

ON Stage[®]

VOLUME B • ISSUE 7



Martyn Brabbins, conductor



Barry Douglas, pianist

SOI Spring 2024 Season

EVOKING VIVID LANDSCAPES



Gergely Madaras, conductor



Sasha Cooke, mezzo-soprano



Bryan Cheng, cellist

for the love of

celebrating the magic of music.

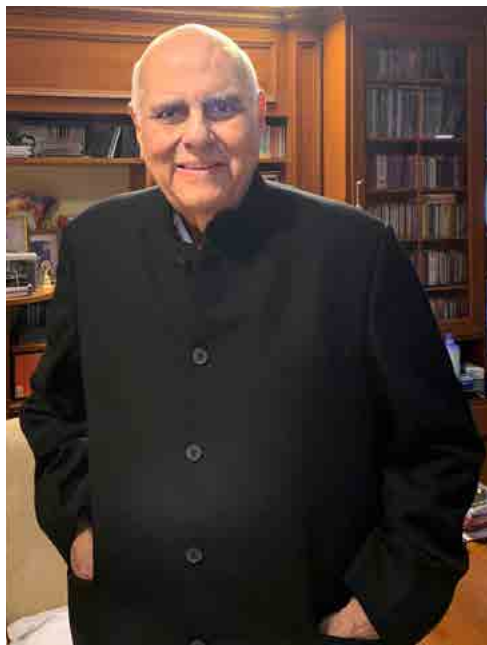
for the love of progress.



Citi is proud to be a long-standing patron of The Symphony Orchestra of India, the country's first and only professional orchestra. The Symphony Orchestra of India, with its pool of talented musicians from India and around the world, aims to elevate India's future talent.



Chairman's Note



Not one to rest on its laurels, our orchestra, after a successful tour of the UK and memorable concerts with Maestro Zubin Mehta in 2023, embarks on its Spring 2024 Season. The line-up is a fantastic blend of experience and talent. We are delighted that the fine conductor Martyn Brabbins is back with us, as is our old friend and noted pianist Barry Douglas. We welcome the three artistes, Sasha Cooke, Gergely Madaras and Bryan Cheng, who are making their debut with the SOI.

Spectrum 2024 brings diverse forms to the NCPA, ranging from classical to contemporary, some of them offering commentary on the world we live in.

Sama'a, our Sufi music festival, is now in its 13th edition and includes documentary screenings, scholarly discourses and concerts by artistes of repute.

Whether it is jazz by greats like Herbie Hancock or young players adding innovative touches to this well-loved form of music, jazz gets its due in our venues.

Science and art have never been compartmentalised at the NCPA. *Constellations*, our theatre production, brings quantum mechanics to the stage in an interesting manner.

Screenings at the NCPA—whether of avant-garde films or classics, operas or plays—are the result of our collaborations with international and local centres of culture. They are a great way of enriching oneself and we hope to see more young audiences in attendance.

As we get increasingly consumed by the smartphone and what it seems to offer at a tap of the screen, we are moving away from tactile, cerebral ways of engaging with the world. Technology has bridged great distances and gulfs, and is an excellent enabler, but it is the arts and literature that are the pinnacle of human accomplishment. Places like the NCPA are a reminder of that.

There are exciting plans ahead for the future seasons and we will of course let you know as soon as they are finalised.

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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 NCPA

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

SPECTRUM

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AROUND THE WORLD

DAY 1

NAVA KALEVAR

Odissi in contemporary
couture by

Madhavi Mudgal & troupe



RANG

collection of compositions of
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Priyadarsini Govind



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From the
Stage to the
Concert
Hall

Some thoughts on the “programme”
vis-à-vis “absolute” music debate.

By Suddhaseel Sen

In the Spring 2024 Season, the Symphony Orchestra of India will be performing a wide array of orchestral works, mostly from the 19th century, some with evocative titles and others with none. Some of these pieces were initially meant for the concert hall, while others were meant for the opera house, from where they came—as did a lot of great orchestral music from operas—into the concert hall.

Is there a fundamental difference between these two kinds of music? As is the case with modern film music, incidental music (i.e., music for theatrical performances) and music for operas and ballets need to connect to the drama onstage. They need to convey the emotions of the characters; evoke musically the locale in which the action is set, or various aspects of nature (rain or a thunderstorm, or various times of the day, for example); or combine all of these musical functions within the course of the same piece. Perhaps the greatest challenge of writing such music lies in creating formal structures that unfold in time in such a way as to correlate with the action onstage and, at the same time, be satisfying in its own right, if the piece has to make musical sense outside of the theatrical or cinematic contexts for which they are initially created.

Musical forms can generate dramatic contrast on



Felix Mendelssohn



Ludwig van Beethoven

In the “Italian” and “Scottish” symphonies of Felix Mendelssohn, the titles of the pieces evoked specific locales through the incorporation of either musical elements specific to those locales or by evoking the natural landscape of these places by orchestral means

their own, a point best illustrated by the great sonata-form movements in symphonies from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Dmitri Shostakovich and later composers. But such music usually does not transfer readily to the opera house or the theatre. While there are numerous examples of composers adapting or extracting music from operas, ballets and film scores for the concert hall, there are very few examples that I know of, in which symphonic music is re-used for operatic, dramatic or cinematic purposes.¹

From our historical vantage point, we can see how purely instrumental music came to be used gradually to “refer” to (if indeed it can be so termed)

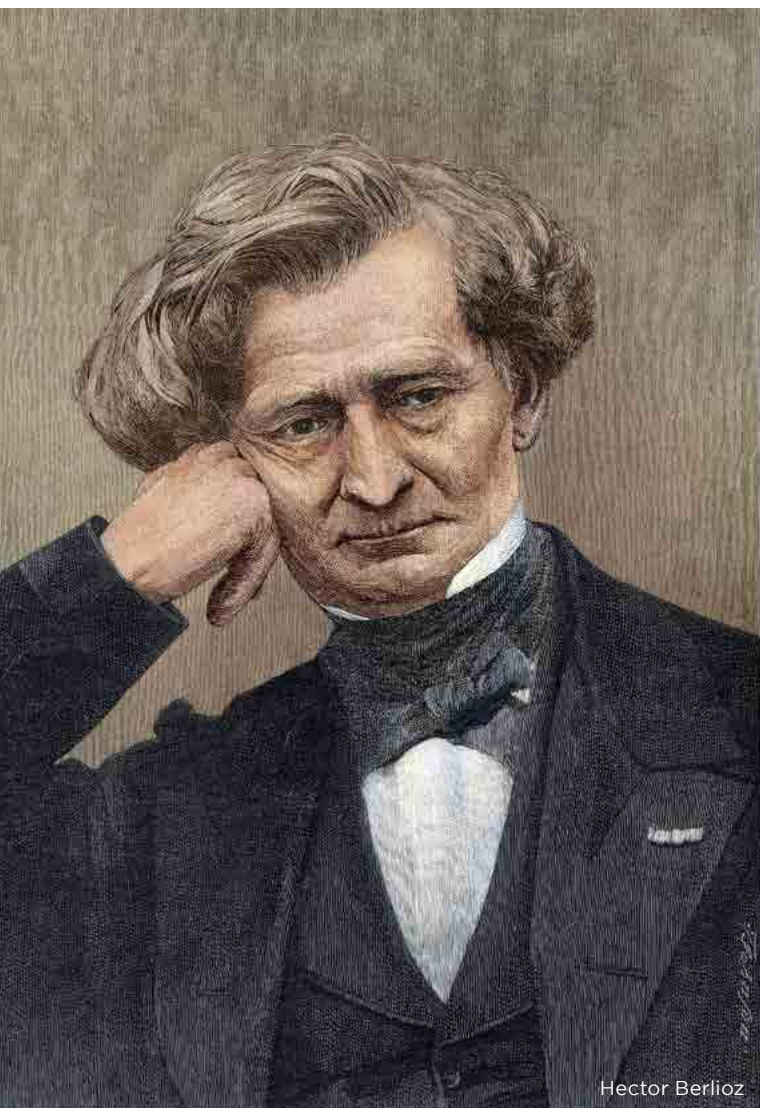
ALL PHOTOS: ALAMY

non-musical elements. Instrumental music with extra-musical connotations first appeared in the late 17th century, such as the “Bible” or “Mystery” Sonatas by Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber (c. 1676) and Johann Kuhnau (1700). The most well-known example from the Baroque period is undoubtedly Antonio Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons* (c. 1720). Many now-obscure examples followed till Ludwig van Beethoven composed his Sixth Symphony, subtitled the “Pastoral” (1808), with extra-musical titles provided by the composer himself. Beethoven’s observation that the symphony is more about “the expression of feeling than of painting” is pointed out repeatedly in this context. How, then, does one account for the fact that the score contains frankly onomatopoeic bird calls or a hair-raising instrumental account of a storm? And how does one account for the fact that Beethoven’s “Pastoral” Symphony reproduces, virtually movement for movement, an arc of development with a cheerful beginning, a central storm section and finally a hymn of thanksgiving that one also finds in *Le portrait musical de la nature*, also subtitled the *Pastoralsymphonie* (c. 1785) by the now-forgotten composer Justus Heinrich Knecht? Both Knecht and Beethoven incorporated musical tropes—or “topics” to use the now-standard term coined by the musicologist Leonard Ratner—that carried extra-musical connotations in the context of theatrical music, into music meant for the concert hall.

Similar disavowals regarding musical tone-painting came from Beethoven’s younger contemporary Carl

Maria von Weber, who told musical “stories” in formally innovative instrumental works containing secret programmes like the *Invitation to the Dance* for piano (1819), the *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra and, most notably, the overture to his opera *Der Freischütz* (both of the latter² from 1821). The first major symphonist born in the 19th century, Hector Berlioz, who took Beethoven and Weber as his points of departure, had no qualms about announcing the programmatic (i.e., extra-musical) content of his purely instrumental symphonies such as the *Symphonie fantastique* (1830) or *Harold en Italie* (1834). It was Berlioz’s close friend Franz Liszt who came up with the term “programme music” and coined the term “symphonic poem” to refer to his orchestral compositions based on extra-musical ideas. A rich body of “programmatic” music was composed in the course of the century, of which the tone poems of Richard Strauss blended innovative forms with tone-painting with astonishing success.

A third kind of orchestral music with extra-musical connotations is represented by the “Italian” (1833) and “Scottish” (1842) symphonies of Felix Mendelssohn. In such cases, the titles of the pieces evoked specific locales through the incorporation of either musical elements specific to those locales (thereby contributing to 19th-century musical exoticism), or by evoking the natural landscape of these places by orchestral means: a combination of both these elements can be found in Claude Debussy’s *La mer* (1905), its indebtedness to Katsushika Hokusai’s ‘The Great Wave off



Hector Berlioz



Johannes Brahms

Do the opening of the First Piano Concerto (1859) or the evocative second movement of the Second Symphony (1877) by Johannes Brahms, a leading representative of “abstract” music, not evoke extra-musical associations in our minds?

Kanagawa’ acknowledged musically through its subtle use of pentatonic elements. Unlike the programmatic pieces by Liszt and Strauss, they do not use non-musical programmes to help audiences make sense of formal innovations; yet, like operatic music of the period, the use of musical “topics” is common to both genres.

Much ink has been spilled over the inability of music to “refer” to specific things or generate narratives—of course, it cannot in the ways in which words do—and “programme” music has been criticised as such by influential critics and philosophers. But no music that reaches out to us can be exclusively about formal structure, or, at the other extreme, about evocations of non-musical elements without any formal or structural rigour whatsoever. Much of the debate, thus, becomes

irrelevant when we consider “programme” and “abstract” music not as mutually exclusive aesthetic orientations but as forming a continuum. Do the opening of the First Piano Concerto (1859) or the evocative second movement of the Second Symphony (1877) by Johannes Brahms, a leading representative of “abstract” music, not evoke extra-musical associations in our minds? Do listen to the SOI concerts where these pieces will be performed—along with masterpieces of “programme” music by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Wagner and others—and judge for yourselves. ■

The SOI Spring 2024 Season will be presented from 2nd to 16th February at the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre. Suddhaseel Sen is a literary scholar, musicologist and Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Bombay.

FOOTNOTES:

1. One example of the latter is that of the brilliant adaptation of music from Shostakovich’s symphonies (especially No. 5) as “background” music for Sergei Eisenstein’s film *Battleship Potemkin*.
2. A tradition of critical suspicion of pictorial and onomatopoeic elements in instrumental music was well-established in German music criticism by the first two decades of the 19th century, when Beethoven and Weber composed their aforementioned works. See Nicholas Cook, “The Other Beethoven: Heroism, the Canon, and the Works of 1813–14,” in *19th-Century Music* vol. 27 no. 1 (2003): 3–24.

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF INDIA

SPRING 2024 SEASON

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conductor

BARRY DOUGLAS
piano

MENDELSSOHN Nocturne from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
BRAHMS Piano Concerto No. 1
MENDELSSOHN Symphony No. 4 "Italian"
FEB 2 | 7:00 pm

GERGELY MADARAS
conductor

BRAHMS *Academic Festival Overture*
KODÁLY *Dances of Galánta*
BRAHMS Symphony No. 2
FEB 6 | 7:00 pm

MARTYN BRABBINS
conductor

SASHA COOKE
mezzo-soprano

BERLIOZ Overture, Royal Hunt & Storm from *The Trojans*
BERLIOZ *Les nuits d'été (Summer Nights)*
SAINT-SAËNS Symphony No. 3 "Organ Symphony"
FEB 11 | 5:00 pm

MARTYN BRABBINS
conductor

BRYAN CHENG
cello

WAGNER Overture to *The Flying Dutchman*
ELGAR Cello Concerto
BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 6 "Pastorale"
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What if you made different choices in life? What if you made them in moments of vulnerability? Would your life be the same? Would you still arrive at the same moment? Would you be surrounded by the same people? Would your relationships have the same dynamics? Then again, what if time was a constant and you could play out these possibilities in different lateral universes?

Nick Payne's award-winning play, *Constellations*, brings the concepts of quantum mechanics and string theory, to a love story. The result is a series of scenes centred around a couple's first meeting, their relationship and their lives ahead.

It was first staged at the NCPA's Experimental Theatre in 2019 and returns this month with a new cast, Kunaal Roy Kapoor and Aahana Kumra. He plays Roland, a beekeeper, and she, a cosmologist. They have little in common and a chance meeting changes the course of their lives. They meet again, in another universe, and the trajectory of their relationship takes a different turn. Then another, and a new set of possibilities arises.

This is partly how *Constellations*, directed by Bruce Guthrie, Head of Theatre & Film at the NCPA, in its second outing, plays out. The stage design is like a light sculpture made up of nearly 200 bulbs that are both a representation of a starlit night sky and a reflection of the state of the characters. It also holds the key to the many universes that the characters traverse.

After a successful first run, Guthrie has returned to the play with a renewed perspective, almost like in a multiverse himself. "It's quite rare for a director to be able to return to a show with a new cast and new dynamics," he tells us ahead of the rehearsal schedule. A lot, he tells us, has changed since the pandemic, including his



The Multiverse of Love

Exploring string theory, quantum mechanics, human emotions and the multiverse, Nick Payne's hit play *Constellations* is coming to the stage in its latest iteration with a new cast and a better understanding of the dilemma between circumstance and happenstance.

By Prachi Sibal

"Nick Payne has involved a very real science in the narrative. At a philosophical level, it is about the tiniest decisions you make in life that lead to a specific moment and shape your personality," says Kunaal Roy Kapoor

understanding of the characters' predicaments.

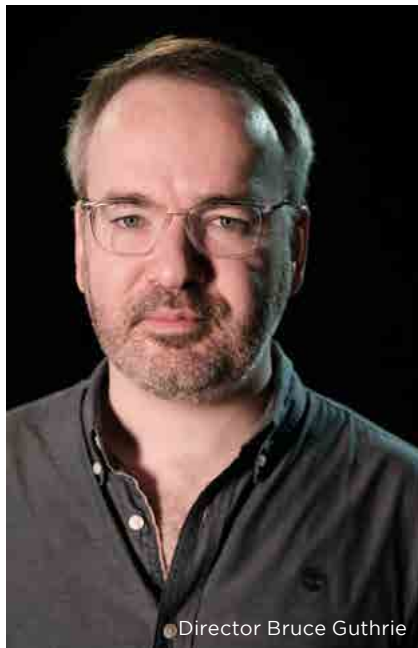
At a time when multiverses are all the rage, from DC to Marvel and acclaimed films like *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, Payne's play is crafted with love and easy storytelling. "If in *Interstellar* love is the fifth dimension, here love has many dimensions. Sometimes it's about forgiving the other person, sometimes it's about understanding that the other person doesn't want to live anymore. Sometimes it's about a person wanting to spend the night with you and deciding against it." Guthrie also points out that Payne's text makes the sound science behind the concept accessible without dumbing it down. "It's like something you watch and emerge smarter from it," he says.

The challenges of the multiverse

For the actors, though, this is fresh and challenging at the same time. Kumra, who first read the play back in 2013, considers the experience a masterclass in acting. "The challenge is that there are many times a scene gets repeated. But it is also beautiful because the actor can do it differently each time. It's a great exercise for actors," she says. It takes her back to her debut with the theatre group Motley, where, training under Naseeruddin Shah, she learnt the importance of staying with a script and reading it differently each time.

Here, it is the script that provides the canvas for the actors to interpret the nuances of each universe and play them out ever so subtly. "The challenge is to communicate [to the audience] that this is the multiverse and to cling on to the thread of a character. To make them feel for these two characters and the variations of their relationship," explains Roy Kapoor who believes in spending time researching the subject of the play. "Payne has involved a very real science in the narrative. At a philosophical level, it is about the tiniest decisions you make in life that lead to a specific moment and shape your personality," he adds.

It remains to be seen how the



Director Bruce Guthrie

"It's quite rare for a director to be able to return to a show with a new cast and new dynamics," says director Bruce Guthrie, adding that a lot has changed since the pandemic, including his understanding of the characters' predicaments

actors bring this amalgamation of science, emotion and repetition to life onstage with pulsating bulbs. Guthrie believes interpretation is a communal exercise and is eager to explore the many facets of a script full of possibilities with the new cast.

Living the characters

Marianne and Roland could not be more different from each other. Their worldview and preoccupations are telling of disparate lives. This is also true for the two actors who are set to play these parts. Kumra's life as a freelancer is at odds with Marianne's fixed job as a cosmologist. "It's the antithesis of our work," she exclaims adding, "I do like playing a character who has designed her life in a certain way. I have friends who

have thought their careers through and live like this."

Roy Kapoor, on the other hand, could relate to Roland in many ways. "He doesn't have a nine-to-five job and he is a committed man. He gives Marianne the space to make her own decisions but is very attached to her without being possessive," he explains.

However, as the story progresses, one of the characters resorts to fractured dialogue following a revelation. Sentences are left incomplete, and it is left to Roland and the audience to understand Marianne's thoughts. "Sometimes it is important to not spell it all out. The fractured dialogue serves a purpose and keeps intrigue alive. It's like pieces of a puzzle coming together. There is also a certain consistency to the fractured dialogue. It gives the audience something to chew on," says Roy Kapoor. Kumra chimes in to say, "After all, that is theatre. If everything is spelled out, it would be cinema."

It's all personal

The scenes may be situated in an expansive multiverse, with changing realities and dynamics suspended in time, but Guthrie tells us that it is the private moments between the characters that are most interesting and will find resonance with the audience.

"The construct of the multiverse is the prism through which the light is refracted but at its heart, it is a story of a couple who meet and the trials and tribulations between them," he says. "The play hangs itself in that moment where something happens to one of them, and something happens to both of them. And it's how they deal with it or don't deal with it."

Constellations, like its name, is happenstance rooted in science. It is complex but steers clear of being didactic. Guthrie's new interpretation with new actors has introduced an all-new set of variables to a play that relies on its very possibilities to tell many versions of the same tale. ■

.....
Constellations will be presented on 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th February at the Experimental Theatre.

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Divine Connections

At this year's edition of *Sama'a: The Mystic Ecstasy*—a scholarly presentation on philosophy, screenings of two documentaries inspired by the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, a concert on Bollywood Sufi music and an eclectic performance of Sufi poetry by artistes from across the country.

By Ornella D'Souza

In Urdu, *Sama'a* means 'listening to'. At *Sama'a: The Mystical Ecstasy*, the annual celebration of Sufi music traditions at the NCPA, the goal is to orchestrate a *mehfil* in which artistes and audiences can reach a transcendental realm so that the human soul may connect with divine love. *Ghazals*, *qawwalis*, *kafis*, among other forms, are some ways in which the poetry of Sufi mystics like Rumi, Amir Khusrau and Lal Dedh is evoked, recited and presented to the audience.

We speak to Sanskrit scholar and orator Dhanashree Lele, the eclectic Indian folk band Maati Baani and star vocalist, Javed Ali to find out what to expect at *Sama'a* 2024.

Philosophical strains

For her talk titled *Sufiana Safar*, Dhanashree Lele will elucidate Sufi philosophy and draw similarities between Sufism, Vedanta philosophy and *Bhakti*, along with excerpts of *Sufiana kalam* (devotional poetry) by bards, prophets, intellects, mystics and minstrels from across the globe. Noted for her discourses on spiritual literature in Marathi and Sanskrit, Lele says, "Both Sufi *sampradaya* (tradition) and Vedanta philosophy believe that God is within us, not outside us. And that we must find ways, by conducting experiments within us, to seek the divine. Luminaries like Kabir, Bulle Shah and Adi Shankaracharya believed that you must not get lost in worldly dualities of happiness and sorrow, but always seek the Supreme power in everything." She expounds her point by quoting this verse:

*Zarre zarre mein usi ka noor hai
Jhaank khud mein woh na tujhse door hai
Ishq hai usse toh sabse ishq kar
Is ibaadat ka yahi dastoor hai.*

[His light permeates each and every particle
Look within yourself, he is not far from you
If you love him, then love everyone
As these are the rules of prayers to him.]

"These four lines encompass the whole concept of finding God within. Just as any Krishna *bhakt* will say, there's Krishna in everyone," she says.

