

friday Review

THE HINDU

A teacher's gift to her students
Sheela Unnikrishnan launches SDN's Kriya to offer a performance platform p2

The call of Kishangarh
Erstwhile princess Vaishnavi Kumari on the revival of the popular miniatures p3



ON A JAZZ TRIP ACROSS INDIA

The World Jazz Festival presented a blend of new pieces and classics p4

S. Poorvaja
poorvaja.sundar@thehindu.co.in

Plastic chairs and string cots are arranged neatly in a semi-circle under a canopy of trees at Beguna Diha, a village on the outskirts of Mayurbhanj in Odisha. You can hear the sound of practising percussionists, as young men and women get ready for a performance. The audience slowly fills the space. As the drums pick up pace, the Mayurbhanj Chhau dancers take centre stage, and their dynamic movements fill the space with energy and verve. They also encourage the audience to learn a few steps. However, replicating their perfection is a futile attempt.

Witnessing these dancers rehearse proves to be a significant part of a trail of sorts, to delve into Chhau – a martial, tribal and folk dance form. In April this year, the Belgadia Palace in Mayurbhanj, in association with Aadi Naad, hosted The Chhau, a three-day festival that brought together three distinct styles of this dance – the Mayurbhanj Chhau that originates from the same region, Purulia Chhau from West Bengal, and Seraikela Chhau from Jharkhand.

There is much that is unique to each style of Chhau, we soon realise. On a balmy evening, a troupe of Purulia Chhau dancers

On a Chhau trail

Ahead of World Dance Day (April 29), we look at how the Belgadia Palace in Odisha is helping preserve and promote the folk and martial art form

dressed in bright yellow, orange, green and black, with masks and elaborate headgear, bring alive the story of Durga and Mahishasura on the grounds of the Belgadia Palace. The dancers effortlessly jump and do somersaults, leaving us in awe of their sharp, nifty movements despite the heavy costumes and masks.

The etymology of the word 'Chhau' can possibly be traced back to meaning Chauni or military barracks, where the dance was supposed to have originated from foot soldiers practicing these movements. Watching the dancers

depict a fierce battle between Durga and Mahishasura, the martial influences are more than evident in the way they move.

When we witness the Seraikela Chhau, there is a calmness and grace that we immediately notice about this style. The costumes and masks are colourful, but a lot more muted in comparison, and the story we see is that of dancers depicting Krishna trying to court Radha. The lilting beats of the dhol and softer strains of the shehnai enhance the sringara rasa.

"Most of us are generational artistes and we begin learning Chhau when most children are introduced to the alphabet," says Sanjay Kumar Karmakar, who has been dancing since he was four. He points towards the masks with elegantly drawn eyes and says they are not props. "Each mask is different, and helps capture the emotion that represents the character we play. We might wear a mask, but through our dance, we become the character we



Steps of change
(From top)
Purulia Chhau;
Seraikela Chhau;
and Mayurbhanj
Chhau.

PHOTOS: SPECIAL
ARRANGEMENT AND
GETTY IMAGES

portray," he says.

While our introduction to the Mayurbhanj Chhau is at Beguna Diha when we see dancers rehearse, nothing can quite prepare us for the spectacle we later see on stage. Performed without masks, dancers decked in silks, turbans and with swords in their hands, nimbly move around the stage, as they bring alive the story of Abhimanyu from the Mahabharata. Courage, valour, the fierceness of a raging battle, and the eventual loss – all come alive on stage. The intense energy of the athletic dancers never once overshadows the emotions in the story they are depicting; a hushed silence falls over the audience when Abhimanyu dies.

Subhasree Mukherjee, chief coordinator of Project Chhauni, a local organisation that has been working to preserve and create awareness about Chhau, says there are 202 socio-cultural organisations and groups of dancers spread across Mayurbhanj. "We worked on identifying dancers, recording different Chhau items, and documenting basic techniques and training," she says. There is much that has changed over the years; many of the dancers we see across the three styles of Chhau work as farm labourers or daily wage earners to make ends meet.

Dancing, they say, brings them special joy.

"We have also worked on establishing a fair revenue model where the fees from any performance goes directly to them. We are also keen that they are employable and resourceful, and stress on skill development as well to ensure they are able to support themselves while continuing to practice their art," Subhasree adds.

