documentary has been nominated for the Docaviv Award (Israel), YES Foundation's Social Documentary Award, Global Film & Media Initiative Award and shortlisted for Breaking Through the Lens, Cannes (2022).

Director, Writer & Producer:

Miriam Chandy Menacherry

Co-Producer: **Alita Furniturewala, Sheena Matheiken, Anand Ramayya, Gary Byungseok KAM**

DOP: **Ranu Ghosh**

Writer & Impact Producer:

Triparna Banerjee

Editor: **Irene Dhar Mallik**

Music: **Parvathy Baul**

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.

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

The NCPA Soulful Blues

Tata Theatre

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

An NCPA Presentation

The much-awaited festival, the 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** featuring **Joan Faulkner** and **David Tobin**.

18th March: Beatrice Kahl b.groovy feat. 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.



Natalie Williams and the Soul Family Band, 19th, Tata Theatre



Beatrice Kahl b.groovy feat. Joan Faulkner & David Tobin, 18th, Tata Theatre

Tickets:

₹1,800, 1,350, 1,080, 900, 720 & 450/- (Members)

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

(Plus GST)

Box Office now open

THEATRE

Baby's Blues

English Play (135 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Saturday, 18th & Sunday, 19th – 7.00 pm

Susan and David are a newly married couple of Indian origin living in New York. Susan is a career woman with a seemingly perfect life, complete with a sensitive husband and a brand-new bundle of joy on the way. Beginning at the moment a very pregnant Susan goes into labour, the play follows her journey as she becomes a new mother, with a frighteningly inexplicable newborn to care for.

Employing both realistic and surrealistic elements, *Baby's Blues* explores one woman's descent into postpartum depression, but also brings into focus the difficult challenge of becoming a mother for the first time, as well as the fine line that sometimes exists between health and madness.

Production: **Surnai Theatre & Folk Arts Foundation**

Written by **Tammy Ryan**

Directed by **Ila Arun & K K Raina**

Cast: **Dilnaz Irani, Viraf Patel/ Muzammil Ibrahim, Guneet Singh, Mia Maelzer, Anjula Bedi/Shilpa Mehta, Prackriti Bhargava & Garima Yajnik**

Produced by **Antardhwani Productions**

Tickets:

₹450, 360 & 270/- (Members)

₹500, 400 & 300/- (Public)

Box Office now open

THEATRE



Amar Akbar Akoori, 21st, Tata Theatre

Amar Akbar Akoori

Gujarati Play (100 mins)

Tata Theatre

Tuesday, 21st – 7.00 pm

An NCPA and Silly Point Productions Presentation

Amar Akbar Akoori is a hilarious Gujarati *natak* meant not just for the Parsi community but to be enjoyed by anyone who speaks the Gujarati language. The play is about a Gujarati, a Bohri Muslim and a Parsi, who are staying as paying guests in the house of a Parsi widow, Mrs. Pinto. The problem is, neither of the three are ready to pay any rent. So, Pinto makes them do the housework in exchange for a room. The landlady is dead against this as non-Parsis and paying guests aren't allowed in a Parsi building. The play takes you on a roller coaster ride as all three try and portray themselves as Parsis.

Written & directed by **Meherzad Patel**

Cast: **Danesh Irani, Danesh Khambata, Sajeel Parakh, Pheroza Modi, Darius Shroff & others**

Tickets:

₹1,800, 1,350, 1,080, 900, 720 & 450/- (Members)

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

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

THEATRE



Pah-Lak, 25th, Experimental Theatre

Pah-Lak

(Father)

Tibetan Play with English Subtitles

(120 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Saturday, 25th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with Tibet Theatre & TIPA

Pah-Lak (Tibetan for "father") was originally an English play. Based on intensive research, it is an examination of the future of non-violence. The play focuses on the role of Buddhism in the lives of Tibetans and the dichotomy of the resistance movement that has emerged from decades of oppression, discrimination and marginalisation.