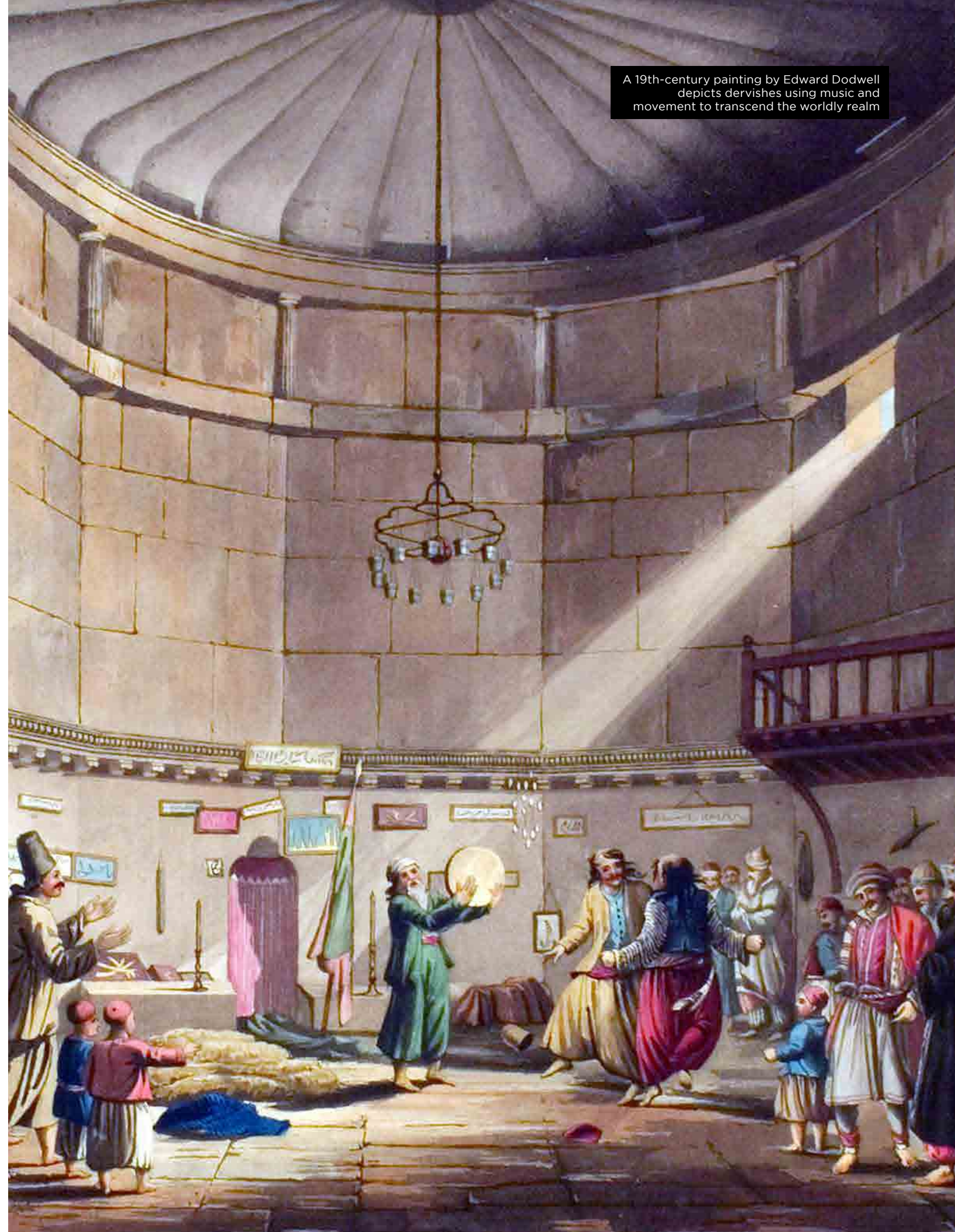
Lele will demonstrate how *ishq* is the basis of the poetry in all three traditions. "Sufism is man's lamentation about his separation from God. It says there is a veil between us and the Supreme Power, and in this life, we must remove that veil. This is also the crux of *Madhura bhakti* in Vedanta philosophy, the most intense form of devotion to God." This love, explains Lele, falls within two broad categories: *Ishq-e-Majazi* (worldly love) and *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* (spiritual love). "The words in Sufi poetry and songs are of a dual nature. They sound like utterances that could be by both, a lover and a devotee. In his poem 'Mera Piya Ghar Aaya', Bulle Shah uses the word '*piya*' to address his guru, not a paramour. Much of Sufi *sampradaya* celebrates the love between guru and *shishya*."

Sound beyond borders

Hindustani classical vocalist Nirali Kartik and composer/music producer Kartik Shah, the husband-wife duo of the band Maati Baani, have, over the years, collaborated with more than 200 artistes from 30 countries. They have named their concert *Ishq Fakira Da*, which translates to 'a wandering minstrel madly in love'. "This phrase is from a Baba Farid poem that signifies a certain carelessness in the being, the kind that comes with being in love," says Nirali. The duo will pay tribute to centuries-old poems by Rumi, Kabir, Bulle Shah, Mirabai and Baba Farid with compositions that will follow a geographical course with a storyline connecting north India to the regions beyond, encompassing Sufi traditions across India. For instance, playback singer Aashima Mahajan will extol Lal Dedh in Kashmiri Sufi *andaaz*, while Kutch Sufi folk singer Moorlala Marwada will perform in Sindhi Sufi style. The band will also perform some of their original compositions for the first time.

Staying true to Maati Baani's unique repertoire of fusing Indian classical and folk music with world

A 19th-century painting by Edward Dodwell depicts dervishes using music and movement to transcend the worldly realm





Dhanashree Lele



Javed Ali



Nirali Kartik and Kartik Shah of the band Maati Baani

sounds, *Ishq Fakira Da* will use Indian instruments such as jodiya pawa or algoza (double flute) paired with a violin and string quartet, and performances by French saxophonist Madhav Haridas, who also dabbles in Persian instruments. “We want the songs to have a grand sound and textured layers. To achieve a unique setlist, we have dived into some less explored material,” says Kartik. However, certain popular songs made it to the line-up because these highlight a specific musical genre. Like Khusrau’s ‘Ae Ri Sakhi’. “As an Indian classical singer, I enjoyed bringing his poetry to the stage in Sufi style,” says Nirali, who resonates with Mirabai, for her fierce independence and free spirit; traits that a section of women still find aspirational.

Movements like Sufism are beyond religious boundaries. “For me, Sufi means just being in love with anything that makes me happy. Giving yourself completely to something that you love, while working on the ego and constantly evolving to feel connected to a higher power,” says Nirali. “For that matter, I consider myself a Sufi of music.”

Soulful core

Javed Ali—known for his Bollywood hit songs ‘Srivalli’, ‘Ishaqzaade’, ‘Tum Tak’, ‘Jab Tak Hai Jaan’ and the more recent, ‘Chal Ve Watna’—began performing with

his father Hamid Hussain, a noted *qawwali* singer, in childhood. He received training in Hindustani classical music and *ghazal gayaki* from *ghazal* exponent Ghulam Ali, and later in gratitude, even assumed his guru’s last name. His first brush with *Sufiana* music was in 2009 when A. R. Rahman asked him to sing ‘Arziyan’ for the movie *Delhi-6*, which catapulted his then fledgling career in Bollywood playback singing. “Rahman *saab* initially wanted a Pakistani singer to sing it. I was at the studio, recording ‘Jashn-e-Bahaaraa’ (*Jodhaa Akbar*), when Rahman *saab* told me, ‘We have one more song for you.’ He showed me this composition, and I sang in my normal *andaaz*. But Rahman sir wanted the *Sufiana andaaz*, which I had never attempted. He then helped me develop it, insisting that I sing with a fuller, deeper sound and throw of voice. When I sang it again, director Rakeysh Omprakash Mehraji, who was also present, said he no longer had second thoughts about who should sing ‘Arziyan’.”

According to Ali, this ‘Sufi voice’ got him wide appreciation. “It became known as my style.” His other Sufi-inspired song that was well received is the 2011 ‘Kun Faya Kun’ (*Rockstar*), again composed by Rahman. The composer made Ali do the *wazu* (ablution) and wear a *taqiyah* (skullcap) to record the song in front of just one burning candle with all the studio lights switched off. “Rahman *saab* tried to create the right atmosphere to establish that divine connection, and the *asar* (result) is evident in the song. The song felt like a prayer while singing it. *Jaise ki namaz padh rahe the* (as if offering *namaz*). Even now, I cover my head onstage for spiritual songs.”

Despite doing regular *riyaz* (practice) and hitting the right notes, a performance of *Sufiana* music can feel amiss without one ingredient. The vocalist, says Ali, must have *ruhaniyat* or soulfulness, to sound ethereal and thereby connect to the listener’s soul. Songs by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Abida Parveen have that quality, he says. “That is the crux of *Sufiana* music. Otherwise, you are just singing the notes, showing off your musical prowess. Anyone can sing the right tune, but *ruhaniyat* is God-given. When that happens, the words and the composition flow intuitively.” ■

Sama’a: *The Mystic Ecstasy* will be presented from 9th to 11th February at the NCPA.

Sama'a
THE MYSTIC ECSTASY
FESTIVAL OF SUFI MUSIC



*Screening of
2 documentaries*

*'How can I forget? The legend of Marui' &
'Don't fall in love with those who wander in boats'*
by **Shabnam Virmani**
Feb 9, 2024 | 5:00 pm
Godrej Dance Theatre



Sufiyana Safar

An illustrative talk
by **Dhanashree Lele**
Feb 9, 2024 | 6:30 pm
Experimental Theatre



Ishq Fakira Da

Presented by **'Maati Baani'**
Nirali Kartik, Kartik Shah with Moorlala Marwada,
Aashima Mahajan, Noor Mohammed Sodha and friends
Feb 10, 2024 | 6:30 pm | Experimental Theatre



Jashn-e-Bahar

An evening of Sufi music
by **Javed Ali**
Feb 11, 2024 | 6:30 pm | Tata Theatre

Supported by **Roopa Kudva**

THE CROONER COMES TO TOWN

On 14th February, Ilya Serov will delight music lovers at the NCPA with contemporary takes on jazz classics from eras gone by. In an interview with *ON Stage*, the young Russian-born American vocalist and trumpeter talks about his musical journey.

By Beverly Pereira

He may be young in years, but Ilya Serov is terrifically old in experience. Although the Russian-born American musician was trained in classical trumpet, it was not long before he was bitten by the jazz bug. His fondness for the music of Chet Baker and Nat King Cole, among others, is apparent in his beautiful renditions of classics as much as it is in his original music. Fusing jazz with soul and R&B with a touch of Latin, Serov's approach to the big band era in contemporary times continues to captivate fans and new generations of jazz lovers.

ON Stage (OS): What were your formative years like?

Ilya Serov (IS): I started playing music at the age of seven and my first instrument was the trumpet. It was not necessarily my first choice, but it was what the band director at the local music school recommended. My parents just wanted me to learn music and didn't have a very strong opinion on the choice of the instrument, although my mom always liked the saxophone. From the beginning I started learning and playing classical music, as jazz wasn't as present in my somewhat smaller town. My parents were never big jazz listeners either. We only had a couple of jazz albums in the house, and both were by Louis Armstrong.

OS: When did you discover jazz?

IS: In my teen years I got introduced to more jazz artistes from diverse styles, including Arturo Sandoval, Miles Davis, Chet Baker and a few others. Sandoval's music was something that got me to start paying attention to jazz. Then came Miles and Chet. I was

hooked. After listening to Chet's early albums for the first time, I absolutely fell in love with his style and sound. His voice also inspired me to start singing, although that didn't happen until I was in my late 20s.

OS: How did the foray into jazz happen?

IS: Even though I started listening to jazz and falling in love with this genre during my high school years, I didn't start playing it until I got to college and moved to St. Petersburg. In the big city, the presence of jazz was prominent and there were lots of incredible players. My formal education at St. Petersburg Conservatory was still based on classical music. I worked in symphony orchestras and at opera theatres as a professional during my college years and would study jazz on my own. I never had a formal jazz education. I learned the music by listening to it and working with some of the most influential musicians.

OS: And how did you become the beloved vocalist that you are?

IS: I was always inspired by Chet's vocals, considering he was also an amazing trumpet player. The crooners of the big band era too had an influence on me. I never thought of myself as a vocalist though and never knew I

could sing. It happened almost accidentally. I had to fill in for someone at one of my small local gigs, and even though I didn't sound good at all, I had fun and felt challenged to develop that skill. I started taking vocal lessons and practising on my own.

OS: You played the annual Dave Koz and Friends Sea Cruise between 2017 and 2019.

IS: Playing and travelling around the world with Dave has

“My formal education at St. Petersburg Conservatory was still based on classical music; I worked in symphony orchestras and at opera theatres as a professional during my college years and would study jazz on my own”





(From left) Jermone Randall, Norman Jackson, Kay-Ta Matsuno and Tony Moore will join Ilya Serov onstage

been a life-changing experience. I have done every one of his yearly cruises since 2018 and will be at the upcoming one too. I consider him to be my mentor as I always learn something from him after every interaction, both musically and personally.

OS: Tell us about your collaboration with the Riverside Philharmonic in California.

IS: The Riverside Philharmonic is a beautiful orchestra consisting of some of the most amazing players in L.A. I was very honoured to receive an invitation from them to be a guest soloist at one of their shows. Since I hail from the symphonic world, it was great to be back and experience the power and beauty of orchestral sound. During that concert I presented some of my original renditions of classic jazz standards. I truly enjoy playing and singing with orchestras and am always excited about the opportunities of being a guest artiste at such shows.

OS: Tell us more about your 2021 album *Just Friends*.

IS: I created *Just Friends* to pay tribute to one of my biggest influences, Chet Baker. The idea behind the album was to imagine what Chet would sound like in 2021 as a contemporary jazz musician. I picked some of my favorite songs from Chet's repertoire and rearranged them with a contemporary jazz twist. I added a few original compositions of my own to the album as well for a bit of a personal touch.

OS: Tell us about the 'jazzhorn', an instrument that you have designed.

IS: The idea behind the 'jazzhorn' goes back a few years. Just when I first started to think of the recording of my very first contemporary jazz album *Just Friends*, one of my producer friends suggested I explore some cool-looking instruments made by Andy Taylor. Looking at all the unique instruments, we had an idea to make a trumpet that looks like a saxophone. Originally, I thought it would

just be funny to make an instrument like that, but when we really got into the process and the instrument turned out the way it did, it became a huge part of my musical palette for recordings and live shows.

OS: What can the audience expect at the NCPA concert on 14th February?

IS: For Valentine's Day, I will be bringing a very special show I am preparing specifically for this trip. It will consist of some classic love songs as well as some of my original music. My amazing band and I will cover multiple genres including jazz, Latin, soul and smooth R&B. It will be an intimate, romantic journey filled with different musical colours and levels of emotions.

I am bringing my favourite musicians with me: Kay-Ta Matsuno on guitar, Norman Jackson on keys, Jermone Randall on bass and Tony Moore on drums. I have been working with these guys for many years now. They are incredible musicians and amazing human beings.

OS: Will this be your first time in India?

IS: It is my very first time in India and I couldn't be more excited. It has always been my dream to visit this amazing country with such

a rich history. I feel honoured to be invited to perform at the NCPA and I can't wait to make some new friends in Mumbai, celebrate the day of love and experience beautiful music together. Also, I absolutely love Indian food, so I am looking forward to trying some local flavours.

OS: What can your fans look forward to in 2024?

IS: I've got some very cool festivals in the U.S. and another amazing trip to Europe with Dave Koz & Friends at Sea. Also, I will be releasing a brand-new album of original music sometime in the spring, so I can't wait to share my new music with the world. ■

.....
Ilya Serov will present A Romantic Rhapsody on 14th February at the Tata Theatre.

ILYA SEROV

A Romantic Rhapsody



**FEB 14,
2024**

HOST **BRIAN TELLIS**

TATA THEATRE, NCPA | 7:00 PM



BEYOND FRONTIERS

Shubhada Varadkar will present cherished melodies of Lata Mangeshkar through five Indian classical dances

At Spectrum, NCPA's festival of dances from around the world, four stalwarts will reimagine traditional movement to explore the infinite possibilities and interpretations embedded in the classical form.

By Aishwarya Sahasrabudhe

“Dance is liberating,” remarks Jayachandran Palazhy, Founder and Artistic Director of the Attakalari Centre for Movement Arts. “It draws sustenance from our past to live in the present, almost touching the future,” he suggests evocatively.

While expounding on the significance of movement as a multidimensional practice, the choreographer explains how a dancer engages with other artistes, audiences and sonic and physical worlds to simultaneously inhabit several micro- and macro-level spaces, exploring a gamut of creative possibilities. Underlying this year's edition of Spectrum are such ever-expanding faculties of imagination tying the dance styles of four exemplary artistes in a synchronous blend of expression.

Palazhy's presentation will include *Jeeva Pravaha*

(*Flow of Life*) incorporating stunning visuals by the Japanese artist Kunihiro Matsuo and powerful music from the composer duo, M. D. Pallavi and Bindhu Malini. The performance will take off from traditional movements to explore an evolving language that “reflects the contemporary idiom.” Palazhy explains that the production talks about “the idea of city as a city of people rather than as a city of architecture or infrastructure” and derives inspiration from the plight of migrant labourers who left them in hordes while grappling with the economic horrors induced by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Where Palazhy draws from collective memory to reach for a futuristic dialogue in his conceptualisation of a city, Odissi exponent Shubhada Varadkar presents a slice of the past by diving into Indian musical history to invoke an enduring artistic legacy

through her collaborative endeavour, *Ram Ratan Dhan*. A spectacular affair returning to the NCPA after a successful show in July 2023, the performance will present cherished melodies of Lata Mangeshkar through five Indian classical dances that celebrate her evergreen voice using vocabularies that stretch the contours of traditional practice even as they remain rooted in the classical spirit.

Also taking the stage at Spectrum in a traditional *margam* performance will be the Bharatanatyam stalwart, Priyadarsini Govind. Odissi exponent Madhavi Mudgal and her troupe are among the line-up as well and will present riveting group choreographies that explore the classical genre in novel ways.

EXPLORING ARTICULATIONS

An award-winning Bharatanatyam danseuse, Govind says, “We are a product of our times.” So even in studying a composition written thousands of years ago, an artiste's interpretation would be reflective of our contemporary social, political and cultural climes. Govind will be bringing a *margam* on the NCPA stage after a long time and her performance will blend technical movements and *abhinaya* for a refreshing take on age-old verses.

This is also an attribute of her workshops. “What I like participants to take away is the approach and the understanding of the composition,” she says. They can then extrapolate from the word meanings the effect of a *rasa* (mood) based on its myriad interpretations. Govind will be hosting a workshop at Spectrum too, in which participants can gather insights on how to interpret and lay out a short composition.

With one eye on the future, Odissi exponent Mudgal explains that endeavours to imagine in newer ways are, in effect, an exercise in *parampara* which is essentially the flow of tradition. “Each successive generation of artistes adds their inputs to this flow,” she says. Classical dance is thus perpetually in flux, and following in the footsteps of her guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, the danseuse's vision has been to present the ancient form in a refreshing manner without deviating from the classical. This spirit intact, the dancer has been engaged in discovering the possibilities of “many bodies moving together, doing the same or contrasting movements or overlapping different rhythms.” Mudgal bringing her troupe to the NCPA for an Odissi showcase is evidence of her innovative explorations of group choreography in what was, for the longest time, recognised as a solo performance practice.

This shift is a different way of doing things, she concedes, and is birthed in varied ways. For instance, the artiste's take on *abhinaya* could mean that dancers enact several parts in each recital. In a storytelling narrative, she elaborates, “It is not that there is one Shiva and one Parvati.” It could interchange as dancers are not dressed in costume, making this a rather distinct approach to a dance style derived from Gotipua's dance-drama traditions.

Madhavi Mudgal bringing her troupe to the NCPA for an Odissi showcase is evidence of her innovative explorations of group choreography. Priyadarsini Govind says, “We are a product of our times.” So even in studying an ancient composition, an artiste's interpretation would reflect our current social, political and cultural climes.

DYNAMIC INTERPRETATIONS

Spectrum is an endeavour embedded in the dynamism of movement. With multiple exploratory performances being part of its line-up, it becomes testament to a reconfiguration of aesthetic sensibilities drawn from age-old practices.

So, when Varadkar returns to the NCPA in a curatorial effort that brings together Kathak, Bharatanatyam,

Odissi, Manipuri and Mohiniattam, she performs an exercise in reimagining each dance style while being firmly rooted in the classical. "Adding freshness to any dance form is required," Varadkar opines, "but it has to be with some meaningful aesthetics." To that effect, she has meticulously selected songs which cover Mangeshkar's diverse musical range across multiple languages while ensuring that each melody suits a particular dance style. And she does so in rather imaginative ways. She pairs the Marathi song, 'Aaj Gokulata Ranga' with Manipuri, and while many would imagine this to be an odd coupling, the refined elegance of the Manipuri *raas-leela* in fact brilliantly celebrates a lyric describing Krishna enjoying the festival of colours with his *gopis*.

Such vision is evident in Mudgal's contemplations too. In a career spanning over five decades, she has borrowed from her musical and architectural learnings to enrich her "experiential reservoir" that has translated into inventive choreographies. Mudgal is familiar with the NCPA's stage—she has been performing at the cultural centre since the early 1970s, when audiences were smaller and auditoriums intimate. Now she examines possibilities of weaving music, poetry and rhythm through traditional movements



With the Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts, Jayachandran Palazhy will present pieces exploring aspects of human existence

Where Jayachandran Palazhy draws from collective memory to reach for a futuristic dialogue in his conceptualisation of a city, Odissi exponent Shubhada Varadkar presents a slice of the past by diving into Indian musical history to invoke the enduring artistic legacy of Lata Mangeshkar

display of innovation in movement and performance practice. Interactive technology figures prominently in his works, he explains, as it "allows us to develop that non-linear kind of narrative" which turns a dance performance into a "trans-disciplinary practice" that transcends stringent rules and develops new kinds of organising principles.

When working with visual artists and music composers Palazhy often begins with a storyboard. "Each artist can infuse ideas into their particular artistic discipline and then that becomes the source material to create the final performance or production," he explains.

Yet, in doing so, Palazhy is never too far from the classical idiom. With choreographies exploring yoga, classical dance traditions and Indian martial arts like *Kalaripayattu*, he expands on traditional aesthetics to process them and develop a new language. Tradition is significant, he maintains, "because knowingly or unknowingly it is actually part of our identity" and moving away from this collective heritage can become a futile exercise in alienation. Instead, he engages in a more productive process of gathering inspiration from tradition to present it "through tools and devices available in contemporary times."

With a growing audience appreciative of sublime Indian dances, Varadkar remarks that ancient scriptures have only given us guidelines by classifying and codifying all gestures and body movements. What is left to the dancer is to then apply them in developing newer vocabularies, for therein lies the vigour of artistic practice integral to the classical form.

At Spectrum, the four artistes will thus be immersed in exploring complex imaginations, taking audiences beyond the frontiers of classical and non-classical, to instead present them with impactful work. As Varadkar suggests, "Dance is an art form which is never stagnant. It is movement in itself." ■

Spectrum will be presented on 16th, 17th, 18th, 23rd & 29th February at the NCPA.

Bharatanatyam exponent Priyadarsini Govind will present a collection of compositions and will also conduct a workshop



Madhavi Mudgal, with her troupe, will present a unique tapestry of poetry and rhythm through Odissi



and compositions to present group choreographies suited to large-scale presentations.

For her part, Govind, hailing from Bharatanatyam's Vazhuvoor school, performs a similar exercise while designing a renewed pedagogy for *abhinaya* by endowing it with a structure. The artiste, who served as director at the reputed Kalakshetra Foundation, is known for her mastery of expression and has worked on a format that, she

ANAY LAL (MUDGAL)

says, "will take you through *abhinaya* like you do *nritta*." Govind elaborates, "The emphasis is on *satvika abhinaya*: how you understand *satvika* and how you translate it through your mind and body." With this, the artiste codifies *abhinaya* within classical pedagogy yet introduces such shifts into learning and teaching techniques that would enable a performer to engage in an emotive dialogue with the audience.

