

friday Review

THE HINDU

Rhythm rendezvous

Mridangist Sumesh Narayanan and his new solo percussion act p2

The Amir Khusrau project

Artistes explore the soul of sufi through the poet-musician's works p3



A LIFE DEFINED BY ART AND ACTIVISM

Padmavati Rao excels in roles that are closer to reality p4

Bala Shankar

Carnatic music students are often told to listen to yesteryear masters, in order to develop and fine tune their art. The more serious ones do. What is the underlying principle in this pedagogical form? After all, many students today are fortunate to learn from current-day exponents directly. The 'listen' advice can be daunting, given the vast range of styles and repertoire of so many doyens.

What to seek from whom? We examine what could be the potential considerations. Back in the days when preparing for the IIT JEE exam was still an art and a skill, and not an industry, we were directed to a few high quality books in the different subjects.

Reference tools

I remember wrestling with the theories from Resnick & Halliday's physics book or Sarin & Sarin's chemistry book and S.L. Loney's geometry book. These were considered as both working and reference books, but not the only sources. A few more additional books were strongly recommended if one had the bandwidth to plough through them. One can draw a parallel to the Carnatic music realm here. The yesteryear stalwarts did not create their masterly performances to serve as an educative tool, just as Resnick & Halliday did not know about IIT JEE exam. They all just pushed the envelope of performance or subject understanding further that gave them iconic status.

There is a caveat though. Their all-round greatness notwithstanding, each one stood out for something in particular. For example, it is a maxim that one needs to listen to G.N. Balasubramaniam for his raga alapana construction and innovative phrases. I have myself listened to his Andolika or Amirtavarshini ragas many times, besides almost all the main ragas. Nagaswara exponent T.N. Rajarathinam Pillai seized proprietary rights to many alapanas as well. Similarly, Alathur Brothers trademarked complex pallavi nadais and niravalas. As a student, I was also told to listen to their Tyagaraja kritis, as they sang with a certain verve and spirit, that added more sparkle to the kritis. Manodharma was everyone's forte, but some were better known than others. Ramnad Krishnan and M.D. Ramanathan were among those, if one was looking for a needle of brilliance in a haystack – an *aha* moment.

Our music lays emphasis on both Kalpita and Kalpana aspects of rendition. Rendering a kriti effectively, laying it on a good kalapramanam, articulating choicest sangathis and delivering unalloyed beauty of a major composition were the hallmarks of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and M.S. Subbulakshmi. The DKP and DKJ brand of kriti rendition was another delight, as there was an optimum beauty woven into them. If one needs a more experimental lesson, it is customary

to turn to Flute Mali, M.L. Vasantha Kumari or S. Kalyanaraman. Madurai Mani Iyer has the patent for elegant sarvalaghu swaras that did not interfere with hearing civility or test our mathematical brain cells. The parallel in cricket would be batting that looks easy on the eye (easy on our ears here). Madurai Mani Iyer's music appeared deceptively easy though.

Laya has an integral role in our music. Some like Alathur Brothers, Lalgudi Jayaraman and T.N. Seshagopalan in later years, took the challenge further and offered gold standard templates. Avid students marvel at raga expositions and kriti rendition of the Dhanammal school, whose grammar includes what is not a permitted phrase!

Virutham acquired its special status in the voices of the likes of Semmangudi, Ramnad Krishnan and a few others. Ragas had quasi owners too, by the sheer engineered by some performers – Maharaipuram school came to be renowned for Arabhi and Mukhari, Semmangudi for Varali and Nilambari, Ramnad Krishnan for Sahana or Begada –

Their all-round greatness notwithstanding, each past master stood out for something in particular. That such aspects were original innovations make them the geniuses that they were.

just a short enumeration of outstanding new vistas in raga ornamentation.

Bhava-laden renditions

I have always been fascinated by the amount of bhavam K.V. Narayanaswamy or D.K. Jayaraman or M.S. Subbulakshmi could bring to even simple kritis and tikkadas. One is not sure if that can really be learnt by mere listening. Yet it often presents the biggest challenge for a large number of aspiring musicians – going beyond the mechanics of presentation.

So, like the 'go to' books for different subjects, specialist lessons are inscribed in the music of many yesteryear stalwarts. That such aspects were original innovations make them the geniuses that they truly were. Living musicians have also developed unique styles and offer newer range of lessons. The ability to carve niches in styles and substance remain the eternal trade secret in Carnatic music. The word 'bani' is not an adequate articulation of what lies deep inside such music. Learners are called upon to assimilate the many performance guides accessible by listening, and blend into their native styles and voice capabilities.

Masterclass (From top) K.V. Narayanaswamy; D.K. Pattammal; T.N. Rajarathinam Pillai; M.L. Vasantha Kumari; G.N. Balasubramaniam; Alathur Brothers; Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer; M.S. Subbulakshmi and Madurai Mani Iyer.