In Odisha, Chhau is an integral part of the Chaitra Parva or the festival marking the month of Chaitra (April). With the number of dancers diminishing with each passing generation and the increasing need for patronage for the dance form, there has been a sustained demand to recognise Chhau as one of the classical art forms of India. In 2010, Chhau was inscribed in UNESCO's representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

"The Mayurbhanj Chhau speaks of the strength and spirit of Mayurbhanj," says Mrinalika BhanjDeo, who belongs to the erstwhile royal family of Mayurbhanj. "Our vision is to use our ancestral home, the Belgadia palace, as a platform to not only preserve and promote the arts, but also make it an experience through a host of initiatives," she says. For guests like us, who visit the Belgadia palace, Chhau performances are an important part of the itinerary throughout the year.

It's 8 p.m., the sky gets dark and the dancers take the stage for a final performance. As the audience intently watches, you realise that the dance form invokes a strong sense of community and pride in one's cultural history. It brings people together to nourish it and keep it thriving.

The writer was at The Belgadia Palace, Mayurbhanj, on invitation from RARE India



CULTURE BRIEFS

Summer theatre fest

Chennai's theatre lovers are in for a treat as Kartik Fine Arts brings back its annual Kodai Nataka Vizha, on till May 3. Started with an aim to nurture new talents while celebrating veterans, the festival has offered a platform for many Tamil theatre groups to stage their latest creations. Held each year during the peak of summer, it offers audiences a mix of plays that spans varied themes and theatrical styles.

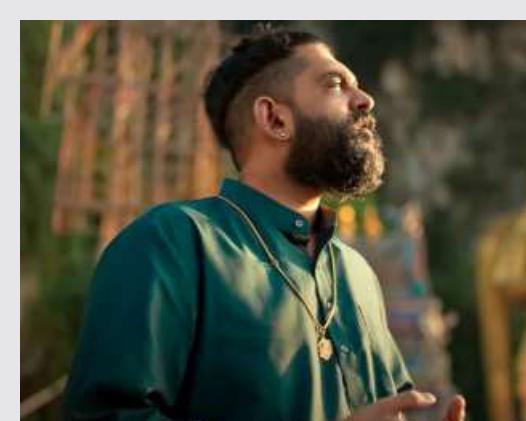
The 34th of the vizha, which was inaugurated on April 22, is taking place at Narada Gana Sabha main hall. The 12-day festival is non-ticketed. On June 1, participants will be given awards for Best Play, Best Actor, Best Actress and Best Child Artiste. There will also be prizes for best reviews of the plays.

The following is the list of plays to be staged till May 3.

- April 25: Brahma Fine Arts' *Yaraithan Nambuvatho*.
- April 26: S. Sruuthi's *Naatya Naadha Nataka Sangamam's Agni Praveysam*.
- April 27: Augusto Creations' *Akila Kitty*.
- April 28: PMG Mayurapriya's *Ennadi Penne*.
- April 29: thRee inauguates *Kalavu Neekiya Padalam*.
- April 30: Rail Priya's *Varutha Padatha Vayodhikar Sangam*.
- May 1: Fab's Theatre inauguates *Un Kannil Neer Vazhindhala*.
- May 2: Dummies Drama's *Kaanal Neero*.
- May 3: Koothapiran Navabharath Theatres' *Leela Vinodham*.

Sid Sriram's new track

Singer Sid Sriram recently launched a devotional track 'Sivanar', featuring lyrics from Arunagirinathar's Tiruppugazh. He first performed it at the Coachella festival in California last year. The music video, directed by filmmaker and photographer Parasher Baruah, was filmed at the Batu Caves Murugan temple in Kuala Lumpur during the popular Thai Poosam festival. The song establishes a partnership between Sid Sriram and Warner Music India.



Three-day festival

Divya Nayar's Dakshina presents 'Anubhuti', a three-day festival of dance, at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore. The first two days of the festival (April 25 and 26) will feature solo performances. Workshops will be held on the last day (April 27).

Details: April 25: 6.30 p.m. - 8.30 p.m.; Shobit Ramesh's

'Viraha: song of the mystic bride' followed by Padmashree and Abhinaya's 'Sending messengers to the Divine', and Dakshina Repertory's 'Mad for the Mad One'.

