

ON Stage



The SOI on Tour

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE U.K.

Gulzar and Shantanu Moitra

On Tagore's world of children

Danish Husain

On Sahir Ludhianvi's legacy

Nick Payne's Constellations

A physicist's analysis

for the love of

celebrating the magic of music.

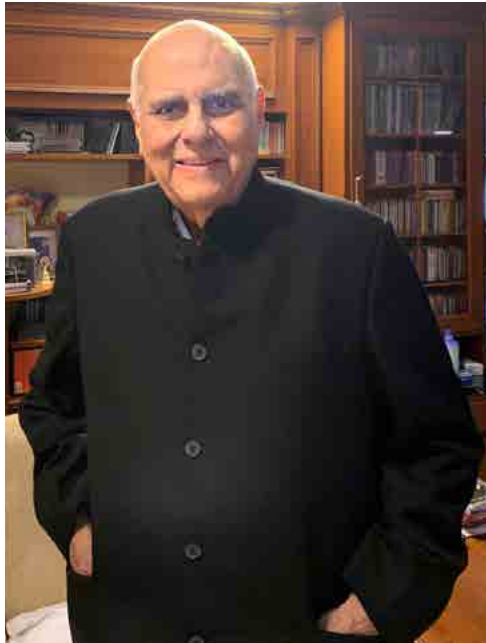
for the love of progress.



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



The season is upon us. Not only has our orchestra returned from a visit to a freezing U.K. but covered itself with glory and accolades from the British press, largely on account of the excellence of its playing and of course the soloists and the great Indian trio—Zakir Hussain, Niladri Kumar and Rakesh Chaurasia.

As we move forward with our offerings in 2024, the Citi NCPA *Aadi Anant* Festival will celebrate Rabindranath Tagore through Gulzar's translation of his poems. The festival will also travel to Delhi, taking our Indian music curation to audiences in the capital.

The event of the month is probably the visit of Herbie Hancock, the legendary jazz musician and composer, to Mumbai. I can understand the wide-eyed expectation of his listeners.

The month-long Mumbai Dance Season has been bringing the city's dance fraternity together. Our theatre programming has been a good blend of international and local presentations.

Today, we are flooded with ideas and events which follow these ideas, and such is the situation that celebrated artistes galore are visiting us.

Let me congratulate our genre leaders who are fulfilling the vision of our founding fathers. It is now our intention to move ahead with more vigour and more ambitious plans, and insistence on a scientific approach to the growth of their art has already been communicated to the heads of genres. This will be followed by unfolding our plans to our council which is being strengthened by the inclusion of several prominent figures.

May we prosper similarly in the future. It all depends on you, dear friends. I hope you had a merry Christmas. Here's wishing you a happy New Year!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. N. Suntook".

Khushroo N. Suntook

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Contents



Features

06

On a High Note

The Symphony Orchestra of India's recent tour of the U.K. was met with great enthusiasm and critical acclaim. With its level of playing having wowed critics across England and Scotland, India's only professional orchestra is proving the country's prowess in Western classical music on the global stage.

12

In Awe of Little Humans

Rabindranath Tagore's poems on childhood are as precious as childhood itself. Through Gulzar's delicate translation of the verses set to Shantanu Moitra's tender music, the world of the child will evoke nostalgia and tickle, cheer and surprise audiences at the Citi NCPA Aadi Anant Festival.
By Snigdha Hasan

16

Globalising Movement

At the NCPA's *Lok Gatha*, Belgian dancers will showcase transnational artistic learnings echoing the philosophical dimensions of Indian folk and classical traditions.
By Aishwarya Sahasrabudhe

20

In the Spotlight

Ten schools. Ten directors. Ten plays. The second edition of the youth theatre programme *Connections India*, in association with the National Theatre in London, is all set for a grand showcase at the NCPA this January. Hear from the students as they gear up for the final performances.

22

Cool Standards and Hot Improvisations

An overview of what transpired at this year's edition of the NCPA International Jazz Festival.
By Sunil Sampat

26

The Many Worlds of Marianne and Roland

A beekeeper and a theoretical physicist. One relationship. Infinite possibilities. Nick Payne's *Constellations* ventures into an area where few theatrical productions have and brings quantum mechanics to the stage through the interplay of string theory, the multiverse, choice and love. *Basudeb Dasgupta*, a theoretical physicist, explores the script and its many worlds.

30

Brilliance, Manifold

The SOI Spring 2024 Season brims with the beauty of orchestral music featuring the return of beloved artistes and the India debut of a Grammy Award-winning mezzo-soprano, a celebrated conductor, and a masterful cellist. We speak to Gergely Madaras, Sasha Cooke and Bryan Cheng ahead of their debut at the NCPA.

By Beverly Pereira

34

A Poet for Every Moment

Danish Husain's new play on the life of the Hindi film lyricist and Urdu poet, Sahir Ludhianvi, showcases the complexities of a man who had a timeless sense of rhyme, rhythm and justice.

By Vidhi Salla

38

Subverting Conventions

In conversation with pianist Kunal Lahiry who innovates and inspires with unusual ease.

By Akshaya Pillai

42

Scaling New Heights

With a sweeping victory across multiple categories at an international competition in Dubai, students of the SOI Music Academy bring home laurels and memories.



44

44

Art for Art's Sake

Notes on Mumbai's maiden art fair, Art Mumbai.

By Aishwarya Bodke

48

Performing Arts: Dance

Manipuri dance artiste *Dr. Bimbavati Devi* writes about the process and churning that went into adapting the repertoire of Manipuri performing arts to portray the resistance and agency of women in a unique dance production.

49

For the Record

Jimmy Bilimoria, who oversees the NCPA's Stuart-Liff Collection, writes about Toti Dal Monte, one of the great sopranos of the early 20th century.

50

Kaleidoscope

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

51

Recommended Volume

In this section dedicated to the

NCPA Reference Library, *Dr. Shefali Balsari-Shah* recommends an anthology of works related to the cinema of Bombay/Mumbai.

52

The Unknown History of Kathak

In *Kathak Lok: Temple, Tradition and History*, Kathak exponent *Shovana Narayan* and former IAS officer, now writer and researcher, *Geetika Kalha* visited numerous 'Kathak' villages across the country in search of Kathak Lok, a widespread community of hereditary practitioners of the form. In the process—which took five years of fieldwork and 7,000 kilometres of travel—they unearthed stories of faith, knowledge and devotion that shatter many pre-conceived notions associated with the form.

54

Archives: A Collision of Cultures

In the last part of a three-part series, writer and dramaturg *Rustom Bharucha* discusses certain Western interpretations of Indian theatre, demonstrated by artistes and scholars as varied as Gordon Craig, Jerzy Grotowski and Richard Schechner.

58

Programme Guide

A guide to all the events happening at the NCPA in January.

70

What's Next

What to expect in the following months.

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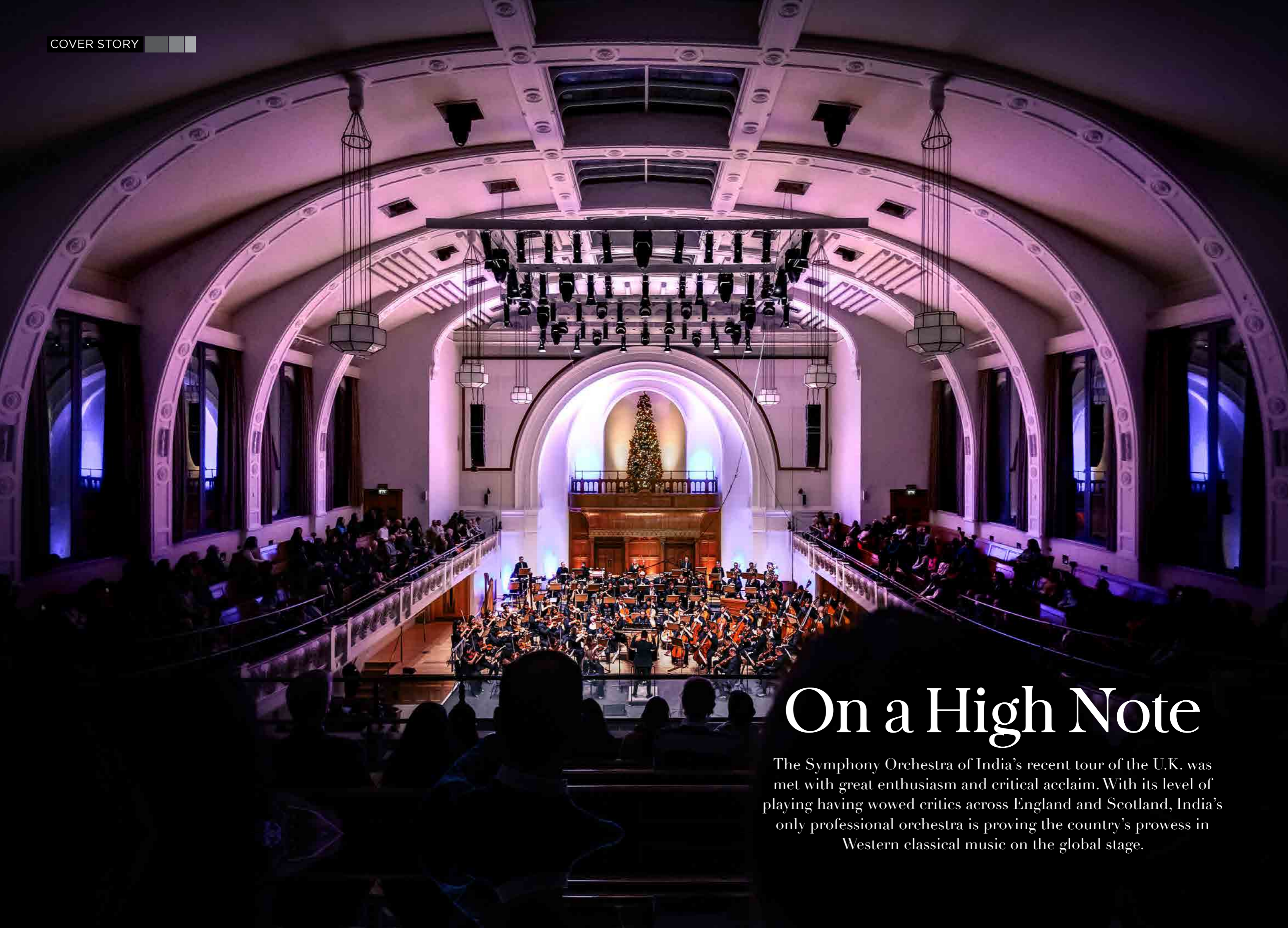


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We look forward to your feedback and suggestions. Please do drop us an email at onstage@ncpamumbai.com.



On a High Note

The Symphony Orchestra of India's recent tour of the U.K. was met with great enthusiasm and critical acclaim. With its level of playing having wowed critics across England and Scotland, India's only professional orchestra is proving the country's prowess in Western classical music on the global stage.



“SOI was founded in 2006 by its chairman Khushroo N Suntook and tonight’s soloist violinist Marat Bisengaliev ... I went to the concert largely out of curiosity and I’m very glad I did because the quality was outstanding... [Bisengaliev] doesn’t go in for showy gestures. He just plays every note [of the Khachaturian Violin Concerto]—and there are a lot of them—with insouciant accuracy and warmth. I particularly admired the bassoon and whispering violas in the second movement and the way the first violins shaped their notes at their entry before the solo muted line from Bisengaliev which was evocative and richly mysterious.

– Susan Elkin, veteran critic and former Education and Training Editor at *The Stage*

Marat Bisengaliev



“It takes decades for an orchestra to finally settle into form, but it is clear that this orchestra now has real depth of tone and strikingly good individual players. In Strauss’s *Rosenkavalier* Suite, the leader (i.e. principal violinist) Adelina Hasani found the swooning, sugary heart of the music, and in Stravinsky’s *Petrushka*, principal trumpeter Adan Delgado conjured up the ghost of the dead puppet with piercing clarity. Horn player Bernardo Cifres showed off the kind of soulful vibrato one used to hear in Soviet-era Russian orchestras.”

– Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*



“This was undeniably a work of great virtuosity with the solo trio very much the focus of the action. The orchestra felt under-used during the first movement, providing the odd splash of colour and structural punctuation. The central movement gave them more to do, with some nice big tunes. It was, however, a bit bland and cliched. The final movement had more bite with layered orchestral texturing, and some moments of real dramatic tension. The work built to a rousing conclusion. The audience went wild.”

– David Gray and Paul Gray, *ReviewsGate*



“You feel blessed to have heard the [Parsifal] suite performed by an orchestra of such supreme talent, and well-deserved rapturous applause fills Butterworth Hall for a considerable amount of time at the suite’s magnificent conclusion.”

– David Court, *Elementary Whats On*



Richard Farnes

“India’s only professional orchestra, here on the first date of a UK tour, has plenty of character and fine musicians...”

Richard Farnes was the conductor for the opening, whose programme was not at all the hackneyed selection of popular works that touring orchestras so often seem to think is the only way to make an impression with British audiences.”

– Andrew Clements, *The Guardian*



“[Alpesh Chauhan] helped the orchestra find its groove at last in a terrifically exciting performance of Stravinsky’s *Petrushka* that featured that bright, multitextured colour for the fair scenes, and a creepy sense of the macabre for the puppets.”

– Simon Thompson, *The Times*



“In the final movement, with its compressed energy and mounting sense of ecstasy, what stood out for me was the phenomenal playing at speed of Kumar’s sitar and also the haunting quality which Chaurasia brought to the bansuri. To my western ears, used to counterpoint and conflicts played out within the orchestra, it was a novel experience hearing such fusion between two different worlds of musical expression that culminated in a sense of peace and contentment.”

– Alexander Hall, *Bachtrack*

Some members of the team that made it possible (from left) Onay Zhumabayeva, Nandita Anjaria, Edward Smith, Brinda Khatau, Bianca Mendonca, Xerxes Unvala, Farrahnaz Irani



“While western orchestras writhe in self-doubt, over in Mumbai – a city that practically defines the term ‘diversity’ – the SOI is pushing ahead with its mission to play the western classics without apology. There’s something to be said for believing in what you do.”

– Richard Bratby, *The Spectator*

In Awe of Little Humans

Rabindranath Tagore's poems on childhood are as precious as childhood itself. Through Gulzar's delicate translation of the verses set to Shantanu Moitra's tender music, the world of the child will evoke nostalgia and tickle, cheer and surprise audiences at the Citi NCPA Aadi Anant Festival.

By Snigdha Hasan

It is not easy to inhabit the world of a child. Inquisitiveness is just around the corner, for the young mind is always grappling with the bizarre rules of adults. There is unabashed candour because the fear of consequences is still unknown. Untainted innocence, for there is no room for pretence. An unworldly way of looking at the world which, for many, fades with time. Tagore was a gurgling exception who let the child within coexist with the polymath. He wrote his first poem when he was eight and in his middle age, as if in renewed admiration of childhood, published *Shishu*, a collection of poems on a child's world written with such sensitivity, it dissolves all barriers of age.

I find my answer to the deceptive effortless of leaving behind one's baggage of adulthood in another of Tagore's works, 'Poet's Age':

*It is a trifle that my hair is turning grey.
I am ever as young or as old as
the youngest and the oldest of this village.*

Or,

*Mere pakne lage hain baal, par un par nazar kyon hai?
Mohalle ke jawano aur buzurgo mein,
Sabhi ki umra ka, hamumra hoon main.*

This translation by Gulzar is not just a fine example of his mastery of language but his endorsement of the malleability of the poet. How otherwise could Gulzar have embarked on the task of opening up the pearls of *Shishu* strung together in Bangla to readers of Hindustani through his endearing transcreation, *Nindiya Chor*?

"Understanding Tagore has been a lifelong process," says the celebrated poet-lyricist and filmmaker on a balmy afternoon in late November at his residence, where he is joined by well-known composer Shantanu Moitra. As the flow of creativity goes, six of Tagore's 30 poems on the world of the child that Gulzar translated have now been adorned with music by Moitra. The unique outcome, *Tapur Tupur* (pitter patter), will be presented at the *Aadi Anant* festival at the NCPA in January. Reverence for each other's processes of translation and composition, and an abiding love for the Bard of Bengal has brought the two minds together, not for the first time.

Little bursts of joy and poignancy await the reader in Gulzar's choice of words, starting with the titles of the poems in *Nindiya Chor/The Crescent Moon* (Harper Perennial, 2016), a rare compilation of poems in Bangla, English (both versions by Tagore) and Hindustani.

'Defamation/Apayash' becomes 'Nuktacheeni'. 'Vocation', on the child's desire to embrace every profession he has ever come across, gets a touch of Ghalib with 'Hazaaron Khwahishein Aisi'. Tagore expresses a father's amazement at the simplicity of his child's playtime with: 'In my frill canoe I struggle to cross the sea of desire/and forget that I too am playing a game.' In Gulzar's alchemy, it becomes: 'Ichchha mein tair ke ichchha hi mein laut ke fir se/ Apni naav bahata hoon.'

The overwhelming feeling that there couldn't have been a better Hindi equivalent which greets the reader emanates from Gulzar's journey with Gurudev,



Gulzar

since the day he borrowed his book from a local library as a schoolboy. “In the course of life, when I started appreciating Bangla in the company of Bengali friends—and there is nary a Bengali who hasn’t read Tagore—I realised that the Urdu translation that introduced me to Tagore and the many I came across later were not good enough. Thus began the quest for better translations. I soon knew I wanted to present to people Tagore’s poems translated from the Bangla, not English,” recalls Gulzar, who had also started translating Kusumagraj and Dilip Chitre from Marathi into Hindustani. “By this time, I had learnt Bangla, so I could understand the meaning but the feel for the words still evaded me. Every language has its own culture, after all. To translate into Hindi and Urdu, I had to evaluate my own linguistic prowess and determine if my Hindustani had the strength to be worthy of Tagore. To arrive at the hope that this may turn out to be all right took a good 80 years.”

Trepidation can indeed be a rewarding emotion. A few years ago, Moitra collaborated with Gulzar to give music to *Baaghban/The Gardener*, another collection of Tagore’s poems that the lyricist had translated. For Moitra, composing music for something of this

“To translate into Hindi and Urdu, I had to evaluate my own linguistic prowess and determine if my Hindustani had the strength to be worthy of Tagore. To arrive at the hope that this may turn out to be all right took a good 80 years”

nature had had no precedent in his career spanning several decades in the music industry. “*Gulzar in Conversation with Tagore* took us four years. First came the question of which poems to choose. You see, Tagore was a composer too, so we only picked those poems that he hadn’t given music to himself. I would then work on the original in Bangla, come up with a composition, bring it to Gulzar Saab and he would then take his translation to fit it in with the music. We kept chiselling at the words and music until the poetry transformed into lyrics,” he shares, before taking a moment to dwell on the luxury of deliberation the project came with. “This is unbelievable, especially from the world of films and albums that we come from. There is no scope for such a process because I write the tune for Gulzar Saab’s own words or he writes the lyrics for my music. Here’s a third character in this story who towers over all of us. As you can tell, this was a daunting task.”

This prior experience helped shape *Tapur Tupur*. Gulzar attributes the trilingual possibilities of the book, which forms the foundation of the programme they will present at the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre, to publisher Udayan Mitra. Sanchari Mookherji, who worked

“Tagore was not a child but an adult when he wrote these poems. I always feel that these are not children’s poems. These are for adults, telling us that we need to learn from children ... And this is why there will be kids onstage, but it is mainly adults who will sing—Shaan, Mahalakshmi Iyer, Rekha Bhardwaj”

closely with Gulzar in the process of translation, was introduced to him by Moitra. The composer uses the Bangla word *aantarik* (hearty/cordial) to describe the bond among people who have become a part of this project.

For Gulzar, the bond with Tagore has followed its own trajectory. He illustrates the idea with another literary example. “When I first read Premchand’s ‘Eidgah’ in school, my eyes welled up, for it reminded me of my mother’s reddened wrists while making rotis in the *tandoor*. In college, I read it through the lens of village life and poverty. Much later, while making a film on it, I got a grasp of the economics of the country through ‘Eidgah’. This is also what happens when you approach a poem at different times in life. Your knowledge of and through it grows too.”

When he was at ease with Tagore’s verses, Gulzar helped put Moitra at ease too. “One day, Gulzar Saab told me, ‘Imagine we are in Gurudev’s company. Let

him hear the *dhun* you have brought. We are doing his work. His approval is important.’ And immediately, the perspective changed. Tagore was not traditional. He had broken every wall in his lifetime. Why should I feel tied down to a structure? That process for me was life-changing,” reveals Moitra.

Tagore had some favourite notes and instruments. Moitra kept those in mind. The preludes and interludes are an ode to Rabindra Sangeet and everything else flows from there. The 90 minutes of *Tapur Tupur* will include songs interspersed with Gulzar’s sonorous recitation of poems and recounting of anecdotes, some of which he generously shares with us on the November afternoon that segues into his own poems for his grandson. There is mirth and laughter and a very tangible thread that ties together Gurudev, Gulzar and the world of a child. “You have to be involved with children. You have to be interested in their world,” he says.

“Tagore was not a child but an adult when he wrote these poems. I always feel that these are not children’s poems. These are for adults, telling us that we need to learn from children. They are a reminder of that innocence. And this is why there will be kids onstage, but it is mainly adults who will sing—Shaan, Mahalakshmi Iyer, Rekha Bhardwaj,” Moitra says. “This evening is very special to me, and I am sure to Gulzar Saab too. Because we are paying tribute to the great Tagore. And through Tagore and the topic of children, we will get to know ourselves and the world a little better.” ■

Tapur Tupur: Bachche, Bachpan aur Bachpana will be presented on 7th January at the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre.



Shantanu Moitra

GLOBALISING MOVEMENT

At the NCPA's *Lok Gatha*, Belgian dancers will showcase transnational artistic learnings echoing the philosophical dimensions of Indian folk and classical traditions.

By Aishwarya Sahasrabudhe



In socio-political parlance, Sati is a designation for the 'virtuous' widow, whose sole duty is self-sacrifice. But the contemplations of renowned Kathak artiste, Shila Mehta, tell us a different story. Through the production, *Women Speak*, the danseuse delves into Indian literary traditions from the sixth century B.C. and extracts the figure of Mahasati to flip a misconstrued perspective. Instead, she reveals a powerful woman embodying devotion, courage and an indomitable spirit.