The play has been written by the author and renowned Indian playwright Abhishek Majumdar between 2013 and 2019 in Tibet and in collaboration with the Tibetan community in exile. *Pah-la* premiered on 3rd April 2019 at Royal Court Theatre, London, with support from Reimagine India, Arts Council England. The Tibetan director and head of the initiative Tibet Theatre, Lhakpa Tsering, the German theatre director Harry Fuhrmann and Majumdar have now created a new Tibetan production of *Pah-Lak* with Tibetan artistes in 2022-23 in collaboration with the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA).

Written by **Abhishek Majumdar**

Translated & Directed by **Lhakpa Tsering**

Co-Directed by **Harry Fuhrmann**

Cast: **Kalsang Dolma, Tenzin Yonten, Tenzin Wangchuk, Youngkyar**

Dolma, Lhakpa Tsering, Tsering Bawa, Tenzin Pema, Tenzin Lhundup, Nyima Dhondup & Tenzin Passang

Produced by **Saatvika Kantamneni**

Tickets:

₹630 & 450/- (Members)

₹700 & 500/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office now open

THEATRE

Hai Mera Dil

Hindi Play (130 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Sunday, 26th – 6.00 pm

Ranbir Singh's *Hai Mera Dil*, arguably the longest-running play in the history of Hindi theatre, having completed 1,166 shows, is a hilarious look into the life of a well-meaning hypochondriac who turns his life upside down with his irrational fears. Believing that he is about to die, he starts to put his affairs in order and the first thing to be done is to plan his beloved wife's marriage but his noble thought boomerangs and now the husband is running for wife... and life! Confusion, delusion, illusion... it is the ECG of a comic fusion.

Written by **Ranbir Singh**

Directed by **Dinesh Thakur**

Cast: **Preeta Mathur Thakur, Aman Gupta, Atul Mathur, Shankar Iyer, Sangam Rai, Alok Mathur & others**

Produced by **Ank Theatre Group**

Tickets:

₹540/- (Members)

₹600/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

THEATRE

Mumbai Premiere

Bombay Flower

Gujarati Play (120 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Sunday, 26th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with Ideas Unlimited Productions

Bombay Flower is a play dedicated to Parsi theatre. It gave birth to modern theatre in India. It depicts the untold

story of Ruttie (Ratanbai Petit) who grew up in an affluent Parsi family and married Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the most controversial leader of the era. The play is relevant today as it is an attempt to understand why an intelligent, sensitive girl from a respectable and privileged background, chooses to elope with a man who is much older and from a completely different faith. She revolts against her family and society, and ends up ruining her life. It tries to dwell on the elements that make educated and empowered girls today to take such decisions.

Written by **Gita Manek**

Directed by **Manoj Shah**

Cast: **Bhamini Oza Gandhi** & others

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office now open

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC



Ralph de Souza, 28th & 29th,
Experimental Theatre

Chamber Music by Musicians of the SOI

with **Ralph de Souza**

Experimental Theatre

Tuesday, 28th & Wednesday, 29th –
7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

The musicians of the Symphony Orchestra of India will perform chamber music with **Ralph de Souza**, former violinist of the Endellion Quartet.

Programme details to be announced shortly.

Tickets:

₹720 & 450/- (Members)

₹800 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office: 25th February for

Members & 28th February for Public

FILM

Short Film Corner

Short Film Screenings

Little Theatre

Wednesday, 29th – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation in
collaboration with White Wall
Screenings

Acha Hua Aap Time Pe Aa Gaye



Acha Hua Aap Time Pe Aa Gaye,
29th, Little Theatre

Hindi Film with English Subtitles
(11 mins)

A police inspector finds himself in the middle of a fight between two BMC officials and a girl for not wearing her mask. He tries to find the truth from the different versions of the incident narrated by each person.

Directed by

Dharmesh Patel & Arsh Kaur Lamba

Sami Sanj (Dusk)



Sami Sanj, 29th, Little Theatre

Gujarati Film with English Subtitles
(15 mins)

Appu and Dolly flee an uneventful and tedious *bhajan sandhya* to revel in happy companionship, forcing their counterparts to admit their struggle with loneliness at the dusk of their lives.