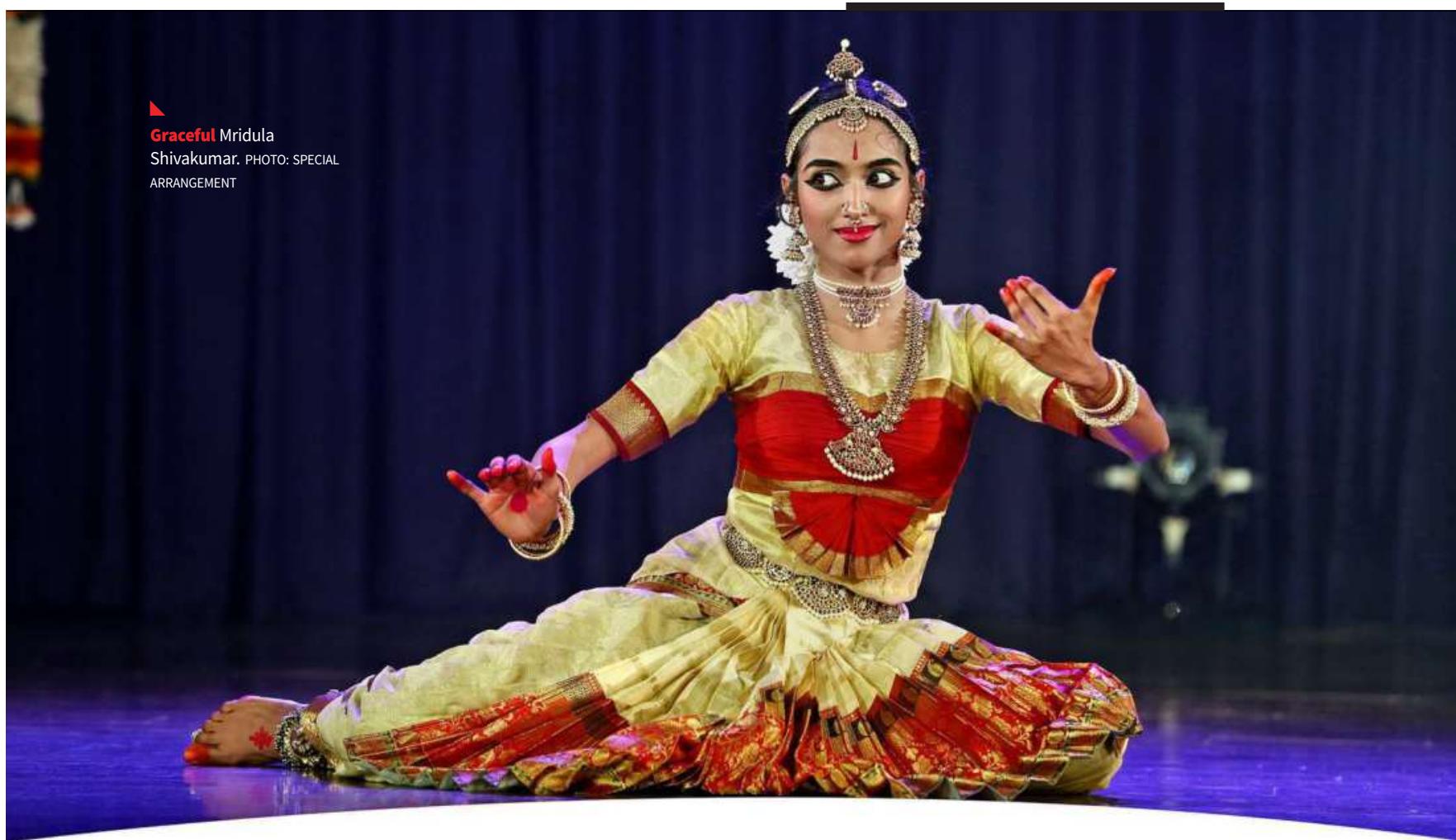
April 26, 6.30 p.m. - 8.30 p.m.: 'Unbroken: Unfettered' by Meghana Krishnan; 'Shedding Skin: A rite of Passage' by Raveena Singh, 'As he Said', a guest performance by Vaibhav Arekar and 'Sutradharas' by Uma Satyanarayanan.