To be presented in January 2024 at the NCPA's *Lok Gatha* festival, this harmonious blend of Kathak and folk art will be staged on a platform created exclusively to highlight folk cultures of India that have sustained centuries of upheavals, much like the resilient image of the Mahasati. The production is also illustrative of the stunning results of global collaborative endeavours

between the Kathak exponent and her senior disciple Maya Sapera, coupled with the contributions of Belgium-based dramaturges Lisi Estaras and Koen Augustijnen.

An exemplary choreographer and danseuse, Sapera ferried Rajasthani folk styles into Belgium and founded the Maya Sapera Dance Company nearly two decades ago to teach, expound and propagate Indian musical and dance traditions. Along with *Women Speak*, she will bring to *Lok Gatha*, Belgian artistes performing two folk styles, *Kalbelia* and *Terataali*.

LEARNING FOLK

Sapera learnt *Kalbelia* in the true spirit of imbibing folk art "by watching and trying". Today, cultural traditions can be disseminated and absorbed around the world quite easily, but when she studied *Kalbelia* over 20 years ago, it was by playing a single VHS tape over and over again in Ghent and travelling to Jodhpur to dance with *Kalbelia* singer and dancer, Asha Sapera and the Khatu family of practising artistes.

The folk dance is integral to the culture of the snake-charming *Kalbelia* tribe, whose elegant swaying motions resemble the serpents they worship. Women artistes swing to the *pungi* and the rhythmic beats of *dafli* to narrate folklore and mythological stories even as the tribe as a whole reconfigures its shifting social roles in Rajasthan's rural economies.

With *Terataali*, the artiste will present a vibrant showcase of dancers moving to the notes of the *ektara*, their bodies adorned with 13 cymbals producing lilting rhythms as they delicately balance tall columns of earthen pots atop their heads

"*Kalbelia* is living heritage," Sapera opines, "So, you really can develop your own style," and in keeping with the essence of the folk idiom, her practice is imbued with her distinct interpretations of a tradition epitomising "inner power, femininity and grounding".

Sapera has worked closely with Rajasthani *Kalbelia* performers to popularise this form globally. According to her, preserving folk cultures is possible only by keeping them alive and enabling them to evolve. "Nowadays, I see influences from oriental dance in *Kalbelia*," she notes, which can potentially enhance the art's sublimity as long as its essence is retained.

Through her dance productions, Sapera has achieved this global cultural confluence while foregrounding the

core of the folk form. With *Terataali* too, the artiste will present a vibrant showcase of dancers moving to the notes of the ektara, their bodies adorned with 13 manjiras (cymbals) producing lilting rhythms as they delicately balance tall columns of earthen pots atop their heads.

IMPARTING CULTURE

A cultural knowledge transfer from Rajasthan's dunes to a dance studio in Ghent is hardly without challenges. Indian dance, Sapera explains, is still often viewed as an exotic practice and it is only when the "tangible benefits" of dedicated learning become apparent that its perception moves beyond oriental allure. But for Sapera, learning Kathak or *Kalbélia* is a nourishing, transformative journey for the soul. She explains, "In a society often dominated by rational thinking, the emotional and spiritual dimensions of Indian dance offer a much-needed counterbalance."

Yet, what makes knowledge transfer a complicated process is a tendency to locate a sense of religiosity, particularly in imparting classical dance. "Our hero of dance is Krishna, and the Lord of dance is Shiva," Mehta points out. Indian classical art forms are multilayered and multi-textured. So, at their core, classical traditions are symbolic and peeling through those depths reveals a philosophical and intellectual dimension that transcends the "direct implications of the story".

Discovering this consciousness of invoking the supreme enables a successful cross-border cultural exchange so that teaching Belgian dancers the *teentaal* is first about connecting them to the intellectualism of art and only then exploring the science of the *taal* cycle.

For the Belgian artistes performing in *Women Speak*, bringing the story of Chandanbala to the stage is about recognising what the woman from that age and part of the world has to say, and asking the question, 'Does that woman also exist here?'

SPIRITUAL CONNECT

With a career spanning over 35 years, Mehta has often witnessed this spiritual link unfurl while teaching Kathak at several centres, including her Mumbai-based Nupur Zankar Academy and Sapera's dance company in Ghent.

Before she first narrated the story of Mahasati Chandanbala to her Belgian students, Mehta had hesitated. Jain philosophy extols the virtues of the 16 Mahasatis, of which Chandanbala was one. In the



Maya Sapera



Shila Mehta

sixth century B.C., during the time of Vardhamana Mahavira, one of the supreme preachers of Jainism, the king and queen of Champapuri had a daughter named Vasumati. Her transformation from Princess Vasumati to Chandanbala, arguably the first nun in the history of Jainism, inspired Mehta because her life story exemplified the principles of Jainism and portrayed that if we face the challenges and miseries of life with a positive attitude, we can overcome them and elevate ourselves. Mehta wondered how far this story would resonate with Western artistes, but she recalls that after she finished the narration, they were overwhelmed.

For the Belgian artistes, bringing the story of Chandanbala to the stage is then about recognising what the woman from that age and part of the world has to say, and asking the question, 'Does that woman also exist here?' First staged in 2016, Mehta elaborates that during its production, Chandanbala's story quickly morphed into a tale of universal womanhood. Discovering uniformity of emotion, this was a quest to untangle layers of suffering—of desire, anger, greed—and to reach purity inherent to the human soul. This spiritual undertaking involved "un-layering" such proclivities to make a woman "stronger and stronger", just like Chandanbala, who turned her challenges into her strengths. So, even as Mahasati remained the underlying spiritual inspiration, Mehta and Sapera integrated her philosophical journey with Kathak, folk music and Western sensibilities infused by talented dramaturges to birth *Women Speak* as a story transcending territorial boundaries.

Undoubtedly, there were the more tangible challenges involved, Mehta notes, one being the "*navkar mantra*" or an incantation in Prakrit sung in the production. This technical component involved teaching Belgian artistes how to sing the mantra in an ancient Indian language.

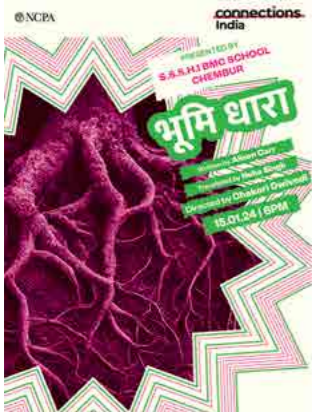
Introducing elements of Kathak into folk art was another creative exercise. However, the malleability of Kathak made it exceedingly compatible with folk sounds, live music and even long silences. Mehta, whose learnings are shaped by legendary gurus like Birju Maharaj and Suresh Talwalkar, notes that Kathak is a sophisticated dance style, its natural form evident in its poised posture. It is also the only classical style in which the *taal* is performed, creating an articulate language of dance. This uniform rhythm allows several sensibilities to find their place in Kathak and makes it a style that can be entwined with other dances to tell a compelling story. *Women Speak* has been lauded by artistes and critics, including the late dance historian and scholar Sunil Kothari who said, "This lavish production has narrative which smoothly flows and keeps audience engaged from the beginning till the end."

Evidently, with *Women Speak*, *Terataali* and *Kalbélia* set to be showcased at *Lok Gatha*, what this *guru-shishya* duo will bring to Indian audiences is a striking collaboration among cultures, delivering globalised interpretations of ancient Indian literature and dance traditions.

Lok Gatha will be presented on 25th January at the Experimental Theatre. ■

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Ten schools. Ten directors. Ten plays. The second edition of the youth theatre programme Connections India, in association with the National Theatre in London, is all set for a grand showcase at the NCPA this January. Hear from the students as they gear up for the final performances.



Connections allowed me to be a different person on stage, to live another life. For me, rehearsals were the most exciting part of the journey. Be it the games we played to break the ice and get in character or the hours of practice. We all worked as a team to bring meaning to the play. There were no adults and children or one superior to another. Everyone learnt from each other.

Rutuja Nandgaonkar
(Akanksha Foundation)

One of the biggest things I learnt that goes hand in hand with acting is empathy. Playing a character I did not understand at first made it difficult to express myself with conviction. However, putting myself in her shoes reminded me of the importance of empathy, not only for an actor but also for us as human beings. Not to mention cooperation and collaboration within a group.

As I return to the festival for its second year, I remember clearly: standing on the stage as the lights came on, claps echoing and smiles all around as we took our bows. I knew then that I wanted to do it again.

Sanaa Dharamshi
(Aditya Birla World Academy)

It was so special learning from our director, Rasika Agashe. I learnt how difficult it is to put on a play from scratch. It was all very exciting.

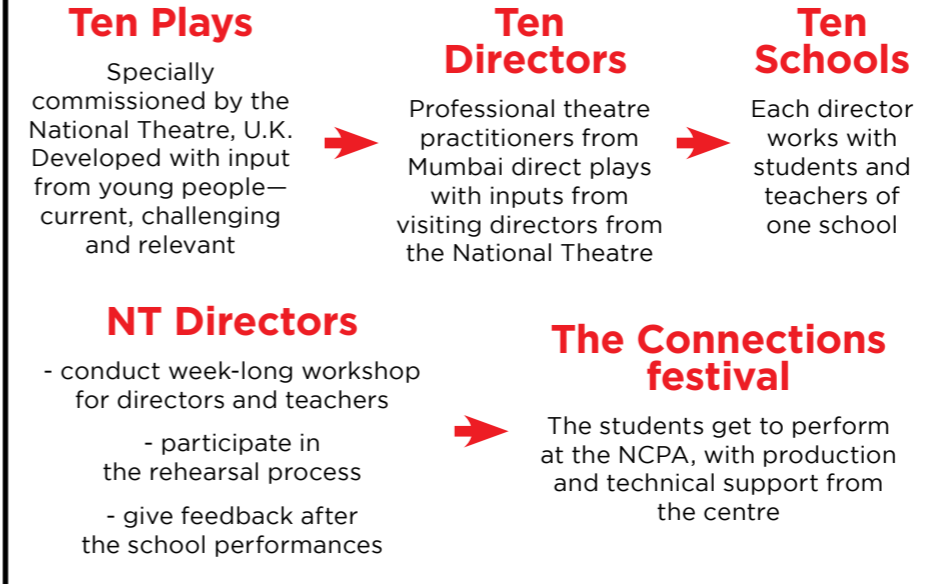
Gokul Jha
(Kherwadi Mumbai Public School, Aseema)

Our play, *The Changing Room*, is like an insight into the mind of a teenager, as though all our thoughts and feelings have been put into words. Each section of the play represents a different stage of dealing with these new emotions and finally owning them. This is quite different from a school play because the emotions portrayed come from instances I can relate to. It's like I'm telling the story of my life.

It is my second year of participation and this time, I learnt more about singing and being more confident and social. During rehearsals, we shared stories from our own lives and got to know each other better. It helped us grow closer as a group, which also helped with our dynamic onstage.

Skye Shenoy
(Institute of Classical and Modern Dance)

THE PROCESS



It has been an exhilarating journey putting the entire act together, right from the warm-up and the games we played before rehearsals to the very last scene. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience being onstage at the NCPA last year and I look forward to performing again. We usually perform for our classmates and teachers at school, so we cannot wait to take the stage in front of a larger audience.

Anjali Jaiswal
(Angel Xpress)

I came back to Connections this year because not only did I get to be part of a performance on a larger scale and platform but also got the opportunity to connect with people I normally would not interact much with. I built lasting friendships.

I recall missing the school assembly to eat cake after our final rehearsal. These are moments we will never forget. The most exciting part of the process, though, was the final day. Everyone was in their costumes, the hall had been done up for the show, music was playing in the background, and we were waiting in nervous excitement for the audience to trickle in. It was exhilarating to see the result of months of work.

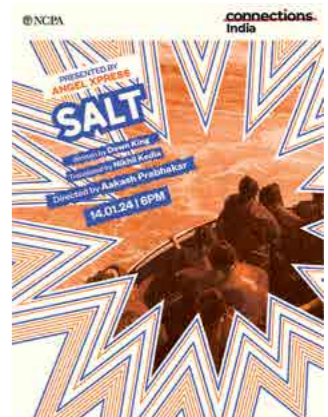
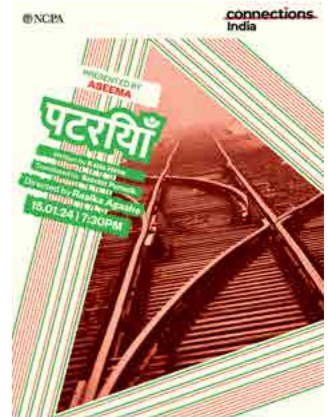
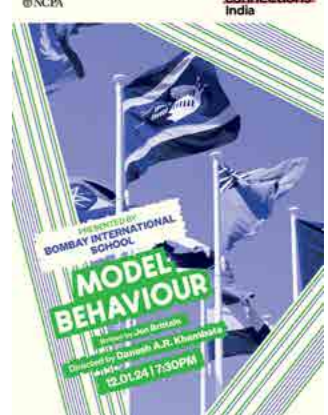
Shiraz Aga
(Bombay International School)

The play we are performing is called *Tuesday* and it taught me things I did not know about. I have performed in school plays, but Connections allowed me to do things I had never tried. Picking team members for backstage work like lighting, making props and designing costumes was also very interesting. It was cool to see everyone's different talents and make decisions together. My favourite part, though, would be the breaks. The word break was the most satisfying thing to hear.

Chaitanya Dangeti
(Shree Geeta Vidyalaya School, Teach for India)

Our play, *Mobile Phone Show*, is simply out of the ordinary. It gives you immense liberty with the haikus, the characters, the choreography.... All of our characters have different quirks, making them truly individual. I find it quite enthralling. Apart from having the opportunity to let my acting flourish, I realised the importance of deadlines, commitment and teamwork.

Costanza Marri Gasque
(DSB International School/ Deutsche Schule Bombay)



Connections India will be presented from 11th to 15th January at the Experimental Theatre.

Cool Standards and Hot Improvisations

An overview of what transpired at this year's edition of the NCPA International Jazz Festival.

By Sunil Sampat

The NCPA Jazz Festival 2023, presented from 24th to 26th November at the Tata Theatre, featured artistes from the U.S., Germany, Cuba, Spain and Canada, in keeping with the international flavour the genre represents. A fair cross section of styles of jazz were part of the festival, including a big band, Cuban (Latin) jazz, the great American songbook and a piano-led quartet, which catered to the varied tastes of the discerning Mumbai audiences.

* * *

A big band has a powerful, wholesome sound but staging such an outfit involves considerable logistics and expense. Such bands are thus a luxury and make

only rare appearances at jazz festivals. The NCPA brought the 16-member Thilo Wolf Big Band from Germany as the opening act of its International Jazz Festival. The band comprised three trumpets, three trombones, four saxophones plus the rhythm section of the leader, Thilo Wolf on piano, an upright bass and drums. Two vocalists and a vibraphone player were added on for the event. They set the mood for their set by opening with Billy Strayhorn's classic 'Take the "A" Train' followed by Wolf's composition 'Captain Cook', an up-tempo piece with a nice beat. Norbert Nagel played a pleasing clarinet solo on this piece.

The vibraphone is a rarity in contemporary jazz, and it was a pleasant surprise to hear one featured with the band. Florian Bührich played 'It Had to be You' and Henry Mancini's 'Charade' from the film of the same name.



Alfredo Rodriguez



Emmet Cohen



Jane Monheit

A big band has a powerful, wholesome sound but staging such an outfit involves considerable logistics and expense, making them rare at jazz festivals ... the NCPA brought the 16-member Thilo Wolf Big Band from Germany as the opening act of its International Jazz Festival



The Thilo Wolf Big Band with vocalists Johanna Iser and Torsten Goods, and Florian Bührich on the vibraphone

A jazz big band typically has a vocalist in tow. Wolf brought two. Johanna Iser, who accompanied Wolf on a previous visit here, sang two jazz classics, 'When I Fall in Love' and Duke Ellington's 'It Don't Mean a Thing' with a clever vocal riff from Woody Herman's famous 'Four Brothers' thrown in. At this point, the band, powered as it were by an eight-cylinder powerful engine, shifted into third gear and played some untypical big band jazz with some pop songs. A second vocalist, Torsten Goods, was also part of the ensemble. The duo sang 'Sunny', a popular song from the 1960s and '70s. Goods then sang Van Morrison's 'Have I Told You Lately' and Iser sang a Stevie Wonder song. Goods brought out his guitar and did George Benson's funky version of 'On Broadway' and the entire ensemble then combined to play Wolf's composition 'Masala Coke', which has a nice blues feel about it. Overall, this was an enjoyable set but perhaps tapering off into music which did not fully utilise the big band sound.

* * *

New Orleans may have been the place where jazz was born but it lives quite vibrantly in New York. The 24 square miles of Manhattan has arguably the best jazz anywhere. Emmet

Cohen and his quartet amply demonstrated this vibrancy. Cohen is a fine young jazz pianist who combines his skill with a deep knowledge and respect for the long history of jazz and its players. Backed by Philip Norris on acoustic bass and the brilliant Kyle Poole on drums, Cohen began his set, warming up with a couple of fluid trio renditions before inviting the fourth band member, Benny Benack III, to join the proceedings. Benack is a vocalist and trumpet player. Beginning with 'Old Devil Moon', Benack sang very clever, seemingly improvised lyrics on Duke Ellington's 'In a Mellow Tone'. After the standard 'What's New', Benack dug into Billy Joel's 'Just the Way You Are'.

Charlie Parker's 'Barbados', rarely heard in recent times, was given a slow, Latin treatment with Benack playing the trumpet, after which he broke into a Christmas song. Benack again turned to vocalese where he manipulated the lyrics to the jazz standard 'Pennies from Heaven'. His version was a tongue-in-cheek 'Bennie's from Heaven', and the humour was not lost on the audience.

The high point of the session was Cohen's composition, 'You Already Know', played with

Emmet Cohen and his quartet amply demonstrated the vibrancy of jazz from New York. Cohen is a fine young jazz pianist who combines his skill with a deep knowledge and respect for the long history of jazz and its players

Benack on the trumpet. An upbeat improvisation, this rendition displayed the individual skills of the quartet, with delicate exchanges between Cohen and his sophisticated and understated drummer Poole who seemed to be working as if by telepathy to match the beats. Bassist Philip Norris amply demonstrated subtlety in his playing throughout. He led the playing of the old standard 'Tea for Two' with support from Cohen and Poole.

* * *



The Alfredo Rodriguez Trio was one of two bands that performed on the last day. The band members were Michael Olivera from Cuba on drums and Jesús Bachiller from Spain on bass guitar. Rodriguez is a talented pianist with a floral style and his Latin jazz roots are considerably influenced by music from Puerto Rico, Latin pop and salsa apart from his native Cuba. The trio played original compositions 'Yemaya' and 'Coral Way' and involved the audience in the singing of the standard 'Bésame Mucho' from Consuelo Velasquez.

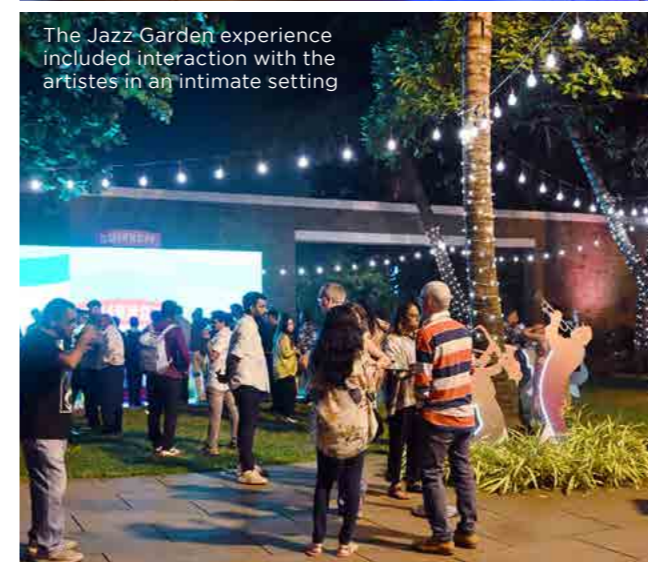
They later played their version of Michael Jackson's 'Thriller'. The connection was the arranger Quincy Jones, who has mentored Rodriguez and was associated with Jackson's landmark album of the same name. The trio also played some popular tunes made famous by Cuban bands, including 'The Peanut Vendor' and 'Guantanamera' to conclude an eclectic set of music.

American vocalist Jane Monheit closed the festival with a string of songs from the mainstream American songbook. Acknowledging the influence of Ella Fitzgerald in her singing, Monheit sang 'Too

The Alfredo Rodriguez Trio



The Jazz Garden experience included interaction with the artistes in an intimate setting



'Close for Comfort', 'Honeysuckle Rose', 'Over the Rainbow', 'Cheek to Cheek' and a couple of Brazilian songs including 'Waters of March', among others. She had an impressive quartet of musicians in support, with Max Haymer on piano, Karl McComas-Reichl on upright bass, Rick Montalbano on drums and the fine tenor saxophone of Joel Frahm. The saxophone complemented Monheit's singing perfectly.

The festival was played to full houses on all three days, a testament to the popularity and success of the NCPA International Jazz Festival which has been a regular feature of Mumbai's music scene since 2011. ■

The Many Worlds OF Marianne AND Roland

A beekeeper and a theoretical physicist. One relationship. Infinite possibilities. Nick Payne's *Constellations* ventures into an area where few theatrical productions have and brings quantum mechanics to the stage through the interplay of string theory, the multiverse, choice and love. **Basudeb Dasgupta**, a theoretical physicist, explores the script and its many worlds.

Constellations is a captivating portrayal of the human condition on the stage of a bubbling multiverse, inviting audiences to ponder on its profound consequences. Moving back and forth in time and exploring multiple realities, it animates themes of love, free will and the nature of existence in a radically expanded reality. Throughout the play, Marianne and Roland revisit pivotal moments in their relationship, repeating scenes with slight variations, each iteration hinting at divergent paths and a multitude of possibilities.

As a theoretical physicist myself, I cannot help but think more about it. How closely does the multiverse of *Constellations* parallel the multiverses explored in theories of fundamental physics? Can it be subjected to a scientist's gaze, and does doing so deepen our appreciation of the play?

Our quotidian experience is rooted in the world of classical physics. An apple is red, and remains so,

irrespective of whether I look at it or not. My eyeglasses dutifully wait on the nightstand, where I tossed them aside last night as I drifted off. All things tend to stay put, unless something happens to disturb them. This classical world is incredibly predictable. To understand just how predictable, consider the Chandrayaan-3—its path was predicted to an accuracy of a few kilometres, thanks to the ingenious work of our ISRO scientists, even as it landed on the Moon over 384,400 km away from the Earth.