Directed by **Pratik Rajen Kothari**

Dinner

Hindi Film with English Subtitles
(20 mins)



Dinner, 29th, Little Theatre

After facing a few tough months living in isolation, Ragini decides to catch up with her friend Divya over dinner. What begins as a warm and intimate conversation, starts to turn sideways. They eventually end their reunion leaving a big question of why they met for dinner.

Directed by **Prateek Sharma**

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

THEATRE

Crossing To Talikota

English Play (120 mins)

Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Friday, 31st March – 7.30 pm

Saturday, 1st & Sunday, 2nd April –
3.00 pm & 7.30 pm

The play revolves around the fall of the Vijayanagar empire, whose capital city Hampi was left in ruins after the war at Talikota. The sultans of Bijapur, Golconda, Bidar and Ahmednagar combined forces to challenge and fight the hegemony of Ramaraya, the ruler of the Vijayanagar empire. Ramaraya's arrogance, ego and his inner complexes caused him to go to war in his old age. The play is an examination of history as well as a personal document of Ramaraya's failings, his betrayal by Adil Shah and revenge from his arch-enemy Nizam Shah.

Written by **Girish Karnad**

Directed by **Arjun Sajnani**

Cast: **Ashok Mandanna, Viveck Shah, Veena Sajnani, Maahir Mohiuddin, Swati De & Susan George**

Presented by **Embassy**

Tickets:

₹2,295, 2,124, 1,593, 1,062 & 531/-
(Members)

₹2,550, 2,360, 1,770, 1,180 & 590/-
(Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

What's Next

April & May 2023

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

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC



Beatles Tribute, 2nd April, Tata Theatre

Beatles Tribute

English Musical (90 mins)

Tata Theatre

Sunday, 2nd April – 7.00 pm

An NCPA & Silly Point Presentation

Come together as it is time to Twist and Shout on a Yellow Submarine while we Hold Your Hand on a journey where you Imagine the greatest for Eight Days a Week. The songs of The Beatles are being brought to life on stage in a way you have never seen before.

Cast: **Sarosh Nanavaty, Naquita Dsouza, Danesh Irani, Danesh Khambata, Hormuz Ragina, Arish Bhiwandiwalla, Brent Tauro, Karan Parikh & Adil Kurva**

Tickets:

₹1,800, 1,350, 1,080, 900, 720 & 450/- (Members)

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

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

SCREENING

Fedora

by Umberto Giordano

Opera Screening (145 mins)



Fedora, 8th April, Godrej Dance Theatre

Sung in Italian with English Subtitles

Godrej Dance Theatre

Saturday, 8th April – 1.00 pm

An NCPA – The Metropolitan Opera (New York) Presentation

Umberto Giordano's exhilarating drama returns to the Met repertory for the first time in 25 years. Packed with memorable melodies, show-stopping arias and explosive confrontations, *Fedora* requires a cast of thrilling voices to take flight, and the Met's new production promises to deliver. Soprano **Sonya Yoncheva**, one of today's most riveting artistes, sings the title role of the 19th-century Russian princess who falls in love with her fiancé's murderer, Count Boris, sung by tenor **Piotr Beczala**. Soprano **Rosa Feola** is the Countess Olga, Fedora's confidante, and baritone **Artur Ruciński** is the diplomat De Siriex, with Met maestro **Marco Armiliato** conducting. Director **David McVicar** delivers a detailed and dramatic staging based around an ingenious fixed set that, like a Russian nesting doll, unfolds to reveal the opera's three distinctive settings—a palace in St.

Petersburg, a fashionable Parisian salon and a picturesque villa in the Swiss Alps.