April 27: Workshops 'Insight into Tamil Shaivite Bhakti Poetry' by Jayakumar S, and 'Word, Meaning and Movement', an exploration with Vaibhav Arekar will bring the three-day festival to a close.

Lec-dem on dance

Natyarangam, the dance wing of Narada Gana Sabha, and Karnataka Bharatagama Pratishtana jointly present a lecture demonstration on Karnataka Nritya Parampara (Mysore School of Bharatanatyam) by Padmini Shreedhar and team, on April 26, 6 p.m. at Swami Haridoss Giri Mini Hall. The lec-dem will throw light of the four styles that are prevalent in Karnataka — Mugur, Mysore, Kolar and Nanjanagudu. A team of 10 artistes from Bengaluru will present unique adavus, the technique and the distinct repertoire.





V.V. Ramani

There is no dearth of talented dancers, but many find it a Herculean task to find platforms to showcase their art. To support young talents from her school Sri Devi Nrityalaya, founder and guru Sheela Unnikrishnan has set up SDN's Kriya, a trust that provides an opportunity for young artistes to research, conceptualise and present a margam, and also supports them with a financial grant.

Among the first beneficiaries was Mridula Shivakumar, who had to work on the compositions of K.N. Dandayudhapani Pillai. The dancer chose five of his compositions. She began with

A stage to shine

Sheela Unnikrishnan's 'SDN's Kriya' provides performance opportunities to her sishyas

a jathiswaram, danced with precision and filled with dynamic movements. But it would have been more graceful if Mridula had tempered her pace.

'Adi sivanai kana asaikondenadi thozhi' – the Thodi raga varnam dealt with a pining heroine beseeching her sakhi to fetch her lord. The theermanams explored varied

rhythmic patterns and Mridula's clarity of footwork revealed her sense of rhythm. The depiction of Ardhanari, which was incorporated into a jathi, saw her transform from male to female with ease, and made for an appealing addition.

The dancer addressed this aspect of love with a combination of Sringara and bhakti bhava, and the sancharis explored the familiar poetic imagery through relevant ideas.

The dance picked up momentum in the charanam lines 'Mathe yarukakilum bhayama' and the chittaswaras that followed. Mridula could do well with a little more attention to the delineation of emotions by maintaining the sthayi bhava.

The padam 'Muthamizh cholaiyile' is not frequently presented on dance platforms. It speaks of the heroine's mood and incorporates references to poets Avvaiyar, Elango Adigalar and Tiruvalluvar.

The finale was a thillana, originally choreographed for Kumari Kamala for the Hindi film *Chori Chori* (1956). This complex composition, filled with a lot of calculation and poses, is challenging, but Mridula rose up to it with finesse.

Chitrambari Krishnakumar provided melodic support on the vocals. Guru Bharadwaj's flourishes on the mridangam charmed, and Sashidhar on the flute and Anantanarayanan on the veena provided adequate support. Nattuvangam was by Kausalya Shivkumar.

World Dance day special

Natya Vriksha's dance festival, curated by Geeta Chandran, is a celebration of diverse styles



(From top) Senior dancer Geeta Chandran; Abhinaya Nagajothy; and Shashwati Garai Ghosh. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Kuchipudi and Odissi artistes.

Each day, the festival opens with a workshop 'Movement and Dance Aesthetics', to be conducted by dancer and choreographer Tanusree Shankar. Over the course of two days, there will be a witty theatrical retelling of an ancient story, scripted and performed by Rama Bharadwaj as well as a lecture by Ashok Vajpeyi on how dance, while rooted in the present, opens portals to imagination, memory and transcendence. There will also be performances by Madhura Bhrushundi (Bharatanatyam), Dheerendra Tiwari (Kathak), Abhinaya Nagajothy (Kuchipudi) and Shashwati Garai Ghosh (Odissi).

"World Dance Day is a moment to pause and celebrate what dance brings into our lives, not just technique or tradition, but emotion, truth and transformation. This festival is our offering to the art, and to the young dancers who will carry it forward," says Geeta Chandran.