MOVEMENT AND INNOVATION

A contemporary artiste whose productions are celebrated for their complexity and layered narrative, Palazhy's choreographies make for a stunning



Mahatma Gandhi with Anand Patwardhan's mother and aunt

ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY

ANAND PATWARDHAN'S MOST PERSONAL FILM, *VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM*, HAD A PACKED SCREENING AT THE NCPA. A CONVERSATION WITH THE FILMMAKER.

BY AISHWARYA BODKE

During a profoundly poignant moment in Anand Patwardhan's *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, a gentle sense of intrusion crawls in. I almost felt like I should not be looking. Patwardhan's unmistakable appeal, though, is hard to escape. In his quietest, most personal film thus far, the filmmaker turns his lens on his ageing parents. Dinner table conversations, anniversaries and evening walks metamorphose into precious pieces of oral history, sewn into India's turbulent past and struggle for independence.

Home is where the heart is in Patwardhan's documentary. A son's tender gaze is unflinching and the parents, Nirmala and Wasudev (Balu) Patwardhan, are his most charming subjects. The kindness and ease in their companionship lingers even when they are not in the frame. It follows you after the film's 96-minute run. They embrace the eventualities of age and time;

when maladies approach, they gracefully greet them. Nirmala, however, beseeches Balu to do one thing—he cannot go before her. He keeps his word.

When the room is thick with loss and departure, Patwardhan's camera does not tremble. As his unsparing documentaries *War and Peace*, *Jai Bhim Comrade* and *Reason* took birth, he returned to this deeply personal footage only after a decade. The outcome is a bittersweet symphony of grief and preservation that makes you ache, smile and weep. You are homesick.

Patwardhan's films find a way to stir sensibilities in cogent and simple ways. But simple his quest is not; has never been. Each film is a document of the time and a triumph over countless struggles for bringing it to the screens.

The film borrows its name from the Sanskrit phrase reiterating collective well-being and global harmony.

A universalist idea that competes with dominant and exclusivist notions of caste, it has been warped by the current regime. The film rejects and reclaims it. Active participants in the freedom struggle, Patwardhan's family members reminisce about Gandhi, Ambedkar and Nehru. "I am the only one in the family who never went to jail," his father chuckles.

We spoke to Patwardhan ahead of the screening at the NCPA. Excerpts from the conversation.

ON Stage: The prism of your films, even when political, has always been personal. But this film's intimate and winsome quality is unlike any. Since the film is born out of moments you wanted to preserve for yourself, when did it turn into something to be shared with the world?

Anand Patwardhan: The title alone, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, reflects a core belief I had grown up with—that the world is, or should be, family. This film initially started as a home movie triggered by the realisation that my parents were getting old. I wanted to preserve their memory for myself. I also talked to other relatives. Slowly, it turned into oral history that included eye-witness accounts of India's freedom struggle. But my two eldest uncles, who were most active in the movement, had already passed away.

All my films are personal in that they started not because I wanted to be a filmmaker but because something was troubling me to the point that I wanted to do something about it. I did not want to draw attention to myself but let my camera and recorder transport images and sounds from one stream of society to another. India is a very class- and caste-dominated society where people live in impenetrable bubbles. So, my early films were forcing the elite to look at the realities of the working class and offering the latter a chance to look at our elite without the rose-tinted glasses that Bollywood may offer.

In the next phase, when religious sectarianism attacked our country—only to intensify over the last few decades—I turned my lens to fighting religious and caste hatred using the technique of cross-fertilisation, which is letting different sections of our caste-divided society speak to and hear each other and themselves. This was a time when outrageous

things were said by a few people and by documenting and exposing this, people could be embarrassed or shocked into introspection. Today, we have almost passed that stage. This highlights the dangers of mere observational cinema—one that can be read differently by different people. Realising this, I never took the chance as people could misinterpret what the filmmaker meant. But at the same time, I wanted to persuade people with evidence, not bludgeon them. So, I made sure my facts were correct and organised my evidence as cogently as a lawyer would. The audience was then the judge.

OS: It took you a decade to start editing the film after the demise of your parents. Do you think films can be a culmination of our grief?

AP: Yes, the home movie shooting ended when my parents passed away and I rarely looked at the footage. Between 1998 and 2018 I made three long documentaries, and the home movie was on the back burner. Eventually, isolation during the pandemic led me to look at the footage again and edit it.

OS: In a time where historical facts are being erased, fabricated and forgotten, what place of significance do reliable oral histories occupy?

AP: It was the knowledge that history was being rewritten that finally made me decide that this home movie could serve a useful purpose, as it was a first-hand account of the very period that our present rulers wish to wipe out and replace with performative nationalism.

OS: To fight and defend the work, one imagines, is the burden of the documentary filmmaker. After five decades, does it get too heavy?

AP: It has been 53 years since I made my first film, and no, it has never been a burden. I enjoy what I do, and it keeps me sane and free from the despondency that would otherwise have engulfed me.

OS: Indian documentaries have received an exceptional response in the last few years. We would like to know your thoughts on the current documentary scenario and its future.

AP: Many good Indian documentaries have made a mark globally and that is to be welcomed. But real progress will happen only when there are many more places to screen our films within India. There is really no commercial reason that such films are not shown in cinemas and on OTT platforms. It is political fear that prevents a breakthrough. ■

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam was screened at the NCPA in January 2024 as part of *Reality Check*, a series that promotes work by Indian documentary filmmakers. It will also be screened on 19th March as part of *The Indian Express Film Club*.



With his parents, Nirmala and Balu Patwardhan

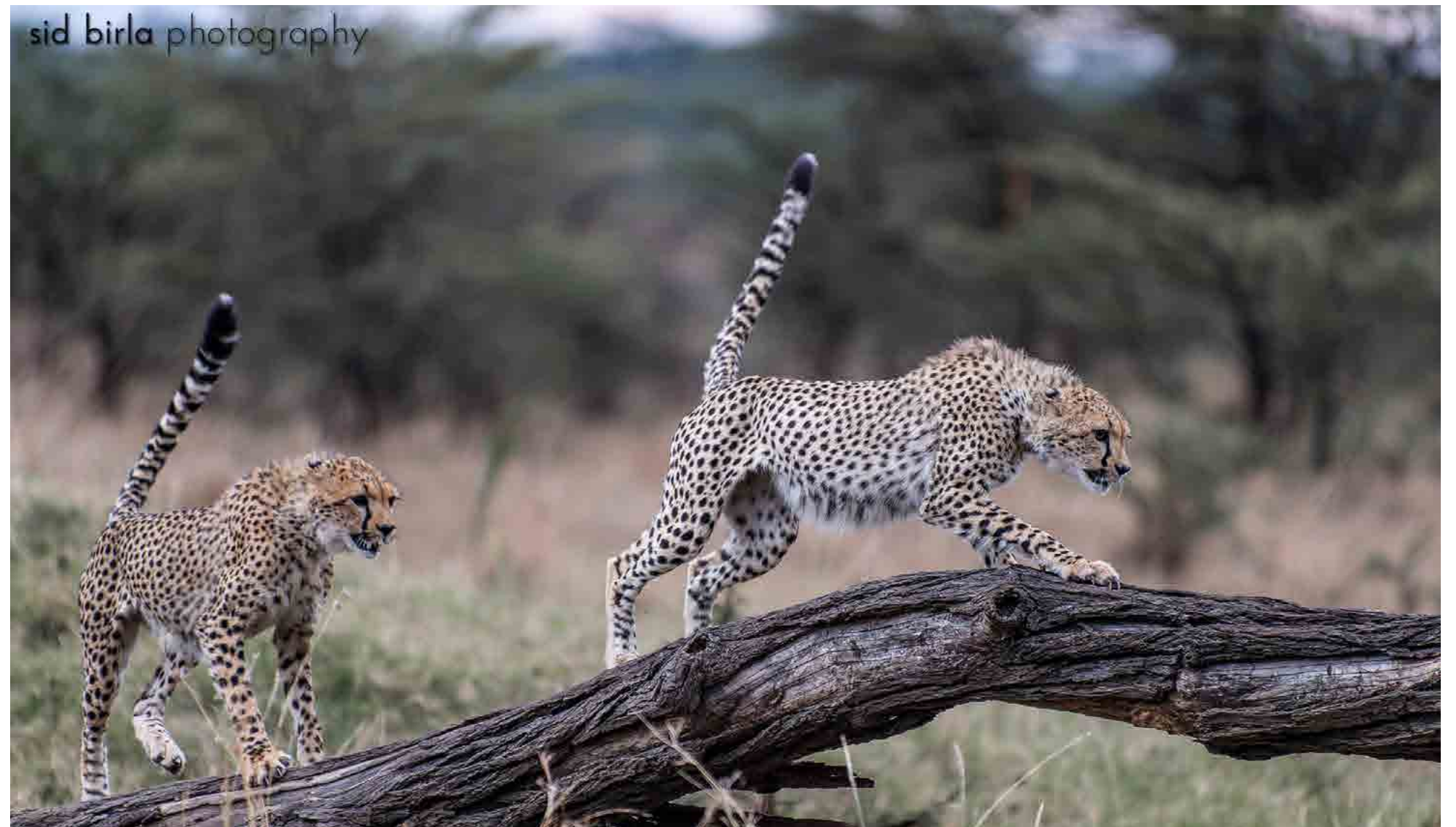
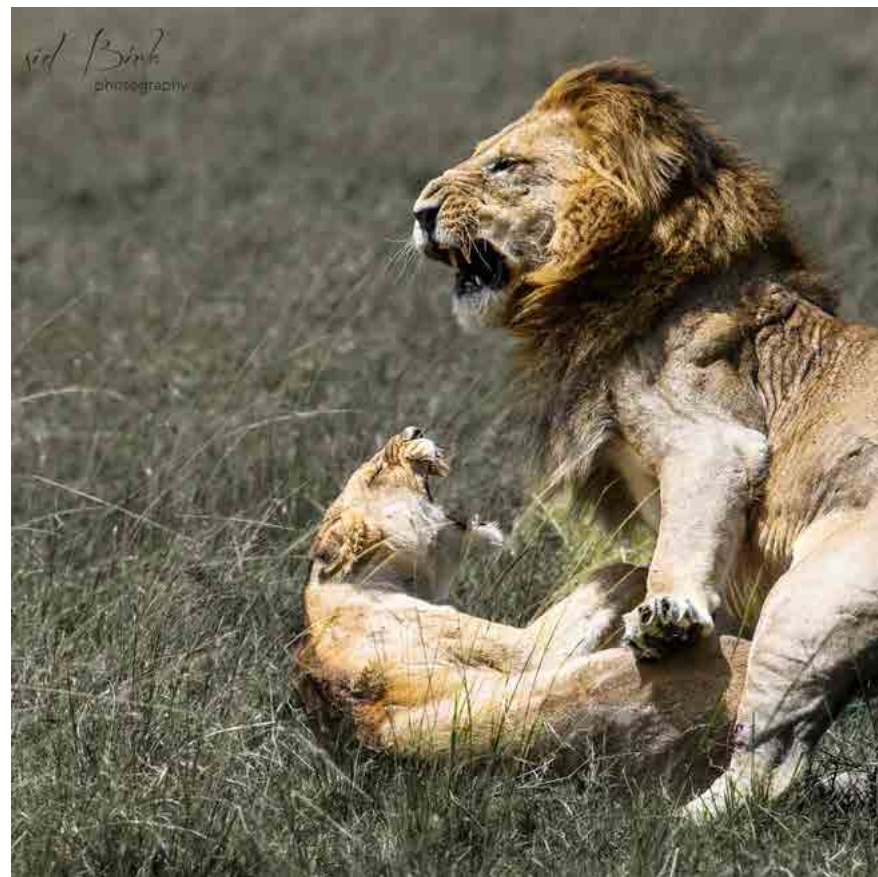
The Citizens of the Serengeti

Over multiple trips to Tanzania and Kenya, Madhushree and Sidharth Birla have captured on camera the spectacular inhabitants of the region in all their glory.

Aclaimed naturalist and author Brian Jackman has said, “Africa changes you forever, like nowhere on earth. Once you have been there, you will never be the same.” Madhushree and Sidharth Birla can confirm that this is, indeed, entirely true. Their love affair with the Serengeti began in 2012. The region’s stark beauty, the orderliness, power and elegance of nature and the majesty of both the hunter and the hunted overwhelmed them in ways that they find indescribable. Derived from a Maasai word meaning “endless plains”, the Serengeti

holds the largest lion population in Africa and is rich in cheetahs, leopards and elephants. Their passion for Maasai Mara began in 2019. Together with the Serengeti, the Mara forms Africa’s most incredible and spectacular eco-systems and is a top big-game viewing destination. “Being here is nothing short of an ultimate experience and a reflective opportunity to grasp the beauty and raw power of nature,” they say. The Birlas spent hours photographing the lords and ladies of the plains. Ahead of their photo exhibition at the NCPA, we present snapshots from their travels.





Enchantment will be exhibited at the Dilip Piralal Art Gallery from 8th to 20th February. The photo exhibition has been made possible through the support of the Hemendra Kothari Foundation.

To extend support to the NCPA in its various initiatives for the promotion and propagation of the arts, please contact Fawzia Madni on fmadni@ncpamumbai.com and Zitin Dhawan on zdhawan@ncpamumbai.com

An illustration of Eros Theatre



LARGER THAN LIFE

AN ODE TO THE SINGLE-SCREEN CINEMAS OF MUMBAI.

BY AISHWARYA BODKE

The dress circle at Regal Cinema is where you will find the best seat, I've always argued. Many, though, devotedly defend the stalls. How else would you witness a hundred people erupting into song and dance from their seats? I could be seated anywhere but there is rarely a forgettable visit to Regal.

If you take the stairway to the balcony, it is hard to miss the tall Oscar statuette embossed onto the mirror panel. The trophy is a homage to Regal's long association with Hollywood. The theatre opened with Laurel and Hardy's *The Devil's Brother* in 1933 and mainly screened Hollywood releases for years.

Unheeding to the unwritten rule book of the multiplex, to have over a thousand people hooting, gasping, laughing and shedding tears together in one of the iconic single screens of Mumbai is the

simplest catalyst to catharsis through film. It is here that the phrase 'larger than life' comes to life. The magnanimous magic of the celluloid and the spirit of collective movie-watching can often make the sight in front of the screen just as memorable as the one on it.

The theatres, too, are a thing of beauty. To call them cinema halls would be a travesty; they were referred to as picture palaces. Moulded out of proscenium theatres, many of them served as venues for live performances. The pits for orchestras were used during the silent film era to couple live music with the visuals. Years before the NCPA was founded, Regal served as a premiere venue in South Bombay, hosting poetry recitals by Rabindranath Tagore and performances by the Bombay Symphony Orchestra and opera stars.

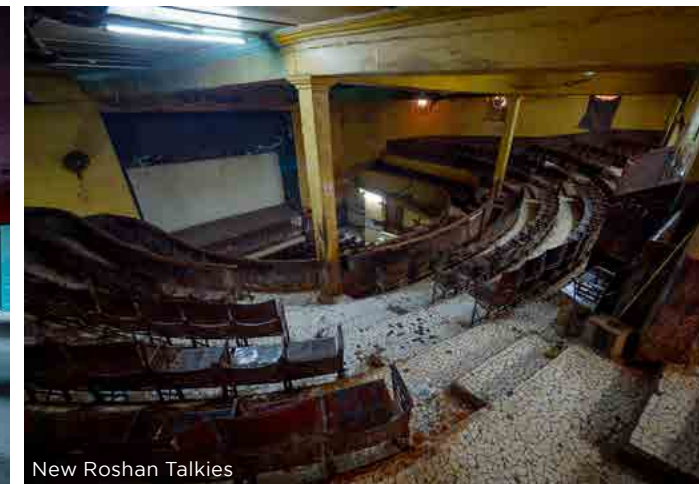
Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, founder of

the Film Heritage Foundation (FHF) and an avid supporter of single-screen theatres, emphasises that these were veritable temples of cinema. Created with immense love, they heralded modern sensibilities not only in what they showed but also in design and architecture. Unlike the multiplexes of today which look like factory-made replicas, each theatre was a unique experience. The FHF chose Liberty Theatre for its inaugural screening in 2015. Christopher Nolan, a champion of analogue film, also screened the 35mm version of *Interstellar* at Liberty in 2018. The foundation continues to turn to Regal for its retrospectives.

Located at the tip of one of the spokes of a busy circular junction overlooking Colaba's S.P. Mukherjee Chowk, Regal is surrounded by Victorian buildings. It ushered in the arrival of Art Deco architecture in Bombay and managed to



Capitol Cinema



New Roshan Talkies

tick many firsts. In addition to being the first air-conditioned cinema in India, it was also the foremost to have an underground garage, neon lighting and a soda fountain.

Not too far away, the Eros Theatre appeared five years later. It housed lounges, a soda fountain, a milk bar and a restaurant with a bandstand and dance floor. These cinemas embraced the Art Deco style, a strong reaction to colonial architecture, carving a distinct cosmopolitan identity when independence was yet to come. The Rajabai Clock Tower stands tall diagonally across Eros, overlooking the other end of the Oval Maidan, while it faces the Victorian Gothic edifice of the Mumbai High Court. A complete antithesis to the stately colonial structures, Art Deco brought in functionality, colour and curves. Following the Swadeshi Movement, one may notice a shift in the nomenclature of the deco buildings too. As you move north along Marine Drive, names like 'Soona Mahal' and 'Meghdoot' replace 'Oceana' and 'St. James Court'.

Even though the first film was screened in India in 1896 at the Watson's Hotel (now Esplanade Mansion)—India's oldest surviving cast iron building—it was only at the turn of the century that these picture palaces emerged.

Capitol Theatre, one of the oldest in the city, was initially known as Gaiety Theatre. Established for the performing arts in 1879, it was converted into a movie theatre in 1928. Defunct for years now, the structure silently gazes at the busy Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus. The Imperial Cinema of 1905 occupies a place on Grant Road with the iconic elephant sculptures adorning the rear gate intact. Before becoming Alfred Talkies in the 1930s, the atmospheric venue started as the Ripon Theatre in the 1890s. Years passed, and the cityscape changed but Alfred Talkies never failed to announce

IT IS HERE THAT THE PHRASE 'LARGER THAN LIFE' COMES TO LIFE; THE MAGNANIMOUS MAGIC OF THE CELLULOID AND THE SPIRIT OF COLLECTIVE MOVIE-WATCHING CAN OFTEN MAKE THE SIGHT IN FRONT OF THE SCREEN JUST AS MEMORABLE AS THE ONE ON IT

each running film with hand-painted posters. Central Plaza at Girgaum and Metro Cinema at Marine Lines followed suit in the 1930s.

The cinemas of Bombay represented the pulse of a nation on the brink of change; motley groups of migrants and the manifestation of their aspirations. This glimmering band of venues, then, was complete with the arrival of Liberty Theatre in 1949. The name was a resounding echo of an independent nation. It exclusively screened Hindustani films.

Nazir Hoosein, the renaissance man who lovingly nurtured the theatre until his demise in 2019, inherited Liberty Theatre from his father Habib Hoosein, who had begun showing films at the Bandra Gymkhana on Sunday afternoons and erected tent cinemas during World War II. He went on to own 45 theatres, including the Garrison and Strand in Colaba and Naaz on Lamington Road. Liberty, however, was his crown jewel. A brochure commemorating Liberty's inauguration proudly pronounced it as 'a statement to the Indian people that no theatre can be too good for them or for Indian pictures.'

Atul Kumar, Founder Trustee of Art Deco Mumbai, remembers meeting Nazir Hoosein, "His visiting card did not have an address. It only said, 'Liberty Theatre: Showplace of the Nation.' The landmark was that prominent."

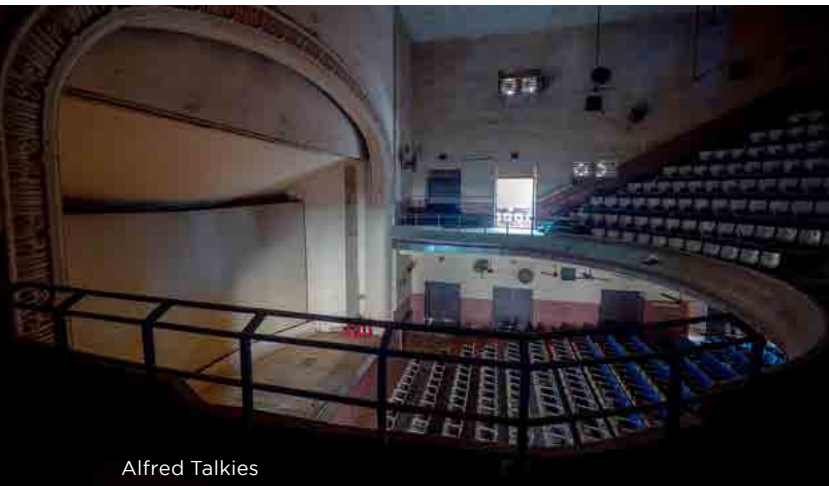
Neon red lettering sparkled on the façade of the towering Art Deco building

that housed shops and offices, the family penthouse and a special preview theatre. Marble from India, teak from Burma and Canadian white cedar were used for the extensive interiors of Liberty. The walls carried monochromatic murals of film stars. It was designed by W.M. Namjoshi, the man behind the Golcha Cinema in Delhi, Raj Mandir in Jaipur and Mumbai's beloved Maratha Mandir.

Each of the picture palaces was uniquely crafted with intricate details and ample quirks. Kumar beams as he talks about the magnificent teak wood panelling in Regal, drawn from the Greek muses of comedy and tragedy. Its ziggurat profile is beautiful while the Eros Theatre, he points out, looks like a tiered cake. Underneath the seats at Eros were tiny hooks that could hold hats, a sartorial norm at the time.

The circular recessed lighting on the ceiling at Liberty is made of thousands of incandescent bulbs, none of them visible to the audience. Kumar insists that it is one of the finest in the world. "They were masters of lighting. The lights created a soft luminescent glow that never hurt the eye. A stunning light and shadow show was orchestrated—still is—for you before the film begins. It is surreal."

It is a cruel tragedy that so many of these architectural gems are now defunct. Green burlap covers Eros, which is set to reopen as an IMAX screen. Liberty now hosts exclusive performances and film festivals, most notably the KASHISH



Alfred Talkies



Edward Theatre

Pride Film Festival. Hoosein welcomed it with abundant love and understanding. It was one of his last wishes that Liberty continues to be the festival's home.

Photographer and former cinematographer Hemant Chaturvedi has been a recurring name in the conversation surrounding single-screen cinemas for the last few years. His selfless and forever-spirited mission to document every single-screen cinema in India—operational, defunct or in ruins—has recently touched the number 1,000. It is a crucial archival endeavour to preserve the memory of our cinematic past.

His voice often camouflages his worry, sometimes through an amusing story from his travels to the remotest of corners, looking for a cinema. Chaturvedi spent his formative years in Mumbai and going to Liberty was an inseparable part of the experience. The 28-seat private theatre at Liberty above the main auditorium is a charming little space that hosts soirées and special screenings. The opulent seats, he recalls, come with a drink holder and a folding flap for critics to make notes. “The most luxurious seats,” he asserts.

“I learned only recently that the seats were bought in an auction of Pan Am jumbo jets. They are designed by the century-old seat-making company called Pen Workers. A gentleman from the company told me that his grandfather was summoned to create the mechanism to instal those seats because they were just so huge and unwieldy,” Chaturvedi tells us.