Conductor: **Marco Armiliato**

Cast: **Sonya Yoncheva, Rosa Feola, Piotr Beczala & Artur Ruciński**

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

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

SCREENING



Life of Pi, 12th April, Godrej Dance Theatre

Life of Pi

by Yann Martel

Theatre Screening

(Approx. 180 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Wednesday, 12th April – 6.00 pm

An NCPA – National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

Puppetry, magic and storytelling come together in this unique, Olivier Award-winning stage adaptation of the best-selling novel of the same name. After a cargo ship sinks in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean, a 16-year-old boy named Pi is stranded on a lifeboat with four other survivors—a hyena, a zebra, an orangutan and a Royal Bengal tiger. Time is against them and nature is harsh. The question is: who will survive?

Filmed live in London's West End

and featuring state-of-the-art visuals, the epic journey of endurance and hope is brought to life in a breathtaking new way for cinema screens.

Adapted by **Lolita Chakrabarti**
Directed by **Max Webster**

Tickets:

₹360/- (Members)

₹400/- (Public)

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

INDIAN MUSIC

Saz-e-Bahar

**Festival of Indian Instrumental Music
Godrej Dance Theatre**

Friday, 14th & Saturday, 15th April – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

The 10th edition of this two-day festival will showcase four internationally renowned instrumentalists, wielding instruments of different categories—drums-percussion (tabla) and string-plucked (mandolin, sitar, sursingar and mohanveena).

On each day at 6 pm, Dr. Suvarnalata Rao will present a pre-event talk on specific instruments presented on the respective days.

14th April

Vijay Ghate (tabla)

U. Rajesh (mandolin)

Vijay Ghate had the privilege of learning from eminent tabla maestro, Suresh Talwalkar, and is known for his astounding mastery in providing accompaniment to dance recitals as well as vocal and instrumental music.

Having been mentored by his virtuoso brother, Mandolin U. Shrinivas, **U. Rajesh** has collaborated with several international artistes, including John McLaughlin on his Grammy-nominated album *Floating Point*.

15th April

Joydeep Mukherjee

(sursingar, mohanveena)

Kushal Das (sitar)

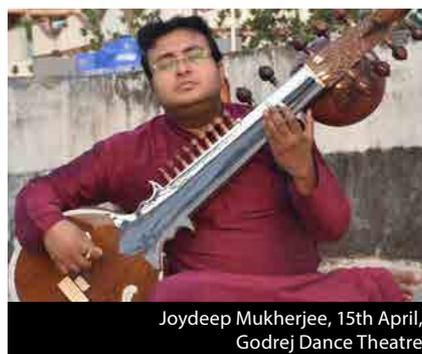
Joydeep Mukherjee has trained with Pranab Kumar Naha of Senia Shahajanpur



Vijay Ghate, 14th April, Godrej Dance Theatre



U. Rajesh, 14th April, Godrej Dance Theatre



Joydeep Mukherjee, 15th April, Godrej Dance Theatre



Kushal Das, 15th April, Godrej Dance Theatre

gharana, and he is a senior exponent of sarod and allied rare instruments including the sursingar and mohanveena.

Kushal Das was fortunate to be born in a family of sitar and esraj practitioners. He was groomed in the art of playing sitar and surbahar by several accomplished musicians like Sanjoy Banerjee, Ajoy Sinha Roy and Ramakrishna Basu, besides his father and uncle.

Daily Tickets:

₹180/- (Members)

₹200/- (Public)

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

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

SOI Academy Orchestra

Marat Bisengaliev, conductor

Tata Theatre

Sunday, 16th April – 5.00 pm



SOI Academy Orchestra, 16th April, Tata Theatre

An NCPA Presentation

The SOI Academy Orchestra performs under the direction of Music Director **Marat Bisengaliev**. The concert will also feature students of the SOI Music Academy as soloists with the SOI Chamber Orchestra

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

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Piano Recital by Gabriele Strata

Experimental Theatre
Thursday, 20th April – 7.00 pm

An NCPA & Mehli Mehta Music Foundation Presentation in collaboration with Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Mumbai

Gabriele Strata has established himself as one of the leading Italian pianists of his generation. Concerto and recital performances have taken him to some of the world's leading stages, including the Berlin Philharmonie, the Barbican Centre and Cadogan Hall. He made his Wigmore Hall recital debut in 2022.