What sets this festival apart is its inclusive embrace of classical, contemporary and experimental dance forms. This year's line-up includes performances by Bharatanatyam, Kathak,

Another key highlight is the conferment of the sixth NATYA VRIKSHA Lifetime Achievement Award to SPIC MACAY and its founder Kiran Seth, in recognition of their tireless efforts to preserve and promote India's cultural heritage amongst youth. "This honour is not mine alone – it belongs to every student who has sat in awe before an artiste, to every volunteer who has given their time to SPIC MACAY, and to every institution that believes in the power of the arts to shape minds and lives," said Kiran Seth.



The World Dance Day Festival 2025 will take place on April 26 and 27, at India International Centre, New Delhi.

Lyrical ode to Rama

Prasanna Venkatraman's concert was a fine blend of devotion and music



PHOTO: R. RAVINDRAN

Tyagaraja wonders aloud, "How shall I extol you, Srirama?", was rendered with verve, followed by snappy kalpanaswaras. Bhadrachala Ramadasa's 'Emaya rama' in Kamboji-Khanda Chapu brings out the attributes of Rama, and Prasanna's rendition was imbued with the raga's characteristic gamakas and grandeur.

The regal aura of Atana came to the fore in Prasanna's precursor to 'Ela nee dayaraadhu'. The classy composition, which sees Tyagaraja at his descriptive best, was another fitting choice. The cascade of vocatives extolling Rama, the distinctive melodic appeal of the raga, and the exquisite rendition combined to provide an elevating experience.

The main raga of the evening was Saveri and the composition was Tyagaraja's 'Rama baana', which celebrates the prowess of the divine archery that felled Ravana. Prasanna's alapana unfurled with the raga's natural ebb and flow, offering hints of the kriti in store. Vijay's version mirrored that of the vocalist. After a

polished presentation of the kriti, Prasanna took up the sole niraval of the recital at the anupallavi opening 'Bhamakasapadu'. It was extensive and absorbing, and well supported by the team. The tani avartanam by Subramanian was succinct and spirited.

A couple of observations need mention. Niraval is the acme of manodharma, and a concert of this nature has scope for and merits at least two explorations. Moreover, compositions by Annamacharya and Arunachala Kavi would have enriched the canvas further. The latter's 'Rama Nataka Keerthanai' offer a near-complete musical Ramayana. Oothukadu Venkata Kavi, too, has several kritis on Rama to his credit.

The concluding section comprised 'Rama mantrava japiso' in Jhompuri by Purandaradasa, 'Vaidehi sahitam' a Dhyana sloka for the Ramayana sung in Sahana, Shanmukhapriya and Manirangu, followed by Dikshitar's coronation kriti 'Mamava pattabbhirama', and Tyagaraja's 'Ramachandra nee daya' in Surutti.

Rich tapestry of songs

R.P. Shravan's concert featured an interesting line-up of Tamil kritis

H. Ramakrishnan

It was a pleasure listening to R.P. Shravan's vocal recital for Madhuradhwani and Aanmajothi as part of the Chithirai Thamizh Isai Vizha. A disciple of Delhi P. Sunder Rajan, he made a vibrant start with 'Aadi kondar antha vedikkai' by Muthuthandavar in Mayamalavagowla, after a

virutham. He rendered kalpanaswaras in the second of the three charanams, 'Aara navamani maalaikal aada'. From the outset, it was easy to admire his sparkling, quick-moving passages. And, he succeeded in maintaining that liveliness through the concert.

In keeping with the event, it was an all-Tamil concert. Papanasam Sivan's 'Gajavadanaa karuna sadana' in Sriranjani on Vigneshwara



Well-planned

R.P. Shravan with Usha Rajagopal (violin), Melakaveri (mridangam) and Adambakkam Sankar (ghatam). PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

followed, with swaraprasthara at the pallavi. After an elaborate virutham in Lathangi, Shravan chose Papanasam Sivan's evergreen 'Venkataramana' (Roopakam) with niraval and swaraprastara at 'Alarmel mangai manaala'. Gopalakrishna Bharati's

'Enneram unthan sannidhiyile' in a lovely Devagandhari was rendered well. Next was a pasuram from Andal's 'Nachiyar Thirumozhi on rain, an apt one for Chennai's grueling summer – 'Mazhaiye mazhaiye mannpuram poosi', tuned by Shravan in Amritavarshini.