Liberty also boasts an exceptional sound system. The tale goes back to 1994, nearly half a century after the theatre opened its doors with the premiere of Mehboob Khan's *Andaz*. A curious request was made. The producers of *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!* wanted to show the film at Liberty but only with a new German sound system that would cost ₹10 lakh. Hoosein was worried about the irrevocable losses he would face should the film fail. “If it

bombs, we will reimburse you for the sound system,” they said. The knockout success saw over two million people walk through the doors of Liberty. The film ran for over a hundred weeks. For a moment in time, it was enough to save Liberty.

Various measures to inject funds and increase footfall have provided fleeting respite from losses. Film festivals, heritage tags and culture walks and renovation projects have helped but a complete transformation in movie consumption has set them back significantly. Mumbai has over 100 single-screen cinemas, of which only a handful are operational. The smaller screens, as you head north to the suburbs, have also dwindled in the last decade. It is also interesting to note how they propped up in the city and how geography and change in the composition of neighbourhoods played a part in their sustenance. Catering to different working classes and regional audiences, they were dramatically different from the Art Deco picture palaces.

The first film to premiere at Maratha Mandir in Mumbai Central was *Sadhna* starring Vyjayanthimala and Sunil Dutt. Aditya Chopra's directorial debut, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* has had a glorious run that will complete 30 years next year, interrupted briefly only by the pandemic. *Mughal-e-Azam*, which had a notable run of six years, was massively celebrated here. It is said that Dilip Kumar arrived at the premiere on a horse. The stuff of legends.

Chandan Cinema in Juhu shut shop a few years ago. In 2006, a glossy PVR multiplex opened nearby. It was believed that the fate of a film could be predicted based on its response at Chandan; a true Bollywood barometer. Among the longest-running films here, however, was the English-language *Saturday Night Fever*.

In the bylanes of Matunga, Aurora Talkies became a haven for Tamil and Telugu films after it was bought by Nambi

Rajan to give back to his community. Alfred Talkies and New Roshan Talkies are located right next to each other, in close vicinity of Kamathipura. Right opposite is the Gulshan Cinema, still running with cheap rates for pulpy B-grade films.

The experience of single-screen cinemas and picture palaces is irreplaceable. Once swanky centres, they are now dependable hubs for affordable movie-watching. There is something about the atmosphere here that transcends the screen in a way that can be called culture-defining. For many, it is an emotional relationship tied intrinsically to the city. Losing the samosas at Chandan, the chicken mayonnaise roll at Eros and the caramel popcorn at Liberty is like losing a part of childhood.

Wistful stories of dwindling single-screen cinemas continue to surface but can there be a silver lining to it? Chaturvedi shakes his head. “Times have changed,” he says with a sigh. But if we have learnt anything from films, hope is never all lost. On a hazy evening last year, over 1,000 people braved torrential rains to show up at Regal Cinema for a free screening of the 1949 film *Mahal*.

Chaturvedi recounts a funny tale. Nishat Talkies in Girgaum had abandoned the House Full sign as it had not been used in years. Post-pandemic hits of 2023, like *Pathaan*, pulled in such unprecedented numbers, they had to run to nearby theatres to borrow the sign.

Today, these structures uphold a greater value: that cinema is for all. The point of telling diverse stories through films that are inclusive and accessible is entirely lost if the act of watching a film is not accessible. “Is it not heartbreaking to see only a few people trickling into the cinema after an era where one had to chase crowds away?” Chaturvedi had once asked the manager at Alfred Talkies. A stoic response came his way, “We endure the woes of today for the pride of our successful past.” ■

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The fitting of the *gajra*



Soaked hide straps are intricately woven together to form the *gajra* that holds the drumtop or *poodi* in place

FROM SKIN TO SONORITY

MAKING A FIRST-RATE TABLA *JODI* IS A METICULOUS PROCESS THAT REQUIRES ARTISTRY AND CRAFTSMANSHIP.

BY KRISHNARAJ IYENGAR



The ingredients of the black circular *siyaahi*, or the tuning paste, are a well-kept secret among most tabla-makers



ALL PHOTOS BY NARENDRA DANGIYA

Unlike in the West where Steinway is synonymous with his pianos, in India, instrument-makers are seldom recognised. From brute force to delicate strokes, the tabla's journey of creation is a poignant one, where toughened hands of unsung artisans temper raw goat hide that can produce both percussive and melodic magic. The tabla is considered one of the world's most refined and evolved percussion instruments and perhaps the only one to be literally tuned to a pitch on the melodic scale. Its characteristic sound is the result of a chain of steps followed scrupulously by the hands that craft it.

A *jodi* or tabla pair comprises *dayan*, the right-hand treble drum generally made of *shisham* or *neem* wood sourced from Amroha in Uttar Pradesh and areas around Delhi and Kolkata, and *bayan*, the left-hand bass drum made of either copper, brass or steel. Both rest on tough cotton rings called *chumbal*. The drum tops or *poodi* are made of goat hide and remain covered with *gaadi* or cloth covers when the instrument is not in use. While *bayans* come in varied sizes, the *dayan's* size determines its pitch. For left-handed tabla players, the *dayan* and *bayan* are interchanged but are addressed by the same terms.

Engineering skin

Following some of India's veteran makers of the tabla unveils a fascinating process. Senior tabla-maker Narendra Wadekar explains each step involved in crafting the instrument at his Mumbai workshop. Sheets of stiff goat hide are soaked in water for around half an hour to soften them. A thin layer for the 'kinaar', the *poodi's* outer ring, and a slightly thicker one for the centre are cut and stitched together to form the first stage of the *poodi*. Forty-eight holes or *ghar* for the *dayan* and 64 for the *bayan* are made at the edges along the *poodi's* circumference, through which thin layers of soaked buffalo hide straps (called *maalu* in Marathi) are passed and stitched to the *poodi*. These will later become the intricate *gajra* that holds the *poodi* in place. Smaller triangular pieces of hide are fitted underneath the *poodis* for extra strength.

Two *dayan* and *bayan* pieces, on which the unfinished *poodi* are fit, are then tied together with cotton ropes for four days and exposed to sunlight to settle the *poodi* over the body. The pieces are then untied, the inner triangular sheets chopped to a smaller size and thick buffalo hide straps called *baddi* are passed through each *ghar*. These



Veteran tabla-maker Narsayya Gangaram examines buffalo hide straps or *baddi* that run vertically along both the tabla drums to pull the membrane and retain its tautness



Narsayya Gangaram's tabla workshop with craftsmen Ravi Rodolla, Vishwanath Surve and Pintu Dikre at Chinchpokli in central Mumbai

“A *jodi* usually takes around eight days to be completed; the *poodi*'s texture and feel should enable the tabla player to produce any sound with absolute ease and playing should be pure joy,” says Mumbai-based tabla-maker Ramakant Kashikar

run vertically along both the *dayan* and the *bayan* to pull the membrane and retain its tautness. The foundation of the *siyaahi* (from the Persian *siyaah* or black), the small black circle in the centre of the *poodi*, is then prepared. Though its ingredients are a well-kept secret among most tabla-makers, they mention iron fillings as the key material.

The *siyaahi* is a feature exclusive to South Asian percussion instruments. According to the physicist C. V. Raman, known for his investigation into the unique sound of the mridanga and tabla, the instruments “contained the solution in a practical form to the acoustical problem of transforming a circular drumhead giving inharmonic overtones into a harmonic musical instrument.” The *soru* (black circle) of the mridanga is derived from a mixture of manganese dust, boiled rice and tamarind juice or a composition of fine iron filings and boiled rice which is shaped into the form of a disc. Dark silt from a riverbank, he noted, gives it tone.

In the tabla, the *siyaahi* takes about four hours to be made after which it is allowed to dry. With a damp cloth, the *poodi* is finally cleaned, polished and tuned with a hammer. At this stage, eight wooden blocks called *gattha* are fitted between the *dayan*'s body and the *baddi* to further stretch the membrane. These are lowered and raised with a steel hammer to adjust the pitch. A smooth black stone is rubbed over the finished *poodi* to further open the sound.



Two *dayan* and *bayan* pieces are tied together with cotton ropes for four days and exposed to sunlight to settle the *poodi*

Tuning tales

The *bayan*'s deep, basal sound is tuned simply by striking the steel hammer on the *gajras*. The *dayan*'s tuning, however, is more complex and involves meticulous hammering with controlled force above or below the *gajra* to ensure uniformity of pitch all around the *poodi*'s circumference.

Wadekar explains, “Over time, when the *poodis*

The *siyaahi* is a feature exclusive to South Asian percussion instruments; according to the physicist C. V. Raman, the mridanga and tabla contained the solution to the acoustical problem of transforming a circular drumhead giving inharmonic overtones into a harmonic musical instrument

lose their tautness, making it difficult to bring the pitch back to tune, the *gatthas* are lowered to the maximum and finally, both the *bayan*, colloquially called *dagga*, and the *dayan* are brought to us for *khenchi*, the pulling procedure. We hold the drum between our feet, remove the *gattha*, open the *baddi* knots from underneath the drums and pull them with Herculean force as we tune the membrane back to pitch, then refit the *gatthas* either with one or two *baddis* followed by the final tuning by the artiste.”

Bespoke instruments

Mumbai-based Sadanand Kashikar made tablas for many legends including Ahmed Jan Thirakwa, Amir Hussain Khan and Allarakha. His son Ramakant, a man of few words, carries forward the legacy. According to Ramakant, his father's secret lay in fine, feather-soft *poodis* and thin *siyaahis* that would often last for over a decade. “A *jodi* usually takes around eight days to

be completed. It's worth the wait. The *poodi*'s texture and feel should enable the tabla player to produce any sound with absolute ease. Playing should be pure joy. A bad workman does indeed blame his tools, but it can sometimes be true if the craftsman's understanding of the art's subtle aesthetics is lacking,” says Ramakant.

Kolkata-style tablas have been sought after for their incredible quality and resonance. Mukta Das is one of the city's most acknowledged tabla-makers and the torchbearer of a family tradition that spans across 11 generations. The Das family has catered to most of Bengal's stalwarts, including Swapan Chaudhuri and Anindo Chatterjee. “I customise tablas according to the style of each maestro, his tone and method of striking the membrane,” shares Das. The Kolkata *khaal* or skin, he believes, is different from Mumbai's relatively thicker one suited to the city's climate. “It's a myth that Kolkata *poodis* tear when exposed to other climates. In fact, they are played the world over,” he says.

What makes a good tabla?

Veteran tabla and sitar maestro Nayan Ghosh provides an artiste's perspective to the craft. A perfect *jodi*, he believes, can be identified by both technical and aesthetical aspects. “The *dayan*'s sound should be open and ringing like a bell. When struck with an open, loud *thaap*, the sound should continue for at least five to seven seconds. This is called *aans*. The *bayan* should sound open and basal, with a soft yet durable *poodi* that easily enables pitch variations,” he explains, adding the tabla-maker should ensure the *kinaar* and the *sur* (the inner layer between the *kinaar* and the *siyaahi*) are on the same pitch. “While the *kinaar* must produce an open ringing tone and the *sur*, a closed ringing one, the *siyaahi*'s sound should be too, crisp and sharp.

The *gajras* must not be too thick and should be constructed lower than the *poodi*'s level to avoid hurting the tabla player's thumb,” he says.

While Maharashtra's tabla-makers, he says, believe that the instrument's sound opens up after extensive playing, Kolkata offers tablas that can be taken to stage directly from the workshop. Today, even as modern innovations like nylon *baddis* and steel hooks appear in the market, craftsmen are skeptical. After all, the tabla is a handmade instrument crafted with natural materials. “The tabla,” says Ghosh, “is a complete musical instrument, not just a pair of drums.” ■

Special thanks to Narsayya Gangaram for offering his workshop space for the photo shoot.



To ensure the tautness of the drumtop, the tabla is held between the feet and the hide straps are pulled with force

The Performing Arts Dispatch

A series on houses of culture from around the world. In focus this month: the Red Rocks Amphitheatre. **By Aishwarya Bodke**



The Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre is a unique open-air amphitheatre, a few miles from the state capital of Denver

The June of 1978 marked a rare occurrence. The American rock legend Bruce Springsteen had a reputation for being reluctant to perform outdoors. But when he was told, “Red Rocks is simply indoors without a roof”, a curious Springsteen was compelled to come around. His debut at the Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado that summer became his first outdoor performance. “Nice place you got here... bunch of big rocks,” he said, marvelling at the stage.

The Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre is a one-of-a-kind open-air amphitheatre, a few miles from the state capital of Denver. Nestled in the unique transitional zone where the Great Plains meet the Rocky Mountains, it is one of the few naturally occurring, acoustically sound amphitheatres.

The sprawling 738 acres of the Red Rocks Mountain Park shelter pines, prairie, fauna and geological wonders.



The massive, pre-historic rocks surrounding the stage lend a unique acoustic quality to performances

Its history, spanning centuries, nurtures remnants of the past, dating as far back as the Mesozoic Era. Dinosaurs wandered the Jurassic Colorado, leaving behind skeletal Diplodocus and Tyrannosaurus Rex at the Dinosaur Ridge, east of Red

Rocks. The footprints of the gargantuan creatures can be seen even today. Not many places in the world can call themselves a concert venue, a community space, a mountain park and a National Historic Landmark (since 2015). At

6,450 feet above sea level, the seating capacity here is a whopping 9,525.

The rocks in themselves are a thing of wonder, each layer an encyclopaedia of geological history. Some of them slope as much as 90 degrees. The two unmistakable, 300-foot monoliths that envelop the venue are taller than the Niagara Falls. The southern monolith bearing resemblance to a ship is named Ship Rock, and on the opposite side of the amphitheatre stands Creation Rock. These rocks lend to the venue its acoustic sublimity that visitors attest to. They say there is no such thing as a bad seat at Red Rocks.

The people of Red Rocks recognise and cherish its distinct significance in terms of the geology and history of the region. Their origin story is highlighted near the entrance of the amphitheatre, where a bronze plaque marks contact between the 1.7 billion-year-old Pre-Cambrian basement rock and the newer Fountain Formation that dates back to 300 million years.

For over a century, these rocks have witnessed music transcending the stage, making the experience a distinctive one for the audience. Artistes and visitors unanimously concur that it is special, what happens here. The very first performance goes back to 1906 when it was still known as the Garden of the Titans and featured Pietro Satriano and his 25-piece brass band. In 1927, the City of Denver bought the land upon which the venue was built and officially renamed it. The amphitheatre in its finished form is the masterwork of noted architect Burnham Hoyt. The official grand opening of Red Rocks took place in June 1941.

After a predominance of opera,

The Beatles, U2, Stevie Wonder, Johnny Cash, Jimi Hendrix, Bonnie Raitt and John Denver are some of the legendary performers who have wowed audiences at Red Rocks

classical and chamber music until the 1940s, rock and roll ascended the Red Rocks. The 1970s also saw a lot of soft rock—no pun intended—as it seemed like the safer bet after an infamous Jethro Tull concert in 1971, where thousands arrived without tickets and crashed the gates. It resulted in a violent confrontation with 200 cops. A ban on rock and roll at the venue followed, which was eventually lifted. Today, icons of several genres fill the amphitheatre, including new-age rock, alternative and indie music, rap and hip-hop, EDM performers and DJs.

The starry roster of performers the venue boasts is endless. The Beatles played at Red Rocks in 1964, incidentally one of their few concerts that did not sell out. There are accounts of Ringo Starr recalling they were given hits from oxygen canisters owing to thin air at the high altitude.



The venue is one of the few naturally occurring, acoustically sound amphitheatres

U2's concert in 1983 was one to remember and proved to be a turning point for the band. The rocks were lit up and come gusty wind or driving rain, the show went on for 4,400 faithful fans. It later became the group's live concert film and gave birth to the album *Under a Blood Red Sky*.

Stevie Wonder played at the venue in 2019 at the age of 69. The same year also saw a Diana Ross concert, which came 50 years after her first performance at Red Rocks. But the band Widespread Panic surpassed the rest with 32 sold-out shows, prompting then Mayor John Hickenlooper to announce 27th June 2008 as “Widespread Panic Day.”

Johnny Cash, Jimi Hendrix, Bonnie Raitt and John Denver are among other legendary performers who have wowed audiences at Red Rocks. Apart from music concerts, the amphitheatre has diverse programming all year round. The extremely popular ‘Film on the Rocks’ was started in 2000 to celebrate the new millennium. It put together Hollywood classics and local music artistes. A screening of *Casablanca* with the Hot Tomatoes Orchestra kicked off the ongoing series. Yoga on the Rocks, on the other hand, is an initiative to get a workout in the dramatic, awe-inspiring setting. All 193 steps of the amphitheatre are packed with enthusiasts and their yoga mats on these days.

Even during the pandemic, the venue continued its community initiatives once the restrictions were eased, with all safety protocols in place. Like all houses of art and culture, it was a trying period for Red Rocks but it only emerged stronger.

In 2022, *The Denver Post* reported that nearly half of all concertgoers at Red Rocks travelled from out of state to see their favourite musicians, spending \$305 million in the Denver metro area, according to the first economic impact study of the amphitheatre. Red Rocks was booked nearly every night from April to November, contributing to unprecedented revenue and audience growth. This is telling of the unshakable place it has held in concert experience for audiences, both local and otherwise.

The upcoming quarter will bring to Denver American DJ Sullivan King, comedian Trevor Noah, The Piano Guys and the bands Lord Huron and Bleachers. Comedy stars Steve Martin and Martin Short will also perform in June, among many others. Needless to say, a rocking line-up. ■

The Printed Word

Every month, we introduce a must-read book from the NCPA Reference Library, which has an extensive collection on theoretical and practical aspects of the performing and visual arts. Here, **Vispi Balaporia** chooses a compact guide to the life and work of one of the great pioneers of Impressionism, Claude Monet.

Monet, The Ultimate Impressionist

By Sylvie Patin

Published by Thames & Hudson, 1993

Walking through the NCPA Reference Library one finds one is spoilt for choice. Music, Drama, Art. A look at the blurb of one of the books lining the shelves in the paintings section enables the decision: *Monet, The Ultimate Impressionist*. “Claude Monet transformed light and colour into art. In 1874 his ‘Impression, Sunrise’ caused an uproar among the critics and a revolution in painting. His inventiveness was inexhaustible: with ‘Haystacks’, ‘Poplars’ and ‘Cathedrals’ and, finally, the enchanting ‘Water Lilies’ of Giverny. Monet captured light in all its fleeting qualities.” But it took the critics and his detractors a long time to arrive at this recognition.

Another lesson learned is that one must not judge a book by its appearance. For this 7”x 5” paperback hardly commands attention. However, the first nine pages of painting after painting are sufficient to make one want to go further. A journey that is fulfilling and rewarding; each page a successful blend of information in the form of documentary witness accounts and letters, and images. The book presents a marvelous combination of being compact, yet comprehensive.

As a young boy, bored with classroom routine, Monet amused himself by drawing caricatures. He even managed to sell some at a stationer, framer and ironmonger’s shop. This brought him a little cash, but more importantly, it brought him in contact with Eugène Boudin, who was beginning to get recognition as a painter. At his suggestion, Monet bought himself a box of paints and accompanied Boudin to Rouelles, a commune in north-eastern France. There, “Boudin put up his easel and set to work ... for me it was like the rending of a veil; I understood, I grasped what painting could be ... my destiny as a painter opened up before me. If I have indeed become a painter, I owe it to Eugène Boudin.”

Monet went to the city of Le Havre where he began to associate with well-known painters. He then enrolled in a studio where he could learn the basics of drawing, before taking up painting. But it was at the Paris Salon of 1859 that he noticed ‘a mass of magnificent paintings of the Orient; in all of them there is a certain grandeur, and a warm light’ (letter to Boudin). Perhaps this prompted him to voluntarily enlist in the first regiment of African Light Cavalry in June 1861. “How much my vision benefitted by this,” he was to say later. “The impression of light and colours I received there only fell into place afterwards; but the germ of my future interests emerged in Algeria.”

Monet’s story is the typical story of ups and downs, acceptances and rejections, struggles and, occasionally, depression. He married his model, Camille, who bore him a son. Monet did not earn enough to support the mother and child, especially since his family stopped supporting him. His letters to fellow Impressionist and



friend Frédéric Bazille reveal some of his desperation. In spite of his exhibition’s success, he wrote to Bazille in October/November 1868: “My painting isn’t working at all, I no longer expect fame... On top of it all, there is still no money. Disappointments, affronts, hope, more disappointments...” In a later letter came a heartbreaking declaration: “I can’t paint, I haven’t a drop of colour left.” It was Pierre-Auguste Renoir who came to his rescue.

For a man considered to be a painter of open spaces and the sea, a shift to interiors needed to be comprehended. In 1877, Monet embarked on a series of views of both the interior and exterior of the railway station terminal, Gare Saint-Lazare. It was the spectacle of modern technology in action that captivated him more than the human presence. By taking an interest in a place so thoroughly characteristic of the time, Monet showed himself to be a true man of his times. Appreciation of this came from no less a person than Émile Zola. He wrote, “This year he has exhibited some superb railway station scenes. In these one can hear the rumbling of the trains, and see the smoke rolling and flooding through the huge sheds ... Our artists must look to the poetry of railway stations, as their fathers sought that of forests and rivers.” As he matured, Monet experimented with painting cathedrals and monuments in cities—his particular favourites being London and Venice—occasionally bordering on the abstract, as seen in ‘The Cliff at Varengeville’ (1897).

But it was his discovery of Giverny that made Monet the painter we all love and admire. “I am in ecstasy. Giverny is splendid for me”, he wrote in 1883 to Duret, his friend and generous supporter. Seven years later, Monet bought property at Giverny. He expressed his love of the village by painting a series featuring haystacks, now considered seminal works, on his property. All were done with the single purpose of studying the interplay of light and form.

None other than Marcel Proust provides a fitting summing up of Giverny: “If ever I should set eyes on the garden of Claude Monet, I imagine I would find it a place of tints and hues more than of blossoms ... And this garden – which in itself would be more a transposition of art than a subject for paintings, being really a finished painting, rendered in nature and illumined by the eye of a great artist ... would be the equivalent of a first sketch drawn from life, with its range of colours already settled and delicious, and its tones harmoniously primed.”

As an epilogue, the section titled ‘Documents’ provides further comments, both eulogistic and critical, on Monet’s achievements. A befitting rounding off to the comprehensive understanding of this remarkable artist. ■

Vispi Balaporia is President of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai. She has been Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Mumbai, and Vice Principal and Head, Department of English at Jai Hind College.

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Rolling with Rock Stars

In *Calling Elvis*, veteran journalist **Shantanu Datta** presents an eclectic, celebrity-filled collection of personal reflections and interviews with the likes of Sting, Roger Waters, L. Subramaniam and Carlos Santana. In the excerpt below, Datta speaks with the inimitable Keith Richards just before the Rolling Stones' first concert in India.

The Beatles want to hold your hand. The Stones want to burn your house down. The word was out, Bangalore and Mumbai would have to guard their homes, lest Tom Wolfe's pithy observation came true. So when Venkat Vardhan of DNA Networks confided in me early in 2003 that the Rolling Stones were indeed coming to India, I couldn't believe it. But they did come. They did play Bangalore on 4th April and Mumbai on 7th April. And when that happened, it represented the coming together of three things that I hold dear to my heart: Calcutta, cricket and the Beatles.