PHOTOS: THE HINDU ARCHIVES

The complete Carnatic guide

Specialist lessons are inscribed in the music of yesteryear stalwarts. Rewind and listen for a nuanced understanding



IMAGING: XJG SATHISH

Musical tribute

Shakthi Sangita Sabha celebrates the birth anniversary of the legendary Balamuralikrishna with a special line-up on July 6, at its auditorium, Anbu Nagar 10th Street, Valasarawakkam. The evening begins with the Bharatanatyam performance by various artistes, who will present the musician's creations (5.35 p.m.). This will be followed by a thematic concert, featuring his compositions, by Brinda Manickavasakan and Arul Priya Manickavasakan at 6.15 p.m. Chief guest Ragavan Manian, musician and disciple of BMK, will talk about his guru (7 p.m.). The evening also includes a special listening session that features excerpts from the master's select live concerts (7.30 p.m.).



K Sarveshan

For young dancers

The Music Academy will present Mid-year dance festival from July 11 to 13 at Kasturi Srinivasan Hall. The performances, organised under the endowment instituted by the family of late M.N. Subramaniam, will begin with the Bharatanatyam performances by Shreema Upadhyaya (6 p.m.) and K. Sarveshan (7.30 p.m.). Day two will feature Shabin Bright's Bharatanatyam (6 p.m.) and Sarita Mishra's Odissi (7.30 p.m.). The festival concludes on July 13 with the Bharatanatyam performances by Bhavya Kumaran at 6 p.m. followed by that of Shirisha Shashank at 7.30 p.m.

Kumaran at 6 p.m. followed by that of Shirisha Shashank at 7.30 p.m.

Annual celebration

Kedaram has organised a three-day concert series as part of its ninth year celebrations from July 8 to 10, at Ragasudha Hall, Luz, Mylapore. The inaugural concerts are by Kolkatta S. Aishwarya (4 p.m.) and Amirtha Murali (6.15 p.m.). Concerts to be featured on other days are: July 9, 4 p.m.: B. Jayaraman and 6.15 p.m.: Ghata Karthick's Heartbeat ensemble. The series concludes on July 10 with the vocal concerts by Nidhi Chandrasekhar and Gauri Chandrasekhar at 4 p.m. followed by the presentation of Kedaram Natakamurthy title to veteran theatre artiste

Kathadi Ramamurthy (5.45 p.m.) and Madurai Sivaganesh's concert (6.15 p.m.). Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti presides the last day's event and veteran actor Delhi Ganesh will be the chief guest of the evening.

Bhajan contest

Bhakthaswaraa Bhajan Mandali in association with Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore, conducts the 36th year inter-school bhajan competition with preliminary rounds on July 20 and 21, and finals on July 28. Schools interested to register for the competition can contact 98416 67059 or 98840 08736 or email bhakthaswaraa57@gmail.com. Last date to register: on or before July 10.

**Music festival**

The Music Academy and Radel will jointly present the Mid-year music festival from July 8 to 10 at Kasturi Srinivasan Hall. The series will begin with Prithvi Harish's vocal concert on July 8 at 5.30 p.m. followed by that of K. Radhika at 7.15 p.m. Day two will feature B.J. Madhuri Kaushik (5.30 p.m.) and C.S. Keshava Chandra (flute at 7.15 p.m.). The concert series will conclude on July 10 with R. Lakshmi's vocal concert at 5.30 p.m. followed by V. Krupa Lakshmi at 7.15 p.m. The festival is organised under the endowment instituted by Ms. Radel Electronics, organised in memory of Sugandha Raman.



Colours in motion

Sita recreates Raja Ravi Varma's iconic paintings through dance

V.V. Ramani

Driving inspiration from iconic artworks and reinterpreting them through another medium are always challenging. It could either be a creative engagement born out of in-depth understanding or just a response to visually delightful works. Apsaras Arts, Singapore, recently presented the dance film *Sita*, which was based on important incidents from Sita's life as portrayed in Raja Ravi Varma's paintings.

The film began with the scene showing Sita and her friends playing in a garden,

and gradually travelled through the artist's paintings of abduction of Sita by Ravana, Sita seated in Asoka Vatika, a pregnant Sita being



abandoned in the forest and to the final depiction of Bhoomadevi taking Sita into her fold.

Aravindh Kumaraswamy, who has curated and directed the film, has woven together stories relevant to each painting. Mohanpriyan Thavarajah's choreography revolves around these stories. The dance sequence depicting the Asoka Vatika stood out for the way song and abhinaya have been used to bring out the beauty of the celebrated painter's visualisation. So also were the intense emotions of Sita abandoned in the forest. Dance and painting blended seamlessly here.

The efforts taken to create

Epic retold Apsaras Arts' dance film *Sita*. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

perfect backdrops and narratives around the paintings were commendable. However, some aspects needed more attention in terms of detailing. For instance, costumes and accessories could have been a bit more subtle to match the aura of a bygone era. Use of bright lighting could have been avoided too.