The quantum world is drastically different. Things jiggle and whizz about randomly, and often one cannot reliably speak of them. A particularly puzzling feature of quantum physics is that it forbids "local reality". Here, "local" means that events can be influenced only by their surroundings, and that no influence can travel faster than light. "Real", on the other hand, means that objects have definite properties independent of whether anyone is looking. Thus, the lack of local reality means that a quantum-apple cannot be said to



when one is not observing. Quantum theory, in fact, predicts that objects do not have definite positions and trajectories, even in principle.

Sounds strange, doesn't it? Yet, this facet of quantum reality has been repeatedly substantiated through rigorous experimental tests, a feat that earned Alain Aspect, John Clauser and Anton Zeilinger the 2022 Nobel Prize in Physics. This lack of a definite trajectory is best captured by Richard Feynman's "sum over paths". This view of quantum theory posits that all paths or sequences of events between two instants of time contribute to the evolution in between. This flies in the face of the classical Newtonian view that a single definitive path determines the outcome. Even the Einsteinian shackles of causality are apparently not obeyed. The sum over paths includes paths that zig and zag backwards and forwards in time.

A subtle element of this idea is that all paths are individually equally likely, and yet the classical path appears most prominently in our everyday experience. This is because the paths near the classical path add in-sync—as if practised voices in a choir, whereas other paths, though individually as loud, melt into a cacophonous din. This is also why we do not easily feel quantum physics in play in our day-to-day life. The allowed quantum paths that effectively matter, are quite close to the classical path; the departures are prominent mainly for tiny subatomic particles.

This revised perspective on reality, as mandated by quantum mechanics, confers profound significance upon the act of observation itself. Objects persist in a superposition of potential states until observed, popularly known as a Schrödinger's Cat state, and only the act of observation seemingly compels it to adopt a definitive state, albeit randomly and with calculable probabilities.

The many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics, proposed by Hugh Everett, provides a rationale for the probabilities associated with the result of an observation. Everett's view, in a sense, extends Feynman's "sum over paths" picture to also include a "sum over possibilities" associated with the results of observation. A sequence of observed events, connected by all possible paths, corresponds to "a world" within the multiverse of many worlds. The interpretation thus asks us to accept that we live immersed in a near-infinity of universes, all occupying the same physical space but evolving autonomously and incognisant of the others. In many of these universes there exist replicas of Marianne and Roland, indistinguishable in almost every way but living through different sequences of events.

These paradigm shifts fundamentally reshape

our comprehension of human elements. Embracing the multiverse narrative not only highlights the kaleidoscopic richness of existence but also reimagines fundamental concepts like love, connections and relationships across a diverse array of timelines. Identifying with our counterparts in countless universes urges a re-evaluation, suggesting that connections transcend singular paths and extend across a myriad of potential histories.

In a sense, central to the enigmatic allure of *Constellations* is also the portrayal of the universe as an unreliable narrator. Unlike Kurosawa's cinematic masterpiece *Rashomon* though, where divergent viewpoints exist in the face of a singular truth, the different narratives in *Constellations* feel more equally true. Each branch of the multiverse is just as true as the others. The viewer, seemingly outside of the multiverse and aware of multiple realities, is thus presented with a narrative complexity that unveils the inherent subjectivity of human perception and our quest for coherence amidst the boundless tapestry of possibilities. This also prompts a re-evaluation of our roles in shaping the world. Our perceptions, intentions and interactions actively influence the unfolding reality, impacting not only our lives but also those of others around us. Embracing the uncertainty and complexity,

recognising that every choice spawns a multitude of potential realities can generate empathy, kindness and compassion. Each individual contributes to the collective existence, simultaneously observing and participating. Sharing experiences and interpretations bridges realities, acknowledging our impact on others' trajectories. This viewpoint empowers agency, encouraging mindful

interactions and fostering a shared responsibility for the collective reality we shape.

By delving into the multiverse, *Constellations* not only fractures the notion of a singular truth but also reinforces the expansive nature of human existence. It challenges us to embrace the kaleidoscope of possibilities, to recognise our interconnectedness across infinite timelines and to wield the power of our observations and choices. In this dance of infinite realities, we are not just spectators but active participants, shaping and being shaped by the cosmic tapestry of existence. ■

Constellations will be presented from 15th to 18th February at the Experimental Theatre. Basudeb Dasgupta is a theoretical physicist at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. His pioneering contributions to research on neutrinos and dark matter earned him the ICTP Prize in 2019 and the SS Bhatnagar Prize in 2022. Outside of physics, he takes avid interest in the arts, and can be found at www.bdasgupta.com.

 **NCPA**

AAHANA KUMRA | KUNAAL ROY KAPUR



**TWO PEOPLE.
ONE RELATIONSHIP.
INFINITE POSSIBILITIES.**

An NCPA Production

CONSTELLATIONS

WRITTEN BY **NICK PAYNE** DIRECTED BY **BRUCE GUTHRIE**

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FEB 17 & 18, 2024 | 4:00 PM & 7:30 PM

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Brilliance, Manifold

The SOI Spring 2024 Season brims with the beauty of orchestral music featuring the return of beloved artistes and the India debut of a Grammy Award-winning mezzo-soprano, a celebrated conductor, and a masterful cellist. We speak to Gergely Madaras, Sasha Cooke and Bryan Cheng ahead of their debut at the NCPA.

By Beverly Pereira

Soak in the sunny Italian landscape with Mendelssohn's Fourth Symphony. Journey through lush fields and babbling brooks into the heart of a joyful village celebration with Beethoven's much-loved 'Pastoral' Symphony. The SOI Spring 2024 Season is here and whether you are a seasoned listener or first-time concertgoer, the repertoire, artistry and line-up are sure to delight.

Gergely Madaras, conductor

Hungarian conductor Gergely Madaras is adored for his tender instincts to draw out varying colours and moods with the orchestras he works with. From engagements with the London Philharmonic and BBC Symphony and Philharmonic orchestras, to performing and recording with the Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège across Europe and South America in his role as Music Director, Madaras is a young, burgeoning force to reckon with. He is proficient in classical and Romantic symphonic repertoire, just as much as he is in contemporary

music, channelling both with poignancy. Back in 2012, he was named the inaugural Sir Charles Mackerras Fellow at the English National Opera which culminated in his operatic debut at the London Coliseum with *Die Zauberflöte*; Madaras has since established a solid reputation with *La bohème* and *La traviata*, among other acclaimed productions.

Born in Budapest, Hungarian music is an integral part of Madaras's repertoire. In the late '80s and early '90s when Hungary was gaining independence, it had become important for the people to return to their roots by visiting villages to witness the last generation of folk musicians and dancers. "When I was five, my parents took me to a traditional dance house in Budapest where this newly re-discovered folk music was played. I was mesmerised by its rhythm, pulsation and appealing melodies," says Madaras, who was soon enrolled in a folk music school that organised trips to remote villages, where he learned from an outstanding violinist, Sándor 'Neti' Fodor.

By the time he was 11, he had switched his focus to classical music, studying both the flute and violin.

It was also during this time that he had a tryst with conducting when he had the rare chance to watch the Budapest Festival Orchestra in rehearsal under the baton of a famous conductor. "I had witnessed an elderly man on fire, turning the individual talent of the musicians into a collective body of sound, channeling everyone's energy into something transcendental, playing in such harmony and euphony that I had never before witnessed," recalls Madaras. It was none other than Sir Georg Solti on the podium.

He went on to study composition to understand the architecture of symphonic pieces and learn how to think like a composer. But at age 17, a true urge to conduct had returned. Some of his first projects involved his flautist partner at the time (now wife) Noemi Gyori. Together, they handpicked 60 talented young artistes, applied for funding and presented well-received concerts. Soon, he was accepted as conducting faculty member of Vienna's Academy of Music and to the flute faculty at the Liszt Academy.

At the NCPA, Madaras will wield his baton on two evenings with the Symphony Orchestra of India. They will present the works of Zoltán Kodály for whom he feels "a patriotic obligation to bring his symphonic music to all corners of the world." But first, there is the much-awaited performance with skilful soloist Barry Douglas. "For me, Brahms and Mendelssohn are some of the most important representatives of the central European and German Romantic music. I hold their compositions dear to my heart. I always feel I discover

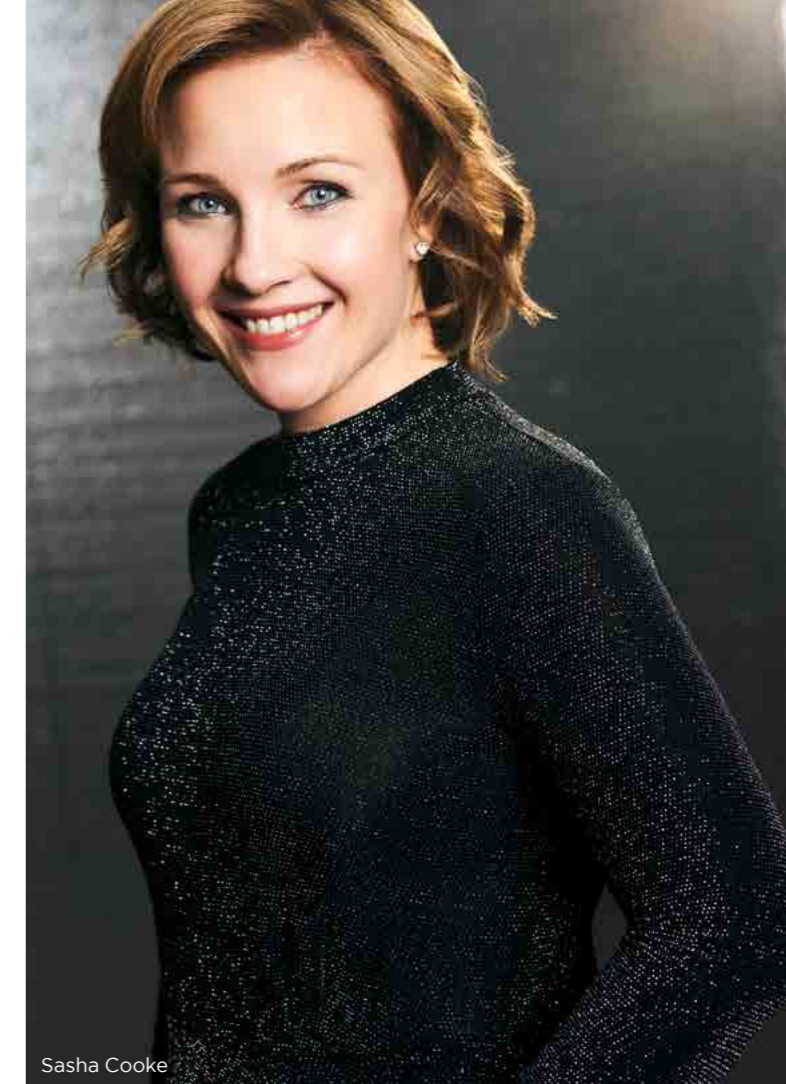
"I had witnessed an elderly man on fire, turning the individual talent of the musicians into a collective body of sound, channeling everyone's energy into something transcendental, playing in such harmony and euphony that I had never before witnessed," recalls Gergely Madaras, adding that it was none other than Sir Georg Solti

something new, relevant and personal in their music whenever I get to conduct them. These pieces inspire, resonate and speak to all of us, no matter what culture or nationality we come from," says Madaras.

Sasha Cooke, mezzo-soprano

A glance at Sasha Cooke's schedule reveals just how versatile a singer she is. Illustrious on both the opera and recital stage, the American mezzo-soprano is lauded for her vocal prowess; *The New York Times* aptly called her a "luminous standout". December was a busy month with opera engagements like Handel's *Messiah*—first with the Oregon Symphony in Portland and then in Rome during the Christmas week. All this, coupled with masterclasses, vocal auditions and recitals with the world's most prestigious orchestras.

In early 2023, Cooke returned to the San Francisco Opera, when she reprised the role of Laurene Powell Jobs in *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* by Mason Bates. The modern opera had won the 2019 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording—one among two award-



Sasha Cooke



Gergely Madaras

ALICE BLANGERO (MADARAS); STEPHANIE GIRARDI (COOKE)

winning recordings to her name. Back in 2008, Cooke bagged the pivotal role of Kitty Oppenheimer in *Doctor Atomic* by John Adams. Part of the The Met: Live in HD series, it went on to win best opera recording at the 54th Grammy Awards in 2011. Cooke has performed with opera companies including the English National Opera, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Metropolitan Opera, among others.

She has performed with over 80 symphony orchestras across the world frequently in the works of Mahler. Her affinity for and articulation of Mahler's works is widely known. "I fell in love with Mahler while doing my masters at Juilliard. One of my thesis papers was on his Rückert-Lieder which thankfully now I have the great pleasure of singing. It feels like a full circle moment that one of my passions as a student became the biggest part of my work," says Cooke.

Cooke, who was born in California and raised in College Station, Texas, remembers music being a huge part of her life. "I have memories of falling asleep to classical music. Around the age of four, I requested a

Bryan Cheng



“The Elgar concerto I will be presenting is so emotion-laden that one needs to balance not only the pure passion and drama, but also this tremendously long narrative line from beginning to end ... it represents a full life, and after the final notes, one should feel a bit like their soul has been taken on a profound journey through Elgar’s music,” says Brian Cheng

piano and started lessons in earnest at age five. I have no doubt I wouldn’t be a singer if it weren’t for the support of my parents,” says Cooke, whose strong piano background led her to hone her vocal techniques at Rice University and The Juilliard School. Opera, she says, came to her when she started pursuing music in college.

Then, of course, came *how do I find you*, a powerful 2020 release that received a Grammy nomination for Best Solo Vocal Album in 2022. Cooke calls the album one of the most meaningful, artistic things she has ever done. “It came in a moment of desperation and turned into a moment of great inspiration. It began with a text my friend, librettist Mark Campbell, sent me called *Listen* inspired by the murder of George Floyd. After Mark and I asked the composer Kamala Sankaram to set the song to music, a lightbulb turned on and I had to do more. Pretty soon, I had 17 new

original songs which we recorded and later premiered on the recital series at San Francisco Symphony where I had been artist-in-residence the previous season.”

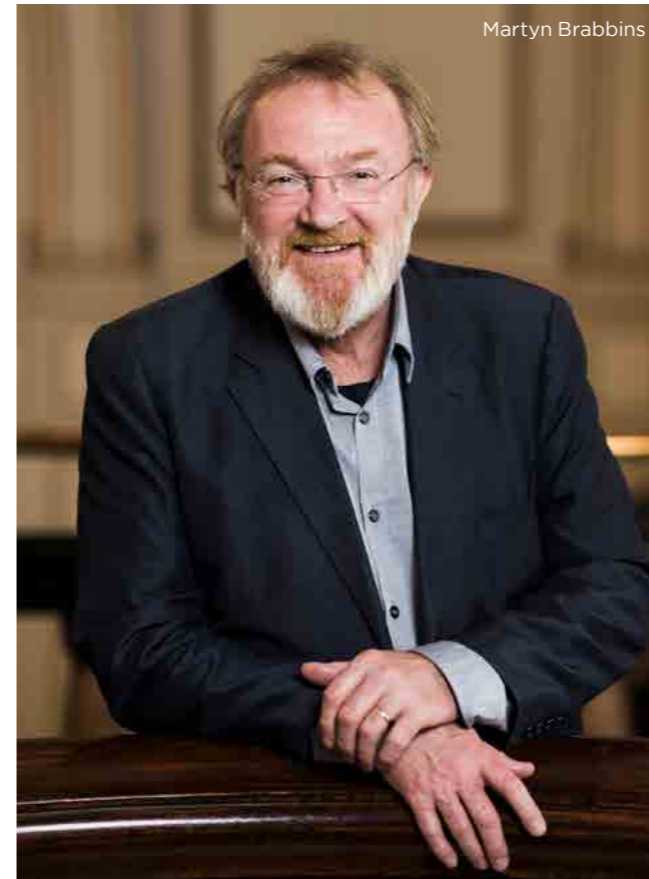
Cooke is looking forward to an evening with the SOI under the baton of Martyn Brabbins. “I have special memories with Martyn because we premiered an opera by Nico Muhly together at the English National Opera called *Marnie*. It was a bonding experience and having a supportive partner like him meant the world. I’m excited to explore some of my favourite Berlioz with him with *Les nuits d’Eté*,” says the singer.

Bryan Cheng, cellist

The Canadian-born, Berlin-based Cheng is one of those compelling rarities to have established himself as a young artiste on the classical music scene. He made his Carnegie Hall debut at age 14 at a sold-out concert and

ANDREI GRILE (CHENG); BEN CALOYERGA (BRABBINS)

Martyn Brabbins



was the first cellist to be awarded the coveted Prix Yves Paternot. Most recently, he was lauded with Canada’s highest honour for young musicians. Cheng has indeed taken the classical world by storm. He has performed as soloist with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and the Johannesburg and Helsinki philharmonic orchestras, among a long list of acclaimed ensembles.

Inspired to take up a musical instrument by his pianist sister Silvie, Cheng attended a cello masterclass at age three and instantly fell in love with the “deep and scary” sound. He then studied with cellist and conductor Yuli Turovsky for eight years in Montreal. “I was lucky enough to be Yuli’s youngest and last student until he passed away in 2013. I soaked up so much knowledge and pure love for music over the course of my studies. Coming from the Russian school of cello playing, he instilled in me a particularly deep appreciation for Russian music by unknown and beloved composers. My sense of sound and philosophy of music-making were also highly influenced by his teachings. He used to say that ‘each performance should be played as if it were your last’, and this is a mantra I live by to this day,” says Cheng.

No two days are ever the same for Cheng who is a part of two very different outfits. With his pianist sister Silvie, he represents the Cheng² Duo that plays core classical repertoire alongside lesser-known classical gems, contemporary works commissioned from their composer friends, and classical and folk pieces arranged by them for cello and piano. Since officially forming the duo at their 2011 Carnegie Weill Recital Hall debut, the sibling duo’s artistry has left lasting impressions with extensive tours across North America, Europe, Asia and South Africa. The Cheng²

Barry Douglas



Duo will perform at the NCPA on 12th February.

Then, there is CelloFellos, a cello duo he founded with his Berlin-based friend and cellist Leonard Disselhorst. “We only perform pieces in the non-classical realm—songs and dances which run the gamut from tango to swing jazz to Balkan folk music to contemporary instrumental pop which Leo writes himself for our duo. In fact, every single work we play is either arranged or composed by one of us. This is our outlet to explore a fascinating universe of sounds which exists outside of classical music,” Cheng explains, adding that he loves the diversity of his daily activities and the fact that these two duos represent different ends of the musical spectrum.

At the NCPA, he will also regale the audience under the baton of the illustrious Brabbins. “In the past years, the Elgar concerto has sort of turned into a calling card of mine. I feel very strongly about this incredibly powerful piece. It’s one of those works that is so emotion-laden that one needs to balance not only the pure passion and drama, but also this tremendously long narrative line from beginning to end. In essence, it represents a full life, and after the final notes, one should feel a bit like their soul has been taken on a profound journey through Elgar’s music. I’m particularly thrilled to be performing it with Maestro Brabbins—I’ve heard many wonderful things, and it will be my first time doing the Elgar with a British conductor, so I’m sure with his wealth of experience, I’ll gain even more insight into this wonderful masterwork,” says Cheng ahead of his India debut. ■

.....
The SOI Spring 2024 Season will be presented from 2nd to 16th February at the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre.

A POET FOR EVERY MOMENT

Danish Husain's new play on the life of the Hindi film lyricist and Urdu poet, Sahir Ludhianvi, showcases the complexities of a man who had a timeless sense of rhyme, rhythm and justice.

By Vidhi Salla

In 1969, the poet-lyricist Sahir Ludhianvi was invited as an esteemed guest to recite a poem on the death centenary of the 18th-century poet, Mirza Ghalib. Ludhianvi, a progressive, was known for speaking his mind, especially when shallow societal norms were in question. He went onstage and recited 'Jashn-e-Ghalib'. To the shock of those present, the verses questioned the double standards of the politicians hosting the celebration and the mistreatment of Urdu over the years since the independence of India:

*Jis ahad-e-siyaasat ne yeh zinda zabaan kuchli
Us ahad-e-siyaasat ko marhoomo ka gham kyun hai?
Ghalib jisey kehtey hain, Urdu hi ka shaayar thaa
Urdu par sitam dhaa kar, Ghalib pe karam kyun hai?*

(The government that crushed this effervescent language

Why should that government grieve over the dead?
The man called Ghalib, was a poet of the Urdu language

Why should they be unfair to Urdu and benevolent towards Ghalib?)

Many such storied incidents, including interactions Ludhianvi had with filmmakers and musicians of the day, will be part of *Main Pal Do Pal Ka Shayar Hoon*, a biographical adaptation, to be presented at the NCPA this month. The format of the play is a combination of monologues and dramatised re-enactments of episodes from Ludhianvi's life, interspersed with his songs and poetry. Danish Husain, who is directing the production in addition to essaying the role of the poet, says, "The whole idea was to create a gossip room, something like a town square where there

for the film *Naujawan* (1951), writing the hit song 'Thandi Hawayein Lehra Ke Aayein' which was set to music by S. D. Burman.

He became known for lyrics that went beyond the scope of the film to express his views on socially relevant matters while still adhering to the requirements of the plot. Husain says, "He would find ways of bringing his own politics into the song and the story and do this double number where the song while pushing the film's story forward also said something universal which transcends the context of the film. He did not leave his politics of socialism, speaking up for the downtrodden and representing the marginalised through his songs." A searing critique of the nation state, 'Jinhe Naaz Hai Hind Par Woh Kahan Hain' from *Pyaasa* (1957) is a good example of music with a message. It is a direct reference to the failing ideals of Nehruvian nationalism and holds an unflinching mirror to a crumbling post-independence society of the '50s. The song was adapted from Ludhianvi's poem 'Chakle', which he had written long before he became a lyricist.

There is a section in Husain's play in which Ludhianvi, while sitting onstage, directly addresses the audience to discuss how he brought together different elements—a thought here, an ideology there—to create a poem or the lyrics of a particular song. "I was nervous about this section. What if it bores people? Is it too cerebral? Maybe we should skip it, we thought." Instead, they received the loudest applause for this at the play's premiere. "We were thrilled," says Husain.

Nostalgia and more

Main Pal Do Pal Ka Shayar Hoon was conceived during the programming for a retrospective of Husain's theatre group, The Hoshrubha Repertory, at Prithvi Theatre in September

"Sahir Ludhianvi would find ways of bringing his own politics into the song and the story and do this double number where while the song pushed the film's story forward, it also said something universal which transcends the context of the film"

are people sitting and talking ... and everybody passing by wants to stop and listen. I wanted to make it a cosy space where five artistes jam and fanboy over Sahir Ludhianvi. Sometimes it's a jam session and sometimes the setting is a recording studio."