Programme details to be announced shortly.

Tickets:
₹720 & 450/- (Members)
₹800 & 500/- (Public)
(Inclusive of GST)
Box Office: 26th March for Members & 29th March for Public

THEATRE

The Verdict

English/Hindi Play (100 mins)
Experimental Theatre
Saturday, 22nd April - 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with Akvarious Productions

A down-and-out lawyer gets a wake-up call when a medical malpractice case comes his way. But his best intentions put him on the warpath with the system. Trouble is that the system always wins.



The Verdict, 22nd April, Experimental Theatre

Written by **Margaret May Hobbs**
(from the novel by Barry Reed)
Adapted & directed by **Akarsh Khurana**
Cast: **Adhaar Khurana, Akash Khurana, Aseem Hattangady, Digvijay Savant, Dilshad Edibam Khurana, Faisal Rashid, Garima Yajnik, Lisha Bajaj, Muzammil Qureshi, Siddharth Kumar / Zafar Karachiwala, Tahira Nath & Zayn Marie Khan**

Ensemble: **Megh Patil, Rahul Gupta & Snigdha Anand Prakash**
Produced by **Saatvika Kantamneni**
Scenography by **Akarsh Khurana**
Costume Design by **Paramita Das**
Sound Design by **Varrunn Bangera**

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Josef Weinberger Ltd.

Suggested age: 16+

Tickets:
₹500/- onwards
Box Office: 9th March for Members & 12th March for Public



The Greatest Show on Earth, 23rd April, Experimental Theatre

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

SOI Chamber Orchestra

Gabriele Strata, piano
Tata Theatre
Sunday, 23rd April – 5.00 pm

An NCPA & Mehli Mehta Music Foundation Presentation in collaboration with Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Mumbai

Italian pianist **Gabriele Strata**, hailed as one of the leading Italian pianists of his generation, joins the SOI Chamber Orchestra to perform Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2. The rest of the programme will be announced shortly.

Tickets:
₹1,080, 720 & 450/- (Members)
₹1,200, 800 & 500/- (Public)
(Inclusive of GST)
Box Office: 26th March for Members & 29th March for Public

THEATRE

The Greatest Show on Earth

English Play (110 mins)
Experimental Theatre
Sunday, 23rd April – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with Water Lily (formerly Masque)

The Creative Head of a TV production house informs her CEO of an Instagram post announcing a suicide by a person distraught with the government's

neglect of the common man. She pushes to buy the rights of a live telecast of this sensational act. Implementing movement, choral speaking and song, this hilarious, condemnatory satire of the socio-political system brings to the fore the ugly core of surging communalism, capitalism and commercialism in a country where there is no value for human life.

Directed by **Vikram Kapadia**

Cast: **Vikram Kapadia, Dipika Pandey, Akshay Datta, Amishka Sood, Hrishabh Kanti, Ariana Sajnani, Aaryan Deshpande, Nadeesh Bhambi, Kashish Sharma, Nihar Dhanraj & Ojaswi Bhattarai**

Music: **Rohit Das & The Cast**

Live Music: **Rohit Das (guitar), Ritesh Malaney (percussion) & Vernon Misquitta (keyboards)**

Choreography: **Fiona**

Age: 18+

Tickets:

₹720 & 450/- (Members)

₹800 & 500/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office: 25th February for Members & 28th of February for Public

SCREENING



Othello, 26th April, Godrej Dance Theatre

Othello

by William Shakespeare

Theatre Screening

(Approx. 180 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Wednesday, 26th April – 6.00 pm

An NCPA – National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

An extraordinary new production of Shakespeare's most enduring tragedy,

directed by **Clint Dyer** with a cast that includes **Giles Terera** (*Hamilton*), **Rosy McEwen** (*The Alienist*) and **Paul Hilton** (*The Inheritance*).