The music composition (by Rajkumar Bharati and songs sung by Bombay Jayashri and G. Srikanth) should have included elements of the traditional music of Kerala from where Raja Ravi Varma hailed. Lyrics such as 'pichai podungal' and the incorporation of a thillana, where Bhoomadevi and Sita are dancing around in circles, didn't fit in well.

Talking about the experience of making such a film, Aravindh said it was an attempt to recreate these timeless artworks through dance. "Though all art forms are inter-connected, it is not an easy task to find a meeting point," he added.

Steeped in bhakti



Shankar Bhagavtar and Rajasri Babaji Raje honouring Dushyant Sridhar.

Visankirtali Trust recently organised the 28th Lakshmi Nrusimha Jayanti Utsavam at Kanchi Mahaswamy Mandapam, Adyar. Prominent bhagavatas and pravachana exponents participated. They were also felicitated for their contribution to the propagation of Sanatana Dharma. Any spiritual event is incomplete without sampradaya namasankirtanam. This utsavam too featured soulful devotional music.

For the past 25 years, Visankirtali Trust had been organising Lakshmi Nrusimha Jayanti in Delhi before moving to Chennai three years ago. The Trust was founded by V.P. Shastrigal in 1969. Delhi Shankar Bhagavtar, Shastrigal's son, is the present managing trustee. He is known for his ability to convey the bhavam in devotional verses.

This year's utsavam was graced by Ramananda Saraswati Swamigal of Raja Rajeshwari Peetam, Madurai, and Pudukkottai Narasimhan Bhagavtar. Other eminent bhagavatas who attended the utsavam included Mumbai Sundaramaran, Thanjavur Thiagarajan, Seerkazhi Sattanan, Govindapuran Gnaneshwar, Mohan Srikanth Koundinya, Melarcode Ravi and Erode Rajamani.

The namasankirtanam concluded with Sita kalyanam and Lakshmi Nrusimha kalyanam, which were performed by Shankar Bhagavtar.

During his pravachanam, Dushyant Sridhar, described Nrusimha's vaibhavam and Prahlada's bhakti. On the occasion, he was honoured with the Dharma Samrakshana Kainkarya Ratnam title while Bhagavata Brothers Vijaykrishna and Balaji with Namasankirtana Kainkarya Ratnam. The felicitation ceremony was presided by Rajasri Babaji Raje, the titular Head of Thanjavur Samasthanam.

The trust has also published books such as *Bhajanmrutam*, *Seetha Kalyanam*, *Radha Kalyanam*, *Rukmini Kalyanam*, *Siddhi Buddhi Kalyanam*, *Meenakshi Kalyanam* and *Valli Devasena Kalyanam*. The books in Tamil also have compositions in Sanskritam, Telugu, Hindi, Kannada and Marathi. The trust plans to bring out these publications in Devanagari lipi as well. Care is taken to ensure the originality of lyrics and right pronunciation of words. Visankirtali Trust is working to preserve our ancient literature.

Deepa Venkatraman

Social media may have become the go to medium for young artistes to connect with audiences across the globe, but the appeal of live performances will never fade. Artistes are exploring new ways of in-person presentations. One such is 'Namba Aathu Katcheri' (NAK), an initiative by a group of young artistes, where chamber concert meets technology. As the name suggests, the concerts are held in an interactive and intimate setting. But unlike most conventional chamber concerts, which are for an invited audience, NAK concerts are open to all. These concerts, which adopt innovative approaches such as gamification, are also live streamed.

Conceptualised by Adithya Raja, a young Carnatic music enthusiast, the group includes vocalist Swarathmika Srikanth, violinist Shreelakshmi Bhat, vainika Charulatha Chandrasekar and mridangist Vamsidhara Anand.

The initiative is designed to host performances by both established and young artistes to engage rasikas of all ages. The first concert featured a group of artistes singing Tyagaraja Pancharatna kritis. It took place at Swarathmika's house.

New approach
In a well-lit living room of an apartment in Nanganallur, the rasikas are seated on the floor. The microphones and cameras are all in place, and vocalists Dhruv and Dhatri are joined by mridangist

Music in your living room

'Namba Aathu Katcheri' brings uniquely themed concerts to homes



Anirudh Raj and violinist Gayathri Vibhavari to perform a concert titled 'The surprise bowl'. Dhruv picks a chit from a bowl and begins to sing the kriti mentioned in it. "While we follow the traditional katcheri format, our uniquely themed concerts appeal to both the millennial rasikas and artistes," says the NAK team.

Over the last six months, the team has conducted 11 thematic concerts every alternate Sundays. The themes included 'Real-time Pallavis' (focusing only on pallavis), 'The Duality' (two aspects of a composition), 'Welcoming Varali' (featuring seven different Varali ragas),

and 'The Unsung Abhangs'. The NAK team also aims to recognise the significance of instrumentalists and ensures that they get the spotlight they deserve. The solo instrumental performances included 'Strings and Swarams' (a mandolin concert based on chittaswarams), 'Exploring Tadzhinginathom' (mridangists presenting panchanadas) and '4 to 4' (a flute and mridangam concert).