Wizard of words

Ludhianvi, most popular as a lyricist of Hindi cinema, was a superlative Urdu poet and a prominent voice of the Progressive Writers' Movement. He was born Abdul Hayee but took on the *takhallus* (pen name) Sahir, meaning magician or wizard, based on a couplet by Allama Iqbal. His last name, Ludhianvi, came from his place of birth, Ludhiana. He was the first lyricist to collect royalties from music companies and insisted that All India Radio start crediting lyricists along with singers and composers on the air. Initially turned down by several filmmakers owing to his brutally critical poetry on social institutions, Ludhianvi landed his first big break

2023. The noted actor-director's quest for a new play was aided by the suggestion of Amita Talwar, Founder of the NGO, Art for Causes, to create something on the life of Ludhianvi. Screenwriter and lyricist Mir Ali Husain had written a script on Ludhianvi for Talwar which Husain immediately began studying to adapt it for the stage. The script was in the first person and Husain sought to change that: "I felt that given Sahir is such a charismatic and complex personality, it would be interesting to have a second or a third person to know what they thought about Sahir." The other influence on the play was Himanshu Bajpai's *dastangoi* work *Dastan-e-Sahir*. With permission from both creators, Husain fused the two scripts while doing his own research on Ludhianvi and created the script for this play.

The premiere was extremely well-received. Some audience members remarked that it was the best onstage adaptation of Ludhianvi's life, some swayed to the songs and for others, it sparked a newfound curiosity about the maverick poet. "People flew in from

Danish Husain as Sahir Ludhianvi in *Main Pal Do Pal Ka Shayar Hoon*



describe him. He was a tall man but very self-conscious about that so he would often stoop. My advantage is that I'm not a really tall man. And then Javed [Akhtar] *saab* told me how he would speak with a wry smile on his face, his lips would twitch towards one side or that when he would get nervous or thoughtful, he would take out a comb and start combing his hair. So, I incorporated mannerisms like these, but I don't overdo them." The biggest compliment Husain received was from people who had personally known the poet. After the first five minutes, they forgot about Husain, they said. Only Sahir Ludhianvi remained onstage.

Though celebrated for his flourish with the written word, Ludhianvi was criticised for his egoistic nature and a certain indecisiveness. He was a complex character, impossible to exhaustively represent within limited time. "When you're making a story on the life of a real person, what you are essentially doing is sampling. You take the audience through the various epochs of his life, but you can't really do a deep dive. There are aspects of Sahir's struggle as a poet, about his involvement in the literary world, the Progressive Writers' Movement, his

“There are aspects of Sahir’s struggle as a poet, instances where he fearlessly takes on the film industry ... sometimes he is magnanimous and gracious and there are times when he appears to be mean to people”

Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi. A week after the show, I met someone who had attended it and they said they had since been listening only to Sahir's songs for the past week," shares Husain. Now, he is excited to bring the popular play to the Tata Theatre. "The NCPA is a great venue to perform in," he says. "The way the whole space is designed just lends itself well to performance. I have fond memories of performing at the Centrestage Festival of Premiering Plays. It is exciting to return to the NCPA after a year. The last play I performed here was *Ek Punjab Yeh Bhi*."

Ludhianvi's songs and poems are woven into the script per the timeline of his life. His poem 'Aao Ke Koi Khwab Bunein' is composed by celebrated classical musician Aneesh Pradhan and was originally sung by Shubha Mudgal. The musical arrangement of the play is minimal, with just three instruments onstage: one guitar, one percussion instrument, either a *dholak* or a cajon, and a harmonium. The performing artistes also play different characters from Ludhianvi's life. "I wanted to make sure that it does not become an endless medley of songs. I also wanted to situate the songs in the context of the story being told. Each song in the play comes at a definite point of time in his life and there is often a story behind the song," Husain explains.

A towering presence

To become the poet onstage was not easy. "There are hardly any videos of Sahir Ludhianvi except for a few grainy ones with not much happening in them. A lot of the mannerisms came through the writing of his friends who

contemporaries, the world of Urdu poetry, instances where he fearlessly takes on the film industry, his fight for royalties, his internal struggle where he refuses to get along with some music directors. Sometimes he is magnanimous and gracious and there are times when he appears to be mean to people. And then there is his decline into depression followed by an early death when he was only 59. Hopefully, once people watch the play, it will arouse some curiosity and they will study more about this man. If that happens, my job is done."

'Main Pal Do Pal Ka Shayar Hoon', meaning 'I'm a Poet Only for a Moment or Two', was a deliberate choice for the title of the play because it is among Ludhianvi's most easily recognised songs, one he wrote for the film, *Kabhi Kabhie* (1976). Husain's play, however, and the response to it, reminds me of the other lyrics from the same film that better describe Ludhianvi's legacy 43 years after his demise.

*Main har ek pal ka shayar hoon
Har ek pal meri kahani hai
Har ek pal meri hasti hai
Har ek pal meri jawani hai
Main har ek pal ka shayar hoon.*

I'm a poet for every moment
My story will last for every moment
My existence will last for every moment
My youth will last for every moment
I'm a poet for every moment. ■

.....
Main Pal Do Pal Ka Shayar Hoon will be presented on 20th January at the Tata Theatre.

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SUBVERTING CONVENTIONS

IN CONVERSATION WITH PIANIST KUNAL LAHIRY WHO INNOVATES AND INSPIRES WITH UNUSUAL EASE.

BY AKSHAYA PILLAI

Two minutes into my conversation with pianist and BBC New Generation Artist, Kunal Lahiry, I found myself making a case for long-distance interviews. There was something epistolary about our exchange, which occurred in bits and bursts alongside the artiste's everyday life.

When we begin our correspondence, Lahiry is having his morning coffee at a feminist cat cafe in Paris. He sends me a picture of a chonky grey cat. My tabby, a doppelgänger, rubs her ears against the cell phone as we begin discussing Lahiry's powerful queer reimagining of Franz Schubert's *Winterreise* in which he takes the dramatic scope and psychological landscape of the Schubert/Wilhelm Müller song cycle

and situates it in a contemporary narrative for the queer identity and journey; a cycle of 24 new songs by queer poets and composers.

The first commission, he tells me, came from this opportunity he had with BBC Radio 3 as part of their New Generation scheme. "These four songs spoke of their journey as trans and queer people in Berlin in winter, which is very dark, very grey and very grim. It was about how young queer people found refuge in techno clubs and the encounters one would have with another anonymously and briefly in these dark spaces."

His voice is delicate and unhurried against the cafe's clamour—the mechanical frothing of coffee, the resonant thud of cups, occasional clinks and a whole

JUSTIN BACH

We begin discussing Lahiry's powerful queer reimagining of Franz Schubert's *Winterreise* in which he takes the dramatic scope and psychological landscape of the Schubert/Wilhelm Müller song cycle and situates it in a contemporary narrative for the queer identity and journey; a cycle of 24 new songs by queer poets and composers

lot of laughter spilling over from nearby tables. It was easy to imagine Lahiry in this setting, even easier to imagine him performing in this cafe, not the first venue one thinks of for a classical music recital.

This essentially encapsulates a dichotomy Lahiry often navigates—a contrast between conventional classical spaces and unconventional settings. "How does the audience's reception differ in these contrasting

“We worry if an audience not exposed to Western classical music can sit through it, if we should stop and explain it to them. But it’s the opposite. They are so present, deeply connected, open and enthusiastic. It is always interesting to hear their reactions. It challenges our idea of a modern-day audience.”

settings, and does it affect your artistic expression?” I asked, curious. “I love it. I love performing in non-traditional concert spaces, because it kind of subverts classical music and gives it a new sense of modernity and immediacy and strips it of all of its social classist values. It just allows music to touch people,” says the artiste. Lahiry is also an Equilibrium Young Artist, Samling Artist, Yehudi Menuhin Live Music Now Artist and Britten Pears Young Artist.

Lahiry makes an effort to look out for these spaces, despite the hurdles—subpar acoustics, the not-so-great instruments, interruptions from outdoor and ambient noise—because this allows classical music to thrive in an informal atmosphere. More importantly, it allows him to not worry about interpretation, being accurate enough or being compared to recorded versions of the music. These spaces, he concludes, allow music to breathe.

For the duration of our exchange, Lahiry was between his London performances and opted to hop on a train to be with his boyfriend in Paris instead of taking a quick flight back to his base in Berlin. The first time Lahiry realised the power of inclusive spaces was during a charity event for queer refugees in Berlin in 2022. It was a space teeming with diversity—drag queens, pole dancers, singers and Lahiry on his piano. “I decided to offer a 15- to 20-minute-song with a singing partner I collaborate with. The text was about being African American and queer,” he recounts. “It was a powerful moment when the music stopped on the loudspeakers, everything quieted down abruptly, and it was just me and the singer without any microphones.” He paints a vivid scene—a congregation, many unacquainted with live classical music, suddenly exposed to familiar faces sharing a stage, having interacted with them just moments before. “Many had never heard live classical music before and certainly not played by people who looked like them. They came to me after and said how healing it was and how they wanted more access to it.” In 2023, he spearheaded Queer Song Fest at St. George’s in Bristol, a boundary-pushing step in making classical music accessible to the LGBTQ community.

As Lahiry narrates this on the other end of the cell phone, Salman Toor’s painting ‘Music Room’ flashes in my mind. The fluid-like stance of the figures engaged in private moments. The pianist, the violinist and the

musicians don’t demand to take centre stage. They are dotted across the room, casting an aura, a warmth that draws people together. In Lahiry’s words and Toor’s strokes, music is about coming together, about inclusion and a sense of connection.

Lahiry makes us want to trust the audience. Especially one that has not been exposed to Western classical music. “We feel the need to play very classical standard repertoire. We worry if they can sit through it, if we should stop and explain it to them. But it’s the opposite. They are so present, so deeply connected, so open and so enthusiastic. It is always interesting to hear their reactions. It challenges our idea of a modern-day audience.”

Later that evening, I play a recording of *Trans*cendental Encounters* that Lahiry had shared where he collaborated with performance artist Lyra Pramuk. Listening to it felt like blooming. Like blooming into oneself. And as I waltzed from my dishwasher to the crockery cabinets, I realised how we make the mistake of thinking of the audience and the venue as two separate entities. Lahiry’s words had me examining their interdependence. It struck me why he has taken it as his mission to reimagine a concert experience where communities can experience classical music without the confines of conventionality.

When Lahiry picks up the conversation next, he is waiting at the subway. The metallic screech of brakes and the muffled announcements punctuate his responses. He gets on the train and I can hear the door close behind him when we get to his upcoming performance at the NCPA. “I do find a level of liberation and incredible energy when music is being made by two people, but that being said, I have been wanting to explore what kind of music I would make if I didn’t have anyone else onstage with me.”

The performance at the NCPA will be his first solo concert since 2015. Here are a few words from the artiste for his listeners in Mumbai. “Take some time beforehand and listen to your fav music, have a drink if you like, put on your fav outfit. Treat this as a time out just for you, a mini self-care retreat. If you don’t know the music on the programme and feel the need to educate yourself, go ahead! But [all you need to do is] come with open ears and hearts, ready to discover.” ■

.....
Kunal Lahiry will give a piano recital on 4th January at the Experimental Theatre.

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Scaling New Heights

With a sweeping victory across multiple categories at an international competition in Dubai, students of the SOI Music Academy bring home laurels and memories.

The SOI Music Academy, devoted to the resolve of imparting education and training to young, promising musicians, recently completed 10 glorious years. In a land where Western classical music is still burgeoning, the academy has nurtured young minds and created a thriving space for students to blossom into artistes of tomorrow.

Over the years, the academy has made its mark in concerts at the NCPA, an international tour and at global competitions. Earlier this year, the SOI Academy Orchestra garnered generous praise from renowned conductor Maestro Zubin Mehta upon his visit. The most recent feather in the cap for the academy is the impressive performance of its students at the Jumeirah Sounds Seventh International Youth Competition held in Dubai in November 2023.

The students of the SOI Music Academy competed with over 100 participants from around the world. The seventh edition of the competition—the first one after

the pandemic—was a dazzling affair and saw participation from several countries, including Turkey, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, among others.

This year, the competition introduced new categories as well as masterclasses for a more well-rounded experience. Disciplines like wind and percussion instruments, oratory and fine arts were received with enthusiasm in their debut year and students represented the academy in numerous categories, winning medals across the board. Piano, a category in which the competition was stiff, also saw students garner both prizes and praise. Please refer to the table on the following page for a list of all the winners.

The teachers form the backbone of the academy, steered by SOI Music Director Marat Bisengaliyev. Clarinetist Ruslan Galilov told us that this was the first time the students of wind and percussion instruments were competing. This was no deterrent to their prize-winning performances. However, Galilov believes that the journey to the competition is the most important part of

the process. “They have just come back, and I can already say they seem more mature as musicians,” he says.

The string instruments students fared exceptionally well. Shweta and Shruti Iyer, who travel religiously from Pune for their lessons at the academy, won the Grand Prix and First Prize in violin respectively. Violinist Gulzara Shakir, who trains the sisters, says, “My students are each other’s strengths.” She recounts Shweta’s unfamiliarity with the concept of Grand Prix. “Once she was explained what she had just achieved, she was ecstatic,” Shakir chuckles.

Olga Vyhodceva trains the NCPA chorus and has been mentoring Aliya Agrawal for two years now. They work on voice production, solfeggio, form analysis, mastery of nuances and musical phrasing. She credits Agarwal for putting in the work. “Competing is a very different yet important emotion for these budding musicians,” she elaborates.

Percussionist Igor Avdeev, who coaches students in xylophone and drums, concurs with his fellow teachers that

Students of the SOI Music Academy competed with over 100 participants from around the world ... they participated in numerous categories, winning medals across the board

students gather experience through such platforms and learn from their peers from other countries.

Vyhodceva also rightly points out that the ardour and support from the parents allow for these experiences to happen. Their unconditional investment in their kids is what turns possibility into opportunity.

On another level, the zeal to learn, compete and win is also an indicator of the country’s growing appetite for Western classical music. Pianist and teacher Aida Bisengaliyeva tells us that the eminent jury panel made it a point to applaud the flair and dedication with which the Indian participants performed.

A school, Shakir reckons, tends to become a world within itself so international exposure is crucial. She elaborates, “They need to step out of the comfort of home. These are musical playgrounds for kids to meet fellow musicians, make friendships and witness music being made.” ■



Gulzara Shakir, Shweta Iyer, Shruti Iyer, Aida Bisengaliyeva (from left to right)



Tarini Kheruka, student of Aida Bisengaliyeva



Dalai Kapri with teacher Aruzhan Bisengaliyeva cropped



Siddharth Khanna with teacher Osman Yarullin



Gauri Khanna with teacher Margarita Gapparova



Aliya Agarwal



Sanjit Lodha Tirumkudulu with teacher Igor Avdeev



Kanushi Ghuwalewala with teacher Igor Avdeev



Rianna Chheda and Ishaan Subramanian with teacher Ruslan Galilov

Student	Category	Prize	Teacher
Shweta Iyer	String Instruments: Violin	Grand Prix	Gulzara Shakir
Shruti Iyer	String Instruments: Violin	1st prize	Gulzara Shakir
Gauri Khanna	String Instruments: Cello	2nd prize	Margarita Gapparova
Siddharth Khanna	String Instruments: Violin	3rd prize	Osman Yarullin
Aliya Agrawal	String Instruments: Cello	3rd prize	Yulia Gallyamova
	Academic Vocal	1st prize	Olga Vyhodceva
	Fine Art	1st prize	-
Kanushi Ghuwalewala	Oratory arts	1st prize	-
	Wind & Percussion Instruments: Xylophone and Drums	1st prize	Igor Avdeev
Dalai Kapri	Wind & Percussion instruments: Flute	1st prize	Aruzhan Bisengaliyeva
Ishaan Subramanian	Wind & Percussion instruments: Clarinet	2nd prize	Ruslan Galilov
Rianna Chheda	Wind & Percussion instruments: Clarinet	3rd prize	Ruslan Galilov
Sanjit Lodha Tirumkudulu	Wind and Percussion Instruments: Xylophone and Drums	2nd prize	Igor Avdeev
Tarini Kheruka	Piano	2nd prize	Aida Bisengaliyeva



Art for Art's Sake

Notes on Mumbai's maiden art fair, Art Mumbai.

By Aishwarya Bodke

When you set foot on the mighty grounds of the Mahalaxmi Racecourse—to see it donning the hues of an art fair—your gaze is bound to flutter, trying to soak in the abundance of craft and colour. Over a balmy November weekend, Mumbai's first art fair, Art Mumbai, debuted in the city that longed for one. Even the Men's Cricket World Cup finals did not deter enthusiasts from thronging the racecourse. Get the stakes: India was up against Australia following an unbelievable victory march. A rather heady Sunday.

The end of the year summons art festivals and fairs across the country. Late last year, Mumbai had its glimmering share. Featuring 53 galleries in an array of contemporary art pavilions, speaker series, off-site and on-site events, Art Mumbai instantly and rightfully claimed the space for what was missing in the cultural calendar of the city.

The first thing you noticed was a slick horse sculpture by Valay Shende. Built

with shiny stainless steel discs, it sat in the 'Sculpture Garden', a mascot of sorts of the event as well as the venue. Or it could be the giant green inflatable octopus tentacles—one of Filthy Luker's famous public interventions in urban spaces. Or perhaps the Art Maze by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, made of graffiti walls, free for people to paint over. "India will win the 2023 World Cup", it declared in blue. As invigorating as anticlimactic.

Mumbai has historically been home to some of the oldest galleries and art schools. Co-founders Minal and Dinesh Vazirani, Nakul Dev Chawla and Conor Macklin wanted to foster a sense of community among artists, curators, collectors, as well as new buyers. Participating galleries assembled from all across India, along with renowned international establishments such as Grosvenor Gallery (London), Aicon Gallery (New York) and Volte Art Projects (Dubai), to name a few.

Two extensive pavilions housed these galleries, represented through a

web of booths. This created an excellent opportunity to witness an abundance of art, right from the masters of the form to the ones on their way to eminence. A collector's paradise. But what it also created was a pulsating density, one which requires art to exist per square foot. The profuse concentration of art spared no room for respite, your eyes constantly chasing the next booth to register the sheer volume of brilliance that surrounded you. The exhibitions separated from the pavilions, then, naturally stood out for me.

The first of them was the Saffronart Foundation's exhibit titled *The Fantasy Collection*. It gave a glimpse of M. F. Husain's life before he became the artist extraordinaire celebrated around the world. Before he joined the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group, he worked at Fantasy, a family-run furniture enterprise. Delicate pastel hues made up the petals of the stunning *Lotus Suite*, commissioned by the late Rani Savita Kumari Devi of Katesar. The muted green and intricately

detailed *Cherry blossom-themed suite* kept it company. One of Husain's earliest offerings, the work told the story of the genesis of his genius. Also a part of the display was a letter he wrote to a friend. "I am going to start replacing Jack and Jill and Humpty Dumpty with stories from 'Panchatantra', so much more colourful and meaningful," he scribbled. His subsequent designs slowly incorporated a distinct indigenous aesthetic, including iconography from the tales of Aladdin and Ali Baba.

Away from the bustling kiosks, *The Fantasy Collection* stirred a sense of serenity into the fair. Steps lingered around the furniture, almost as if visitors were looking to put together pieces of a home. A wonderful contrast to this was the roaring tribute to Vivan Sundaram by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art; a patchwork quilt of some of the most evocative and political work by the artist, who passed away last year. In addition to striking installations, an intriguing photo series lined the wall. In *Re-Take of Amrita*, Sundaram orchestrated archival self-portraits of his aunt Amrita Sher-Gil and her father Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, with a digital wand. We got a peek into the Sher-Gil ménage as time and space ruptured in the artist's contemporary fiction. "An almost incestuous relationship between the two is proposed," read the text panel. Seduction was central but so was fantasy. "A seemingly real, entirely

It is unfair to determine the true value of something merely by its utility; but when art crosses over and ties itself to social, political and individual threads, an exhibition can turn into a celebration, a rebellion, a movement

A visitor observing an artwork at the Mahalaxmi Racecourse



KNMA brought together some of Vivan Sundaram's most evocative and political work

constructed drama of self-appointed egos” as Sundaram called it.

Several masterpieces occupied dignified places in the pavilions too, most notably works by Jamini Roy, Akbar Padamsee, F. N. Souza and Sayed Haider Raza, all under the space dedicated to the Delhi Art Gallery. Raja Ravi Varma’s ‘Kadambari’ gleamed in a dark room with a sole spotlight on it. It is not often that one has a rendezvous with these icons under the same roof. So, critique does not come easy when the complaint is that one is spoiled for choice. This indulgence at Art Mumbai, though, also tended to disrupt. It lacked a personal lens, one beyond the social and the mercenary. It pined for a curatorial heart.

But it is perhaps an unfounded expectation from an art fair, where trade is just as important a part of the endeavour if not one that takes precedence. Where art is a commodity as well. I argue not for the utility of art, for I believe that it is complete by itself. That it doesn’t have to be something, it can just be. It is a liberating proposition, *l’art pour l’art*. Art

Several masterpieces occupied dignified places in the pavilions too, most notably works by Jamini Roy, Akbar Padamsee, F. N. Souza and Sayed Haider Raza, all under the space dedicated to the Delhi Art Gallery

for art’s sake. But who is allowed access to art often decides its utility. It is unfair to determine the true value of something merely by its utility. But when art crosses over and ties itself to social, political and individual threads, an exhibition can turn into a celebration, a rebellion, a movement.

As I walked into Vadehra Art Gallery’s presentation, a lone bench surrounded by flocks of visitors and shelves of books stared at me—books that yearned to be picked up and the bench, a friendly room for two. No one sat on it and the books remained untouched.



Art Maze by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

M. F. Husain's *Lotus Suite* was part of Saffronart Foundation's presentation



The extensive pavilions housed galleries from all over India and noted international establishments



‘The Bhupen Bench’ is Atul Dodiya’s homage to noted artist Bhupen Khakhar. The concrete bench was part yellow and part grey, complete with a suspended book held by a pair of earphones. A well-crafted exhibition note told me that the idea was to create a space that brings back memories of Bombay’s fabled ‘reading rooms’, like the David Sassoon Library in Fort and Dadar’s Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya. It worked on a singular provocation—to invite people to sit and reflect.