She is the bright, headstrong daughter of a senator, elevated by her status but stifled by its expectations. He is a refugee of slavery, and having risen to the top of a white world, he finds that love across racial lines comes at a cost. Wed in secret, Desdemona and Othello crave a new life together. But as unseen forces conspire against them, they find their future is not theirs to decide.

Othello was filmed live on the Lyttleton stage of the National Theatre.

Age: 15+

Tickets:

₹360/- (Members)

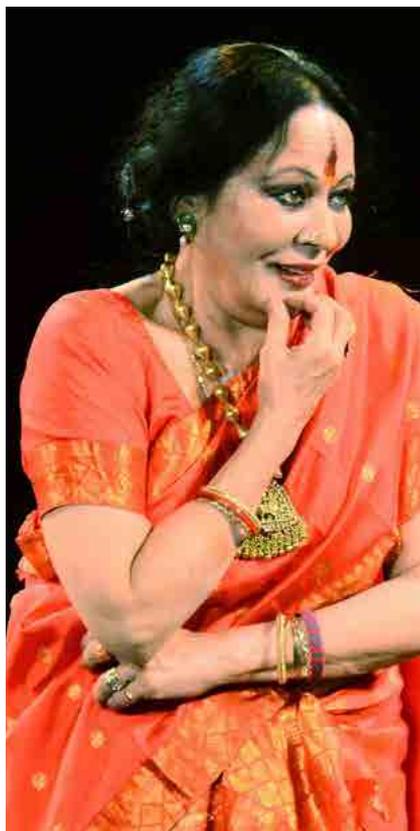
₹400/- (Public)

Box Office: 26th March for Members and 29th March for Public

DANCE

NCPA Mudra Dance Festival 2023

Experimental Theatre & Tata Theatre
27th & 28th April



Sonal Mansingh, 28th April, Tata Theatre

Sandhya Purecha, 28th April, Tata Theatre



Mudra is the only thematic dance festival of the NCPA which is presented around International Dance Day every year. Previously, *Mudra* has been curated on themes like motherhood, colours, *bhakti* poetry, animal movements, etc. This year, it explores a unique theme **Aparajita – the one who didn't stop till she won.**

Post-pandemic, we have finally, collectively won over the darkness and found our light. How does one identify light in dark times? A force that can bring us out of the dark maze of challenges creeping slowly to crush every spark of self-confidence. It is now time for us to look back and identify qualities, impulses and habits that help us come out of that darkness. So, in this edition of *Mudra*, we celebrate women who have crossed the threshold, surmounted challenges and come back to outshine the stage light.

Presentations by senior dance artistes: **Kanak Rele, Sonal Mansingh, Sandhya Purecha, Rajashree Shirke & Sutapa Duttgupta** who kept winning as they danced, inspiring everyone around them.

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

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

International Jazz Day

Tata Theatre

Sunday, 30th April – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation



In Mumbai, International Jazz Day has been celebrated for the last eleven years. The 12th edition, curated by **Louiz Banks**, will feature a huge array of artistes spread over a span of three hours. From jazz standards to jazz fusion, the concert will feature some of the finest musicians and singers in the country. The NCPA, along with Banks, celebrates this iconic day live at the Tata Theatre, Mumbai.

Tickets:
 ₹900, 720 & 450/- (Members)
 ₹1,000, 800 & 500/- (Public)
 (Plus GST)
Box Office: 9th March for Members & 12th March for Public

SCREENING

Lohengrin

by **Richard Wagner**
Opera Screening (285 mins)
Sung in German with English Subtitles
Godrej Dance Theatre
Saturday, 20th May – 1.00 pm

An NCPA-The Metropolitan Opera (New York) Presentation

Richard Wagner was the complex, controversial creator of music-drama masterpieces that stand at the centre of today's operatic repertory. He was an artistic revolutionary who reimagined every supposition about music and theatre. He also developed the idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk, meaning "total work of art" that combines music, poetry, architecture, painting and other disciplines, a notion that has had an

impact on creative fields far beyond opera. Wagner's soaring masterpiece, *Lohengrin*, makes its triumphant return to the Met stage after 17 years. The sequel to *Parsifal* unveils an atmospheric staging that weds striking visual style with keen dramatic insight into Wagner's breathtaking music.