At 'The Wheel of Ragas' concert, violinist Shreelakshmi along with mridangist Sannath Parameswaran played ragas starting with the alphabet selected from a spin-off wheel that was randomly displayed

content discussions to the digital presentation of pillar graphics displayed on screen during live-streamed katcheris and short videos of unique performances, the team is working to boost its digital presence.

Vamsidhara shares, "The promo shoots are the most fun-filled as they are naturally shot, and nothing is scripted."

Adithya adds, "Some senior artistes such as mridangists Sumesh Narayanan and Delhi Sairam, and vocalist Bharath Sundar have watched our online content and have shown interest in participating in NAK katcheris. This is very encouraging."

While katcheris were initially held at artistes' homes, the team is now taking it to rasikas' homes. The first such concert was at Valasarawakkam. "Those interested to host a katcheri can message us on our social media handles," says Adithya.

Sessions by experts
NAK is looking at music education too. "Experts will share their insights on the various aspects of Carnatic music. Our first interactive workshop (July 6, 5 p.m.) titled 'Richness in alapanas and swarams' will be conducted by vainika Ramana Balachandran," say the team members.

NAK is working on a variety of exciting projects to bridge the gap between classical music and music lovers.

Going solo

'To groove is divine' is an outcome of mridangist Sumesh Narayanan's distinct engagement with rhythm

Lavanya Narayanan

"It's hard not to move to a rhythmic groove," says percussionist Sumesh Narayanan. After all, he has been exploring the art of drumming for over a decade.

It was exactly 10 years ago that he joined popular playback singer Haricharan Seshadri, along with fellow artistes Ravi G, Aalaap Raju, Raghavasimhan Sankaranarayanan and Vikram Rozario at Kamaraj Arangam to present Haricharan's 'GrooviDa'.

Perhaps, that's what inspired him – many *kutcheris* and even a movie later – to engage with rhythm in his own distinctive way. Recently, he debuted his solo act, 'To groove is divine', at Chennai's Medai - the Stage.

Beyond the routine
This was not the first time Sumesh has tried to look beyond traditional rhythm. His fans know him as the rugged percussionist from IndoSoul, who would make heads bob and hands sway



with beats that had evolved from the complex *sollus*, reflecting his 24-year-long training in mridangam.

But the premiere of his new show recently was the first time he took the stage alone, a departure from a *kutcheri* set up, exploring a host of audio-visual elements of performance while entertaining the audience with his own juxtaposition: mridangam and cajon.

"As a mridangist, I have been trained to produce sounds with both my hands. Intrigued by the cajon, I started playing it with my left hand and the mridangam with my right and was overjoyed with how well the two fused. The cajon provided me with a rounded rich bass sound, while the characteristic mridangam sound was kept intact. After discovering this unique combination, I wanted to make it mine," says Sumesh.

Collaborating with a team of technicians, some for the first time and one, an old friend, Sumesh says TGID is a product of all his previous collaborations and the vocabulary he has amassed along the way, things that have helped him evolve into programming, arranging and composing art.

He's excited to find beauty in imperfection," he says, because that unique quality is what lends itself to a story on stage. Ask him more, and he says even he doesn't know – thing just unfold during the performance.

"You know how when you go on the stage, there are moments of deep contentment that you experience after a well-executed idea? Well, that moment is completely unplanned. As passionate as I am as an artiste, I have an unending love to create. I can never satisfy my need to experiment. I just want to sit down and play all the sounds that come to mind. Because truly, that is my story," says Sumesh.

Ghazals from god's own country

Singers and poets are opting for ghazals with simple Malayalam lyrics to reach out to a wider audience



(From top) Raaza Razaq and Beegum; Sunitha Nedungadi; and the iconic ghazal singer Umbayee.

PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Parvathy K. Pillai and Afrah Pandikkadan

When you utter the word 'ghazal', what comes to mind are the timeless verses of Mirza Ghalib and the haunting voices of Mehdi Hasan, Farida Khanum, Ghulam Ali, and Jagjit Singh. Ghazal is a celebration of both poetry and music. This musical form, whose popularity is limited to the North of India, has been facing challenges and struggling to draw audiences. But in the recent past, it has managed to cross boundaries to enter an unfamiliar terrain – Kerala. Its growing acceptance in this southern state, dominated by Carnatic music, must be credited to musician-composer Umbayee.

Known for his unique style of singing, Umbayee not only introduced ghazal to music-lovers in Kerala but also began writing ghazals in Malayalam. But Umbayee's decision to compose ghazals in Malayalam did not find favour in the music industry, leading to many poets refusing to write for him. They felt the genre may lose its original flavour. These arguments did not deter Umbayee, who felt emotions of love and heartbreak are universal and can be expressed in any language. He single-handedly established the form in Kerala. Artistes, who later took to ghazal singing were only following his footsteps.