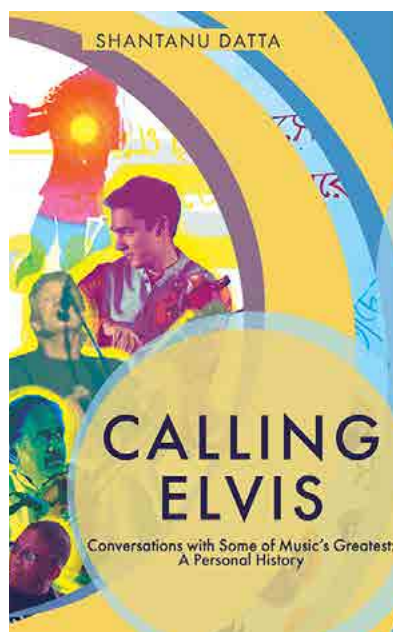
Venkat, the promoter, is from Bangalore. But the man who hooked him up with Messrs Mick Jagger & Co. was Dilip Doshi, the left arm orthodox spinner who used to play in Calcutta even though he is from Gujarat. We rejoiced his belated inclusion in the Indian Test squad—why not, he was a *'Kolkata-r chheley'* after all—in 1979 against Australia in Madras (Chennai) where he ended up scalping 8/167 in the match. Yet unknown to us then, his other passion was the Rolling Stones. Writing about it in *The Telegraph* (London) in August 2006, Doshi recounts how at his request the enterprising owner of Calcutta Gramophone Stores on Lindsay Street would have Stones records shipped to him from Decca Records, England, in the mid-'60s. A serious pursuit of cricket led Doshi to England where, lo and behold, he got to meet Jagger in the '70s while playing county.

Suffice to say the India leg of the Forty Licks tour would not have happened, but for Dilip Doshi. 'I first met Mick (Jagger) when I was playing for Nottingham in the '70s. Both he and Charlie Watts had come to watch England play,' he told us in Mumbai at a meet-the-Press to announce the India concerts. Soon they became friends. Good enough to practise together at the nets at Lords on several occasions.

Doshi revealed he had long been discussing with Jagger the possibility of a Stones gig in India. It all fell into place once Venkat agreed to produce and manage the shows in India.

Exactly 13 years later, in October 2016, the Rolling Stones would be playing on two consecutive weekends at a desert in California. They did a bluesy cover of 'Come Together,' a song Jagger nonchalantly described as being penned by an 'unknown beat group.'

Reading about it first and then watching a recording of the performance on YouTube, I was transported back in time and reminded of what Keith Richards had told me during a telephone conversation barely 24 hours before their Bangalore concert, the first time the Rolling Stones would be performing in India.



Yet, I can't forget how the India tour may not have happened at all. China, the Stones stopover prior to India, had imposed certain conditions. The Stones were asked not to play certain songs because of, I presume, the sentiments they seemed to encourage. As bizarre as it may sound now, the Stones agreed.

Thank you for not calling off the India tour.

Keith: Yes, the band can't wait to get to India. That mechanical failure (the aircraft snag) just held up things. But we are here. By the way, I love your carpets.

You called off the China tour because of the South Asian health scare over SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). The fans there must be disappointed?

We are very disappointed. Personally, it was okay with me, you know, but when you are talking about the lives of hundreds of people you've got to take a call. The idea is to enjoy the concert; when that isn't going to happen, there's no point to it. But we'll go back there for sure, once things get cool.

China had banned the Stones from playing 'Brown Sugar', 'Let's Spend the Night Together'. I thought you guys would be the last to agree to censorship.

It's kind of weird to be told what to play and what not to. It's only a love song. But we respect the sensitivities of other countries. And since I have no political axe to grind, I say, 'You don't want us to play it, okay we won't. I don't give a damn.'

On to music. You have said that the only place that instils a sense of peace in you is the stage. Explain that.

That's the only place where we don't have to answer phones and no one is asking us questions. You are alone at peace with the music. I think the other guys in the band will share my feelings.

How do you inspire yourself to play 'Satisfaction' a zillion times? 'Satisfaction' is a dream. I know it in my dream. When I play 'Satisfaction' it's like living a dream. And who doesn't like to live his dreams?

Do you still feel that Scotty Moore's solo on Elvis's 'I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone' is the best thing to happen to music and you?

I can't believe you know this. Yes, Scotty is great and believe me I still can't play that solo (laughs).

The Rolling Stones vs the Beatles. How was it like in those days? You know, John (Lennon) and George (Harrison) were particularly fond of the Stones.

John was a very dear friend of mine. I miss him dearly. I think the Beatles learnt and took quite a lot from us just as we did from them. Often, we used to say we should have all been in the same band. Now, John and George are not with us—nothing in the world is perfect. You know that don't you?

That night Bangalore got itself another



introduction—the city that kicked off the India edition of the Rolling Stones' Forty Licks tour. 'This is a good place to start our gigs in India. It's good to be here,' screamed Jagger. ■

The author Shantanu Datta is a journalist who has written about politics, films, books and music since 1987. This is an excerpt from his first book, Calling Elvis. No part of this excerpt may be quoted or reproduced without prior written consent from its publisher, Speaking Tiger Books.

Performing Arts: Jazz

A monthly column exploring all aspects of the performing arts. This month, Mumbai-based jazz pianist **Rahul Wadhvani** discusses his evolution as a musician and the lessons he has learnt along the way.

I moved to Mumbai in 2016 after studying jazz piano at LMS Gaspoltshofen in Vienna. I was expecting things to be smooth sailing for me since I had this special training and initially, it did seem easy. I was the new kid on the block, and everyone was interested in playing with me and checking my skills out. Even though the money wasn't great, I was happy to see that I was busy soon after I moved here. But things changed after a year, and eventually I wasn't working so much.

The reason was that I wanted to choose whom I would work with. I was also too much in my head at that point, thinking that I was a qualified player and deserved to only play with better musicians. Slowly I realised I should diversify and perhaps play with good musicians from other genres. While I did get a chance to do so, the callbacks were few and far between. It was only after a period of frustration that I realised why nothing seemed to be working out.

I was trying to play as a *traditional* jazz pianist instead of making an effort to understand the context of the music in front of me. I was not open to digressing from tradition nor listening to what the music actually demanded. After taking my time and learning things the hard way, I started listening to the music around me and tried to be sensitive towards it. Callbacks finally began to trickle in.

Things were still not easy. The cost of living was constantly rising but venues were still paying the same kind of money they had been paying years ago. As an adult, my responsibilities were also growing. These straitened circumstances made me think about what the next step could be. I realised that I should further expand my possibilities and try playing Bollywood music. This was not easy for me because it requires special skills and sensibilities that I wasn't equipped with at the time. I was insecure but I kept trying. I started playing pop, fusion, R&B, funk. I played everything that came my way, irrespective of the genre. Eventually, I got a steady teaching job and I thought: this is the way to do it; have a steady job and choose the gigs you want to play, and I did exactly that. I



taught for four years while performing in select gigs that meant something to me. After a point, I began to get lots of opportunities to perform, even to present solo piano concerts in Europe. Once I felt I had established myself, I gathered courage and quit my teaching job. I started letting musicians know that I was now available to play more.

Today I play jazz with some of the best musicians in the country. I also play fusion, world music, pop, Bollywood, etc. with some of the finest musicians I know. Had I been stuck with one style, I would never have had the opportunity to play with musicians from other backgrounds. I also feel that the fact that I play different styles of music makes my jazz playing more rounded and the musician in me more mature.

There are two key suggestions I would offer anyone wanting to become a musician. First, for a long-lasting career, it is very important to have a strong command of the art form of your choice. It can be Indian classical, jazz, Western classical or something else altogether. That is your foundation. The stronger the foundation, the easier it will be for you to push yourself or experiment in other genres. For me, that foundation is jazz. I will continue to study it for the rest of my life.

Secondly, always be open and sensitive to the place you are living and working in. Keep an open mind and try out new things. While a strong foundation is critical, it is also essential to have the ability to adapt and the willingness to do something beyond your comfort zone. Circumstances might keep changing but to thrive, you must have the courage to accept reality and do what is required to succeed. ■

Rahul Wadhvani has worked with Shantanu Moitra, Mohini Dey and Rakesh Chaurasia, among others. In 2022, he released Explorations Beyond the Borders in collaboration with Austrian trumpeter Manfred Paul Weinberger. He has conducted workshops across India and Europe and is currently working on a solo piano project.

For the Record

Every month, **Jimmy Bilimoria** delves into the musical treasures of the NCPA's Stuart-Liff Collection. Here, he writes about one of the leading Italian dramatic sopranos of the 1930s and 1940s, Maria Caniglia.

Maria Caniglia was born in Naples on 5th May 1905. It was considered a blessing when Agostino Roche accepted her as his student, since he was responsible for the stellar technique of Ebe Stignani, one of the great mezzo-sopranos of the 20th century. Stignani was older than Caniglia by two years and made her debut five years ahead of her. From the very first time Caniglia heard Stignani, she was astounded, not having the faintest idea that in time to come both were destined to sing together constantly. Roche claimed from the beginning that Caniglia was a spinto since her voice was large and filled with energy and enthusiasm.

In 1929, Roche sent Caniglia to La Scala to audition for three major conductors: Gino Marinuzzi, Ettore Panizza and Giuseppe Del Campo. All three were unanimous in their verdict and Caniglia was called for a second audition after a couple of months for a group of lyrical arias. Auditions can be tricky as the singer is nervous, the house empty and there is no orchestra.

Caniglia studied at the Conservatory San Pietro a Majella in Naples and made her debut in Turin in 1930 as Chrysothemis in *Elektra*. That same year she made her first appearance at La Scala as Maria in Ildebrando Pizzetti's *Lo straniero*. She sang there regularly until 1943 and again from 1948 to 1951. She sang at Covent Garden in 1937, 1939 and with the Scala company in 1950; and at the Met during the 1938-39 season. Among the roles she created were Manuela in Italo Montemezzi's *La Notte di Zoraima* (1931, Milan), Roxane in Franco Alfano's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1936, Rome) and the title role in Ottorino Respighi's *Lucrezia* (1937, Milan).

Caniglia sang most of Verdi's lyric-dramatic soprano roles from Leonora in his first opera *Oberto* at La Scala to Alice in *Falstaff*.

Caniglia left La Scala in 1951. She felt that all the choice roles were going to Renata Tebaldi and Maria Callas. She moved permanently to the Rome Opera where she had been a frequent guest, and became a big attraction. In all, she appeared in 33 different operas in Rome and in 36 at La Scala.

Conductors were kind to the singer. Italian conductor Tullio Serafin advised Caniglia never to undertake either *Madama Butterfly* or *Ernani*. "You are too emotional for Butterfly," he told her. "This opera would destroy you in no time, for you will always be unable to control your feelings. You have a top, but it is not your glory, for Elvira in *Ernani* the upper range must be exceptional or it does not come off. You could manage it, but with the hundreds of roles at your disposal, why not concentrate on what you can do best?"



From lyric roles, Caniglia went into the spinto repertoire. In the last years of her career, she was forced to take on dramatic roles to help the opera houses. Maria Carena had retired, Iva Pacetti and Gina Cigna retired due to ill health. There seemed to be a shortage of dramatic sopranos. Because of this, Caniglia touched the bel canto operas first—*Norma*, *La vestale* and *Poliuto*. Later she added *Nabucco*, *La Gioconda* and *La fanciulla del West*.

La Scala used to hold immense prestige. Once it announced you for a new role in the forthcoming season, there would be a number of requests to repeat it in other theatres. Because of Caniglia's warm timbre, she accepted many verismo operas like *La Wally*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Guglielmo Ratcliff*, *Francesca da Rimini*, *Andrea Chénier*

and *Fedora*.

Too many verismo roles, thrilling as they are for the singer, can also be dangerous, for they lie in the middle of the voice. Caniglia always believed in going to the source for advice. When preparing for *Manon Lescaut*, she went to Carmen Melis and for *La fanciulla del West* to Gilda dalla Rizza as they were great interpreters of these Puccini operas.

Caniglia had sung many Verdi roles, but the one that most affected her was Leonora in *La forza del destino*, "where the duet 'La Vergine degli angeli' comes with the bass and chorus. The setting with all the monks carrying candles is so awe-inspiring I was never able to sing it without weeping. Since my husband passed away, I have thought increasingly about death and how wonderful it would be to go into the beyond to the tune of that music, praising the Holy Virgin."

Caniglia was much admired as Tosca, Adriana Lecouvreur, Fedora and Leonora. No one deserved to enter the gates of heaven the way she wished more than she did, for she brought a warm human quality and dramatic excitement to her performances. The Stuart-Liff Collection includes an LP featuring Caniglia in one of her great roles, that of Amelia in the opera *Ballo*, with Beniamino Gigli. ■

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.

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Be it taking the NCPA to parks across the city as part of our community outreach initiative, hosting our first youth-theatre festival, helping artistes grow with specialised training programmes, or investing in the country's cultural future by providing underprivileged children with access to the arts; it has been a fulfilling year. The return of audiences in record numbers—as is evident in our sold-out shows—further strengthens our commitment to Mumbai's cultural life. With a promise of excellence, the NCPA continues to produce, collaborate with and curate the best in the performing arts.

The latest addition to these achievements is the reopening of the Dilip Piramal Art Gallery after an extensive refurbishment. The state-of-the-art venue provides a holistic space for diverse exhibitions, workshops and other events.

In the Symphony Orchestra of India, the country has its first and only professional orchestra. The orchestra not only performs in India but has also undertaken several international tours in the UK, Switzerland, Oman, UAE and Russia. The NCPA and SOI have also presented large-scale productions including fully-staged operas. Apart from this, the SOI brings a professional level of teaching to gifted young musicians at the SOI Music Academy, with the aim of growing the number of Indian musicians in the SOI in the future.

There is much to look forward to with the upcoming re-launch of the food and beverage spaces. Members will have access to a variety of dining options, exclusive spaces and much more!

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

*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

Kaleidoscope

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



A part of Carnatic vocalist T. M. Krishna's collection of antique tamburas, most of them bought from Thiru Dakshinamurthy

Honouring the unsung

Carnatic music collective and curatorial organisation Parivadini Music presents the Parlandu Award of Excellence each year in recognition of the seldom appreciated luthiers of classical music. Sri Thiru Dakshinamurthy, a veteran tambura and violin caretaker, has been announced the recipient of the 2023 Parlandu Award. Named after the legendary Dalit mridangam maker Parlandu Fernandez, the honour was introduced in 2014 after Parivadini's observed dearth of mainstream acknowledgement for people who are "the backbone of the entire music field." Dakshinamurthy, whose craftsmanship is admired by musicians like T.M. Krishna, has worked as an instrument maker for almost half a century. His achievement has also arrived at a time when the tambura faces an increasing negligence on concert platforms. The award ceremony was held in December 2023 as part of the Nada Inbam December Music Festival. For more information, please visit www.youtube.com/@ParivadiniMusic

Revive, rejuvenate

A monument that has existed as a sight for sore eyes and a destination for the curious minds of many Mumbaikars is the David Sassoon Library and Reading Room, located in Kala Ghoda's art district. The newly restored Victorian Gothic architectural gem, which reopened to the public last June after a 16-month-long refurbishment period, recently won the 2023 UNESCO Merit Award for

Cultural Heritage Conservation. Founded by banker and philanthropist David Sassoon in 1870, the library is not only an important Jewish heritage site but is also part of Mumbai's UNESCO-recognised Victorian and Art Deco Ensemble. The restoration involved rehousing 30,000 books in restabilised bookshelves, reversing past construction oversights, redesigning technical aspects to optimise reader experience and reinforcing the visual, structural and spatial integrity of the library. This mammoth project was led by conservation architect Abha Narain Lambah, aided by the JSW Foundation and ICICI Foundation in partnership with Hermès India, the Kala Ghoda Association, the Consulate General of Israel in Mumbai and the MK Tata Trusts. For more information, please visit www.unesco.org/en



A momentous feat

Renowned theatre director Indhu Rubasingham has been announced the next Director and Joint Chief Executive of the National Theatre, U.K., making her the first woman and person of colour to assume the prestigious role in the theatre's 61-year history. Succeeding Rufus Norris as Director in Spring 2025, Rubasingham will work alongside Joint Chief Executive Kate Varah in a co-leadership model. Born in Sheffield to Sri Lankan Tamil parents, Rubasingham boasts an illustrious and prolific career in British theatre. Appointed as Artistic Director of Kiln Theatre in 2012, she revolutionised the company's programming by shining a spotlight on emerging talent and creatively engaging with the local community. She has also held Associate Director positions at the Gate Theatre, the Birmingham Rep and the Young Vic. Rubasingham has shared an intricate link with the National Theatre



for many years, directing productions that have been presented in all three auditoriums, including *The Ramayana*, *The Great Wave* and *The Father and the Assassin*. For more information, please visit www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

At long last

After 20 years in the making, the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) will finally open its doors to the public in spring 2024 as one of the largest archaeological museum complexes in the world and Egypt's prime cultural attractions. Located at the junction between Cairo and the Pyramids of Giza, the aspirations for this one-billion-dollar project have survived change of sovereignty, revolutions, counter-revolutions, a pandemic and professional disagreements. Designed by Ireland's Heneghan Peng Architects, the history of the museum's construction reflects the complexity of the subjects it vows to preserve, protect and present. When it opens, the GEM will comprise 1.8 million sq. ft. of exhibition area housing 100,000 pharaonic and predynastic artefacts, including treasures from Tutankhamun's tomb, a 30-ft. statue of Ramesses the Great, and King Khufu's 4,600-year-old boat. With five million visitors estimated in its first year of opening, the museum is also expected to usher an economic boom for Egypt's most-profitable industry—tourism. For more information, please visit www.visit-gem.com ■

- Neelakshi Singh



T. M. KRISHNA (HONOURING THE UNSUNG); JSW GROUP (KALAGHODA COMMONS, REVIVE, REJUVENATE); ANTONIO OLMO (A MOMENTOUS FEAT); THE GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM (AT LONG LAST)

The Record Makers

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 first of a three-part series, singer and composer **G.N. Joshi** traces the history of the phonograph in India.

The history of the phonograph in India dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. Though gramophones began to be exported to India around 1898, the idea of commercially exploiting the phonograph on a large scale in the east was mooted in 1900 and the Mutoscope Biograph Company in India was given the agency of selling horn gramophones and records of European music imported from America. In 1898, W. B. Owen had established in England the parent company of the Gramophone Company Limited. He was sent to England by the American inventor of disc recording, Emile Berliner, to sell, if possible, his European rights for the disc records which he had patented in the U.S.A. Since Owen did not succeed in selling Berliner's rights outright, the two formed the Gramophone Company Limited in England. Berliner erected a record-pressing factory at Hanover in the U.S.A. for supplying records and machines to the newly formed company in England.

At this point a mechanic named Johnson invented a spring-wound motor for the phonograph machine. Until the time his invention was perfected, users (during the period when the record was being played) had to rotate, with the help of a handle, the turntable with the disc on it. The spring motor enabled the phonograph to be wound for a certain number of playings and hence the listener could sit at a distance without having to bother to crank the machine all the time.

The Mutoscope Biograph Company in India started selling machines and records pressed in America. The most popular record imported into India at that time was Burt Shepard's *The Laughing Song*. It had proved popular wherever it had been released. Over a period of a few years, nearly half a million copies of this record were sold. But the company did not do well and its agency was terminated. In 1901, J. Watson Harod was sent out to open a branch of the company, which he



Gauhar Jaan was the first Indian artiste to record with Gramophone

The Mutoscope Biograph Company in India started selling machines and records pressed in America; the most popular record imported into India at that time was Burt Shepard's

The Laughing Song

did on 7th July 1901 in Calcutta.

In the initial stages, a gramophone record used to be manufactured by a process known as 'zinc etching'. A zinc disc with a smooth, shiny surface was coated with a layer of fat, on which a spiral groove was cut by a stylus. The stylus was fixed to a diaphragm that vibrated in sympathy

with the sound waves of the song and music, sung or played into the large mouth of a horn. The recorded zinc disc was then immersed in acid for about 10 minutes and the spiral groove of the music was etched into it. This record could then be played back straightaway.

In 1901, recording on wax was invented

and it also became possible to duplicate the matrices, so that huge quantities could be pressed from these. The process opened up an enormous field for expansion. By the beginning of October 1902, T. W. Gaisberg, who had worked with Berliner for several years, came to India with the intention of developing record trade in the east. His recordings in India became a milestone of great value.

Gaisberg and his successors in the following years recorded Miss Dulari, Gourajan, Zohran, Malkajan, Angurbala, Indubala, Kamala, Goharjan and popular *quwali* [*qawwali*] singers Pearu Quwal, Kaloo Quwal, Fakre Alam Quwal and several others. The accompaniment for these artistes comprised just a few instruments: a harmonium, tabla, sarod, clarinet and with female singers, the sarangi and bells. These recordings were sent to the factory at Hanover for processing and pressing. The finished records were then exported back into India and were sold in large numbers. In order to interest prospective purchasers to listen to discs, a novel idea was tried out. At the close of the singing, the artiste would announce his or her name, "My name is Jankibai of Allahabad" or "My name is Mushtaribai of Agra". These statements in English by performers who did not know the language amused listeners and helped somewhat to boost sales of discs. The earliest record was only seven inches in size but later it was increased to 10 and 12 inches. The early horn machines were black in colour, but later these were changed to brass for a more attractive and dazzling effect. The coloured horn was known as 'Morning Glory', and it became the rage in 1907.

The year 1908 was unique in the history of the gramophone, for in that year factories were established, one at Beliaghata in Calcutta and the other at Hayes, Middlesex, in England. This assured a steady supply of gramophone motors, machines and records to the rapidly growing market in India.

After the initial success of *The Laughing Song* by Shepard, the company brought out another one by Charles Primrose Records containing route-march songs, bugle-calls, camp-fire songs, pipes and drums played by the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of the 2nd Battalion and comic songs like 'The Peanut Vendor' also proved to be money-spinners. The company's factory at Beliaghata could not meet the rapidly growing demand for discs. Thus in 1928, the company shifted

its operations to a bigger factory at Dum Dum in Calcutta.

Technological developments

The period of the last nearly 50 years has been one of continuous progress and expansion. The introduction of electrical recording in 1925, when microphones, amplifiers and cutting styli were used for recording the 'master' on wax, brought about a miraculous change in the technique of recording. The voice of the singers and the accompanying instruments could be controlled and what is called a 'balance' between the two could be achieved. A round piece of wax shaved to a mirror-

In order to interest prospective purchasers to listen to discs, a novel idea was tried out. At the close of the singing, the artiste would announce his or her name, "My name is Jankibai of Allahabad" or "My name is Mushtaribai of Agra". These statements in English by performers who did not know the language amused listeners and helped somewhat to boost sales of discs.

finish was placed on a turntable which was driven at a fixed speed of 78 rpm, through a governor-driven device. A heavy weight attached to a pulley, descending slowly through a cable wound around a drum, would drive the turntable at a steady speed.