Periyasami Thooran's popular Suddha Saveri kriti, 'Thaye tripurasundari' (Khanda Chapu), with an enchanting inbuilt chittaswara, followed. For the main piece, Shravan's extensive raga alapana in Kamboji was not only traditional, but also profound. The kriti chosen

was Gopalakrishna Bharati's 'Thiruvadi saranam enringu naan nambi vanthen'. The composer begs at the feet of Nataraja of Chidambaram to ensure that he is not reborn. Elaborate niraval and swaras were at 'Aduththu vantha ennai', a part of the charanam.

'Velum mayilum thunai', on Muruga, composed by Lakshmi Viswanathan in Tiru nadai in Chakravakam came up next. The Tirupugazh, 'Iththarani meethu piravathie' in a ragamalika was delightfully tuned by Bhavya Hari. She is the daughter and disciple of T.V. Sundaravalli, a well-known vocalist who immersed herself in the propagation of Arunagirinathar's verses. Shravan then rendered 'Mavoor valam peruga vantha kaali ammane' by Harikesanallur Muthiah

Shailaja Tripathi

Almond-shaped eyes, aquiline features, elongated faces with defined chins and noses, earthy tones, panoramic landscapes and stylised clouds – these are some of the things that set apart Kishangarh paintings from the other miniature traditions of India.

Drenched in bhakti and sringara rasas, these miniatures originated somewhere around the 17th Century in Kishangarh in Ajmer, Rajasthan. Rulers such as Raj Singh and Sawant Singh set up court ateliers led by Bhavandas and Nihal Chand and patronised this art form. However, diminished patronage over the years has seen miniatures and traditional visual art forms relegated to the realm of handicraft.

Centuries later, Vaishnavi Kumari, who traces her lineage to the erstwhile royal family of Kishangarh, has taken upon herself the task of reinventing the art form to suit the contemporary milieu. In 2010, she set up Studio Kishangarh, where she works with artists to create paintings that merged traditional aesthetics and modern sensibilities.

"We do acrylic on canvas, work on wasi (handmade) paper and take up landscape themes. We might take inspiration from a Pichwai painting and interpret it in our own way, using gold and silver embellishment. We recently had a show 'Isq Chaman' based on the poetry of Raja Sawant Singh. The poem talks about devotion and we created allegorical paintings on love and devotion for god," says Vaishnavi Kumari, the curator and founder of Studio Kishangarh.

Vaishnavi graduated from NIFT and pursued her Master's in art history from SOAS University, London. "Middlemen buy unique haathi-ghoda paintings at very low prices from artists. These are sold as souvenirs. That set me thinking. In museums and auctions, you see work that is highly valued, and I wondered why we were not producing that kind of quality. Traditionally, a patron influenced the kind of work done in karkhanas (workshops). For example, you see hunting scenes in Kota paintings, because the ruler wanted those depictions. Nainsukh (1710-1777)



The might of the miniature

An erstwhile princess is on a mission to revive the popular Kishangarh paintings

painted most of his works for the local ruler Raja Balwant Singh of Jasrota in Himachal Pradesh. That encouraged me to set up an atelier and offer contemporary patronage," says Vaishnavi.

A couple's rendezvous in a lush green garden against the picturesque backdrop of mountains, dense flora and fauna and a distinct blue sky is an aesthetic marvel, and a typical Kishangarh miniature. This style is

also synonymous with Bani Thani – known as the Indian Mona Lisa, a combination of grace and beauty, supposedly painted by Nihal Chand, as instructed by then ruler Raja Sawant Singh. It is said that the Raja and Bani Thani were lovers, and they are the nayak and nayika in several paintings.

Among the most famous of Kishangarh paintings, 'Boat of Love', is on display at the National



Colours of the past (Clockwise from far left) Vaishnavi Kumari and paintings from the collections at her Kishangarh Studio. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



the women are beautiful, the figures so lyrical... but there is a deeper meaning. Bani Thani wasn't just a beautiful woman. She was an accomplished poet and an amazing musician. Sufism and Haveli Sangeet were major influences at the time and we want the viewers to discover all these facets to these paintings. Raja Sawant Singh was a Bhakti poet and wrote in Rekhta, a precursor to the Hindustani dialect, among other languages, under the pen name of Nagari Das. A pushtimargi, belonging to the Vallabhacharya sect, he wrote devotional poetry for Krishna and Bani Thani," she adds.