According to ghazal singer Raaza Razaq, in Kerala the form may not strictly follow the ghazal format such as *radif* (each couplet ends on the same word or phrase), *qafia* (repeating pattern of words) and *Maqta* (last *sher* in a ghazal), but people have begun to enjoy the emotions expressed in the poetry." Raaza will soon be releasing an album with ghazals that reflect his personal thoughts.

Musicians such as M.S. Baburaj and P. Bhaskaran have also contributed to this musical trend. The appeal of their ghazals lie in the use of Hindustani raags.

Contemporary sensibility

Sunitha Nedungadi, known for her adaptation of poetry by Sugathakumari, Vayalar and P. Kunhiraman Nair to ghazal, feels the form has moved from love and spirituality to contemporary issues. As for translating ghazals from Urdu and Farsi to Malayalam, Sunitha thinks the essence of the poetry might get lost in translation.

Earlier, ghazal singing was accompanied by harmonium, tabla, sarangi and oud. Later, other instruments such as flute and guitar were included. As singers began to use works of modern poets, the music composition gained a contemporary sensibility. This musical rendition of poetry before a live audience not only communicates the meaning of the lyric but also the energy and mood of the singer. "Ghazal is the language of the heart," says Ahmed Mueenudheen, a ghazal lyricist.

Malayalam ghazals embody simplicity in language and expression, channelling the poet's thoughts and emotions. Sometimes colloquial expressions and words are used for a wider reach. Ghazal has transcended linguistic barriers to find resonance in a new cultural setting.

Narendra Kusnur

Vibrant bansuri and keyboard solos blended well with smooth vocals on 'Jai Nizamuddin', which poet-musician Amir Khusrau had dedicated to his spiritual master Nizamuddin Auliya. Composed in raag Todi, it was an appropriate start to the thematic concert Hazrat Amir Khusrau Project, conceived and curated by keyboardist and fusion composer Abhijit Pohankar at Mumbai's intimate Veda Kunba auditorium.

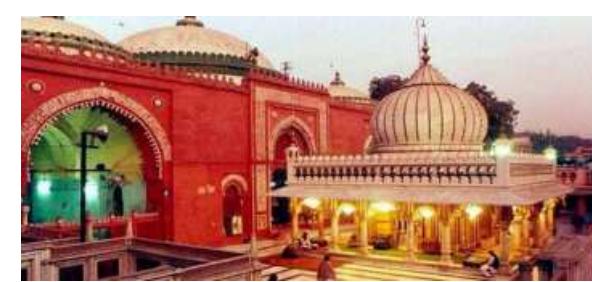
Abhijit's idea was to present a mix of popular and rare pieces, with singers Gandhar Deshpande and Kalpana Gandharv joining him. For around 90 minutes, he was accompanied by percussionist Shikhar Naad Qureshi, flautist Tejas Vinchurkar, tabla artiste Amit Mishra and bassist Sabyasachi Deb to take the audience on a nostalgic ride.

Amir Khusrau (1258-1325) was known for making many innovations in Indian music. He created the qawwali and taraana, and is also credited for inventing the sitar. Abhijit has been studying Khusrau's works for a few years now. He says, "The audience seem to be familiar only with a few of his songs such as 'Chaap Tilak'. I wanted to do a structured programme, where I would introduce some less known gems."

Thus, Gandhar, son of classical vocalist Pt Ram Deshpande, followed 'Jai Jai Nizamuddin' with the raag Bahaar composition 'Phool bane sarson sakal ban'. Though singer Raja Hasan's version of the song was recently featured in the Netflix series *Heeramandi*, Abhijit's composition gave Gandhar the freedom to improvise on the nuances. The vocalist was in great form in the 13-minute taraana in raag Malkauns, which began with a bansuri-keyboard interaction and included a percussion solo by Shikhar Naad.

Popular bandish

Kalpana sang 'Man kunto maula' and the *bidaai* (bride farewell) song 'Kaahé ko byaahi bides'. Her voice has the rustic charm suited for such songs. On audience demand, she sang her *Heeramandi* song 'Ek baar dekh lijiye', composed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and written by



Veres and voices
(From left) Nizamuddin dargah in Delhi; Gandhar and Abhijit Pohankar; Amir Khusrau; and Kalpana Gandharv. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



The soul of *sufi*

The Hazrat Amir Khusrau Project recreates the poet-musician's works with modern musical arrangements

A.M. Turaz. Though it pleased most in the audience, and it's a fantastic composition too, it diverted from the main theme.

The programme ended with a blend of the bandish 'Mora Juba' and the popular 'Chaap



Tilak', featuring both vocalists, besides a brisk keyboard solo. Abhijit says he plans to use some Persian composition such as 'Zehaal-e-miskin' in the next edition.