When I sat on the bench, immediate stares and maybe even a gulped-down gasp came my way. Sometimes, it takes

a curious, amusing case of sitting on a bench to reject the facade of the art world and to jolt it. Sometimes, it takes a moth in an air-conditioned room that sits on a painting right above the sign that says ‘do not touch’. Sometimes, it takes paintings carved in Braille with the sign ‘please touch’. Sometimes, it takes an interpreter onstage, translating panel discussions into sign language. At other times, it takes a loud and unafraid “Gay Wedding is My Verdict” announced on a painting. Or an enormous “Free Palestine” written over the graffiti wall. Art Mumbai made space for all of these. ■

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Performing Arts: Dance

A monthly column that explores any and every aspect of the performing arts. This month, Manipuri dance artiste **Dr. Bimbavati Devi** writes about the process and churning that went into adapting the repertoire of Manipuri performing arts to portray the resistance and agency of women in a unique dance production.

In the summer of 2020, I was approached by the Hyderabad-based Kuchipudi dancer Katyayani Kanak to present a dance film at a festival which had been meticulously curated by her esteemed organisation, Lasyakalpa Foundation. Her forethought was focused on the 'not so docile, not so fair nor the typically beautiful' goddesses. Hence, the festival was thoughtfully named 'Ghora – the Grotesque Goddess'.

I was not very keen to portray a woman (or a goddess) as someone who is dreaded and, through elaborate rituals, is pacified to shield people from her wrath. For me, a woman is a picture of endurance. She is poised unless provoked. Non-synchronous and crude images of the undaunted women warriors of Manipur assembled afore my eyes. They were the nurturing mothers of Manipur who were fearless, like the Goddess with ten weapons of war, and 'grotesque' like the dark goddess forging ahead unclothed with blood dripping from the severed heads in her hands. I recalled the words of Ima Ibetombi, one of the mothers of the nude protest of 2004, who said, "If the police came forward, we would have torn their pants and shirts. We were like Goddess Kali—ready to devour."¹

I envisaged the goddesses entering the human world through the possessed bodies of the revolutionaries/protesters. Intense conversations took place between my own self and the dancer within me who is structured in the present time. Thoroughly appropriating the repertoire of Manipuri performing arts, I tried to re-aestheticise power and resistance, portray the desires and agencies of women, thus salvaging their bodies from the baggage of ultra-feminine grace and docility.

The plot revolved around the saga of the women's army in the 2nd Nupi Lan (2nd Women's War) in 1939², the Meira Paibis³, the women torchbearers who are the social custodians of the land, and the momentous nude protest by a group of women against the barbaric rape and murder of Thangjam Manorama, a suspected terrorist on 11th



July 2004 by members of the 17th Assam Rifles, the official guardians of the state.

The Meitei pantheon has countless deities for every phenomenon. These women soldiers of various time frames were compared with the warrior goddess Panthoibi. Their footprints, tainted with blood, will forever pave the path for light and emancipation. They are deathless and hence their lives were given back by Thongak Lairembi, the Goddess of Death.

An artistic juxtaposition of myth and reality was created, and elements of ritualistic practices and performance traditions were adapted to aestheticise the 'grotesque' onstage. Gradually, a new somatic language started evolving which was enthused by *Lai Tongba* (possession by a female spirit) and performative elements like postures and movements of *Thang-ta* and dances of the Maibis (the female priestesses of Manipur). *Louta Eshei* (harvest songs), melodies on the pena (an indigenous musical string instrument), and archetypal Meitei folk tunes, sung by male and female vocalists, were used abundantly throughout the production.

Massive harvest failure and mass exploitation by the British were figuratively depicted by men trampling all over the crops and a woman helplessly fumbling over the scattered grains. In the scene depicting Manorama, the symbolism of the lotus, which remains unblemished despite blooming in muddy waters, was metaphorically very significant. Movements of the otherwise mirthful bamboo dance were used to produce squares on the ground by men, which represented the dreadful dark chambers. Manorama eventually got entrapped in one of the squares and her frail corpse was hauled up by them. The crushed lotus smeared with blood fell from her hands.

The scene of the nude protest commenced with intense sounds of the drums and a woman suddenly turning towards the audience and apparently opening the *phanek* (the traditional Meitei sarong) with a jerk and screaming aloud '*Hoi Maa*'. Other women holding a piece of white fabric with red spots all over it, ran across the proscenium and then collectively marched forward. Their bodies swayed in a manner that portrayed their anguish and desperation.

Footprints in Blood, in which fire played an important role, was presented both in a closed space like the Experimental Theatre at the NCPA *Mudra* Dance Festival and at amphitheatres in different parts of the country. The myths had to be re-read thoroughly so they could be interwoven with real-life incidents. I made an attempt to give a new dimension to the knowledge of my aesthetic and somatic practices acquired and accumulated in all these years and also to the emotions cushioned within a female body.

Dancers today face innumerable questions. Why are classical Indian dancers so unresponsive to the social, religious, political roiling around them? Why are their disciplined bodies not sensitised enough? "If our life is alienated, can our dances and arts help to transcend that alienation?"⁴ Those forms which were considered devout or pious are

now viewed from the perspective of gender, power, ethnicity and politics. Even if dance is separated from its social backdrop and considered just as a medium of physical expression, the social element contained in the dancer as a member of the sociocultural community cannot be overlooked. The power of dance is being utilised insightfully and innovatively by dancers and this alone can make the margins of the binaries permeable, which will abundantly allow a synergy between art forms. ■

Footnotes:

- 1) Rehman, Teresa. *The Mothers of Manipur: Twelve Women Who Made History*. New Delhi: Zubaan Books, 2017. p. xix.
- 2) The unrest in 1939 arose from the protest by women belonging to the agrarian community against the mass corruption and unjust export of rice by British rulers and non-Manipuri businessmen. The women fought unarmed to save their homes and hearth.
- 3) The Meira Paibis (torchbearers) of Manipur walk along the streets at dusk with blazing torches, protesting against various forms of social injustice. Every Meitei woman becomes a Meira Paibi during trying times.
- 4) Chandralekha. *New Directions in Indian Dance*. Ed. Sunil Kothari. Vol. 55 No. 2. Mumbai: Marg Publications. 2010. p. 53.

For the Record

Jimmy Bilimoria, who oversees the NCPA's Stuart-Liff Collection, writes about Toti Dal Monte, one of the great sopranos of the early 20th century.

Rated as one of the most accomplished singers of her time, Toti Dal Monte was born in Venice on 27th June 1893. Her ambition was to become a concert pianist and she entered the Benedetto Marcello Conservatory in Venice while still a child. A strained tendon in her left hand came as a severe blow to Dal Monte who, having almost finished her studies, saw her aspirations shattered. Her father sought the advice of Italian operatic contralto Barbara Marchisio. The 'Jewel Song' sung by Dal Monte so charmed the famous singer that she became both teacher and devoted friend. The celebrated basso Antonio Pini-Corsi later became Dal Monte's teacher in stagecraft.

She made her debut at La Scala in 1916 in the secondary role of Biancofiore in *Francesca da Rimini*, proving an instantaneous success. Less than two years after this, Dal Monte sang the lead role in *Lodoletta* in Sicily, and this may be regarded as the real commencement of her brilliant career. Touring throughout Italy, she came back to La Scala in 1922 when Toscanini invited her to appear as Gilda in *Rigoletto*. Thereafter, she concentrated on light soprano repertory, with occasional appearances in lyric roles such as Adina, Violetta and Butterfly.

South America accorded the young coloratura soprano a series of tremendous ovations unheard of since the days of Luisa Tetrazzini and in 1924, she was one of the singers in Nellie Melba's opera company when she made her first visit to Australia. Of all the singers in the company, it was



An autographed photo of Toti Dal Monte in *Madama Butterfly* from the author's personal collection

Dal Monte and Apollo Granforte who achieved great success in *Rigoletto* and *Don Pasquale*. Another Australian visit in 1928 was equally successful. A young tenor, Enzo de Muro Lomanto, with whom she had already sung in Italy, was also a member of the company and the two were married in Sydney.

Her only Covent Garden appearances were in 1925 as Lucia and Rosina. At the Met, she sang on only three occasions during the 1924-1925 season due to the strong opposition from firmly entrenched favourites. Chicago welcomed her and retained her for three seasons in which she sang *Linda di Chamounix*, *Lucia di*

Lammermoor, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *La sonnambula*.

When Toscanini took the Scala company to Germany in 1929, she was widely accepted by the audiences. Toscanini praised Dal Monte and utilised her vocal gifts which were allied to matching musicianship. Italian audiences of the 1930s were privileged to hear some of the most exquisite vocalism in her partnership with Tito Schipa in *Barbiere*, *Don Pasquale*, *La sonnambula* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Quite often her other partners were Giacomo Lauri-Volpi and Beniamino Gigli during the same period in which she was in peak form. After her retirement in the '40s, she taught in her native city. Two of her most successful pupils have been Dolores Wilson and Gianna D'Angelo.

"Toti Dal Monte...whose art has a jewel-like delicacy and fineness that must be heard to be believed," wrote composer and music critic Kaikhosru Sorabji.

LPs of her memorable singing in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La fille du régiment* and other works are housed in the Stuart-Liff Collection at the NCPA. ■

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 donated to the Centre 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. The library is open from 10 am to 5.15 pm on weekdays.

Kaleidoscope

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



New contenders

Two diverse Indian cities and their equally distinct artistic heritage recently shared the spotlight on the international cultural stage. For World Cities Day, celebrated on 31st October, UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay announced the induction of 55 new cities to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN). Kozhikode in Kerala and Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh joined this prestigious list, designated as creative cities of literature and music respectively. The addition makes for an unsurprising achievement, with Kozhikode's status as a vibrant literary hub that hosts the famous Kerala Literature Festival annually, and Gwalior's centuries-long contributions to conserve Indian classical, folk and Sufi musical traditions. The UCCN now includes 350 cities in more than a hundred countries, across seven official creative fields. Member cities collaborate with each other and the UNESCO to strengthen their resilience against evolving threats like climate change, rising inequality as well as rapid urbanisation. The NCPA is proud to conserve a facet of the legacy of the Gwalior *gharana* with the audio recordings of artistes like Krishnarao Shankar Pandit (1971), Sharadchandra Arolkar (1974), Malini Rajurkar (1984), Shankar Abhyankar (1985) and Pradeep Chatterji (1989). The recordings can be accessed from the NCPA archives. For more information, please visit www.unesco.org/en

Hidden treasures

Almost 50 years ago, the peculiarly intricate sketches etched on the walls of a coal room under the Medici Chapels in Florence were discovered to have been drawn by the great sculptor Michelangelo in 1530. Accessible only to art scholars to date, the hidden treasures were unveiled to the public for the first time in November



2023. Up to 100 art enthusiasts can reserve their visits each week, and four at a time can spend a maximum of 15 minutes inside the chamber. The compact space is protected through a painstaking and constant preservation process by various art professionals and conservators. Believed to have been drawn over the course of six weeks of Michelangelo's time hiding from the death warrant announced by Pope Clement VII, the charcoal and chalk sketches depict fragments of lost paintings like 'Leda and the Swan', a self-portrait, a study on the Florentine ruler Giuliano de' Medici's legs, and elements from his past projects and the then-incomplete Sistine Chapel. The room has been added as yet another Renaissance attraction that the Medici Chapels Museum offers as part of the larger Bargello Museum. For more information, please visit www.bargellomusei.beniculturali.it

Operatic honour

A jury comprising renowned music journalists has crowned the Dutch National Opera as the Best Opera Company at the Oper! Awards 2024. Known as Germany's only international, publicly presented opera prize, the award ceremony is organised by *Oper!* magazine to celebrate creative excellence in the global opera landscape, on or behind the stage. The award categories range from singing and direction to costume designing and digital recording. The Dutch National Opera, under the directorship of Sophie de Lint, is being recognised for



its efforts and achievements to take the operatic art form into the future through a careful selection of rich musical repertoire consisting of rare pieces, classics and world premieres, and an emphasis on diversity and sustainability. Ulrich Ruhnke, chairman of the jury, refers to the company as "a house for its city and at the same time an indispensable player in the international opera business." The award will be officially presented along with 19 other categories on the opera company's premises in Amsterdam on 29th January 2024. The gala will be the first to be held outside Germany. For more information, please visit www.oper-awards.com

Wilde card

The Picture of Dorian Gray, arguably the most recognisable work by the great Irish author and iconoclast Oscar Wilde, will witness a contemporary resurrection on the theatrical stage. A partnership between the Sydney Theatre Company and Michael Cassel Group, the highly anticipated production will transform



the Victorian satire into an edgy modern tale with a twist, featuring Golden Globe-winning actress Sarah Snook in a mono act performance. Snook will single-handedly embody all 26 roles, including the titular character and the philosophical nobleman Lord Henry Wotton. Adapted and directed by the acclaimed theatre and opera director Kip Williams, the play will be an experimental amalgamation of live performance and video. The theatrical adaptation will premiere at London's Theatre Royal Haymarket this month for a limited 14-week season, marking Snook's return to the West End after eight years. For more information, please visit doriangrayplay.com

- Neelakshi Singh

Recommended Volume

Every month, we introduce a must-read book from the NCPA Reference Library, which has an extensive collection of books on theoretical and practical aspects of the performing and visual arts, ranging from ethnomusicology to architecture to folk traditions. Here **Dr. Shefali Balsari-Shah** recommends an anthology of works related to the cinema of Bombay/Mumbai.

Project Cinema City

Edited by **Madhushree Datta, Kaushik Bhaumik,**

Rohan Shivkumar

Published by **Tulika Books, 2013**

Is it an archive of Mumbai? A coffee-table book? A volume of research articles? An array of visual narratives with maps and drawings and schemes for the city? This sweeping, stunning volume is born out of Project Cinema City: Research, Art and Documentary Practices, a project accompanied by a series of exhibitions that ran from 2008 to 2012. Initiated and hosted by Majlis, and visualised in part by the design cell of KRVI (Kamla Raheja Vidyavidyalaya Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies), this ambitious enterprise was conceived, as Madhushree Datta puts it, as “a set of enquiries into the labour, imagination, desire, access, spaces, locations, iconisation, materiality, languages, moving peoples, viewing conventions and hidden processes that inform the cinemas the city makes, and also the cities its cinema produces”. The book consists of several essays comprising both text and visuals organised into three broad sections: Mapping Imaginations: Terrains, Locations; Performing Labour: Bodies, Networks; Viewing Limits: Narratives, Technologies.

Arjun Appadurai’s foreword to the book suggests that the overarching philosophy here combines Guy Debord’s notion of *derive* and the Situationist *detournement*—“a rapid passage through various urban ambiances that aims to explore and intervene in the psychogeography of the city, a technique that aims to break through the monotony of the capitalist city by seeking experiences by chance and then building out of them an alternative experience of the possibilities of the urban”. Accordingly, the scope of the book is to examine fluid shapes and patterns and capture myriad moods and manifestations, revealed primarily by the cinematic lens that has become our go-to definer of the city.

Kaushik Bhaumik argues that Bombay/Mumbai’s pre-eminence as the centre for cinema production is a direct outcome of its position as “*ur*-bazaar encompassing the energies of all bazaars of northern India”. He posits, further, that its location on the west coast put the city outside the main currents of heartland India’s caste politics. Consequently, with its growth as a trade and commercial magnet, “the city’s bazaars provided a panorama of a hectic, interactive commercial space with little consideration for somatic or religious identities, at least on the shop-fronts of its bazaar spaces”. This persuasive theory fits well with the popular culture projection, driven largely by Hindi cinema, of the city as a site of modernity where caste and class, regional, linguistic and religious origins meld into a multifaceted urban identity.

The city, however, is not always a dreamscape. Often, in feature films like *Jagte Raho*, it is a spectral, heartless, faceless beast, triggering Kafkaesque experiences in shadowy half-worlds, while documentary films tend to problematise the entire city as a

studio set. The book explores the dynamics of this elusive dream-nightmare chimera in considerable detail. Thus, documentary practices are used in engaging and interactive ways to capture images that both de-familiarise and illuminate the less visible: telephone instruments among complex networks of goods and services, migrant wage workers, noir locations of crime in the city. While, over the years, many artists trained in fine art have achieved commercial success as art directors of drama companies and film studios, we see, too, the travails of the faceless and unsung labour force that has toiled to make cinema such an integral part of the city. There are also lively and revealing interviews with a range of female film-viewers (‘Zenana Show’), bar dancers and stunt artistes, sweatshop labourers and a waste celluloid dealer who recycles old film reels evocative of escapist fantasies into the materiality and banality of bangles and collar stiffeners. These visceral glimpses of Mumbai are contrasted, ironically, with the melodramatic productions of up-and-coming movie centres like Malegaon and the Northeast.

The book abounds in visual essays, animated and stylised maps of real and imagined places, artworks, illustrations and storyboards enlivened by styles as varied as Kalighat and surrealism, eye-popping photographs of people, places and artefacts, designs for nameboards of train stations featuring film villains to encapsulate the underlying unease of an urbanism tainted by crime as heavily as grime, graphic thrillers and photo-romances, even a delightfully quirky Vastu Sangrahalaya Dukaan—a Museum Shop of Fetish Objects. Visual archives freeze for posterity several fast-vanishing areas of the city like Pila House (where the erstwhile playhouses that facilitated the growth of Parsi, Gujarati and Marathi theatre stood), Kamathipura and Girangaon, while Mumbai’s growth as a cultural and industrial centre is graphically traced through colourful mill labels, calendar art and lithographs. The sheer number and richness of all these images calls for a lengthy and intense immersion.

Even those familiar with Bombay/ Mumbai history will be drawn in by this audacious and panoramic volume. It is a cornucopia of impressive research, documentation and data, sharp, lively observations and insights, and engaging narratives, while its riotous aesthetics make for a sensory feast. *Project Cinema City* redefines the trajectory for future writings about the city. ■

Dr. Shefali Balsari-Shah is former Associate Professor and Head, Department of English, St. Xavier’s College (Autonomous), Mumbai. The NCPA Reference Library is open to visitors from 10 am to 5.15 pm on weekdays. The reference library membership is complimentary for NCPA Members and Friends of the SOI. The books and LPs in the Stuart-Liff music library are available for reference to Friends of the SOI at no cost. The reference library membership is open to the general public at a nominal annual fee of ₹500/- (April-March). Casual membership for visitors (outstation visitors only) is available at ₹100/- per day. For more information, please call 022-6622 3715.

The Unknown History of Kathak

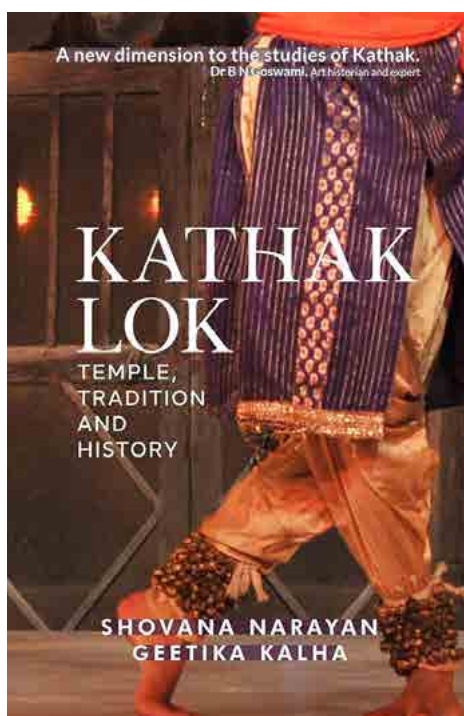
In *Kathak Lok: Temple, Tradition and History*, Kathak exponent **Shovana Narayan** and former IAS officer, now writer and researcher, **Geetika Kalha** visited numerous ‘Kathak’ villages across the country in search of Kathak Lok, a widespread community of hereditary practitioners of the form. In the process—which took five years of fieldwork and 7,000 kilometres of travel—they unearthed stories of faith, knowledge and devotion that shatter many pre-conceived notions associated with the form.

Over a cup of tea with Pandit Ayodhya Sharan Mishra, we learnt that he was the son of the late Pandit Sheetla Prasad Mishra, a well-known Kathak from Raebareli, who had performed at the Sri Raj Gopal temple every year throughout his life. On the death of his father, the temple authorities had approached him to continue the temple custom. Not wanting the family tradition to end, he had agreed. He was passionately committed to performing in Ayodhya during Sawan Jhoola. He also rendered *sewa* at the temples in Raebareli and Varanasi during Janmashtami and other festivals. He said doing *nritya sewa* in a temple before the deities was an experience like no other, and that he would like to do it as long as he could.

He learnt to perform *nritya sewa* from his grandfather and father. The family, he said, had a large collection of sacred texts and verses. He emphasised that the ladies of the family did not perform. He mentioned that the audience during his father’s time was very different. Then, the audience understood and appreciated classical music and dance whereas now the audience just wanted to be entertained, he said. When asked if his art was respected, he replied that he, a Kathak Brahmin, still commanded respect in the towns and villages.

We requested him to sing verses from certain episodes of the Ramayana, thinking that he would perhaps fumble, as it would be unrehearsed. To our surprise, he immediately and effortlessly began to sing and also started giving an interpretation. We got the impression that he had not learnt an art; he was the art. He broke into musical verse with every breath, his eyes captured every emotion and his body responded to every sentiment. He was a true Kathak. We understood why the art (music, verse and dance) is called Kathak and why the people practising the art are also called Kathak.

In urban presentations, Kapila Vatsyayan has said: “The aesthetic enjoyment of the classical dance is considerably hampered today by the wide gap between the dancer and the spectator¹”. Most urban contemporary artistes are comfortable with pre-rehearsed items and perhaps have limited knowledge of *sahitya* (literature).



The dancer on the proscenium stage aims to please, to provide enjoyment and showcase his/her skill. In the temple, a Kathak who is immersed in *sahitya*, understands its depth, aims to explain the message of the saints; he does not seek applause. He innovates and interacts with the devotees without missing a beat. It made us understand why the Kathaks in these areas were such a special community, distinct from the urban artistes who perform the Kathak dance. It was like seeing the last of a species. It was an emotional moment for us.

The Kathaks that we met were skilled in singing, playing musical instruments, dance and were steeped in *kavya* or religious text. In a temple, the most important aspect of the *sewa*, is the *kavya* or the verse or the word, or the *pada* or the *shabd*. A Kathak has to memorise a huge amount of text and also understand its literal meaning and philosophical interpretations. Elaboration and interpretation of the text is done by

interweaving *padas* of various saints. This brings out the common message of all saints and at the same time showcases the depth and breadth of the knowledge and understanding of the Kathak. To be able to express the text, he has to be able to sing. All the Kathaks that we saw were excellent vocalists.