There were no studios with good acoustics and engineers had to arrange heavy curtains on the walls and thick carpets on the floors to ensure that the sound on the disc was neither too dull nor too reverberant. Later on, studios were set up in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Delhi. Wax recording held sway till about 1948, despite the risk of breakage in transit from the recording centres to the factory at Dum Dum. To minimise such hazards, acetate-coated aluminium discs began to be used. But the weight-drive could not provide the requisite power to cut the new material which was

stiffer than wax; an electric motor had to be used for this purpose. Then, in 1950, came the revolutionary magnetic tape recorder with a frequency response of 50 to 10,000 cycles per second. This recorder also provided facilities for playing back the recorded material. The merits and flaws of the recorded piece could be observed, and mistakes rectified through re-recording (after an erasure of the previously recorded attempts). This resulted in improved sound quality in performances, without any loss except of labour and time. By 1964, even better tape recorders, with frequency response between 40 to 15,000 cycles per second, appeared alongside facilities for stereophonic recording.

Besides manufacturing and marketing machines and records, the company today offers a wide variety of record players, radiograms, tuners and stereo systems through a nationwide network. The phonograph that first landed in India at the beginning of the 20th century has found its way into millions of homes and the invention of the great Thomas Edison and Charles Cros is rightly known today as one that radiates human happiness.

India, with a population of over 620 million people and more than 30 languages and dialects, has a varied treasure of musical traditions and colourful folklore. The present catalogue of the company includes over 7,500 records featuring classical, folk, patriotic, devotional, light classical, light as well as pop and film music. In addition to items of sheer entertainment value, there is quite a large number of recordings of educational and cultural interest.

The stirring words of our national leaders Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were recorded and thus preserved for future generations. 'Vande Mataram' was recorded by Rabindranath Tagore somewhere around 1900. The record was a 12" disc which played from inside to outside and it was published under the auspices of H. Bose's Record. A copy of the record was traced in 1961, the centenary of Tagore's birth. His voice was also recorded by H.M.V. during the early '20s in the Beliaghata factory and subsequently in the studios at Dum Dum. The voices of Kazi Nazrul Islam, Sumitranandan Pant, Mahadevi Verma, D. R. Bendre and poet Vallathol Narayana Menon have also been preserved through records of their recitations of their poems. ■

This article first appeared in its entirety in the NCPA Quarterly Journal in September 1977 (Volume 6, Issue 3).

Programme Guide

February 2024

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



SOI symphony orchestra of india

Spring 2024 Season

Patron: Citi India

Orchestral Concerts

Friday, 2nd February – 7.00 pm
Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Gergely Madaras, conductor
Barry Douglas, piano

Mendelssohn: Nocturne from
A Midsummer Night's Dream
Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1
Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 4 "Italian"

Experience the magical allure of the Nocturne from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a piece that transports you to a world of whimsical dreams and starlit romance. Let the profound depth of Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 stir your soul, as its powerful melodies weave a story of passion and introspection. And finally, embark on a musical journey through the sun-drenched landscapes of Italy with Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4, nicknamed "Italian", as its lively rhythms and bright colours paint a vivid picture of joy and vivacity.

Tuesday, 6th February – 7.00 pm
Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Gergely Madaras, conductor

Brahms: *Academic Festival Overture*
Kodály: *Dances of Galánta*
Brahms: Symphony No. 2

The concert opens with Brahms's *Academic Festival Overture*, a vibrant

and spirited celebration of youth. Next, let the *Dances of Galánta* by Kodály whisk you away to the quaint town of Galánta in Slovakia. The evening culminates with Brahms's Symphony No. 2, which takes you on an emotional odyssey. From serene, pastoral melodies to jubilant crescendos, this symphony reflects the full spectrum of human emotion, mirroring the beauty and complexity of life itself.

Sunday, 11th February – 5.00 pm
Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Martyn Brabbins, conductor
Sasha Cooke, soprano

Berlioz: Overture, Royal Hunt & Storm from *The Trojans*
Berlioz: *Les nuits d'été (Summer Nights)*
Saint-Saëns: Symphony No. 3 "Organ Symphony"

Berlioz's composition from *The Trojans* opens this concert with dramatic and powerful music that captures the thrill of the hunt and the fury of nature in a mythic landscape. Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été* then offers a contrasting experience—a dreamlike journey through songs of love, longing and the beauty of summer nights. A highlight of the evening is Saint-Saëns's Symphony No. 3, the "Organ Symphony". This masterpiece is unique not just in its grandeur and complexity, but in its incorporation of the organ, creating a sound that is both majestic and deeply moving, resulting in a truly immersive experience.

Friday, 16th February – 7.00 pm
Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Martyn Brabbins, conductor
Bryan Cheng, cello

Wagner: Overture to *The Flying Dutchman*
Elgar: Cello Concerto
Beethoven: Symphony No. 6 "Pastoral"

Experience a captivating evening of storytelling through music with this concert that begins with Wagner's overture to *The Flying Dutchman*, a piece that immediately sets sail into a world of maritime legend and myth. The mood shifts as we delve into the deep, emotional landscape of Elgar's Cello Concerto. Finally, Beethoven's Symphony No. 6, known as the "Pastoral", is a vivid portrayal of the tranquility and beauty of the countryside. This symphony is not just music; it is a celebration of nature and a peaceful escape that refreshes the soul.

Tickets:

₹3,600, 2,880, 2,520, 2,160, 1,800,
1,440, 900 & 450/- (Members)
₹4,000, 3,200, 2,800, 2,400, 2,000,
1,600, 1,000 & 500/- (Public)
(Inclusive of GST)

Recitals

Saturday, 3rd February – 7.00 pm
Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Barry Douglas, piano

Schubert: Four Impromptus, Op. 90
Tchaikovsky: Six Pieces, Op. 51,
No. 5 & 6
Tchaikovsky: Two Pieces, Op. 10, No. 1
Tchaikovsky: Eighteen Pieces, Op. 72,
No. 4
Schubert: Piano Sonata in A minor,
D. 845

Barry Douglas has established a major international career since winning the Gold Medal at the 1986 Tchaikovsky

International Piano Competition, Moscow. A highly sought-after recitalist and chamber musician, he has given performances across the globe including at the Royal Albert Hall, the Barbican, Wigmore Hall and at the Verbier Festival. Douglas is an exclusive Chandos recording artiste and has recently completed a six-album recording of the full works for solo piano of Brahms, which was hailed by *International Record Review* which said, "this is indeed Brahms playing of the utmost integrity and authority... this cycle looks set to become a benchmark version."

Tickets:

₹1,350, 900 & 450/- (Members)

₹1,500, 1,000 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

Monday, 12th February – 7.00 pm

Jamshed Bhabha Stage

Cheng² Duo

Bryan Cheng, cello

Silvie Cheng, piano

Debussy: Scherzo, L.39

Chopin: Cello Sonata in G minor,

Op. 65

Wijeratne: *Portrait of an*

Imaginary Sibling

Bruch: *Kol Nidrei*, Op. 47

Piazzolla: *Le Grand Tango*

Rooted by a sibling bond that transcends the familial, the **Cheng² Duo** (pronounced Cheng Squared Duo) transfuses listeners through its impassioned expressivity and contagious joy. Cellist **Bryan Cheng**, prizewinner of the 2022 Queen Elisabeth Competition and Verbier Festival's coveted Prix Yves Paternot, and pianist **Silvie Cheng**, 2022-23 Cecilia Concerts Musician-in-Residence and National Arts Club Artist Fellow, have been making music together for nearly their entire lives. Since officially forming the Cheng² Duo at their 2011 Carnegie Weill Recital Hall debut, their artistry has left lasting impressions across the globe, with extensive tours to illustrious concert halls and international festivals throughout North America, Europe, Asia and South Africa.

Tickets:

**Admission free for Benefactors/
Friends of the SOI**

₹900 & 450/- (Members)

₹1,000 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

**Talks on Western
Classical Music**

Stuart-Liff Collection Library

Thursday, 1st – 4.00 pm

and

Pre-concert talk

JBT Museum

Friday, 2nd – 6.15 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 4
("Italian")

In this series of talks on Western classical music, **Dr. Cavas Bilimoria** takes listeners through musical concepts, the lives of composers and their famous works, sprinkled with examples of recorded music. This month, his first talk will discuss Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4, also known as the *Italian*. The composer captures in musical form, the sights, smells and emotions inspired by his holiday in Italy. Published in 1851—four years after Mendelssohn's death—it is among the most brilliant music he composed and has remained one of the best-loved symphonies in Western classical music.

Entry free

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

INDIAN MUSIC

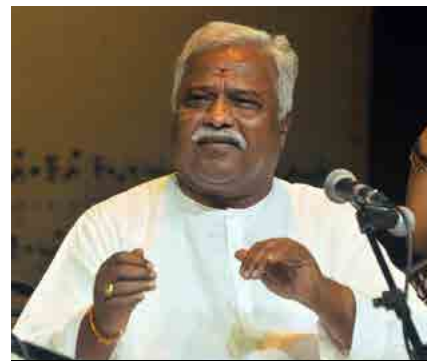
**Hindustani Music Recital
by Venkatesh Kumar**

Experimental Theatre

Thursday, 1st – 6.30 pm

**An NCPA Presentation in association
with Saroj Jhaveri Foundation**

Venkatesh Kumar has trained with Puttaraj Gawayi, who was a stalwart



Venkatesh Kumar, 1st, Experimental Theatre

of both Kirana and Gwalior *gharanas*, as well as a reputed scholar. He has also been influenced by the music of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, the eminent doyen of Patiala *gharana*. Endowed with a powerful and sonorous voice, his repertoire straddles compositions of both Kirana and Gwalior *gharanas*, with an aesthetic build-up through permutations and combinations of notes, extensive ornamentation, *sargam* and attractive *taan* patterns. Kumar will present a typical Hindustani music recital including *bada khayal*, *chhota khayal*, *tarana* in *ragas* that are typically favoured by the followers of the two *gharanas*.

Tickets:

₹450, 270 & 180/- (Members)

₹500, 300 & 200/- (Public)

Box Office now open

INDIAN MUSIC

**NCPA-HSBC Music
Workshop**

**Securing the Future through
Financial Planning and
Management**

**A free online workshop on Zoom by
Sourav Chatterjee**

(Approx. 60 mins)

Saturday, 3rd – 11.30 am

Supported by HSBC India

Financial planning and management are key to securing one's future. This workshop is aimed at enabling performing artistes to understand the nuances of managing their money and raising awareness of factors that should be considered while planning their investments. Additionally, the session will provide tips on how to look at wealth creation along with



Sourav Chatterjee, 3rd, Online

diversification and asset allocation. The speaker will also focus on certain safeguards and precautions that must be considered.

Sourav Chatterjee has two decades of experience in guiding people on investing and planning their finances. He has been part of teams that design, manufacture and distribute financial products. He is passionate about ideating on products and financial plans to help people realise their dreams. Currently, he is Vice President, Wealth Insurance at HSBC India.

For free registration, please visit www.ncpamumbai.com

THEATRE

A Perfect Murder

Marathi Play (120 mins)

Tata Theatre

Saturday, 3rd – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with Badaam Raja Productions

When Meera Mujumdar is off watching a play with an old flame, her husband, Niranjana, puts in place a grand plan to murder her. The plan is foolproof, the alibis are plotted and provided for, and the date is set. On a rainy night, Meera sleeps alone in her house. At the designated time, the telephone rings. As Meera gets up to answer it, she has no idea of the dark shadow that lurks behind her drapes.

Will Meera somehow escape from her predicament? Or will Niranjana get away with committing A Perfect Murder?

Story & Sets: **Neeraj Shirvaikar**
Direction: **Vijay Kenkre**



Cast: **Pushkar Shrotri, Priya Marathe, Aniket Vishwasrao, Subodh Pande & Rahul Pethe**

Music: **Ajit Parab**

Lights: **Sheetal Talpade**

Tickets:

₹1,800, 1,350, 1,080, 900, 450 & 270/- (Members)

₹2,000, 1,500, 1,200, 1,000, 500 & 300/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office now open

DANCE

Finale Evening of the NCPA Mumbai Dance Season 2024

Tata Theatre

Sunday, 4th – 5.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation curated by Darshana Jhaveri and Tushar Guha

The closing event of the Mumbai Dance Season will feature performances by eminent artistes and institutions from Mumbai as well as established young performers. The finale will be curated by noted artistes, Darshana Jhaveri and Tushar Guha.

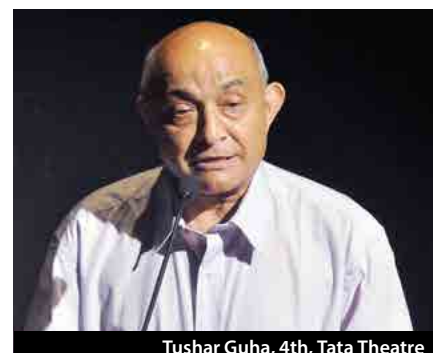
Darshana Jhaveri is a classical Manipuri dancer, research scholar and teacher and is one of the four



Darshana Jhaveri, 4th, Tata Theatre

internationally renowned Jhaveri sisters, whose name has become synonymous with Manipuri dance. She has dedicated her life to preserve, perpetuate and propagate the classicism of Manipuri under the able guidance of Bipin Singh, who has nurtured her talent as a technically versatile dancer, having specialised in both *tandava* and *lasya* elements of Manipuri dance and music. She has performed with her sisters around the world since 1958. She has collaborated with her guru, Singh, and visited Manipur several times to meet various gurus, learn and collect recorded music and correlate the oral tradition with Vaishnavite and Indian texts on dance and music. The creative contribution of the Jhaveri sisters and Singh has been to bring the traditional and classical dances of Manipur from the temples to the theatre without polluting its original form and spirit. Jhaveri is actively associated with Manipuri Nartanalaya in Mumbai, Kolkata and Manipur. She has received many honours and awards, including the National Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and the Padma Shri.

Dr. Tushar Guha, Founder & Chairman of Nrityanjali Group, is an eminent performing artiste with experience in dance, music and drama in addition to being a psychologist, educationist, corporate trainer, mentor, author and personality development pioneer in India. With over 32 years of in-depth research and professional experience, he made history in the year 2000 when he earned the first Doctorate in Personality Development from the U.S.A. Dr. Guha's research has been presented at the Harvard School of Education. His book *Perceptions of Personality*, published in 1996, is the approved reference book on personality development by the Government of Maharashtra. A



Tushar Guha, 4th, Tata Theatre

graduate of English Literature, he also has a master's degree in economics. Guha is an entrepreneur with his own printing and publishing house. He has trained in Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri and Kathak at the Bharatiya Nritya Kala Mandir, Kolkata, while simultaneously pursuing dramatics and music under guru, Anima Roy.

Tickets:

₹360, 270 & 180/- (Members)

₹400, 300 & 200/- (Public)

Box Office now open

FILM



Sthal, 6th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Sthal (A Match)

Marathi Film with English Subtitles (104 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Tuesday, 6th – 6.30 pm

The Indian Express Film Club screening in association with the National Centre for the Performing Arts & Dhun Productions.

Sthal is a poignant tale of a woman struggling to fit the constraints of an 'ideal bride'. The film is a powerful rebuttal to the patriarchal process of 'choosing' brides. It poses a simple yet thought-provoking question, "Is being saleable in the marriage market the only value of a woman?"

Director: **Jayant Digambar Somalkar**

Producers: **Jayant Digambar Somalkar, Shefali Bhushan & Karan Grover**

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



Dear England, 7th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Dear England

by James Graham

Theatre Screening

(Approx. 160 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Wednesday, 7th – 6.00 pm

An NCPA-National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

Joseph Fiennes (*The Handmaid's Tale*) plays Gareth Southgate in **James Graham's** (*Sherwood*) gripping examination of nation and game. The country that gave the world football has since delivered a painful pattern of loss. Why can't England's men win at their own game? With the worst track record for penalties in the world, Southgate knows he needs to open his mind and face up to the years of hurt, to take his team and country back to the promised land.

Filmed live on stage at the National Theatre, **Rupert Goold** (*Judy*) directs this spectacular new play.

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office now open

PHOTOGRAPHY

Enchantment

Wildlife Photography Exhibition by **Madhushree and Sidharth Birla**

Dilip Piramal Art Gallery

Thursday, 8th to Tuesday, 20th – 12.00 noon to 8.00 pm

Supported by **Hemendra Kothari Foundation**

Madhushree and Sidharth Birla's love affair with the Serengeti in Tanzania began in 2012. The region's stark beauty and scale, the orderliness, power and elegance of nature and the majesty of both the hunter and



Enchantment, 8th to 20th, Dilip Piramal Art Gallery

the hunted can overwhelm one like few other places can. Derived from a Maasai word meaning "endless plains", the Serengeti holds the largest lion population in Africa and is rich in cheetahs, leopards and elephants. The Ngorongoro crater, Tanzania, is another spectacular phenomenon with no parallel. It is the world's largest inactive volcanic caldera formed by a volcano exploding and collapsing into itself about two to three million years ago.

The duo's passion for Maasai Mara (Kenya) started in 2019. Together with the Serengeti, the Mara forms Africa's most incredible and spectacular ecosystems and top big-game viewing destination. While being a unique experience, being there also provides a reflective opportunity to grasp the beauty and raw power of nature. The Birlas spent hours photographing the lords and ladies of the plains and wish to share a few special moments they have had with wildlife, particularly big cats and elephants.

Entry free

INDIAN MUSIC

Sama'a: The Mystic Ecstasy

Festival of Sufi Music

9th to 11th February

An NCPA Presentation

Supported by **Roopa Kudva**

We rarely hear the inward music, but are dancing to it nevertheless!

- Mevlana Rumi

Based on the mystical branch of Islam, Sufism preaches peace, tolerance and pluralism. Music is regarded as a way of deepening one's relationship

with the Creator, and hence longing to dissolve the physical realm and transcend into the spiritual universe with *Sama'a*, the practice of listening to music, chanting, whirling and finally culminating in spiritual ecstasy. Sufi music is practised in different regions of the world through an array of forms.

Screening of two documentaries

by **Shabnam Virmani**

How Can I Forget? The Legend of Marui

and

Don't Fall in Love with Those Who Wander in Boats

Godrej Dance Theatre

Friday, 9th – 5.00 pm



Shabnam Virmani, 9th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Shabnam Virmani is a filmmaker, musician and pioneer of the landmark Kabir Project.

Both films are inspired by the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (18th century), one of the greatest Sufi poets of the Sindhi language. His poetry is based on well-known folk stories, love legends, historical events as well as on the lives of ordinary people, making him not just a great Sufi poet but also a great folk poet. The films also feature Shah Latif's poetry as sung by Waai singers from Kutch.

How Can I Forget? The Legend of Marui

(45 mins)

Delving into a Sufi tale about a simple village girl held hostage in the fortress of a powerful king, this film

grapples with questions of freedom and imprisonment, longing and belonging. It weaves together the apparent and the hidden meanings of this tale—which is at once spiritual and social, personal and political, historical and timeless—about a woman, her lost homeland and the struggle to remember who we truly are.

Don't Fall in Love with Those Who Wander in Boats

(21.45 mins)

Drawing on the imagery of the heartrending agony experienced by women folk from the families of seafarers, and their endless wait to unite with their beloved, the film seeks to bring forth the painful experience of separation and the deep longing to reunite, which is also at the core of Sufi ideology. This film, made during the lockdown of the pandemic, was meant to connect with diverse folk musicians of Kutch, Malwa, Rajasthan and Sindh, and celebrate the gift of conversations and songs from the oral traditions.

Entry free on a first-come-first-served basis

Sufiana Safar

An Illustrative Talk by

Dhanashree Lele

Experimental Theatre

Friday, 9th – 6.30 pm

The pain of separation from the Creator is at the core of Sufi ideology. While saint-philosophers like Rumi,



Dhanashree Lele, 9th, Experimental Theatre

Lal Dedh, Kabir, Bulle Shah and others have fervently expressed their love and longing for the Divine through their poetry, we find similar thoughts also being echoed in the works of others like Tukaram, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and many *Bhakti* poets across ages in numerous languages.

Focusing on the philosophy of Sufi traditions (*sampraday*), this presentation aims to draw a parallel between Sufi ideology and the indigenous philosophy of Vedanta, along with the concept of *bhakti*. The talk seeks to illustrate the underlying similarities in all these thoughts, thus highlighting the universality of the truth. The talk, presented in Hindi and Urdu, will be interspersed with musical excerpts from the respective traditions.

Dhanashree Lele is an impressive orator, award-winning author, scriptwriter and multilingual compère renowned for her scholarship in Sanskrit literature and spiritual subjects.

Tickets:

₹225 & 135/- (Members)

₹250 & 150/- (Public)

Ishq Fakira Da

Presented by 'Maati Baani'

Featuring **Nirali Kartik, Kartik Shah with Moorlala Marwada, Aashima Mahajan, Noor Mohammed Sodha and friends**

Experimental Theatre

Saturday, 10th – 6.30 pm



Kartik Shah and Nirali Kartik, 10th, Experimental Theatre

Sufi music is practised in different regions of the world through myriad genres. In the Indian subcontinent, it finds expression through vocal genres of *ghazal*, *qawwali* and various regional folk forms. Based on the verses of mystic poets across the ages, today, these genres have gained mainstream popularity.

Featuring talented folk artistes from Kutch and indigenous instruments like jodiya pawa or algoza (double flute) alongside Western instruments, the group seeks to embark on a poetic odyssey, rendering the immortal verses of legendary Sufi poets like Kabir, Bulle Shah, Baba Farid, Shah Abdul Latif, Lal Dedh, Mirabai and Rumi. Various facets of love are explored, from passionate and intense to the spiritual and divine, with songs presented in languages including Hindi, Sindhi, Punjabi, Kashmiri and Persian.

Tickets:
₹450 & 315/- (Members)
₹500 & 350/- (Public)

Jashn-e-Bahar
An evening of Sufi music by
Javed Ali
Tata Theatre
Sunday, 11th – 6.30 pm

The core idea of love, longing and union with the beloved, as espoused in Sufi songs has an evergreen appeal to people from all walks of life, transcending man-made boundaries of region, religion, caste and creed. Today, besides the traditional repertoire, a large number of songs are inspired by or based on elements of Sufi music. These compositions show marked influence of contemporary idioms and expressions and are widely popular with the masses.

Javed Ali trained with his father Hamid Hussain, a well-known *qawwali*



Javed Ali, 11th, Tata Theatre

singer, and Ghulam Ali, the legendary *ghazal* maestro. In the short span of his career, he has had the privilege of working with eminent music directors and has performed for numerous films in several languages. Besides film music, Ali is proficient in singing *ghazals*.

Ali's presentation will include a bouquet of Sufiana compositions from the traditional repertoire and Bollywood Sufi music.

Tickets:
₹1,800, 1,350, 900 & 450/- (Members)
₹2,000, 1,500, 1,000 & 500/- (Public)
(Inclusive of GST)
Box Office now open

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC



Syed Fateen Ahmed, 10th, Little Theatre

Young Musician of the Year 2023: Syed Fateen Ahmed

Western Classical Piano Recital
Little Theatre
Saturday, 10th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA & The Olga & Jules Craen Foundation Presentation

Fateen Ahmed is the incumbent Laureate and the youngest Young Musician of the Year to date. The Laureate is selected annually for The Olga & Jules Craen Foundation by an international jury comprising visiting examiners from the U.K. boards of music. The programme includes works by Bach, Grieg, Prokofiev, Medtner,

Mozart and Chopin. There will be a brief performance by the Incoming YMOY 2024, Neil Sajani, who will perform Schubert's Impromptu No. 3 and Schumann's Widmung, arranged by Liszt for piano solo.