For some years, festivals like Jahaan-e-Khusrau, initiated by filmmaker Muzaffar Ali in New Delhi, and the multi-city Khusrau-Kabir, presented by Banyan Tree, have showcased the mystic poet's works. They have featured different artistes, unlike this presentation, which plans to have a single group for the duration of each show. Says Abhijit, "In my fusion projects, I retain the traditional elements of the vocals, but use contemporary arrangements to give them a modern flavour."

The son of classical vocalist Pt Ajay Pohankar, Abhijit began by playing classical music on

the keyboard. His albums includes 'Piya bavari' with his father, blending classical music with Lounge, and Thumri Funk, which had modern interpretations of light classical compositions. In 2018, he started the Bollywood Gharana concert series, featuring vocalists Bhavya Pandit and Gandhar Deshpande.

"It's a crossover between Bollywood and classical music. I take a popular song, where

Bhavya sings it in the familiar version. Then, I look at a classical equivalent in the same raag or thaat. This is presented by Gandhar," says Abhijit. While continuing Bollywood Gharana, he plans to do more shows in the Hazrat Amir Khusrau Project. "Amir Khusrau's repertoire is very vast, and there is so much more that we can do. This is just the beginning," he concludes.

IndianOil
ALL WOMEN CAR RALLY 2024
SUNDAY 7th July, 8 am SAVERA HOTEL
THE DUCHESS CLUB
Entry Fee Rs.1500/- (Inclusive of Lunch for 4)
Co-Sponsor RAMCO CEMENT
Powered by
Registration : 9841288631 / 9710947355
Organised by
kauvery hospital
Prize Sponsor
25th Anniversary
Organic Food Partner
Create
Team Partner
146, Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai, Mylapore, Chennai - 600 004

NPR
NANDHANA PALACE RESTAURANT
3 DECADES OF AUTHENTIC ANDHRA CUISINE
NOW OPEN AT MOUNT ROAD TILL 2 AM
நந்தனா பேலஸ்
ORDER NOW ON SWIGGY ZOMATO
HALAL
nandhana®
PALACE
Legendary Andhra Restaurant Chain
MOUNT ROAD: CMRL Government Estate, First Floor, Metro Station SEG-ANC-01 near, Near Omandur Hospital, Chennai - 600002 | +91 9606025158
CHENNAI: OMR: 8925527979 | VELACHERY: 8925537975 | CHROMEPEL: 8925537976
www.nandhanarestaurants.com @nandhanapalace
RESTAURANTS | HOTELS | BANQUETS | HOME DELIVERY | TAKE AWAY

Care. Innovate. Educate.
AIM for SEVA
Educating Rural India
he Govind
An Ode to Krishna
IN SUPPORT OF SWAMI DAYANANDA KRUPA HOME
Residential facility for individuals with developmental delays
27 JULY 2024 | THE MUSIC ACADEMY CHENNAI
SRI. PRAVIN GODKHINDI | SRI. JAYATEERTH MEVUNDI
SCAN TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS
TICKETS ON mdnd.in
SPONSOR AKR EXPRESS
For enquiries: +91 95000 60153 | www.aimforseva.in
SRI. NARENDRA L. NAYAK
SRI. YASHWANT VAISHNAV
SRI. SUKHD MANIK MUNDE
SRI. SURYAKANT GOPAL SURVE

Charumathi Supraja

I'm starting with a disclaimer. It is impossible to map all the things that Padmavati Rao has done and continues to do. She has worked as an actor, writer, playwright, translator, puppeteer, story-teller, assistant director, dubbing director, dialogue writer, poet, artist, eco-activist, school teacher, theatre facilitator, farmer and even made a refrigerator (yes, you read that right) that can run without electricity.

Padmavati's work has – literally and metaphorically, spanned different locations in time, space and intent. Yet, speaking to her, you feel the gentleness of her strength, see a stubborn love for life (despite the pain that life can bring) and sense her childlike glee about her next creative foray. When Padmavati Rao made her big screen debut in Girish Karnad's Kannada film *Ondanodu Kaladalli*, she was a 15-year-old school girl from erstwhile Bombay and given the screen name Akshatha Rao. Before that she was called Padmavati Rao. At 17, she became a popular actor after essaying the role of Geetha in a Kannada film of the same name. Exasperated by the

Mirroring reality

For Padmavati Rao, the stage and screen are extensions of life



Balancing act Padmavati Rao at Ranga Shankara in Bengaluru and during the shoot of 'Sweet Karam Coffee' PHOTOS: K. BHAGYA PRAKASH & PRIME VIDEO



fame the film brought her, she cut her hair to encash the small joys of walking on MG Road in Bangalore, "without being recognised by fans." To date, she is referred to as "Geetha film heroine." It makes her happy that "Geetha – the feisty girl in love with life, is remembered for what she was."