To embellish their explanations, they performed *abhinaya* to the *kavya*, which was interspersed with short rhythmic patterns. Hence the Kathak was able to exhibit mastery over *sahitya*, *abhinaya*, and also showcase his rhythmic prowess. Hein describes this by saying that the Kathak sang “an extended song uttered in words and at the same time illustrated and explained by imitative and symbolic gestures that provided a visual commentary on the text—like the illumination of a manuscript.”²

The temple presentations were *bhavpradhan* (rich in expressions). Meaning that the Kathaks tried to evoke emotion in the audience by creating dramatic scenes with *abhinaya*. This enabled the audience to empathise with what was happening and experience the same emotion as the performer. We saw the Kathaks draw *citraabhinaya* (draw pictures with expressions and movements) as identified by Bharata in his *Natyashastra*. Abhinavagupta, in his *Abhinavbharati*, calls it *nrityakavya* i.e., poetry delineated through dance or poetry in motion.

More than a decade earlier, we had seen the performance of the late Pandit Sheetala Prasad in Delhi. He was a traditional temple Kathak. His performance was described by Pandit Munna Shukla³: “Sheetala ji would explain the *shabdārtha* (literal meaning), *bhavartha* (referential and allegorical meaning), and *goodārtha* (hidden meaning) of a verse. He would expand and improvise on each line of the *baramasa* and move from one *chaupayi* to the other in a seamless manner.”

Pandit Birju Maharaj affirmed that this was the method of *sewa* in temples.

What was remarkable was the ability of the Kathak Lok to engage all members of the audience. In all the temples we saw the audience—men, women and children—glued to the performance, watching for hours, completely absorbed. We all laughed and cried as they effortlessly involved us in the much-loved emotional tales. This was India at the grassroots. This was why year after year after year we watch the Ramlila during Dussehra, and the Ram Jhoola during Sawan.

Kathak sewa and Kathak dance

Even as the temple Kathak does his *sewa*, he uses all the technical features of the Kathak dance. As we watched the Kathaks perform at the temples, we knew we were looking at the roots and the purpose of Kathak dance. There is no doubt that what the Kathaks were performing at the temple was the original Kathak dance.

Here we must say once again that the purpose of the performance in the temple was to explain the verse or *kavya*, whereas the proscenium stage Kathak dance aims to entertain. The latter comprises physical skill, rhythmic wizardry, fast-moving footwork, endless *chakkars* and awe-inspiring *tatkar*, elaborate costumes, lights and music. Whereas in the temple the whole emphasis is on *kavya*, which is embellished with music and

dance. The Kathak is not showcasing his skill, he is explaining the verse and evoking emotions.

That this tradition continues till today is testimony to the fact that the tradition of delineating religious texts with music and dance by the Kathak Lok is very much a living tradition. Actually, seeing a Kathak doing *katha* in a temple, explaining the message of the saints to the people, is an experience like no other. How beautifully music and dance enhance the message. It would be tragic if this tradition dies out.

Witnessing the temple *sewa* in Ayodhya moved us to the core. It was much more than we had expected. It also brought home to us the stark fact that this tradition was in danger of dying out. The Kathaks were not earning much from the temples. They were doing it because it was their dharma, and it was what their forefathers had done. But when had it started, what was the basis of this tradition? ■

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This is an excerpt from Kathak Lok: Temple, Tradition and History by Shovana Narayan and Geetika Kalha. No part of this excerpt may be quoted or reproduced without prior written consent from its publisher, Vitasta Publishing.

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1. *Rasa: The Indian Performing Arts in the Last Twenty-Five Years*, Volume 1, Music and Dance Editorial, pg 132.
2. Norvin Hein, *The Miracle Plays of Mathura*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1972, Chapter 2, The Kathak, pg 36.
3. Interview with Munna Shukla (see *Mapping of Kathak Villages* by Shovana Narayan and Geetika Kalha, ICH Project, Sangeet Natak Akademi).

This Month, That Year

January 1985 saw two interesting programmes in the sphere of drama: a solo theatre performance based on the novels of Jane Austen by British actress Geraldine McEwan, and a one-man theatre presentation by Brian D. Barnes (also from the United Kingdom) drawing from *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. *It's All Yours, Janab*, directed by Bharat Dabholkar, introduced to non-Marathi theatregoers the robust humour and satirical intent of P. L. Deshpande's original. Om Puri's appearances in *Bichchoo* and *Udhvasta Dharmashala* offered audiences an opportunity to witness the multifaceted talents of this remarkable actor.

* * *

In the first week of January 1986, theatregoers were offered an evening of sheer enjoyment with three one-act comedies by Anton Chekov, directed by Naseeruddin Shah in which he appeared in two.

The most significant event of the month was the East-West Theatre Encounter in which 30 leading theatre practitioners from India and abroad participated. Meanwhile, the Tata Theatre continued to draw on the energies and talents of local directors. Arvind Joshi's Gujarati plays, Janak Toprani's *The Imaginary Invalid*, with Naseeruddin Shah in the lead, was a popular draw. Pransukh Nayak, a veteran of the Gujarati stage and now based in Ahmedabad, offered glimpses into the traditional style of drama presentation. Breezy comedies, topical revues, replete with music

and dance like *Bottoms Up*, made the Tata Theatre a popular venue for weekend entertainment.

* * *

The year 1988 commenced with a Festival of Classical Music organised in collaboration with Sajan Milap and featured senior artistes like Kishori Amonkar and Bhimsen Joshi along with Lalith Rao, Malini Rajurkar and Rashid Khan. An unusual programme was organised in January to celebrate the centenary of the Bombay Art Society. M. F. Husain painted a huge canvas to the strains of Joshi's music in the presence of an engrossed and delighted audience. 'Jazz and its Development through the Century' was the subject of an illuminating lecture-demonstration at the Little Theatre by Francois Nicoullaud, Consul General of France in Bombay. Towards the close of the month, *Ramayana*, a dance-drama, was performed with elan by differently abled children.

* * *

The East-West Dance Encounter was held from the 22nd to the 29th of January 1984. Thirty participants from India and abroad joined the forum for a meeting of minds and exchange of information, where the basic artistic concepts, dance styles and work modes pertaining to India and the West could be analysed. The contribution of Susanne Linke (from the Federal Republic of Germany) in infusing a mood of seriousness and commitment in the discussion was outstanding. The participants from the West were enthralled by the beauty and vitality of Indian dance, but not quite aware of the challenges within it.

A Collision of Cultures

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 last of a three-part series, writer and dramaturg *Rustom Bharucha* discusses certain Western interpretations of Indian theatre, demonstrated by artistes and scholars as varied as Gordon Craig, Jerzy Grotowski and Richard Schechner.

In a seminar on *Ritual in the Theatre* at the New Theatre Festival in Baltimore in 1978, Richard Schechner described Jerzy Grotowski's use of Kathakali as "a transformation... a genuine use of ritual cross-culturally" (Schechner 1978, 94). More provocatively than any writer on the theatre today, he has argued, theorised and speculated about cross-cultural exchanges between theatrical traditions in the East and the West. In recent years, he has spent much time in India where he has observed and recorded performances of *Chhau*, Kathakali and the Ramlila. Unlike most American scholars of theatre in the East who tend to focus on particular theatrical traditions, Schechner's reflections on Indian theatre cannot be studied in isolation from his comments on Balinese or Japanese theatre. Often, they are enclosed within his own views of performance, ethology, kinesics, the rehearsal process, "selective inattention", and the use of ritual in theatre. Schechner's eclectic interests and modes of perception are as prodigious as they are occasionally bewildering. Not inappropriately, he once remarked: "I want to reveal myself as a set of disconnected thoughts, which is the way I am. I want to celebrate my fragmentation" (Schechner 1978, 92).

Schechner's writings conspicuously reveal his state of fragmentation. His texts and productions can be viewed as networks of interlocking structures, passages and spaces which frequently do not connect or cohere. This seeming randomness conceals a very alert and fundamentally sceptical mode of inquiry. In fact, if there is one quality that characterises Schechner's writings on theatre, it is scepticism. More succinctly than any writer, he has demystified Indian theatre, divesting it of its sacred and metaphysical associations. While Schechner is surely correct in

emphasising that the religious festivals of India like the Ramlila and the Kumbh Mela are also vibrant entertainments and function as economic and educational centres, he tends to emphasise the social and theatrical aspects of these festivals at the expense of the spiritual. The Ramlila is less of a *mela* than he makes it out to be. Thousands of Indians, including villagers and vagrants, deprived of the basic necessities of life, turn to the rituals in the Ramlila not merely for their theatrical vitality (which should not be ignored) but for a spiritual guidance that invigorates them to face their lot in life with some resilience and courage.

Secular activities in religious festivals like the Ramlila are notoriously deceptive. They are frequently so alluring that Western viewers unfamiliar with Indian rituals tend to concentrate on the fun and forget about the worship of the gods. A more rational response, which is Schechner's more often than not, is to view the secular and the sacred in some kind of analogous relationship. But the Ramlila ultimately transcends any analysis that isolates equivalents between its structures of ceremony and play. Its ritual complexity lies not in the coexistence of the secular and the sacred but in the interpenetration, as it were, of these two seemingly irreconcilable states of being.

Schechner's most perceptive comments on the interpenetration of disparate activities relate to the 31st day of the Ramlila when three distinct activities exist within one another like the layers of a seed. He sees the Maharaja worshipping the *swarups* (the boys who play the gods) as an act of cosmic significance, which is contained within a mythic event—the Maharaja welcoming visiting royalty—which in turn is contained within the social order of Ramnagar when the entertainers are finally paid for their services during

the festival.¹ This interpenetration of the secular and the sacred applies as much to the activities surrounding the Ramlila as to the performances themselves. The *swarups* do not merely represent deities; they are incarnations of the gods themselves.

When Schechner asked the actor who played Rama what he felt when the people touched his feet, the boy replied: "Feeling of god is in me." Similarly, the veteran actor who has played the sage Narad-muni for over three decades is Narad-muni in everyday life. His spectators are his devotees. For Schechner, quite understandably, the actor is not a saint. Revealing his fundamentally sceptical mode of thinking, Schechner says, "This man is not Narad-muni, but also he is not not Narad-muni: he performs in the field between a negative and double negative, a field of limitless potential, free as it is from both the person (not) and the person impersonated (not not)" (Schechner 1981, 88).

In articulating this mode of acting, Schechner is characteristically rash in associating it with the actor playing Narad-muni and with Laurence Olivier playing Hamlet. It is not that this mode of acting does not apply to the two actors, but the point is that it applies in totally different ways. Schechner fails to acknowledge that Narad-muni's degree of absorption in his role is of a very different order from Olivier's in *Hamlet*. Besides, his continuation of the role in everyday life (when is he ever not Narad-muni?) has no parallel, to my mind, in Western theatre. Then also the social context of Narad-muni and Hamlet as roles is radically different. With very few exceptions (notably Oberammergau), there is no tradition in contemporary Western theatre of actors representing gods and divine figures as there is in religious dramas performed in India today. The core of spiritual belief embedded in the role of Narad-muni

transfigures the performance in a way that one cannot expect from any performance of *Hamlet*.

Underlying Schechner's method in applying theoretical models to differing performance traditions is his faith in "universals". In *Drama, Script, Theatre, and Performance*, he emphatically states: "It is my belief that performance and theatre are universal, but that drama is not" (Schechner 1977, 600)². Performances, I believe, differ as much from culture to culture as dramas do, even though recurrences of structure and patterns of movement may be found in the creation of their spectacles. Schechner's approach is to isolate a ritual structure or process from its particular social context and then apply it to another disparate context. His approach is shared by other social scientists and anthropologists who have recently turned to the theatre to explain activities and rituals in terms of games and texts. Victor Turner's all-encompassing concept of "social drama", for example, has been applied to rites and picaresque narratives, to Icelandic sagas and Caribbean carnivals. "Turner's Western pattern of breach, crisis, redressive action and reintegration," Schechner believes, "is actually universal... the theatre of every culture I know about also conforms [to this dramatic paradigm]." (Schechner 1977, 121)

Though this statement needs illustration, which Schechner does not provide, it is unlikely that paradigms (such as Turner's) can be applied to theatrical traditions in the East and West without blurring their considerable differences. Even if the structure of a particular performance by the Living Theatre (an American theatre company founded by Judith Malina and Julian Beck) corresponded to a segment from the Ramlila (and this is purely a hypothesis on my part), they would still mean two different things to their respective audiences. And what they mean ultimately constitutes what they are. Clifford Geertz has argued perceptively against "universal" structures in interdisciplinary studies of the social sciences:

Formally similar processes have different content. They say, as we might put it, rather different things, and thus have rather different implications for social life. And though ritual theorists are hardly incognisant of that fact, they are, precisely because they are so concerned with the general movement

of things, ill-equipped to deal with it. (1980, 173)

Schechner frequently neutralises the content of a particular ritual (or "meaning" as he prefers to call it) by concentrating on its "physical action". When a ritual is taken from its original setting and integrated into one of his productions, the objective is to find an equivalent meaning for the ritual in an American context. For instance, in the Performance Group's production of *Mother Courage* directed by Schechner, food was served during intermission, just as people in the highlands of New Guinea distribute pig meat during some of their festivals. The problem with such an action is that there may not be an equivalent for pig meat in American culture. Soup and bread (with or without Swiss cheese) may not embody American social structure for Americans the way pig meat embodies the social structure of New Guinea for its residents.

In fact, if there is one quality that characterises Richard Schechner's writings on theatre, it is scepticism; more succinctly than any writer, he has demystified Indian theatre, divesting it of its sacred and metaphysical associations

On other occasions, Schechner acknowledges that the meaning of a particular ritual is altered when that ritual is transplanted from its own culture into another. What is ignored in this process is the interpretation of the ritual's meaning. Schechner's approach is to play "the physical action" of the ritual and to accept whatever meaning emerges from it. Frequently, this meaning is a travesty of what the ritual once signified. For instance, the "birth ritual" in *Dionysus in '69* was "taken" from the Asmat in West

Irian. "It meant something different to us," Schechner explains, "but I didn't play the meaning, I played the physical action. You go to another country to see your own more clearly." (Schechner 1978, 97)

But what about the "other" culture? Are its rituals there simply to be used in an arbitrary, personal way? Is it fair to take a ceremony from it that is part of its heritage, divest it of its original meaning, and then replay it for its "physical action"? These questions, which may seem naïve and redundant to most social thinkers, concern the ethics of representation. It is with this issue in mind that I question Schechner's view that "any ritual can be lifted from its original setting and performed as theatre" (Schechner 1977, 86). I believe that this is a gross overstatement. Schechner needs to acknowledge that there are rituals rooted in spiritual contexts to which they are inextricably linked. Not all rituals are "acts of instrumentation", to use Alexander Alland's term. If rituals, particularly those associated with sacred ceremonies, have to be used or reproduced in the theatre, a confrontation of their "meaning" is as important as an examination of their "physical action". For instance, if elements of the Mass had to be reproduced in Indian theatre, it would be necessary not merely to perform the ritual gestures associated with the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, but it would also be imperative to know something about Christ's death in relation to those gestures and believe in it.

Schechner's pragmatic belief that meaning is in doing applies, I believe, to performances within his own tradition where the "entire performance score", to use his words, is shaped from "ordinary life" (Schechner 1978, 93). The words and actions that constitute the score have familiar associations: they represent a consistent behaviour, a grammar of action. But when a ritual is used from a non-Western culture, its words and actions are unfamiliar. The responsibility of any director, then, is first to learn what the ritual means within its own culture, and then to reflect on what it could mean in his own. Merely "doing" a ritual from another culture without knowing or caring what it means risks a simplification and distortion of its content.

Underlying Schechner's advocacy of the use of rituals in theatre is a specific attitude towards differences between cultures. "The difference between 'them'

and ‘us’ isn’t so great,” he informed the participants in a seminar on *Ritual in the Theatre* held in Baltimore in 1978. While this attitude seemed at first open and generous, it became clear that Schechner was not really interested in understanding the perspective of other cultures on their own rituals. Ultimately, he used the supposed lack of differences between cultures as a rationale for interpreting rituals in a personal way. According to him, Kathakali is no different from *Hamlet* insofar as every performance of Shakespeare’s play is an “editing of the text” just as every performance of Kathakali by a great dancer like Gopinath is a recreation of the rules. (Schechner 1978, 94)

Apart from freely associating “ritual” with Kathakali (which can be more accurately viewed as a theatre-dance tradition incorporating ritual elements within its performance structure and rehearsal process), this statement reveals the limitations of analogical thinking in cross-cultural contexts. Contrary to what Schechner has stated, the degree to which a Kathakali dancer can deviate from the rules is considerably less than for an actor playing *Hamlet*. What are the rules for playing *Hamlet* anyway? There is a performance tradition, but nothing so codified as the system of acting Kathakali prescribed in acting manuals, where the minutiae of *mudras*, eye movements and emotional states to be portrayed are intricately documented. What Schechner has not acknowledged is that there are rules in Kathakali that remain more or less fixed. If a great dancer like Gopinath (who is really an exception among classical Indian dancers) “puts his own stamp” on a tradition, in Schechner’s words, his deviation from the rules ironically calls attention to them. Certainly, every great dancer will shape a *mudra* individually just as every actor will speak “To be, or not to be” differently, but the dancer will invariably keep in mind the *mudra* as he learned it from his guru, whereas the actor is relatively free to interpret *Hamlet*’s soliloquy in a manner that seems appropriate to his inner life.

Schechner is surely aware of the *guru-shishya* (teacher-disciple) relationship that is integrally related to performance traditions in India. An Indian dancer performs, in a certain sense, on behalf of his guru who has instilled the moves of the dance within him. As Schechner has observed, “A Balinese or Indian dance guru passes on the moves of the dance, often standing behind the student,

manipulating her as if she were a puppet until, as the Balinese say, the dance ‘goes into the body;’” (Schechner 1978, 93). But the performance itself, Schechner believes, unlike the rehearsal process, is “truly contingent, an ever-changing *lila*” (Schechner 1981, 106). I believe that Schechner exaggerates the quality of contingency in classical Indian dance-theatre, where even the most improvised sections of choreography (and they are relatively few compared to a raga, which is based on the principle of improvisation) function within strict limits.

I should also point out how deceptive it is to compare performance traditions in the East and the West using fixed criteria. It is not that Indian theatre is more “contingent” than Western theatre during performance, as Schechner says; the point is that they are “contingent” in totally different ways. There is an equivocal

With the development of international transport, the growth of the tourist industry and the widespread use of cameras and film, the world has shrunk as it were, and rituals, which were once strange sights and sounds for artistes like Gordon Craig, have now become increasingly available ... The most blatant manifestation of this accessibility is the emergence of “cultural tourism”

nature to the terms Schechner often uses, such as “score” and “flow” (which are predominantly Western conceptions), that conceals the fact that there are more differences than similarities in a cross-cultural examination of theatre.

With the development of international transport, the growth of the tourist industry and the widespread use of cameras and film, the world has shrunk as it were, and rituals, which were once strange sights and sounds for artistes like Gordon Craig, have now become increasingly available. Perhaps it is this accessibility of rituals that has tempted theatre practitioners like Schechner to overly familiarise them. The most blatant manifestation of this

accessibility is the emergence of “cultural tourism”. Schechner’s enthusiastic support for this phenomenon is problematic since it concentrates more on what tourism has opened up for Westerners (in terms of rituals, rites and ceremonies that were once inaccessible) and less on the effect of tourism on the rituals themselves. Here again, I believe Schechner’s pragmatism, so innately American (if I may insert a cultural bias on my part), leads him to view the distortion or disappearance of a particular ritual with a certain “moral neutrality”, to use a term created by Kenneth Tynan (1977, 20) to describe Peter Brook’s attitude to the *Ik*.³

Schechner has no contempt for the changes in genuine performances that have resulted from commercialism and audience pressures. He asks (quite unaccountably to my mind), “At what moment does a tourist show become itself an authentic theatrical art?” (Schechner 1977, 82) This question, which seems to view culture as a product that can be recycled, could emerge only from a mind shaped by the needs of a technological society. In India, the recycling of garbage has yet to be widely accepted as a practice; as for the recycling of culture, the conversion of the spurious into the “authentic”, it is a totally alien concept. Significantly, when Schechner was once asked how one can distinguish between “a genuine ritual” and “a fabricated one”, he responded with a question: “Does it make any difference?” (Schechner 1978, 99) My answer to that question is an affirmative one.

Fabricated rituals are not at all difficult to find in contemporary theatre. Schechner himself has acknowledged that “most of the ritual of theatre in our culture comes during rehearsals. The ritual we see in performance is false” (Schechner 1978, 95). A fabricated ritual is frequently distinguished by the lack of skill and accuracy with which it is executed. Even more conspicuous is the lack of belief in the ritual itself. The most virtuosic display of the gestures and movements in a ritual can be ultimately false if they are emptied of content.

An unfortunate development of cultural tourism has been the influx of fabricated rituals within the cultures of these rituals. It is bad enough if a ritual from India, for example, is travestied in the West, but it is worse when this ritual loses its significance in India itself. The practitioners of many traditional dances and rituals in India no longer perform for

the gods; they perform for tourists who come to the villages armed with their cameras, dressed in kurtas and beads. In payment for their performances, the actors no longer receive *prasad* (sacred food)—they get dollars or marks or yen or (when the tourists are Indian) rupees.

It should be emphasised that there is a difference between exchanging a ritual for a song or a performance (as Brook “traded culture” with the Africans) and exchanging a ritual for money. In many situations where money is used, the “cultural exchange” becomes a pretext for an economic exchange, a business transaction. And money, which constitutively signifies power, is very powerful in an impoverished country like India. The outsiders who give it are the ones who control this cultural exchange and however cosmopolitan or altruistic they may be, they are still figures of authority. They dominate by their very presence in the villages and rural areas of India where most of the traditional dances and dramas are performed.

Sometimes the mere presence of tourists at performances in Indian cities is jarring enough. At a rare performance of the ancient *Chhau* dances in Calcutta, I confronted some of the ironies of cultural tourism. *Chhau* dancers are villagers from the districts of Seraikella, Mayurbhanj and Purulia in Eastern India. Most of them work as labourers, farmhands and rickshaw pullers during the day. It is amazing how, with all their difficulties, they are able to preserve and perfect the intricacies of this highly complex dance tradition. From where I was sitting, I could see the dancers waiting in the wings for their entrances. Before they entered, I saw them touch the ground with their hands to invoke the blessing of the gods. This gesture was ignored by the horde of American and European photographers in front of the stage who clicked cameras with callous indifference throughout the performance. At particularly dynamic moments in the dance, they yelled out instructions to one another over the ritual beating of the drums and the clashing of the cymbals. There was something greedy in the way they vied with one another for the best shots.