Conductor: **Yannick Nézet-Séguin**
 Cast: **Tamara Wilson, Christine Goerke, Piotr Beczala, Evgeny Nikitin, Brian Mulligan & Günther Groissböck**

Tickets:
 ₹450/- (Members)
 ₹500/- (Public)
Box Office: 26th April for Members & 29th April for Public

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

MaMoGi

Feat. Mohini Dey, Mark Hartsuch & Gino Banks
Tata Theatre
Saturday, 20th May – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

MaMoGi is an all-star, powerhouse band that plays progressive rock, electronic and jazz music that has consistently left audiences wanting more. The band features prodigy bassist **Mohini Dey**, the incredible **Gino Banks** and superstar saxophonist **Mark Hartsuch**. The MaMoGi trio exemplifies the notion that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts". Together, they nurture their individual

talents and pool them together to make music that is truly collaborative. This can immediately be heard in the tightness of the groove and be seen in the amount of energy radiating from the stage. This music of the band is proof that instrumental music can also make people dance.

Tickets:
 ₹900, 720, 450 & 270/- (Members)
 ₹1,000, 800, 500 & 300/- (Public)
 (Plus GST)
Box Office: 9th March for Members & 12th March for Public

SCREENING

Best of Enemies

by **James Graham**
Theatre Screening
(Approx. 180 mins)
Godrej Dance Theatre
Wednesday, 24th May – 6.00 pm

An NCPA – National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

David Harewood (*Homeland*) and **Zachary Quinto** (*Star Trek*) play feuding political rivals in **James Graham's** (*Sherwood*) multiple award-winning new drama, *Best of Enemies*. In 1968 America, as two men fight to become the next president, all eyes are on the battle between two others: the cunningly conservative William F. Buckley Jr. and the unruly liberal Gore Vidal. During a new nightly television format, they debate the moral landscape of a shattered nation. As beliefs are challenged and slurs slung, a new frontier in American politics is opening and television news is about to be transformed forever. **Jeremy Herrin** (*All My Sons*) directs this blistering political thriller, filmed live in London's West End.

Directed by **Jeremy Herrin**
 Inspired by a documentary by **Morgan Neville & Robert Gordon**

Age: 15+

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

Events at a glance

March 2023

Day	Date	Time	Event	Venue
Thu	2nd	8.00 pm	UnErase's Women's Day Special English/Hindi	
Fri	3rd	4.30 pm	New Book Discussion <i>Tula Athavtana</i> by Sanjivani Gajarmal	Stuart-Liff Collection Library, NCPA
Fri	3rd	6.30 pm	<i>Aye Mohabbat</i> - Celebrating the music of Begum Akhtar Curated & presented by Tushar Bhatia with Sraboni Chaudhuri, Shivani Vaswani, Aditi Banerjee and group	
Sat	4th	6.30 pm	Hindustani Classical Vocal Music by Harish Tiwari of Kirana <i>Gharana</i>	
Sun	5th	7.00 pm	<i>RasaKeli</i> (Krishna & Gopis - A Love Story) A Sattriya Ensemble	
Wed	8th	7.00 pm	Women Slay Wednesday Stand-up Comedy English/Hindi	Godrej dancel theatre
Thu Tue & Wed	9th 14th & 15th	3.00 pm	NCPA <i>Nrityaparichay</i> 2023 Classical Dance Training for School Children Annual Performances by Students	 TATA THEATRE
Thu	9th	6.30 pm	NCPA <i>Umang</i> <i>Bhumi</i> by Avijit Das and <i>Putanaa</i> by Swarada Bhawe & Eesha Pinglay	Godrej dancel theatre
Thu Fri Sat & Sun	9th 10th 11th & 12th	7.00 pm 5.00 pm & 7.00 pm 3.00 pm, 5.00 pm & 7.00 pm	<i>Every Good Boy Deserves Favour</i> An English Play for Actors and Orchestra	
Fri	10th	5.30 pm	The Jazz Masters Listening Sessions	
Fri Sat	10th 11th	6.30 pm 6.30 pm	Living Traditions: Festival of Madhya Pradesh (10th & 11th March) Kabir songs by Jagdish Boriola group <i>Raee nritya</i> by Devki Ram Kushwaha group Bundelkhandi folk drama by Sandeep Srivastava group Bagheli folk songs by Roshni Prasad Mishra group <i>Gangaur</i> folk dance by Vishal Sakalle group Bagheli folk drama by Neeraj Punder group	 
Sat	11th	1.00 pm	<i>The Hours</i> by Kevin Puts Opera Screening Sung in English with English Subtitles	Godrej dancel theatre
Sun	12th	4.30 pm & 7.30 pm	<i>Perfect Family</i> Hindi Play	
Sun	12th	7.00 pm	<i>The Class Act</i> English Play	TATA THEATRE