Mumbai days

Even before that unexpected call from cinema and adulation, Padmavati was actively pursuing Marathi, Hindi and Gujarati theatre in Bombay, learning the tropes of acting and theatre-making with the likes of Balraj Sahni, A.K Hangal and Shaukat Azmi (Shabana Azmi's mother) at the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). Her average day as a college student involved traversing across Bombay by bus, train and walk taking French classes before college, going for rehearsals and shows after college and getting home late in the night. She fully credits her parents for the foundation she and her sister Arundhati Nag got, not just in theatre practice, but also in life. "We were encouraged to spread our wings and fly," says Padmavati.

There were ground rules though. They had to inform their parents about who they would be with, where, roughly when they would get back and a phone contact (only landlines of course) had to be shared for emergencies. Any mistakes or wrong choices only brought them closer to their parents. "And we made plenty of mistakes," says Padmavati.

The challenges and joys of working in those times taught her a lot. When an indefinite power cut loomed before the performance of *Khelaiya*, a hugely popular Gujarati musical directed by Mahendra Joshi, the audience refused to take a refund and insisted that the play be performed, even if in candlelight. And so it was. "Candles were bought

Her process as an actor involves approaching every character with complete humility and surrender.

out from the area around Prithvi Theatre and the audience watched the whole play in candlelight, singing and clapping along!" Padmavati recalls. Travelling with plays at that time, she learnt about "the world and worldliness," about the synergy between audience and actors that dynamically makes a play come alive and become a shared experience.

Watching her play a grieving mother in *Apne Ghar Jaisa* during the Remembering Veenapani Festival at Adishakti Theatre, Auroville, earlier this year, I saw how Padmavati held the audience in the grip of her character's doubts, sorrows, questions and prejudices though she was the only one on stage for most part. She masterfully took the play to a note that left most in the audience close to tears.

Her process as an actor involves approaching every character with complete humility and surrender, she says. She lets the director, "who has been with the character for much longer," shape her performance completely. Padmavati believes that playing characters unlike oneself opens tremendous growth avenues for the actor within, while also teaching empathy. She advocates the power of "emptying out" before donning a role and stresses the importance of doing one's homework as an actor. She is said to have learnt to knit, skilfully and fast, to better play her role in the Hindi film 'Te3n,' alongside Amitabh Bachchan.

Speaking about her recent work as Deva in Prime Video's Tamil series, *Sweet Kaaram Coffee*, Padmavati expresses delight about getting to work with veteran actor Lakshmi, "who was a star, when I was in my teens." Padmavati's work as an actor on stage, the big screen and small screen take away nothing from her passion to work with and for the earth through Sarsayee Foundation – a not-for-profit entity that she founded to train young people in engaging deeply and compassionately with ecology and the arts. We need to "find the forest within and nurture the forest without," says Padmavati, who believes that the world can change only when we collectively transform from "human doing to human beings."

Songs for the road

Vineet Singh Hukmani celebrates the joy of travel in 'Kahan chal diye'

Neha Kirpal

Globally radio chart-topping singer-songwriter Vineet Singh Hukmani celebrates the joy of travel with his latest offering 'Kahan chal diye'. The pop-rock song, crafted with upbeat drums, happy guitars and electric piano, is an ode to the vast and diverse landscapes of India.

Vineet believes that the beauty of a road trip is discovering beautiful locations suddenly in a most unexpected turn on the road. "From the magic of pristine hillside mornings to chilling near beautiful lakes at sunsets – it's all so satisfying," he says. For him, the magic happened about 150 kilometres from Udaipur. Driving around on an unplanned route, he shot at a stunning locale that he chanced upon.

The cinematic feature has breath-taking visuals of picturesquely roads, rolling hills, serene lakes and other refreshing landscapes across Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi. The team used a combination of two cameras for close-ups and wide

shots, and a drone shot of the place. "Even in the ultimate zoom-out of a drone, you will see me as a lone traveller in the video, which not only adds to the authenticity of expansiveness but also communicates the joy of travelling solo," he said.

Exploring the country The idea for the song stemmed from the comparison between travelling within one's own country and travelling abroad. "The spontaneity of travel within India is unmatched – just start your car and head out! *Kahan Chal Diye* is not just a question but a statement of that spontaneity," says Vineet.

According to him, travelling abroad though enjoyable, needs too much planning in terms of visas and currency calculations. "It normally ends up being a controlled 'guided tour'.

Also, some people travel abroad only due to the peer pressure of social media. I want my song to remind people to travel for the right reasons of personal contentment, and our country has that in ample

measure," he added.