At the end of the performance, the dancers assembled onstage and folded their hands in the traditional gesture of *namaste*. In this gesture, which evoked an aura of submission, and the glittering array of cameras and zoom lenses and projectors—a minuscule representation of Western technology and power—I

saw two conflicting worlds. Unlike Schechner, I am sceptical that the theatre is in the process of discovering “a world of colliding cultures no longer dominated by Europeans and Americans, and no longer dominable by anyone” (Schechner 1981, 113). The *Chhau* performance made me realise, only too bitterly, how easy it is for the West to assert its dominance by virtue of its economic and technological power.

What is urgently needed is a more sustained dialogue and exchange of ideas, techniques and performance skills between performers and scholars from India and the Western world

If interculturalism in the theatre is to be more than a vision, there has to be a fairer exchange between theatrical traditions in the East and the West. At the moment, it is Westerners who have initiated (and controlled) the exchange. It is they who have come to countries like India and taken its rituals and techniques (either through photographs, documentation or actual borrowings). The sheer poverty, if not destitution, of most performers in India clearly minimises

their possibilities of travelling to the West. Only a few Indian gurus and dancers have had the opportunity to visit European and American countries for lecture-demonstrations and classes. Likewise, the exposure of many Western scholars and artistes to the performance traditions of Kathakali, *Chhau* and *Yakshagana* remains limited in duration and depth.

What is urgently needed is a more sustained dialogue and exchange of ideas, techniques and performance skills between performers and scholars from India and the Western world. Seminars on interculturalism in theatre can certainly play a valuable role in fostering a closer understanding between the different cultures, though the discussions in the seminars are more likely to generate performance theories rather than performances. Perhaps, a more enduring and vital form of exchange can emerge from the creation of workshops involving Indian and Western performers where communities, however fragile and fleeting, can exist for brief periods of time, and where differences can be sustained within harmonious experiences. ■

Courtesy: Asian Theatre Journal 1, no. 1 (Spring 1984), University of Hawaii, Hawaii. This article first appeared in its entirety in the NCPA Quarterly Journal in June 1985 (Volume 14, Issue 2).

NOTES:

1. For a more detailed description see ‘The Ramlila of Ramnagar’ (Schechner and Hess, 1977).
2. For Schechner, “The *drama* is what the writer writes; the *script* is the interior map of a particular production; the *theatre* is the specific set of gestures performed by the performers in any given performance; and the *performance* is the whole event, including audience and performers ...” (Schechner 1977, 44)
3. Brook is presently working on a production of the Mahabharata in Paris. When I met him at La Mama in New York two summers ago, I asked him what sections of the Mahabharata he intended to dramatise. He replied: “The whole thing.”

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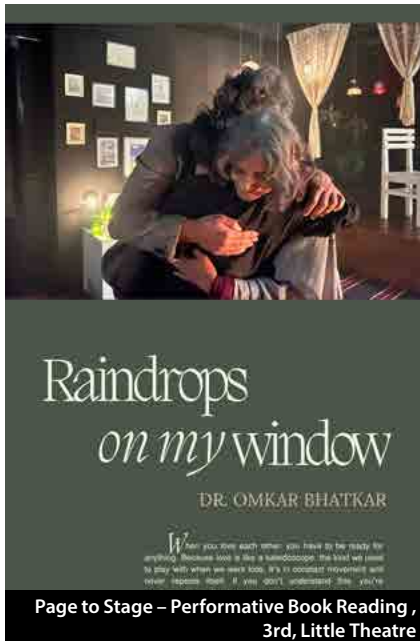
Programme Guide

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

January 2024

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

MULTI ARTS & PRESENTATION



Page to Stage – Performative Book Reading

Raindrops on my Window
Written & directed by
Dr. Omkar Bhatkar
Little Theatre
Wednesday, 3rd – 4.00 pm

The NCPA Library in collaboration with Metamorphosis Theatre and Films

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Experimental Theatre

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from different matras in a given tala

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(60 mins followed by Q&A session)

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Supported by Citi

In the context of Indian art (classical) music, a composition, often referred to as *bandish*, serves as an edifice upon which the architecture of a *raga* can be sculpted. By virtue of holding within its structure, elements that can be improvised upon, a *bandish* contributes to portraying the personality of a *raga* in an unambiguous manner.

There could be several *bandishes* based on the melodic structure of a given *raga*. There could be variations in terms of factors such as the poetry, the *tala* and the speed used, as well as the specific beat (*matra*) of the *tala* cycle from where the composition takes off (*uthan*). Each of these factors has a definite aesthetic significance, especially in the genre of *khayal*, which is known to offer infinite scope to imagine, interpret and improvise spontaneously.

With a focus on *khayal bandishes*, this workshop will highlight the aesthetic effect attributed to the point from where a *bandish* is expected to take off (*uthan*) with respect to the *tala* cycle. The discussion will include live demonstrations of *bandishes* across *gharanas* using varied take-off points within the framework of a given *raga* as well as in different *ragas*.

Satyasheel Deshpande is known for his contribution to the field of Hindustani music as a performer, composer, musicologist, researcher, author and guru. Son of the renowned musicologist Vamanrao Deshpande,

he has had the privilege of training with the legendary vocalist, Kumar Gandharva. The establishment of the Samvaad Foundation, one of the largest and most valuable collections of Hindustani music, has enabled him to imbibe knowledge and the insights of great masters together with their varying perspectives on the art of music-making.

Registration starts on

6th December 2023

Register now on

www.bookmyshow.com**INTERNATIONAL MUSIC**

Johanna Iser, 7th, Little Theatre

The Mastery (Embodied vocal sovereignty)

An International Vocal Masterclass

Little Theatre

Sunday, 7th - 4.00 pm to 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

In this unique workshop, international singer and speaker **Johanna Maria Iser** will be teaching her special breathing and vocal technique—The Embodied Voice Technique—for the very first time internationally.

She will share her experience as a performer and vocal facilitator to improve the level of vocal skill and stage presence. Participants will analyse their individual breathing style and learn how they can improve the sound, density, presence, volume and control of their natural instrument. In the second part, they will be introduced to the art of stage training, which includes posture, movement, mindset and charisma on any kind of stage.

This workshop is for anyone who wants to work professionally with

their voices (either speaking or singing) and has a desire for a deeper understanding and skillset regarding their voice.

Registration Fee: ₹2,000/- (Plus GST)
Register now on
www.bookmyshow.com.

INDIAN MUSIC

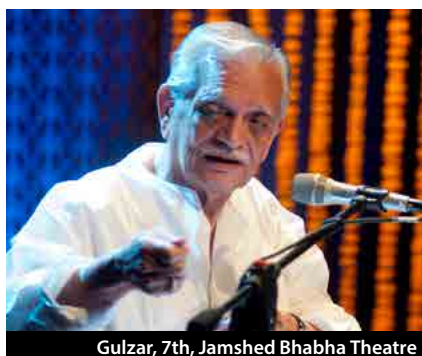
Citi NCPA Aadi Anant: From Here to Eternity

Tapur Tupur: Bachche, Bachpan aur Bachpana

Children's poetry by Gurudev Tagore with Gulzar, Shantanu Moitra, Shaan, Rekha Bhardwaj, Mahalakshmi Iyer, a group of children and others
Jamshed Bhabha Theatre
Sunday, 7th – 6.30 pm

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), the Nobel laureate, poet, novelist, painter and composer, has had a far-reaching impact not only on Indian literature but on music as well. A leading figure in the renaissance of Bangla literature, his contribution to children's literature is colossal. Although a large body of his work meant for children consists of poems, short stories, novels and songs, poetry seems to be central to his vision of childhood. Starting with his very first poem 'Jol Pore, Pata Nore' (raindrops fall, leaves rustle) that he wrote when he was barely eight years old, his works, including the Indian national anthem, truly transcend the barriers of nationality, culture, race and religion, expressing the pure spirit of love, freedom and joy.

Gulzar, one of India's finest filmmakers and lyricists, was influenced at an early age by the literary works of Tagore. The Oscar-



Gulzar, 7th, Jamshed Bhabha Theatre



Shantanu Moitra, 7th, Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

winning poet seems to share a special bond with the "Bard of Bengal". In a career spanning over 50 years, he has written poems in Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi, and often translates from Bangla, the most recent being two volumes of translations of Gurudev's poems.

Starting with advertisement jingles, **Shantanu Moitra** went on to compose music for some landmark films and independent albums: *Ab Ke Sawan*, *Gulzar in Conversation with Tagore*, and such others. He has also to his credit a National Film Award for best music direction (2014). Furthermore, he has uniquely married his sense of adventure with music to create memorable events such as *Song of the Himalayas*, *Chandrayan* and *Songs of the River*.

This event will feature a compilation of Tagore's poems specially written for children, on various subjects like the beauty of nature, simple joys and innocence of childhood, etc. using elements of fantasy, fable, fairy tale and myth. Such is the beauty of Tagore's words that even adults listening to his poems are bound to revisit memory lanes of their childhood.

The poems are translated from Bangla into Hindi by Gulzar and will be presented in his deep sonorous voice. The song versions of the poems are woven into the magic of music by Moitra, and will be performed by talented artistes, including **Shaan, Rekha Bhardwaj, Mahalakshmi Iyer** and others with a group of children.

Tickets:
 ₹2,250, 1,800, 1,350, 900 & 720/- (Members)
 ₹2,500, 2,000, 1,500, 1,000 & 800/- (Public)
 (Inclusive of GST)
Box Office now open

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC



Simon Wynberg, 8th, Little Theatre

From India to Indiana

A Lecture by Simon Wynberg
Little Theatre
Monday, 8th – 6.30 pm

An NCPA & Mehli Mehta Music Foundation Presentation

Simon Wynberg has been the Artistic Director of the ARC Ensemble (Artists of The Royal Conservatory) since 2003. This ensemble, comprised of Canada's leading instrumentalists, has emerged as one of the country's leading cultural ambassadors.

The lecture is a fascinating examination of the life and legacy of the composer of All India Radio's call sign: the musicologist and conductor Walter Kaufmann. Born in the Sudetenland and trained in Berlin and Prague, he fled to Bombay to escape the Nazis. After the war he established the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra in Canada, and finally settled in Bloomington, Indiana. The talk traces his extraordinary life and his musical contribution.

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

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Talks on Western Classical Music

Stuart-Liff Collection Library
Thursday, 11th – 4.00 pm
and
Little Theatre
Wednesday, 17th – 6.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Dvořák's: Cello Concerto in B minor

In this 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. In the second talk of the month, he will discuss Antonín Dvořák's Cello Concerto, considered one of the most popular cello concertos across the world. The second and third movements stir up a meditative ending as they were rewritten—as farewell—after the tragic death of the woman he loved.

Register on www.bookmyshow.com
Entry free

MULTI ARTS & PRESENTATION

Masala of Life:

Mother-daughter dialogue,
discussing mythology and the art of
storytelling

Little Theatre

Thursday, 11th – 4.30 pm

An NCPA Library Presentation

Dr. Paramita Mukherjee Mullick and her daughter **Sankalpita Mullick** will be discussing their books, *Unravelling* and *Metamorphosis – Legends Come to Life*. The book discussion will have segments of a dramatised reading of select chapters (or short stories) by the authors accompanied by a staged enactment of these short stories by veteran actress of stage and screen, **Madhuri Bhatia**. It will be followed by a general discussion where Mullick will speak about the difference in the art of storytelling as a poet versus as a short story writer. After that, Sankalpita will talk about the importance of nuanced writing and the need for sensitivity



and respect when writing a story based on beloved legends and epics. Watch mother and daughter speak about the journey of their writing debuts in two vastly different fields and how they helped each other through it.

Unravelling is a short story collection by Mullick. All the stories are loosely based on real-life incidents either experienced or heard by the author. Sketches by the author accompany each story. The stories depict how life can be hilarious, eerie, happy and not so happy, sometimes all at once.

Metamorphosis – Legends Come to Life is Sankalpita's debut novel. It is the story of a young teenager who embarks on a journey to boarding school, where things are not as they seem and otherworldly experiences seem commonplace. A one-of-its-kind book about the villains and antagonists from Indian epics, legends and myths, this book explores themes of redemption, second chances and questions about what makes one intrinsically evil and whether one can be unchangeably evil. Sankalpita is an alumna of *Between the Lines*, the International Writing Program at Iowa University, on a full scholarship.

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

INDIAN MUSIC

POWER PLAY

Zakir Hussain (tabla)

with

Niladri Kumar (sitar)

Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

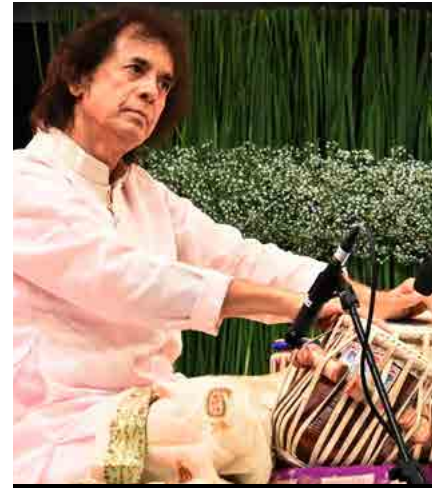
Friday, 12th – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation in
collaboration with Sahachari
Foundation Events

Main sponsors: HSBC, DIA

In recent times, tabla players have lent new dimensions to the aesthetics of an overall musical presentation. As a result, the tabla player is recognised as an integral part of a performance, and not a mere accompanist.

In this regard, the contribution made by **Zakir Hussain**, the internationally renowned tabla maestro, is indeed



invaluable. He has introduced elements of jazz, fusion and world music into the tabla repertoire, thus widening its creative gamut. In this performance, the inimitable master will showcase the versatility of tabla by playing solo as well as providing rhythmic accompaniment to sitar.

A fifth-generation sitar player, **Niladri Kumar** has trained with his father, Kartick Kumar and other great masters, including the legendary maestro, Ravi Shankar. Kumar has had exposure to world music, and today, he is a prominent instrumentalist representing the younger generation of musicians.

In this recital, the artistes will explore sonic space with each other, leaving aside the conventional hierarchy of either one of the instruments.

Tickets:

₹2,250, 1,800, 1,350, 900 & 720/-
(Members)

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

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC



High Noon, 12th, Little Theatre

Movies Under the Stars

High Noon (1952)

Film Screening

(B&W - 85 mins)

Little Theatre

Friday, 12th - 6.30 pm

An NCPA & Film Heritage Foundation Presentation

High Noon, a 1952 American Western film, is celebrated for its exploration of morality, duty and integrity. **Gary Cooper**, the reluctant hero, earned an Academy Award for his role as Marshal Will Kane. The storyline follows Kane's attempt to retire and start a new life with his Quaker wife, Amy (**Grace Kelly**). However, the return of vengeful outlaw Frank Miller forces Kane to confront the threat alone, highlighting themes of individual responsibility. Produced during the Cold War, the film is seen as an allegory about Hollywood's response to the House Un-American Activities Committee. The movie's impact led to critical responses, including John Wayne's disagreement who called the film un-American. The use of real-time storytelling, Cooper's standout performance, and Tex Ritter's classic title song contribute to the film's enduring legacy.

Directed by **Fred Zinnemann**

Screenplay by **Carl Foreman**

Cinematography by **Floyd Tiomkin**

Music by **Dimitri Tiomkin**

Cast: **Gary Cooper, Thomas Mitchell, Lloyd Bridges, Katy Jurado, Grace Kelly, Otto Kruger, Lon Chaney Jr & others**

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

THEATRE



Aakash Gupta, 16th & 17th, Experimental Theatre

The Brand New Show by Aakash Gupta

Stand-up Comedy

Experimental Theatre

Tuesday, 16th & Wednesday, 17th -

5.00 pm & 8.00 pm

An NCPA Off-Stage Presentation in collaboration with The Laugh Store and Suburb Comedy & Things

We have all known and seen the immense love you have given to Excuse Me Brother. After touring the world and receiving ten folds of love, **Aakash Gupta** is back with another banger of a show, a brand new show.

In this absolute hour (or more) of only and only comedy you will hear stories, have conversations, and engage in all the funny banter as this stand-up comedian is ready to set the stage on fire and leave you in splits. So get ready to LOL and fall off your chairs because you are signing up for something totally worth it!

Performed by **Aakash Gupta**

Suggested age: 16+

Tickets:

₹899 & 719/- (Members)

₹999 & 799/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

Box Office now open

DANCE

NCPA Mumbai Dance Season 2024

Opening Session (Approx. 90 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Thursday, 18th - 5.00 pm onwards



Jayashree Nair, 18th, Experimental Theatre



Lata Rajesh, 18th, Experimental Theatre

An NCPA Presentation curated by Jayashree Nair and Lata Rajesh

The NCPA Mumbai Dance Season is a community engagement initiative started by the NCPA in 2018 in association with the classical dance community in the city. The fifth edition of this season will be held from 18th January to 4th February 2024. The opening event will be curated by noted artistes, Jayashree Nair and Lata Rajesh.

Jayashree Nair is a professional classical dancer, teacher and choreographer who is instrumental in training, guiding and encouraging aspiring dancers. She was initiated

into Bharatanatyam and later trained in Kathakali and Mohiniattam. In 1976, she founded the Upasana Academy of Fine Arts—a school that trains children in Indian classical dances. Through her academy, Nair is passing on her knowledge of different Indian classical dance forms to the next generation. She was also involved in teaching these forms to differently abled children under the aegis of the Indian Society for Rehabilitation of Handicapped Children.

Lata Rajesh is an accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer, teacher and choreographer. She was initiated into the world of Bharatanatyam by Gurus Smt. & Shri Pawar. She holds a distinction in Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance – Bharatanatyam) from Nalanda Nrityakala Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai University and a master's in Fine Arts (Dance – Bharatanatyam) from Bharathidasan University, Tamil Nadu. She was awarded the Sri A. Nageswara Rao Scholarship for topping the Mumbai University's degree examination. Rajesh is a graded Doordarshan artiste and recipient of the 'Singar-Mani' title by the Sur-Singar Samsad, among others. In 1993, she established Nrtyanjli to impart professional training in Bharatanatyam. She has created a vast repertoire of solo, duet and group pieces including *Shila - Eternal marvels of storytelling*, *Devi Mahatmyam*, and *Shaapmochan*.

Entry for the opening session on a first-come-first-served basis

FILM

Reality Check

Documentary Film Screening

Little Theatre

Thursday, 18th – 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.



Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, 18th, Little Theatre

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – A film by Anand Patwardhan

English, Hindi, Marathi (96 mins)

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, a Sanskrit phrase meaning “the world is family”, is a universal idea that competes with the dominant, exclusivist Hindu notions of caste. **Anand Patwardhan** grew up in a milieu that questioned the latter. The family's elders had fought for India's independence but rarely spoken about it. ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity’, words enshrined in India's constitution, became subconsciously internalised. As his parents aged, Patwardhan began to film with whatever equipment was at hand. Soon birthdays and family gatherings gave way to oral history. Revisiting home movie footage a decade after his parents had passed was a revelation.

Today as self-confessed supremacists, whose ideology once inspired the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, rewrite India's history, memories of the past have become more precious than mere personal nostalgia.

Production, Direction & Editing:

Anand Patwardhan

Camera & Sound: **Anand Patwardhan**

& **Simantini Dhuru**

Production Assistance: **Simantini**

Dhuru & Mohosin Shaikh

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.

THEATRE



Gieve Patel, 19th, Experimental Theatre

Celebrating Gieve

Experimental Theatre

Friday, 19th – 6.30 pm

This evening is a tribute to the work of poet, playwright, painter, **Gieve Patel** (1940-2023).

A versatile and committed artist, who authored poetry that was widely anthologised and translated, wrote plays that were staged by leading theatre groups, and exhibited his art in major galleries in India and around the world, Patel's creative practice was exploratory, passionate, profound and rigorous. He lived in Mumbai and was keenly engaged with its cultural scene as practitioner and observer.

In an evening dedicated to this exceptional artist, a gamut of theatre practitioners, poets and painters converge to celebrate his many facets through a joyous mosaic of play reading, poetry and personal remembrance.

Participants: **Adil Jussawalla, Anand Thakore, Aniruddha Khutwad, Arundhati Subramaniam, Darshan Jariwala, Gajanan Paranjape, Hemant Divate, Menka Shivdasani, Naushil Mehta, Noshewan Jehangir, Padmanabh Bind, Ranjit Hoskote, Ruth Padel, Sampurna Chattarji, Shanta Gokhale, Siddhartha Menon, Sudhir Patwardhan, Zafar Karachiwala**, and others.

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

SCREENING

X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X

by Anthony Davis



X - The Life and Times of Malcolm X, 20th, Godrej Dance Theatre

Opera Screening (Approx. 200 mins)
Godrej Dance Theatre
Saturday, 20th – 4.00 pm

An NCPA-The Metropolitan Opera (New York) Presentation

Anthony Davis's groundbreaking and influential opera, which premiered in 1986, now arrives at the Met. Theatre luminary and Tony-nominated director of *Slave Play*, **Robert O'Hara** oversees a potent new staging that imagines Malcolm as an everyman whose story transcends time and space. An exceptional cast of breakout artistes and young Met stars enliven the operatic retelling of the civil rights leader's life. Baritone **Will Liverman**, who triumphed in the Met premiere of *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, is Malcolm, alongside soprano **Leah Hawkins** as his mother, Louise; mezzo-soprano **Raehann Bryce-Davis** as his sister Ella; bass-baritone **Michael Sumuel** as his brother Reginald; and tenor **Victor Ryan Robertson** as Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad. **Kazem Abdullah** conducts the newly revised score, which provides a layered, jazz-inflected setting for the esteemed writer **Thulani Davis's** libretto.