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



Day	Date	Time	Event	Venue
Tue to Thu	14th to 16th	10.00 am to 4.30 pm	Guru in Residence Masterclass on 'Bandish' in Hindustani music conducted by Ajoy Chakrabarty	West Room 1, Above Jamshed Bhabha Theatre, NCPA
Wed	15th	6.00 pm	<i>The Crucible</i> by Arthur Miller Theatre Screening	Godrej dance theatre
Wed	15th	7.00 pm	Movies Under the Stars <i>Johnny Guitar</i> ((1954) Film Screening	Tata Garden
Thu	16th	6.30 pm	Reality Check Documentary Film Screening	LITTLE THEATRE
Sat	18th	6.30 pm	The NCPA Soulful Blues (18th & 19th March) Beatrice Kahl b.groovy feat. Joan Faulkner and David Tobin	TATA THEATRE
Sun	19th	6.30 pm	Natalie Williams and the Soul Family Band	TATA THEATRE
Sat & Sun	18th & 19th	7.00 pm	<i>Baby's Blues</i> English Play	F&S THEATRE
Tue	21st	7.00 pm	<i>Amar Akbar Akoori</i> Gujarati Play	TATA THEATRE
Thu	23rd	6.30 pm	<i>Astitva</i> Hindi Film with English Subtitles	Godrej dance theatre
Sat	25th	7.00 pm	<i>Pah-Lak</i> (Father) Tibetan Play with English Subtitles	F&S THEATRE
Sun	26th	6.00 pm	<i>Hai Mera Dil</i> Hindi Play	Godrej dance theatre
Sun	26th	7.00 pm	Mumbai Premiere <i>Bombay Flower</i> Gujarati Play	F&S THEATRE
Tue & Wed	28th & 29th	7.00 pm	Chamber Music by Musicians of the SOI with Ralph de Souza	F&S THEATRE
Wed	29th	6.30 pm	Short Film Corner Short Film Screenings	LITTLE THEATRE
Fri Sat & Sun	31st & 2nd April	7.30 pm 3.00 pm & 7.30 pm	<i>Crossing to Talikota</i> English Play	jb JAMSHED THEATRE

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A Play for Actors and Orchestra
Written by Sir Tom Stoppard | Music by André Previn
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- Broadway world

"You find yourselves chuckling at the darkly funny situations but also paying heed to the subtle ways in which Stoppard is trying to warn you."
- The Times of India

"The scale of the production is spectacular, it is something that might never have been experienced before in India."
- Mumbai Theatre Guide

"Can't get EVERY GOOD BOY DESERVES FAVOUR out of my head."
- Dolly Thakore

★★★★★
The Times of India

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

March 9th - 12th | Jamshed Bhabha Theatre | Tickets on book **my** show





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