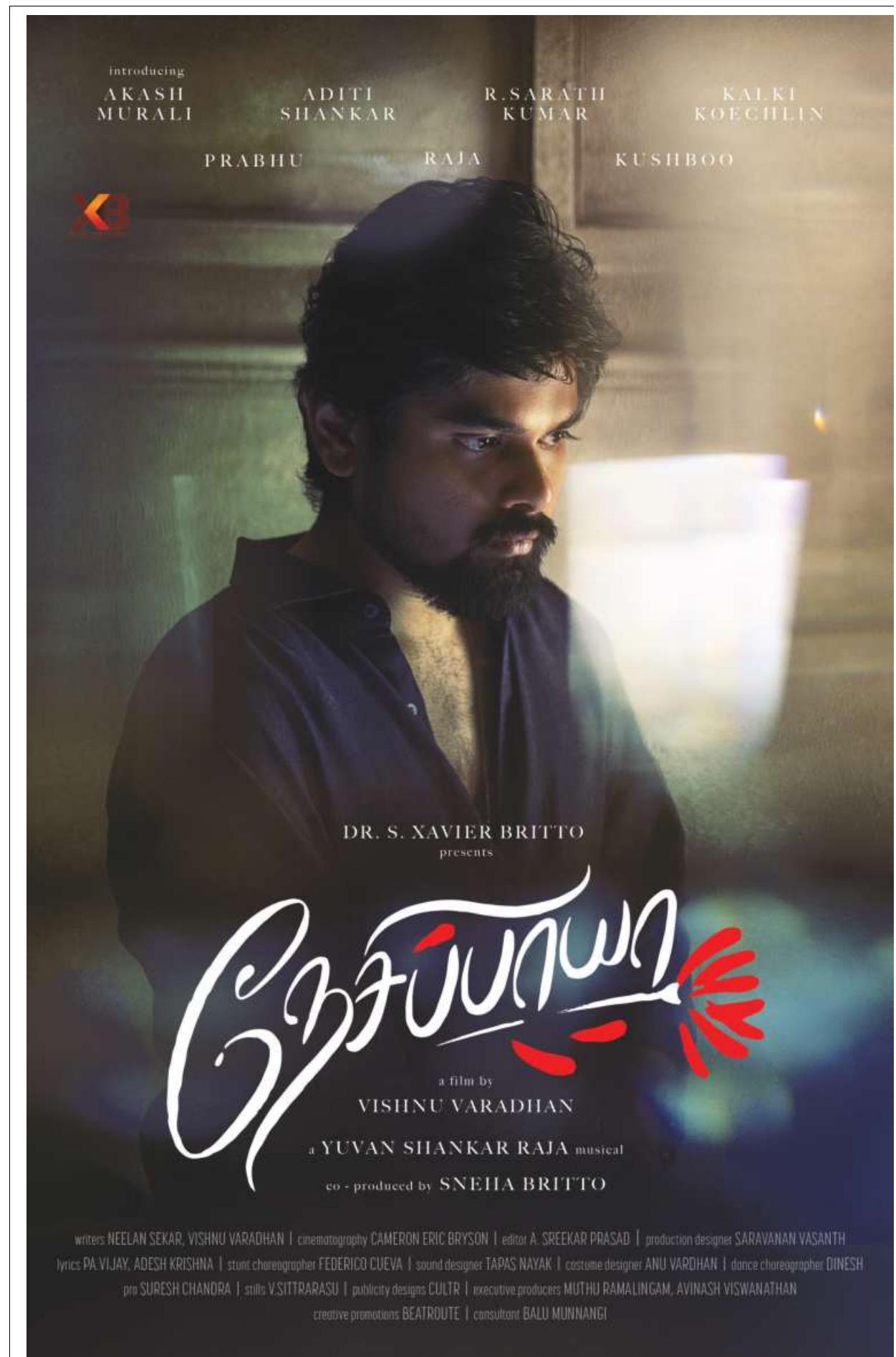
For his next song about saving children from the atrocities of war, Vineet plans to experiment with alternative opera. "This will be straight from the heart."

The Harvard Business School alumnus has set a fabulous precedent for Indian independent artistes. Last year, he created the world's first music multiverse with his song 'Run! Run! Run!'. It also had a short animation film and superhero comic book called *RunStorm*. The concept allowed people to interact with content in a multi-dimensional way, seeding new revenue streams in an otherwise commodified music market.

Further, Vineet's multi-genre offerings have gained him huge traction in global radio charts and a world record of 9 number 1s in the European radio top 100. It also led him to write *Nine*, a thrilling multimedia book with a soundtrack that showcases nine stories combined with nine tracks. *Nine* was also accepted for Grammy submission in the 'Crafts' category under 'Best Boxed or Special Limited Edition Package'.



Wanderlust Vineet Singh Hukmani
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



writer NEELAN SEKAR, VISHNU VARADHAN | cinematography CAMERON ERIC BRYSON | editor A. SREEKAR PRASAD | production designer SARAVANAN VASANTH
lyrics PA. VIJAY, ADESH KRISHNA | stunt choreographer FEDERICO CUEVA | sound designer TAPAS NAYAK | costume designer ANU VARADHAN | dance choreographer DINESH
pro SURESH CHANDRA | stills V.SITTRARASU | publicity designs CULTR | executive producers MUTHU RAMALINGAM, AVINASH VISWANATHAN
creative promotions BEATROUTE | consultant BALU MUNNANI