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

THEATRE

Babuji Dheere Chalna
Hindi Play (110 mins)
Experimental Theatre
Sunday, 11th – 5.00 pm & 7.30 pm

From the dawn of time, our species has been hooked to the thrill of love. Whether hearts are shattered or cherished like gold, we just can't get enough of it. No matter how many times we stumble or fall, we keep playing this irresistible game. Get ready for a rollercoaster ride of passion, heartache and all the twists and turns of love in this captivating show.

Written & directed by **Om Katare**
 Cast: **Om Katare, Kajal Sonkar, Chinica Madurkar, Sahil Ravi, Naman Mukherji & Rhythm Mohad**
 Produced by **Yatri Theatre Association**

Tickets:
₹630 & 450/- (Members)
₹700 & 500/- (Public)
(Plus GST)
Box Office now open

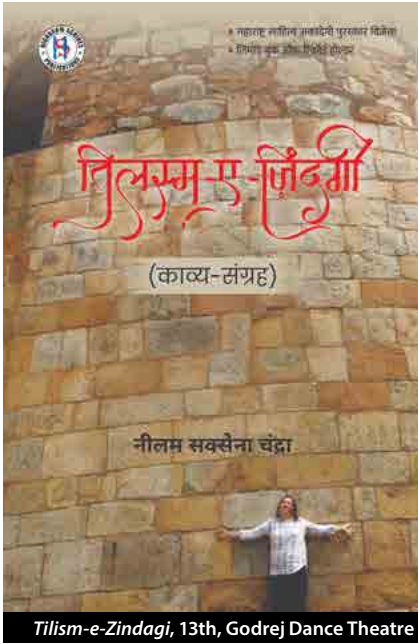
MULTI ARTS & PRESENTATION

TRIVENI: Fusion of Poetry, Painting and Kathak

This event promises to be a celebration of emotions, stories and the power of language in verse.
Godrej Dance Theatre
Tuesday, 13th – 6.30 pm

The NCPA Library in collaboration with Literary Warriors Group, India

The celebrated painter **Captain Ashish Pannase** will create paintings based on the poem as it is performed during the launch of *Tilism-e-Zindagi*,



a book of poetry by **Neelam Saxena**.

This event will be performed live onstage as a fusion of poetry, painting and dance. Elevating the poetic experience, a live dance presentation will enrich the atmosphere, complementing the spoken word with rhythmic tones. The synergy between poetry and dance promises to be a feast for the senses. The Head of the NCPA Library and Documentation Centre, **Sujata Jadhav**, will moderate the event.

The book launch will be followed by readings of poems in Hindi by members of the Literary Warriors Group, including **Anoop Pandey, Juhi Gupte, Anup Jalan, Sheo Nath** and **Purna Shah**. Senior artiste **Arpana Rao** and her disciple **Nandita NG**, two Kathak artistes from the AMNA Institute, will conclude the event by uplifting the poetry experience. The fusion of dance and poetry is sure to delight all the senses.

Entry free

Register on www.bookmyshow.com

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Talks on Western Classical Music

Stuart-Liff Collection Library

Wednesday, 14th – 4.00 pm

and

Pre-concert talk

JBT Museum

Friday, 16th – 6.15 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Beethoven: Symphony No. 6 ("Pastoral")

In this ongoing series of talks on Western classical music, **Dr. Cavas Bilimoria** takes participants through musical concepts, the lives of composers and their famous works, sprinkled with examples of recorded music. The focus of his second talk this month will be Beethoven's beloved Symphony No. 6, or the Pastoral. An interface between music and nature, the piece stirs within the listener feelings of joy and wonder from the very first note.

Entry free

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

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC



Valentine's Day with Ilya Serov

Tata Theatre

Wednesday, 14th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Award-winning trumpeter, singer and bandleader **Ilya Serov** will be bringing his smooth trumpet sounds and velvety vocals to the NCPA on 14th February. A talented young musician with an old soul, Serov will bring an infusion of imagination, vision and energy to the many shades of America's original musical art form. Possessing chops and charisma, his live performance will leave the audience spellbound. Serov expands his creative interests to take audiences in a new direction that blends smooth jazz with elements of soul and R&B and shows a connection between several generations of romance and jazz. Serov will perform

for the audience a romantic rhapsody by presenting classic love songs.

Tickets:

₹1,800, 1,350, 900, 765 & 450/-
(Members)

₹2,000, 1,500, 1,000, 850 & 500/-
(Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office now open

THEATRE



Readings in the Shed:

Letters of Love (VI)

English (70 mins)

Godrej Sunken Garden

Wednesday, 14th – 7.30 pm

An NCPA Off-Stage Presentation

Romantic. Mushy. Cheesy. Stoic. Poetic.

Expressions of love take all these tones and more. Brave declarations or hesitant murmurs, letters proclaiming love have travelled between the lovers and the loved since time immemorial. They are saved and pressed between tomes or stowed away in chests and shoeboxes. They are read, re-read and read again to relive those memories. Or in case of heartbreak, torn up or burnt to ashes. Join Readings in the Shed as we recreate love stories through the sixth edition of Letters of Love.

Performed by **Jhelum Gosalia**

Suggested Age: 11+

Tickets:
₹450/- (Members)
₹500/- (Public)
Box Office now open

THEATRE



Constellations

English Play (80 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Thursday, 15th & Friday, 16th –
7.30 pm

Saturday, 17th & Sunday, 18th –
4.00 pm & 7.30 pm

An NCPA Production

One relationship. Infinite possibilities.

Marianne and Roland meet at a barbecue. They are single, or recently single, or in a relationship or married. Perhaps they go on a date and fall in love, or perhaps it doesn't go well. Maybe they get together and they break up. After a chance encounter at a dance lesson preparing for an upcoming wedding, they get back together, or maybe Marianne reveals that she is now engaged to someone else. Or perhaps Roland is engaged. Or what if Roland and Marianne navigate all of this and get married? Or what if their time together is cut tragically short?

Does free will exist? Or are we playing out one of a multitude of predetermined possibilities?

Nick Payne's touching and funny multi-award-winning play is about many things—string theory, the multiverse, free will, choice—but it is also about what it is to love someone so much that you will put their needs before your own, no matter the cost.

Written by **Nick Payne**
Directed by **Bruce Guthrie**
Cast: **Kunaal Roy Kapur & Aahana Kumra**

Age: 16+

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

DANCE

Spectrum 2024 - A Festival of Dances from Around the World

16th, 17th, 18th, 23rd &
29th February

An NCPA Presentation

The NCPA Spectrum Dance Festival is an annual celebration of dance. This vibrant event brings together talented dancers and choreographers from various genres, showcasing the diversity and dynamism of the dance world. It provides a platform for artistes to experiment with new dance vocabularies whilst retaining the rich legacy of classical dances. The festival provides a captivating experience for audiences, exposing them to the beauty of dance in its various forms, and giving them an opportunity to witness the power of movement as a form of artistic expression.

Spectrum 2024 boasts an enviable line-up of artistes. The schedule is as follows:

Dance Workshop

by **Priyadarsini Govind**

Sea View Room

Friday, 16th – 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm

and

Sunday, 18th – 10.00 am to 12.00 noon

Registration Fees: ₹2,500/-
(open for all classical dancers)

To register, email:

mdsouza@ncpamumbai.com,

ashetty@ncpamumbai.com

Yavanika

Film screening

Tata Theatre (foyer)

Saturday, 17th – 3.00 pm

Free seating on a first-come-first-served basis

Rang – Bharatanatyam by Priyadarsini Govind Nava Kalevar: Odissi in Contemporary Couture Odissi by Madhavi Mudgal & Troupe

Tata Theatre

Saturday, 17th – 5.00 pm

An exceptional Bharatanatyam artiste, **Priyadarsini Govind** has perfected a dance style marked by fluid movement and a sharp sense of rhythm. After initial training under Usha, Govind specialised in *abhinaya* under Kalanidhi Narayanan and received advanced training in Bharatanatyam under Swamimalai K. Rajarathnam Pillai, exponent of the Vazhvoor school. She has performed at dance festivals in countries like France, Tunisia, Britain and Japan. Govind has received several honours including the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for her contribution to Bharatanatyam, the titles of Kalaimamani conferred by the Tamil Nadu Eyal Isai Ataka Manra, and Nritya Choodamani by the Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, to name a few.

Govind will be presenting *Rang*, a collection of compositions of different shades of emotions. The presentation includes an *Alaripu* set against the aural framework of a Siddhar verse, *Dharu* on Chamundi (the presiding deity of Mysuru), a lament of Ravana, an unusual verse, sourced from the repertoire of *Koodiyattam*, a *Vidyapati*





Madhavi Mudgal & Troupe, 17th, Tata Theatre

verse (which is a *Nindastuti*), bringing out the tongue-in-cheek humour of a young bride, a *Kshretrayya* composition with an unusual heroine, and a composition on the *Kalinga Nartanam*.

One of the leading classical dancers of India, **Madhavi Mudgal** is a prime disciple of the legendary Kelucharan Mohapatra. She is credited with bringing a greatly refined sensibility to her art form. Apart from establishing a niche as a soloist on the international dance scene, she has received critical acclaim for her choreographic works. She teaches at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, New Delhi. She is a recipient of the Padma Shri, Central and the Odisha State Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards, Grande Medaille de la Ville de Paris, Delhi State Parishad Samman and Nritya Choodamani, among others. Mudgal was also awarded the Chevalier de l'ordre des arts et des lettres by the Government of France.

Mudgal will be presenting *Nava Kalevar: Odissi in Contemporary Couture*. The word 'kalevar' refers to the outer form or body, usually in the context of the deity, and in Odisha, of Jagannath. This presentation offers an experience of the traditional form of Odissi dressed in a novel sensibility. It highlights the possibilities that emerge when weaving the major strands of music, poetry and rhythm in appropriate measure, to create its unique tapestry.

Tickets:

₹540, 360 & 270/- (Members)
 ₹600, 400 & 300/- (Public)
 (Inclusive of GST)

Ram Ratan Dhan

Curated by Odissi exponent
Shubhada Varadkar
Jamshed Bhabha Theatre
 Friday, 23rd – 6.30 pm



Shubhada Varadkar, 23rd, Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Shubhada Varadkar is an exponent of Odissi. A disciple of the legendary Kelucharan Mohapatra, Varadkar is a recipient of a Senior Fellowship by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. Varadkar's dance is a union of eloquent expressions and graceful movements right out of Odissi's rich heritage. Some of Varadkar's major productions include *Kanupriya*, based on Dr. Dharmvir Bharti's poetry by the same name; *Miracles of Splendour*, based on Kalidasa's *Ritusamharam* and Rabindranath Tagore's *Chitrangada*. Her dance productions have been well-received for their rich tapestry of music, choreography and literature. Within the boundaries of the traditional format, she has enthralled the audience with her artistic excellence and creative spirit.

Conceptualised by Varadkar, *Ram Ratan Dhan* is a classical dance presentation on immortal melodies of Lata Mangeshkar. It is a soulful presentation of the evergreen melodies sung by Mangeshkar and performed onstage by classical dancers from Mumbai. An array of songs in various languages, ranging from film to devotional and patriotic, have been curated to give a wholesome experience to the audience.

Tickets:

₹540, 360 & 270/- (Members)
 ₹600, 400 & 300/- (Public)
 (Inclusive of GST)

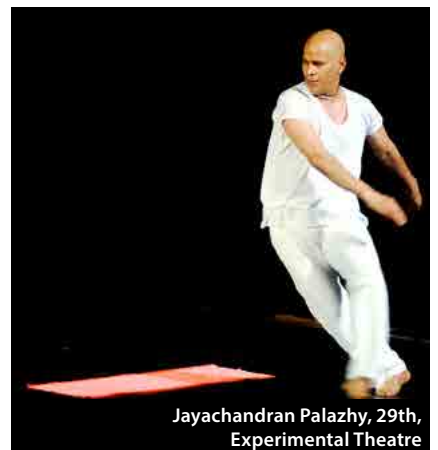
Contemporary Dance

by **Jayachandran Palazhy & Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts**

Experimental Theatre
 Thursday, 29th – 6.30 pm

Jayachandran Palazhy is a changemaker, visionary leader, choreographer and the Artistic Director of Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts, Bengaluru. His multimedia dance productions have received critical acclaim and toured internationally. He is the Director of Attakkalari India Biennial festival, FACETS Choreography Residency, Incubation Centre for Arts & Media, NAGARIKA research and documentation project and many education initiatives. He has worked as director, consultant and mentor and is a visiting faculty member in reputed universities in India and abroad. He has received awards as well as recognition for his choreography and other contributions to dance. The Attakkalari Dance Company is the performance wing of Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts, India's premiere contemporary dance organisation. Invested in education, training, research, choreography, productions, performances, festivals, stage technologies, transdisciplinary exchanges and collaborations, Attakkalari has developed strategic global partnerships for projects and events and has succeeded in transforming Bengaluru into a hub for contemporary dance in South Asia.

The presentation will include different pieces exploring various aspects of human existence. Set



Jayachandran Palazhy, 29th, Experimental Theatre

in response to the poignant sight of migrants journeying back to their distant villages amidst India's sudden lockdown due to Covid-19, *Jeeva Pravaaha* peeks into human experiences and memories, diverging from glorifying India's megacities or their architecture. It delves into the intricate human connections expressed by great poets of the era, envisioning freedom from grandeur and praising wandering devotees carrying divinity within. Seamlessly blending heritage, memories and contemporary cityscapes, the performance unfolds the transformation of the notion of home—from a refuge to a place evoking seclusion and tension. *Prayer of a different kind*, Kabir's poem set to tune by Kumar Gandharva, is a piece developed and performed by Attakkalari's rehearsal director and choreographer Hemabharathy Palani, who moves effortlessly to the iconic music of acclaimed singer Bindhu Malini. *Reflections* draws inspiration from the distilled geometry and poetic grace of classical dance Bharatanatyam and portrays the inner sanctity and elegance through the precision and dexterity of the moves of the dancers. *Nava Durga*, created during the lockdown and based on the images of Goddess Durga by nine contemporary female painters, explores the plight of contemporary Indian women, their trials and tribulations, and their fight for justice and equality. *Vanna Vatuvukal* explores the male and the female energies that exist within us, particularly the playful nature of the period of courtship. Set to specially composed music by MIDival Punditz, images of rites of passage of time and rituals as well as elements, such as water, are invoked in this celebration of sensuality.

Tickets:

₹360 & 270/- (Members)

₹400 & 300/- (Public)

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

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

Movies Under the Stars

Mildred Pierce (1945)

Film Screening



Mildred Pierce, 16th, Tata Garden

(B&W – 111 mins)

Tata Garden

Friday, 16th – 6.30 pm

An NCPA & Film Heritage Foundation Presentation

Melodrama casts noirish shadows in this portrait of maternal sacrifice from Hollywood master **Michael Curtiz**.

Joan Crawford's iconic performance as Mildred, a single mother hell-bent on freeing her children from the stigma of economic hardship, solidified Crawford's career comeback and gave the actor her only Oscar. But as Mildred pulls herself up by her bootstraps, first as an unflappable waitress and eventually as the well-heeled owner of a successful restaurant chain, the ingratitude of her materialistic firstborn (a diabolical **Ann Blyth**) becomes a venomous serpent's tooth, setting in motion an endless cycle of desperate overtures and heartless recriminations. Recasting **James M. Cain's** rich psychological novel as a murder mystery, this bitter cocktail of blind parental love and all-American ambition is both unremittingly hard-boiled and sumptuously emotional.

Director: **Michael Curtiz**

Screenplay: **Ronald MacDougall**

Based on a novel by **James M. Cain**

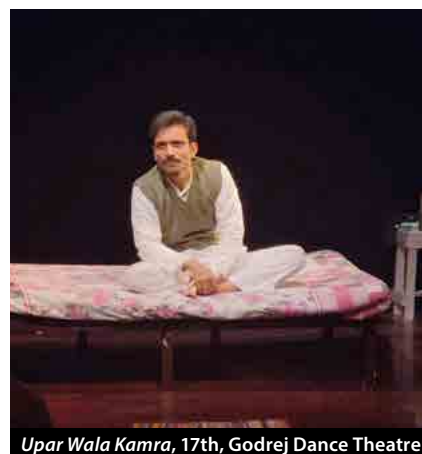
Cinematography: **Ernest Haller**

Music: **Max Steiner**

Cast: **Joan Crawford, Jack Carson, Zachary Scott, Eve Arden, Ann Blyth, Bruce Bennett & others**

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

THEATRE



Upar Wala Kamra, 17th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Upar Wala Kamra

Hindi Play (85 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Saturday, 17th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

The play explores the life of an old man whose son is suffering from depression. As the father tries to understand why and how his son has reached this point, he starts looking at their life as a family, himself as a father and the inexplicable nature of mental illness. As the father goes deeper into the past and present, the piece begins to investigate the strong forces and bonds that operate within a family, pulling us together and apart. The piece also attempts to create a conversation around depression, from the standpoint of the outsider, in this case, the father, who is watching his son descend deep into an isolation that will drown them both. During the performance, the protagonist directly addresses the audience, sharing his fears, his failures and his achievements. In the process, larger questions around relationships, mental health and the inherent strength and frailty of the human condition are highlighted.

Written, directed and performed by **Anoop Gupta**

Suggested age: 18+

Tickets:

₹360/- (Members)

₹400/- (Public)

Box Office now open

THEATRE



Love is in the Air, 18th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Love is in the Air

Stand-up Comedy

English/ Hindi (100 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Sunday, 18th – 6.00 pm & 8.00 pm

An NCPA Off-Stage Presentation
In collaboration with Comedy Ladder

February is the month of love and the NCPA, in collaboration with Comedy Ladder, will present Love is in the Air, a comedy show for everyone who has ever loved. Come with your loved one or even come with an ex. A love and laughter-filled evening awaits you!

Host: **Abish Mathew**

Comics: **Jeeya, Dahaab, Anirban, Shamik, Shreeja** and a surprise ACT

Suggested age: 16+

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office now open

FILM

Reality Check

Documentary Film Screening

Godrej Dance Theatre

Thursday, 22nd – 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.

Kaifnama – A film by Sumantra Ghosal

Urdu/English (90 mins)



Kaifnama, 22nd, Godrej Dance Theatre

Kaifnama looks at the life and art of the Urdu Progressive poet Kaifi Azmi, who supported social change and was one of the foremost lyricists in the Hindi film industry. Not content to limit himself to literary writing, he worked ceaselessly throughout his life as a catalyst for change among the disenfranchised.

The film looks at his small-town roots, his commitment to socialism, his wide-ranging body of work and the enormous changes he brought to the life of the village where he was born.

This extraordinary journey is documented through extensive interviews with him and his wife Shaukat Kaifi as well as insights from his children, Shabana and Baba Azmi, and reminiscences by his friends and colleagues.

Kaifnama thus is both the definitive film biography of Kaifi Azmi and a history of the times he illuminated with his genius.

A Cinematix Production

Produced by **Mijwan Welfare Society**

Directed by **Sumantra Ghosal**

The film screening will be followed
by a discussion.

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

INDIAN MUSIC

Geet Gunjan: A bouquet of Gujarati music and poetry

by Parthiv Gohil, Gargi Vora & group

Anchor: Nehal Gadhvi

Tata Theatre

Friday, 23rd – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation in
association with Mariwala
Foundation, Jasubhai Foundation
and Kilachand Foundation

This concert is a tribute to the sheer beauty and power contained in the literary and musical heritage of Gujarat. With a bouquet of songs that still resonate with discerning listeners, it will take the audience on a journey through the history of Gujarati *sugam sangeet*.

Parthiv Gohil and **Gargi Vora** will present select compositions of celebrated musicians and poets who have contributed immensely to the growth of Gujarati *sugam sangeet*. These include Avinash Vyas, Purushottam Upadhyay, Ashit Desai, Hema Desai, Dilip Dholakia, Ninu Majumdar, and poets Ramesh Parekh, Suresh Dalal, Umashankar Joshi, Ajit Sheth, Khalil Dhantejvi, to name a few.

Having trained with several reputed masters like Laxmipati Shukla and Zia Fariduddin Dagar, Gohil has been



Parthiv Gohil, 23rd, Tata Theatre



Gargi Vora, 23rd, Tata Theatre

a playback singer in a host of films including *Devdas*, *Saawariya*, *Vaada Raha* and others. Endowed with a melodious voice, Vora is a rising star in the firmament of Gujarati music.

Tickets:

₹720, 540, 360 & 270/- (Members)

₹800, 600, 400 & 300/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

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

SCREENING



Florencia en el Amazonas, 24th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Florencia en el Amazonas

by Daniel Catán

Opera Screening

(Approx. 135 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Saturday, 24th – 4.00 pm

An NCPA-The Metropolitan Opera (New York) Presentation

Inspired by the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez, Mexican composer **Daniel Catán's** 1996 opera tells the enchanting story of a Brazilian opera diva who returns to her homeland to perform at the legendary opera house of Manaus. She is also on a mission to search for her lost lover who has vanished into the jungle. The Met premiere stars soprano **Ailyn Pérez** as Florencia Grimaldi, with Music Director **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** on the podium to lead a spellbinding new production by **Mary Zimmerman** that brings the mysterious and magical realm of the Amazon to the Met stage. A distinguished ensemble of artistes

portrays the diva's fellow travellers on the riverboat to Manaus, including soprano **Gabriella Reyes** as the journalist Rosalba, bass-baritone **Greer Grimsley** as the ship's captain, baritone **Mattia Olivieri** as his enigmatic first mate, tenor **Mario Chang** as the captain's nephew Arcadio, and mezzo-soprano **Nancy Fabiola Herrera** and baritone **Michael Chioldi** as the feuding couple Paula and Álvaro.

Conductor: **Yannick Nézet Séguin**

Cast: **Ailyn Pérez, Gabriella Reyes, Nancy Fabiola, Mario Chang, Michael Chioldi, Mattia Olivieri & Greer Grimsley**

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

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

PHOTOGRAPHY

Wildlife

Group Photo Exhibition by **Mukesh Acharya, Pinkesh Tanna, Dr. Manish Nagpal, Neel Sarkhedi, Roopkumar Rathod and Palak Patel** Dilip Piramal Art Gallery

Wednesday, 28th February to Sunday, 3rd March – 12.00 noon to 8.00 pm

The photographers in this group

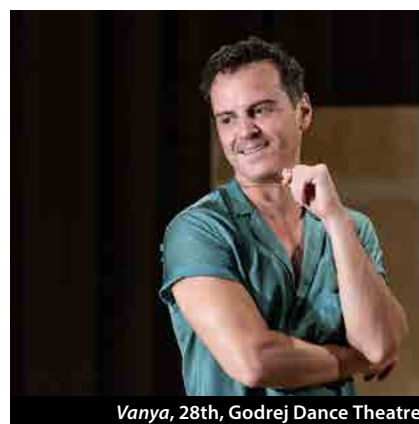


Wildlife, 28th February to 3rd March, Dilip Piramal Art Gallery

come from different fields and facets of life. They include an artist, a painter, a singer, an engineer, an eye surgeon, a businessman, as well as professionals from the fields of real estate and commodities, etc. Incidentally, one of them is fighting cancer and finds courage and strength via the medium of nature and photography. The one common factor that brings them together is their love for wildlife and documenting the beauty of nature.