Conductor: **Kazem Abdullah**

Cast: **Leah Hawkins, Raehann Bryce-Davis, Victor Ryan Robertson, Will Liverman & Michael Sumuel**

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

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

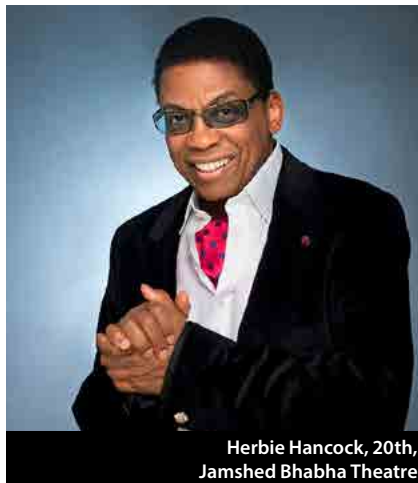
INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

The Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz

Jamshed Bhabha Theatre
Saturday, 20th – 6.30 pm

An NCPA and US State Department of Education and Cultural Tours Presentation

Legendary pianist and composer **Herbie Hancock** has shaped the direction of jazz, fusion, funk and hip-hop for more than six decades. A renowned leader in world culture, technology, business and music, he serves as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Creative Chair for Jazz with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Chairman of the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz. He will be joined by five-time Grammy Award-winning vocalist **Dianne Reeves**, the pre-eminent jazz vocalist in the world, whose virtuosity and improvisational prowess put her in a class by herself. Hancock and Reeves will share the stage with the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz Performance at UCLA Ensemble—six of the most gifted young jazz musicians from around the world who were selected to study in



Herbie Hancock, 20th, Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

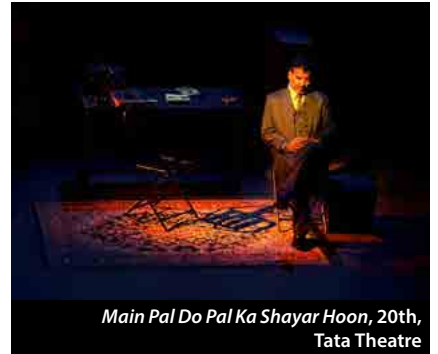


Dianne Reeves, 20th, Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

a full scholarship master's programme with the greatest jazz musicians of our time.

Entry by invitation only

THEATRE



Main Pal Do Pal Ka Shayar Hoon, 20th, Tata Theatre

Main Pal Do Pal Ka Shayar Hoon

Hindustani Play (120 mins)
Tata Theatre
Saturday, 20th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation in collaboration with The Hoshruha Repertory & Art for Causes

The play is based on the life of Sahir Ludhianvi, a great poet of Urdu literature and an unforgettable lyricist of songs in Hindi cinema.

Hoshruha Repertory, in collaboration with Art for Causes, brings to the stage the 20th-century wordsmith's life and work in a semi-autobiographical theatrical presentation. The play attempts to bring a 360-degree perspective on his life interspersed with some of his iconic songs and poems.

"Aao Ke Koi Khwaab Bunein" composed by **Aneesh Pradhan** and first sung by **Shubha Mudgal**

Writers: **Mir Ali Husain & Himanshu Bajpai**

Director: **Danish Husain**

Creative Producer: **Amita Talwar**

Musicians/Singers: **Shantanu Herlekar** (harmonium), **Srijonee Bhattacharjee** (vocalist), **Siddarth Nityanand Padiyar** (percussion) & **Donald Krist** (guitar)

Actors: **Danish Husain, Vrinda Vaid 'Hayat', Shantanu Herlekar, Srijonee Bhattacharjee, Siddarth N. Padiyar & Donald Krist**

Costumes & Set Design:
Himani Mehta Dehlvi

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

THEATRE

Qisse aur Kavitaayein

Hindi (90 mins)

Tata Garden

Sunday, 21st – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Off-Stage Presentation

We bring to you a unique amalgamation of poetry infused with music. Stories about life, love and laughter are sure to move you and bring you an experience to remember amidst nature at the beautiful Tata Garden at the NCPA. Headlined by **Priya Malik**, followed by **Vanika Sangtani**, **Abhin Joshi**, **Aryansh Arora** and **Yashi Verma**, we bring to you an eclectic mix of your all-time favourites and fresh voices on the poetry scene.

Suggested age: 15+



Abhin Joshi, 21st, Tata Garden



Yashi Verma, 21st, Tata Garden

Tickets:

₹450/- (Members)

₹500/- (Public)

Box Office now open

DANCE

Lok Gatha

Folk Dance by Shila Mehta and
Maya Sapera

Experimental Theatre

Thursday, 25th – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Lok Gatha is a platform provided by the NCPA to help promote and preserve tribal and folk traditions and rituals as well as provide livelihood opportunities to rural and tribal communities that are rich in performing arts. Renowned artistes Shila Mehta and Maya Sapera will showcase an evening of Indian folk dances—inspired by a legendary figure and popular folklores.

Maya Sapera is the Founder and Artistic Director of the Maya Sapera Dance Company, a Belgium-based production company that collaborates with different dance and music groups. Sapera endeavours to bring Indian and Asian arts to Belgian audiences through unique productions combining different cultures in a creative and authentic way. The company has been promoting Kathak and Indian folk dances in Belgium and other countries. Sapera has also tied up with Shila Mehta's Nupur Zankar Academy to provide dance students



Shila Mehta, 25th, Experimental Theatre

with a certified degree in Kathak from India.

Shila Mehta is the Artistic Director and Founder of Nupur Zankar Academy of Performing Arts & Research Centre, Mumbai. Mehta has trained as a Kathak artiste under eminent gurus including Prahalad Das, Vijai Shankar and Birju Maharaj, to name a few. Mehta is renowned for her versatility and novel choreographies. She regularly performs and teaches abroad, including at the Maya Sapera Dance Company, Belgium, as a Resident Guru.

Lok Gatha will feature:

- **'Women Speak, Inspired by Mahasati'** – A legendary character from Indian literature who with her positive attitude overcame the challenges that life threw her way. Mehta and Sapera embark on a journey that melds Kathak with folk dance in a rare combination to present a brave, inspiring and compelling story.
- **Kalbeliya** – Performed as a

Lok Gatha (Women Speak), 25th, Experimental Theatre



celebration, it is an integral part of the 'Kalbelia' (snake charmer community) culture. Their dances and songs are a matter of pride and a marker of identity for the Kalbelias. The dance represents the creative adaptation of this community, its changing socio-economic conditions and its role in Rajasthan rural society.

- **Terataali** – Performed by the 'Kamada' tribe of Rajasthan, it refers to the 13 manjiras (or cymbals) attached to different parts of the dancers' bodies and includes the balancing of earthen pots on the dancers' heads. A folk form, the dance is supported by music on the ektara (single-string instrument) while the rhythm is created by the manjiras.

Tickets:

₹270 & 180/- (Members)

₹300 & 200/- (Public)

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

THEATRE

Ajaatshatru

Hindi Play (130 mins)

Experimental Theatre

Friday, 26th & Saturday, 27th – 7.00 pm

Ajaatshatru is an adaptation of celebrated Norwegian playwright **Henrik Ibsen's** famous play *An Enemy of the People*. Ibsen is considered the father of modern drama and the adaptation in Hindi is written by **Ila Arun**.

The play focuses on the burning problem of environmental disasters including air and water pollution that confronts us today. The play highlights the dangers of a lack of social responsibility and reckless business interests that camouflage the problem for personal gain. It explores these issues through a conflict between two brothers. One is an enlightened doctor conscious of his medical and social responsibilities but unfortunately in the minority while the other is a businessman and politician who is supported by the ignorant and powerful majority. For how the conflict gets resolved, please come and watch our play, *Ajaatshatru*.

Presentation by **Surnai Theatre and Folk Arts Foundation**

Adapted in Hindi by **Ila Arun**

Directed by **K. K. Raina**

Cast: **Abhishek Pandey, Vijay Kashyap, K.K. Raina, Guneet Singh, Aditi Sharma/ Ishita Arun & Shilpa Mehta/ Prackriti Bhargava**

Produced by

Antardhwani Productions

Age: 14+

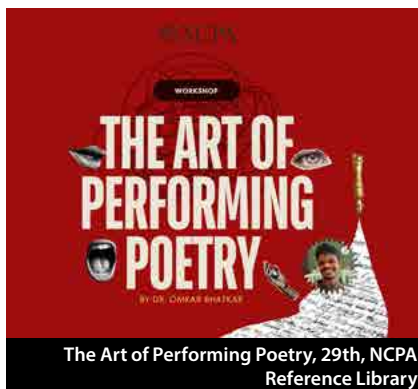
Tickets:

₹450, 405 & 360/- (Members)

₹500, 450 & 400/- (Public)

Box Office now open

MULTI ARTS & PRESENTATION



The Art of Performing Poetry

Workshop by Dr. Omkar Bhatkar

NCPA Reference Library

Monday, 29th – 11.00 am to 1.00 pm

The NCPA Library in collaboration with Metamorphosis Theatre and Films

Live performance not only complements but unlocks new meanings to and perspectives on the written word. No two performances of the same work can be exactly the same.

This workshop looks at poetry as a performative piece, with emphasis on enunciation, tone and pauses, and how delivery unlocks new layers of meaning that otherwise would not have been found. Applicants can bring along up to three works of poetry they feel strongly about and at the end of the workshop they will have found ease of performing at least one of their poems. The poems can be in any language

but the medium of instruction of the workshop will be English.

The workshop is conducted by Dr. Omkar Bhatkar who has been rendering poetry into stage performances for the last 10 years and has created memorable stage presentations with the poetry of Pablo Neruda, Kamala Das, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Anne Carson, Narayana Guru, Shah Abdul Latif and Sylvia Plath.

Only 15 seats to register

Register free on

www.bookmyshow.com

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Trio Amici

Veronika Botos, viola

Péter Csongár, clarinet

Mónika Ruth Vida, piano

Experimental Theatre

Monday, 29th – 7.00 pm

An NCPA Presentation

Supported by Liszt Institute, New Delhi

Péter Csongár and **Veronika Botos**, musicians of the Hungarian State Opera, have been friends for 20 years, and were looking for a good pianist to play with them. After meeting **Mónika Ruth Vida** at a concert in 2018, Botos felt that she had found the right musical partner. Together, the three have built a repertoire with music from Frescobaldi and Couperin to classical, Romantic and contemporary music. The trio has played several concerts across Hungary and marks their India debut as a trio with this concert.

Programme:

Mozart: Kegelstatt Trio K. 498

György Orbán: Sonata for viola and piano

Kamilló Lendvay: *Best regards*

Mr. Goodman for solo clarinet

Max Bruch: 8 Pieces for clarinet, viola and piano

Tickets:

₹720, 450 & 270/- (Members)

₹800, 500 & 300/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

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

 NCPA

THE NCPA

Soulful Blues

FESTIVAL 2024



Mar 16
**DEMETRIA
TAYLOR**



Mar 17
TERRIE ODABI

HOST BRIAN TELLIS
TATA THEATRE, NCPA | 6:30 pm

 **FURTADOS**
because you love music

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What's Next

February & March 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"

Tuesday, 6th February – 7.00 pm
Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Gergely Madaras, conductor

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

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"

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 "Pastorale"

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

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

Since officially forming the duo at

their 2011 Carnegie Weill Recital
Hall debut, cellist **Bryan Cheng**
and pianist **Silvie Cheng's** artistry
has left lasting impressions across
the globe.

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

Tickets:

Admission free for Benefactors/
Friends of the SOI

₹900 & 450/- (Members)

₹1,000 & 500/- (Public)

(Inclusive of GST)

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

INDIAN MUSIC

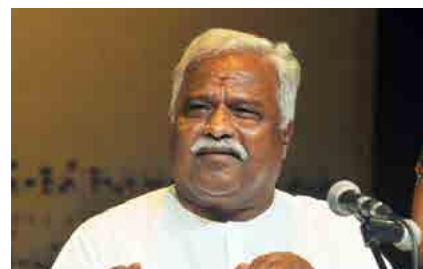
Hindustani Music Recital by Venkatesh Kumar

Experimental Theatre

Thursday, 1st February – 6.30 pm

An NCPA Presentation in
association with Saroj Jhaveri
Foundation

Venkatesh Kumar has trained with



Venkatesh Kumar, 1st February,
Experimental Theatre

Puttaraj Gawayi, who was a stalwart 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: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public

THEATRE



A Perfect Murder, 3rd February, Tata Theatre

A Perfect Murder

Marathi Play (120 mins)

Tata Theatre

Saturday, 3rd February – 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, Niranjan, 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 Niranjan 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 & Satish Rajwade**

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 February – 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.

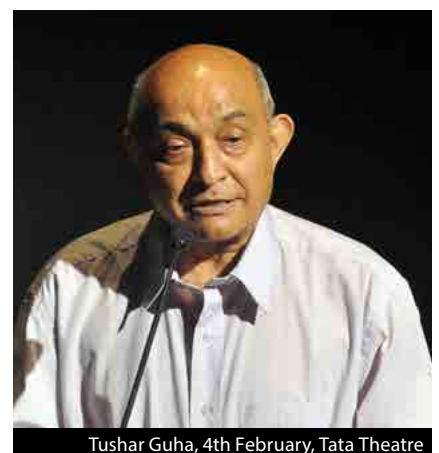
Darshana Jhaveri is a classical Manipuri dancer, research scholar and teacher and is one of the four internationally renowned Jhaveri sisters, whose name has become synonymous with Manipuri dance. She has dedicated her life to preserve,



Darshana Jhaveri, 4th February, Tata Theatre

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 in 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



Tushar Guha, 4th February, Tata Theatre

Government of Maharashtra. A 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: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public

SCREENING



Dear England, 7th February, Godrej Dance Theatre

Dear England

by James Graham
Theatre Screening
(Approx. 160 mins)
Godrej Dance Theatre
Wednesday, 7th February –
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: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public

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 documentary films 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 February – 5.00 pm



Shabnam Virmani, 9th February, 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 re-unite, 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 February – 6.30 pm

The pain of separation from the Creator is at the core of Sufi ideology.



Dhanashree Lele, 9th February, Experimental Theatre

While saint-philosophers like Rumi, 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 Moorlal Marwada, Ashima Mahajan, Noor Mohammed Sodha and friends
 Experimental Theatre
 Saturday, 10th February – 6.30 pm

Sufi music is practised in different regions of the world through myriad genres. In the Indian subcontinent, it finds expression through vocal



Nirali Kartik and Kartik Shah, 10th February, Experimental Theatre

genres of *ghazal*, *qawwali* and various regional folk forms. Based on the verses of mystic poets across ages, today, these genres have gained mainstream popularity.

Featuring talented folk artistes from Kutch and some typical 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 assorted languages including Hindi, Sindhi, Punjabi, Kashmiri and Persian.

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

Jashn-e-Bahaaraa

An evening of Sufi music
 by Javed Ali
 Tata Theatre
 Sunday, 11th February – 6.30 pm



Javed Ali, 11th February, Tata Theatre

The core idea of love, longing and union with the beloved, as espoused in the 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 the marked influence of contemporary idioms and expressions and are widely popular with the masses.

Javed Ali has trained with his father Hamid Hussain, a well-known *qawwali* 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 for the Festival: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC



Ilya Serov, 14th February, Tata Theatre.jpg

Valentine's Day with Ilya Serov

Tata Theatre
 Wednesday, 14th February – 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 you 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:

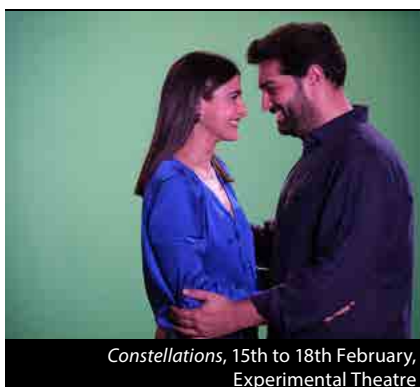
₹1,800, 1,350, 900, 765 & 450/- (Members)

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

(Plus GST)

Box Office now open

THEATRE



Constellations, 15th to 18th February, Experimental Theatre

Constellations

English Play (80 mins)

Experimental Theatre

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

Saturday, 17th & Sunday, 18th February – 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 – 6.30 pm

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 including Jayachandran Palazhy, Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts, Priyadarshini Govind, Madhavi Mudgal & troupe and Shubhada Varadkar & troupe showcasing a modern take on classical dance forms. The schedule of Spectrum 2024 is as follows:

Dance Workshop

by **Priyadarshini Govind**
Sea View Room

Friday, 16th February – 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm and Sunday, 18th February – 10.00 am to 1.00 pm



Priyadarshini Govind, 17th February, Tata Theatre

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 February – 4.00 pm

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

Bharatanatyam by Priyadarshini Govind Odissi by Madhavi Mudgal & Troupe

Tata Theatre

Saturday, 17th February – 6.30 pm



Madhavi Mudgal & Troupe, 17th February, Tata Theatre

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 February – 6.30 pm



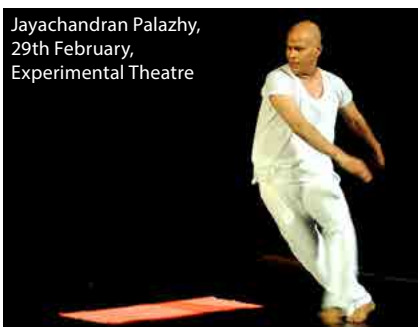
Shubhada Varadkar, 23rd February,
Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

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 February – 6.30 pm



Jayachandran Palazhy,
29th February,
Experimental Theatre

Tickets:

₹360 & 270/- (Members)
₹400 & 300/- (Public)
Box Office for the Festival: 26th
January for Members & 29th
January for Public

INDIAN MUSIC

**Geet Gunjan: A bouquet
of Gujarati music and
poetry**

by Parthiv Gohil, Gargi Vora &
group
Anchor: Nehal Gadhvi
Tata Theatre
Friday, 23rd February – 6.30 pm

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



Parthiv Gohil, 23rd February, Tata Theatre



Gargi Vora, 23rd February, Tata Theatre

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, Parthiv Gohil
has been a playback singer in a host of
films including *Devdas*, *Saawariya*,
Vaada Raha and others. Endowed with
a melodious voice, Gargi 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 February,
Godrej Dance Theatre

**Florencia en el
Amazonas**

by Daniel Catán
Opera Screening
(Approx. 135 mins)
Godrej Dance Theatre
Saturday, 24th February – 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

SCREENING

Vanya
 Theatre Screening
 (Approx. 110 mins)
 Godrej Dance Theatre
 Wednesday, 28th February –
 6.00 pm



Vanya, 28th February, Godrej Dance Theatre

MARC BRENNER (VANYA)

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

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

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-stopping heart-racing two days of blues and soul, with host **Brian Tellis**.

The line-up includes blues singers **Demetria Taylor** and **Terrie Odabi**. Taylor is the daughter of venerated Chicago blues musician Eddie Taylor, who, in his time, worked with John Lee Hooker and taught Jimmy Reed to play the guitar. In 2022, Taylor was the winner of the KoKo Taylor Queen of the Blues award from the Jus' Blues Foundation. Odabi, it has been said, is easily the most dynamic blues and soul woman to have emerged in the Bay Area since Etta James came out of San Francisco's Fillmore District in the Fifties. The Oakland-based singer is a seven-time Blues Music Award nominee.

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: 9th January for Members & 12th January 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 match 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 Rs.500/- each per show
Box Office: 9th January for Members & 12th January for Public

Events at a glance

January 2024

Day	Date	Time	Event	Venue
Wed	3rd	4.00 pm	Page to Stage - Performative Book Reading Raindrops on my Window Written & directed by Dr. Omkar Bhatkar	
Wed	3rd	4.00 pm	Talks on Western Classical Music	Stuart-Liff Collection Library
Sat	6th	5.00 pm		
Thu	4th	7.00 pm	Piano Recital by Kunal Lahiry	
Fri	5th	7.30 pm	Priya Malik Live Ishq hai, Ishq hai, Ishq hai Hindi	
Sat	6th	11.30 am	NCPA Citi Music Workshop Aesthetical significance of <i>uthan</i> from different <i>matras</i> in a given <i>tala</i> A free workshop on Zoom by Satyasheel Deshpande	Online
Sun	7th	4.00 pm to 7.00 pm	The Mastery (Embodied vocal sovereignty) An International Vocal Masterclass	
Sun	7th	6.30 pm	Citi NCPA <i>Aadi Anant</i> : From Here to Eternity <i>Tapur Tupur: Bachche, Bachpan aur Bachpana</i> Children's poetry by Gurudev Tagore with Gulzar, Shantanu Moitra, Shaan, Rekha Bhardwaj, Mahalakshmi Iyer, a group of children and others	
Mon	8th	6.30 pm	From India to Indiana A lecture by Simon Wynberg	
Thu	11th	4.00 pm	Talks on Western Classical Music	Stuart-Liff Collection Library
Wed	17th	6.00 pm		
Thu	11th	4.30 pm	Masala of Life: Mother-daughter dialogue, discussing mythology and the art of storytelling	
Fri	12th	6.30 pm	POWER PLAY Zakir Hussain (tabla) with Niladri Kumar (sitar)	

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

Day	Date	Time	Event	Venue
Fri	12th	6.30 pm	Movies Under the Stars <i>High Noon</i> (1952) Film Screening	
Tue & Wed	16th & 17th	5.00 pm & 8.00 pm	The Brand New Show by Aakash Gupta Stand-up Comedy	
Thu	18th	5.00 pm onwards	NCPA Mumbai Dance Season 2024 Opening Session	
Thu	18th	6.30 pm	Reality Check Documentary Film Screening	
Fri	19th	6.30 pm	Celebrating Gieve	
Sat	20th	4.00 pm	<i>X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X</i> by Anthony Davis Opera Screening	
Sat	20th	6.30 pm	The Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz	
Sat	20th	7.00 pm	<i>Main Pal Do Pal Ka Shayar Hoon</i> Hindustani Play	
Sun	21st	6.30 pm	<i>Qisse aur Kavitaayein</i> Hindi	Tata Garden
Thu	25th	6.30 pm	<i>Lok Gatha</i> Folk Dance by Shila Mehta and Maya Sapera	
Fri & Sat	26th & 27th	7.00 pm	<i>Ajaatshatru</i> Hindi Play	
Mon	29th	11.00 am to 1.00 pm	The Art of Performing Poetry Workshop by Dr. Omkar Bhatkar	NCPA Reference Library
Mon	29th	7.00 pm	Trio Amici Veronika Botos, viola Péter Csongár, clarinet Mónika Ruth Vida, piano	

in collaboration with The Hoshruha Repertory & Art for Causes

Main Pal Do Pal Ka Shayar Hoon

Hindustani Play

A play is based on the life of
Sahir Ludhianvi



Writers: Mir Ali Husain & Himanshu Bajpai | **Director:** Danish Husain

Actors: Danish Husain, Vrinda Vaid 'Hayat', Shantanu Herlekar,
Srijonee Bhattacharjee, Siddarth N. Padiyar & Donald Krist

Creative Producer: Amita Talwar

JAN 20, 2024 | 7:00 PM | TATA THEATRE, NCPA

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