Entry free

SCREENING



Vanya, 28th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Vanya

Theatre Screening

(Approx. 110 mins)

Godrej Dance Theatre

Wednesday, 28th – 6.00 pm

An NCPA-National Theatre Live (London) Presentation

Andrew Scott (*Fleabag*) brings multiple characters to life in **Simon Stephens's** (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*) radical new version of **Chekhov's** *Uncle Vanya*.

Hopes, dreams and regrets are thrust into sharp focus in this one-man adaptation which explores the complexities of human emotions.

Adapted by **Simon Stephens**, after **Anton Chekhov**

Directed by **Sam Yates**

Designed by **Rosanna Vize**

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office now open

What's Next

March & April 2024

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

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

Pannonica

Featuring Paolo Fresu
& Rita Marcotulli
with special guest Trilok Gurtu
Tata Theatre
Saturday, 2nd March –7.00 pm

An NCPA and Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Mumbai Presentation

Three distinct musical personalities unite for a special trio project, blending formal elegance with elements from both traditional and modern music rooted in



Paolo Fresu, 2nd March, Tata Theatre



Rita Marcotulli, 2nd March, Tata Theatre



Trilok Gurtu, 2nd March, Tata Theatre

FABIANA LAURENZI (PAOLO FRESU)

Mediterranean and Indian traditions. They intricately weave the rich jazz tradition with the allure of world music. These three maestros boast decorated careers as undisputed virtuosos, dedicated to pushing musical boundaries and delving into diverse cultures. As extraordinary performers, they draw inspiration from challenging one another to convey and share this unparalleled experience with the audience.

Tickets:

₹1,350, 1,080, 720 & 450/- (Members)

₹1,500, 1,200, 800 & 500/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

Box Office now open

INDIAN MUSIC

Living Traditions: Festival of Jharkhand

Experimental Theatre

Friday, 8th & Saturday, 9th March - 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

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 folk traditions.

In the 13th edition, the focus will be on **Jharkhand**.

Formed in 2000, Jharkhand is one of the newest states located in the north-eastern part of India. Literally meaning 'the land of forests and bushes', the region has a great diversity of flora and fauna, beautiful natural resources including hills and waterfalls, and is rich in a variety of minerals. The state is equally rich in its cultural heritage. Be it *chhau*, *mundari*, *kathi mage*, *dasai* or *nagpuri* and *jhoomar*, these performing art forms are not only means of entertainment for the different tribes indigenous to the region, but they

also have a place in rituals of worship.

During the two days of this year's edition of Living Traditions, over 100 artistes comprising six well-known troupes from various parts of Jharkhand will present varied forms of music, dance and folk theatre. Each presentation will be introduced in appropriate sociocultural and aesthetic context. Additionally, on both days, artisans will demonstrate mask-making and bamboo artwork in the Experimental Theatre foyer.

Friday, 8th March - 6.30 pm

Nagpuri songs

by Prithviraj Sinhdeo & group

Regarded as a derivative of Bhojpuri, Nagpuri is the main language of Sadan, an ethno-linguistic group of the Chhota Nagpur region, which covers some areas of Jharkhand and neighbouring states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. It is also the main language of a number of tribal groups such as Kharia, Munda, Bhumij, Kurukh and others. Couched in Nagpuri language, the musical renditions are based on diverse melodies, reflecting the typical folk flavour of the region. Until recently, only locally made instruments were used for accompaniment.

Ho dance by Uma Kumari & group

Ho Munda are the scheduled tribe of the Singhbhum district of Jharkhand. Performed together by men and women, it is essentially regarded as a courtship dance. But often, it is also performed during the harvest season and wedding celebrations. White, red and yellow colours dominate attires of both men and women. Holding each other, they move with the melody of the bansuri (bamboo flute) in a semi-circular fashion with graceful footsteps and waist movements, matching with the beat of drums and percussion instruments such as dama, dumeng and rutu, to name a few. The songs vary with the change of



Ho dance by Uma Kumari & group, 8th March, Experimental Theatre

season and occasion; as a result, there are several variations of this dance form. Mage Porob, organised in the month of Magh, is the well-known dancing festival of the Ho Munda community.

**Gohaer Jatra: folk play written and directed by Deepak Lohar
A Presentation by Birsa Kala Kendra**



Gohaer Jatra, 8th March, Experimental Theatre

The title of the play depicts loud communication amidst the pandemonium of the countryside fair. This is a story of a village girl Roopa, caught in human trafficking. The play unfolds the heartrending plight of the victim along with that of her brother, Kanhu, who also has his own share of life struggles. The play has a tragic end, highlighting the menacing effects of rural poverty that is rampant in most Indian villages.

Saturday, 9th March - 6.30 pm

**Kudmali Jhumar songs
by Kamal Mahato & group**

Regarded as an Indo-Aryan language, Kudmali is one of the several languages spoken in Bihar. While mainly prevalent in the Chhota Nagpur region of Jharkhand, it is also widespread in the border regions of Odisha and West Bengal. Though mainly written in the Bangla script, Kudmali literature is also available in other scripts such as Devnagri and Odia.

Closely linked with the lives of common people, Kudmali folk songs are simple, yet appealing. There is no aspect of life in this region that can be considered complete without the inclusion of these extremely popular songs, known as *Kudmali jhumar geet*.



Chhau dance by Dildar Ansari & group, 9th March, Experimental Theatre

Chhau dance by Dildar Ansari & group

Recognised by the UNESCO as the intangible cultural heritage of humanity, *chhau* is a popular dance form prevalent in the three states of eastern India: Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal. Although there are regional variations, topics generally range from the great epics to mythology, nature and even folklore, which are presented using combinations of hand, neck and eye movements. Some varieties also deploy martial art techniques. Instruments used are bamboo flute, cymbals and varieties of native drums. Within the state of Jharkhand, there are three prevalent styles of *chhau*: Saraikela, Kharsawa and Manbhum.

This *chhau* dance presentation revolves around the hunting tradition of this region replete with lush green hills, forests, animals and tribals, in which hunters kill animals for their flesh. When persuaded by their wives to abandon the age-old practice against nature, hunters understand the importance of maintaining an ecological balance by protecting all kinds of flora and fauna, which would in turn protect the human species.

**Phurgal Dishom Rin Bir Ko, folk play by
Jeet Rai Hansda & group**

The play portrays the saga of several *adivasi* men who fought relentlessly against the rulers of the British Empire in pursuit of freedom. Starting in 1784, Baba Tilka Manjhi led an uprising against British landlords at Bhagalpur. His brutal execution gave impetus to further rebellion by other young men including four brothers—Siddhu, Kaku, Chand and Bhairav—who, around 1855, dared to fight the British along with thousands of *adivasis* from the Santhal region. Legend has it that their sisters as well as lovers also joined the freedom struggle. Later, Birsa Munda led the struggle from the Chhota Nagpur region. The sacrifices made by these iconic leaders along with thousands of men, women and children are depicted in a style replete with song, dance and action.

Daily Tickets:

₹180 & 135/- (Members)

₹200 & 150/- (Public)

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

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC



Demetria Taylor, 16th March, Tata Theatre



Terrie Odabi, 17th March, Tata Theatre

The NCPA Soulful Blues

Tata Theatre

**Saturday, 16th & Sunday, 17th March
– 6.30 pm**

An NCPA Presentation

After a successful first edition, the NCPA Soulful Blues festival is back with a power-packed line-up of two of the leading women of blues, promising to make it a soul-warming, heart-stopping two days of blues and soul, with host **Brian Tellis**.

The line-up includes Best Female Blues Artist of the Year, Most Outstanding Blues Singer of the Year and Best Blues Album of 2022 artiste **Demetria Taylor** and seven-time Blues Music Award nominee **Terrie Odabi**.

16th March: Demetria Taylor

17th March: Terrie Odabi

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

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

INDIAN MUSIC



Dhananjay Hegde, 22nd March,
Experimental Theatre



Ruchira Kedar, 22nd March,
Experimental Theatre

Barasat Rang: Celebrating Holi

with Dhananjay Hegde, Ruchira Kedar & others

Experimental Theatre
Friday, 22nd March - 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Holi, a traditional festival that celebrates the advent of spring, captures the spirit of exhilaration in one's heart, whether it is the song of a young couple in love, a bride or the eternal epic love of Radha and Krishna. Above all, Holi signifies the triumph of good over evil, and therefore it is the time to celebrate with colour, music, dance and gaiety unleashed.

This recital seeks to recreate the unbounded spirit of Holi that is intrinsic to the melody, rhythms and literature of myriad genres prevalent in north India. The range of genres from classical, semi-classical to light music will depict the vibrant tones of Holi.

Initiated into music by his parents, **Dhananjay Hegde** has trained with Venkatesh Kumar and Vinayak Torvi. **Ruchira Kedar** has had the privilege of training with Dr. Alka Deo Marulkar and Ulhas Kashalkar. Additionally, she has also studied semi-classical music with Girija Devi. Representing the younger generation, both have participated in several prestigious festivals across India and overseas and are recipients of Sangeet Natak Akademi's Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar award.

Imbued with imagination, creativity and emotive expressions, this thematic presentation will include myriad compositions across genres: *khayal*, *dhamar*, *chaturang*, *thumri*, *bandish ki thumri*, *bhajan*, *abhang*, *hori*, *Awadh*

ki hori, *Shivji ki hori*, *Rasiya* and more, all portraying the fun and frolic of the festival of colours.

Tickets:

₹270 & 180/- (Members)

₹300 & 200/- (Public)

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

THEATRE

Adrak Ka Swaad

by Karunesh Talwar
Stand-up Comedy in Hinglish
(60 mins)

Experimental Theatre
Sunday, 24th March – 5.30 pm &
8.00 pm

An NCPA Off-Stage Presentation in
collaboration with Karunesh Talwar

Adrak Ka Swaad is **Karunesh Talwar's** brand new stand-up show. His idea of fun is staying indoors, watching Test cricket, consuming carbohydrates and taking naps while every other person his age wants to go out to party, drink, dance and explore nature. In this show, he makes fun of those people, one of whom he has been in a long-term relationship with. The couple moved to Goa, the unofficial capital of partying, drinking, dancing and exploring nature. So, as you can imagine, he is deeply annoyed and is coming to your city to tell you all about it.

Performed by **Karunesh Talwar**

Suggested age: 16 +

Tickets:

₹720/- (Members)

₹800/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

50 early bird tickets of ₹500/- each
per show

Box Office now open

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

SOI Chamber Orchestra Danish Chamber Players

Maria Badstue, conductor
Tata Theatre
Friday, 12th April – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Programme:

Copland: "Appalachian Spring"

Mahler: Adagietto from Symphony No. 5

Beethoven: Symphony No. 4
and more

Tickets:

₹1,080, 720 & 450/- (Members)

₹1,200, 800 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

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

SCREENING

Nabucco

by Giuseppe Verdi
Opera Screening
(Approx. 175 mins)
Godrej Dance Theatre
Saturday, 13th April – 4.00 pm

An NCPA-The Metropolitan Opera
(New York) Presentation

The success of **Giuseppe Verdi's** third opera, a stirring drama about the fall of ancient Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar "*Nabucco*", catapulted the 28-year-old composer to international fame. The music and Verdi himself were subsumed into a surge of patriotic fervour culminating in the foundation of the modern nation of Italy. Specifically, the 'Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves' also called 'Va, pensiero', in which Israelites express the longing for their homeland, came to stand for the country's aspirations for unity and that exciting era in Italian history, the *risorgimento* or resurgence. In a remarkable career spanning six decades in the theatre, Verdi composed 26 operas, at least half of which are at the core of today's repertoire. His role in Italy's cultural and political development has made him an icon in his native country. **Temistocle Solera's** libretto takes some liberties with biblical history, and the characters, other than the title role, are dramatic inventions, but the story stays close to events as they are related in Jewish scriptures: primarily Jeremiah, as well as two Kings, two Chronicles, Daniel and the Psalms. The first part takes place around the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E, with the remainder of the opera set in various locations in the city of Babylon. *Nabucco's* score, with its contrasts of the dynamic and the serene, provides an ideal frame for the personal and communal aspects of the drama. The chorus is assigned a major role, giving voice to a wide spectrum of feelings,

from terror at the beginning to despair, faith and finally bright hope. Rather than depicting a character that goes mad, as in so many other operas, Abigaille's aria reflects a personality that embodies madness through sheer malice. The opera contains a brief scene of madness for the title character, but Verdi gives more emphasis to Nabucco's return to sanity in his poignant Act IV aria 'Dio di Giuda'. The supreme example of operatic prayer, of course, is found in 'Va, pensiero'. The simplicity of the choral melody and the unity of the vocal line perfectly encapsulate the communal sentiment.

Conductor: **Daniele Callegari**

Cast: **Liudmyla Monastyrska, Maria Barakova, SeokJong Baek, George Gagnidze & Dmitry Belosselskiy**

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

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

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

Modcult

Experimental Theatre

Sunday, 14th April – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

When you have **Shreya Bhattacharya** on vocals, **Clement Rooney** on piano, **Amandeep Singh** on guitar, **Emanuel Simon** on percussion, **Mark Hartsuch / Shirish Malhotra** on flute/sax, **Arjun Chakraborty** on drums and **Avishek Dey** on upright bass, you know you're going to witness something special. This line-up of talented musicians will present jazz standards rearranged with complete acoustic instruments to give you a feel of the magic of great jazz music.

Tickets:

₹675 & 450/- (Members)

₹750 & 500/- (Public)

(Plus GST)

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

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Artie's Festival India

Experimental Theatre

Wednesday, 17th & Thursday, 18th April – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Nathan Mierdl, violin
Mathilde Borsarello, violin
Antoine Berlioz, viola
Gauthier Herrmann, cello
Jean-Michel Dayez, piano

Gauthier Herrmann discovered India in 2001 as a young solo cellist and never stopped coming back. He came soon after with his Trio con Fuoco and later with the Neemrana quartet. By then, the seeds of Artie's Festival were sown and in March 2008, the first concerts of the festival took place at the NCPA. Since then, Artie's Festival has travelled to other parts of Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf and, of course, all over Europe.

The 27th Edition of Artie's Festival at the NCPA will be presented in April 2024. The programming for the festival, always curated by Herrmann and NCPA Chairman Khushroo N. Suntook, includes well-known masterpieces, relatively less-known music and reductions of famous orchestral works.

Programme:

17th April

Beethoven: String Quartet Op. 59 No. 1 (Razumovsky No. 1)

Dvořák: Piano quintet Op. 81

Various violin and piano pieces

18th April

Beethoven: String Quartet Op. 59 No. 2 (Razumovsky No. 2)

Ravel: Piano trio

Dvořák: Notturmo Op. 40 for Strings (with members of SOI Chamber Orchestra)

Tickets:

₹720 & 450/- (Members)

₹800 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

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

DANCE

NCPA Mudra Dance Festival 2024

20th to 28th April

Mudra is an annual thematic dance festival presented by the NCPA around International Dance Day. This festival features performances centered around specific themes, making it a unique and culturally rich event. Some of the themes that *Mudra* has explored include motherhood, colours, *bhakti* poetry, animal movements in dance and heroic

women in history and mythology. *Mudra* has a history of hosting renowned dancers and choreographers who have made significant contributions to Indian classical and contemporary dance.

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

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

Spring Board

Tata Garden

Saturday, 20th & Sunday, 21st April – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Young artistes are given few platforms to showcase their talent before live audiences in theatres and auditoriums. With that in mind, the NCPA has decided to launch Spring Board, a platform to give talented musicians a sound knowledge of what goes into the making of a great performing artiste. One of the aims is to give them the tools to hone their skills as well as provide them with a purpose, direction and some exposure to situations which would hold them in good stead as future performing artistes.

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

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

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

International Jazz Day

Tata Theatre

Tuesday, 30th April – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

In Mumbai, International Jazz Day has been celebrated for the last 12 years. The 13th 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

Events at a glance

February 2024

Day	Date	Time	Event	Venue
Thu	1st	4.00 pm	Talks on Western Classical Music	Stuart-Liff Collection Library
Fri	2nd	6.15 pm		Jamshed Bhabha Theatre Museum
Thu	1st	6.30 pm	Hindustani Music Recital by Venkatesh Kumar	
Fri	2nd	7.00 pm	Symphony Orchestra of India Mendelssohn & Brahms Gergely Madaras, conductor Barry Douglas, piano	
Sat	3rd	11.30 am	NCPA-HSBC Music Workshop Securing the Future through Financial Planning and Management A free online workshop on Zoom by Sourav Chatterjee	Online
Sat	3rd	7.00 pm	Barry Douglas, piano	
Sat	3rd	7.00 pm	<i>A Perfect Murder</i> Marathi Play	TATA THEATRE
Sun	4th	5.00 pm	Finale Evening of the NCPA Mumbai Dance Season 2024	TATA THEATRE
Tue	6th	6.30 pm	<i>Sthal</i> (A Match) Marathi Film with English Subtitles	Godrej dance theatre
Tue	6th	7.00 pm	Symphony Orchestra of India Brahms & Kodály Gergely Madaras, conductor	
Wed	7th	6.00 pm	<i>Dear England</i> by James Graham Theatre Screening	Godrej dance theatre
Thu to Tue	8th to 20th	12.00 noon to 8.00 pm	Enchantment Wildlife Photography Exhibition by Madhushree and Sidharth Birla	
Fri	9th	5.00 pm	<i>Sama'a: The Mystic Ecstasy</i> Festival of Sufi Music (9th to 11th February) Screening of two documentaries by Shabnam Virmani <i>How Can I Forget? The Legend of Marui</i> and <i>Don't Fall in Love with Those Who Wander in Boats</i>	Godrej dance theatre

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

Day	Date	Time	Event	Venue
Fri	9th	6.30 pm	<i>Sufiana Safar</i> An Illustrative Talk by Dhanashree Lele	
Sat	10th	6.30 pm	<i>Ishq Fakira Da</i> Presented by 'Maati Baani' Featuring Nirali Kartik, Kartik Shah with Moorlala Marwada, Aashima Mahajan, Noor Mohammed Sodha and friends	
Sun	11th	6.30 pm	<i>Jashn-e-Bahar</i> An evening of Sufi music by Javed Ali	TATA THEATRE
Sat	10th	7.00 pm	Young Musician of the Year 2023: Syed Fateen Ahmed Western Classical Piano Recital	
Sun	11th	5.00 pm	Symphony Orchestra of India Berlioz & Saint-Saëns Martyn Brabbins, conductor Sasha Cooke, soprano	
Sun	11th	5.00 pm & 7.30 pm	<i>Babuji Dheere Chalna</i> Hindi Play	
Mon	12th	7.00 pm	Cheng ² Duo Bryan Cheng, cello Silvie Cheng, piano	Jamshed Bhabha Stage
Tue	13th	6.30 pm	TRIVENI: Fusion of Poetry, Painting and Kathak This event promises to be a celebration of emotions, stories and the power of language in verse	Godrej dance theatre
Wed	14th	4.00 pm	Talks on Western Classical Music	Stuart-Liff Collection Library
Fri	16th	6.15 pm		Jamshed Bhabha Theatre Museum
Wed	14th	7.00 pm	Valentine's Day with Ilya Serov	TATA THEATRE
Wed	14th	7.30 pm	Readings in the Shed: Letters of Love (VI) English	Godrej Sunken Garden
Thu & Fri	15th & 16th	7.30 pm	<i>Constellations</i> English Play	
Sat & Sun	17th & 18th	4.00 pm & 7.30 pm		
Fri	16th	7.00 pm	Symphony Orchestra of India Wagner, Elgar & Beethoven Martyn Brabbins, conductor Bryan Cheng, cello	

Day	Date	Time	Event	Venue	
Fri	16th	2.00 pm to 5.00 pm	Spectrum 2024 A Festival of Dances from Around the World (16th to 29th February)	Sea View Room	
Sun	18th	10.00 am to 12.00 noon	Dance Workshop by Priyadarsini Govind		
Sat	17th	3.00 pm	<i>Yavanika</i> Film Screening		Tata Theatre Foyer
Sat	17th	5.00 pm	<i>Rang</i> - Bharatanatyam by Priyadarsini Govind <i>Nava Kalevar</i> : Odissi in Contemporary Couture Odissi by Madhavi Mudgal & Troupe		TATA THEATRE
Fri	23rd	6.30 pm	<i>Ram Ratan Dhan</i> Curated by Odissi exponent Shubhada Varadkar		jb JAMSHED THEATRE
Thu	29th	6.30 pm	Contemporary Dance by Jayachandran Palazhy & Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts		EX THEATRE
Fri	16th	6.30 pm	Movies Under the Stars <i>Mildred Pierce</i> (1945) Film Screening	Tata Garden	
Sat	17th	7.00 pm	<i>Upar Wala Kamra</i> Hindi Play	Godrej dance theatre	
Sun	18th	6.00 pm & 8.00 pm	Love is in the Air Stand-up Comedy English/Hindi	Godrej dance theatre	
Thu	22nd	6.30 pm	Reality Check Documentary Film Screening	Godrej dance theatre	
Fri	23rd	6.30 pm	<i>Geet Gunjan</i> : A bouquet of Gujarati music and poetry by Parthiv Gohil, Gargi Vora & group Anchor: Nehal Gadhvi	TATA THEATRE	
Sat	24th	4.00 pm	<i>Florencia en el Amazonas</i> by Daniel Catán Opera Screening	Godrej dance theatre	
Wed to Sun	28th to 3rd Mar	12.00 noon to 8.00 pm	Wildlife Group Photo Exhibition by Mukesh Acharya, Pinkesh Tanna, Dr. Manish Nagpal, Pinal Patel, Neel Sarkhedi, Roopkumar Radhod and Palak Patel	PRAMAL art gallery	
Wed	28th	6.00 pm	<i>Vanya</i> Theatre Screening	Godrej dance theatre	

An NCPA Presentation

Finale evening of the



Our esteemed Curators

Padmashree Darshana Jhaveri

&

Dr Tushar Guha

An evening of dance based on **Bhakti Ras**

Debi Basu | Kamalika Guha Thakurata

Anand Sachidanandan & Prachi Saathi

Sujatha Nair & Renjish Nair | Gauri Sharma Tripathi

Sheetal Kapole | Ayswaria Warriar | Shubhada Varadkar

Latasana devi & Purbita Mukherjee

Bharata College of Fine Arts & Culture

Feb 4, 2024 | 5:00 pm

Tata Theatre, NCPA

Box Office: +91 22 66223754 | Book now on [book my show](#)



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This is our famous fluted bezel. A brilliant creation in many regards. Presented on our Oyster in 1926, it is remarkable first and foremost for its original design, which enabled it to be screwed tightly to the case, thus completing the waterproofness of the watch. Since 1953, however, it has been fixed on the watch by friction-fitting. One may wonder, then, why we keep it and even sharpen its distinctive geometry? The answer is simple.

While it once was merely an element among others repelling dust and water, it now lives to uniquely reflect even the slightest ray of light. Exclusively fashioned in 18 ct gold or 950 platinum, we have enhanced its fluting and finish with no less passion than that we devoted to its functional purpose. Whether at a glance or in mere reflection, all instantly recognise it as our distinctive signature feature.

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