Artist community

Once Vaishnavi returned from London, she discovered many families that had been painting for generations. She brought together a few of them for two reasons – better livelihood opportunities and the chance to develop a unique aesthetic.

"We have a core group but we also work with other artists. When we started, we were doing handicrafts – we painted apparel. I explore a lot of media. Even though I give ideas, the exploration is by the artists. Also, each painting is the collective work of two or three artists – one does the basic drawing, the other adds the flora and fauna elements, the third might add an iconic element like the Kamadhenu. They enjoy working on a new visual vocabulary," says Vaishnavi, who is trying to strike a balance between the old and the new.

Museum, Delhi. Inspired by Raja Sawant Singh's poem, the painting depicts three scenes featuring Radha and Krishna – atop a hill, crossing the river seated on a boat accompanied by attendants, and amid dense foliage.

Through her work in the atelier with her artists, Vaishnavi wants to educate people about the art tradition. "What you see is just the first layer which is the aesthetic –

Vaishnavi Kumari, who traces her lineage to the erstwhile royal family of Kishangarh, has taken upon herself the task of reinventing the art form to suit the contemporary milieu

Musical tribute Radhika Joshi presenting 'Mai Ri' in Bengaluru and (below) Kishori Amonkar. PHOTOS: SANDHYA KANNAN AND THE HINDU ARCHIVES

biographies on Mogubai and Kishori Amonkar besides having detailed discussions with her guru Pt. Raghuandan Panthikar, who studied music directly from both.

"Finding information about Mogubai's music was challenging, because there are fewer resources available on her. With Kishori tai it was the opposite problem – there are many newspaper articles and interviews, but since she evolved musically over the decades, some of her thoughts may seem contradictory to what she said earlier," Radhika points out. Though Mogubai was "a firm believer of maintaining the purity of the tradition and wasn't one to experiment too much, she composed drut bandishes, as there weren't fast-paced compositions in many raags characteristic to the Jaipur-Atrauli gharana such as Shuddha Nat, Sampurna Malkaus or Gauri".

"Kishori tai was more open to experimentation. She would spend hours trying different combinations of raags. Some jod raags created by tai are Anand Malhar and Lalat Vibhas," shares Radhika. Kishori tai's love for light music and ghazals was rooted in the fact that her mother sent her to train in other forms and in other gharanas. When Kishori tai sang a film song, however, Mogubai warned her that she might never touch her tanpura again, if she didn't remain faithful to classical music.

Radhika says that she was inspired by Mogubai's dedication. As for Kishori tai, she adds, "In most traditional Indian art forms, students are taught to accept what the guru says. By challenging norms and if required later, even admitting mistakes, Kishori tai made space to question texts and what earlier masters had to say."

Notating lives

'Mai ri' looked at the bond Kishori Amonkar shared with her mother Mogubai Kurdikar



Charumathi Supraja

Her music "...for me, is a painting that embodies every detail of someone's life. And in that there is great happiness, great sadness, great anger, great frustration, desperation – everything in one concentrated little piece". This is how Ustad Zakir Hussain described stalwart musician Kishori Amonkar in *Bhinna Shadaj (Note Extraordinaire)*, a documentary by Sandhya Gokhale and Amol Palekar.

Hindustani vocalist Radhika Joshi created 'Mai ri', a special tribute to this musician, whose story is entwined with that of her mother and guru – the doyenne Mogubai Kurdikar. Radhika's 'Mai ri', rooted in the music and life stories of Kishori Amonkar and Mogubai Kurdikar, was part of Bangalore International Centre's special programming for Women's Day.

The story of this mother-daughter duo who irreversibly transformed how raags would be sung and heard begins in a village in Goa. Born in Kurdi in 1904, Mogubai was orphaned early. Even as a child who had to find her path in the world, she knew that her mother



Finding information about Mogubai's music was challenging, because there are fewer resources available on her

RADHIKA JOSHI

musical formats, were narrations about the duo that conjured up images of two strong-willed women, passionate about music, not always in agreement with each other, but determined to sing and grow their chosen musical form. Radhika sourced information for 'Mai ri' from

For a cause

A renovated pond was recently inaugurated at Thandalam

Water is often regarded as the elixir of life, making its conservation more crucial than ever in today's world. In this spirit, a significant initiative took place in Thandalam, Tiruvallur district, as part of the centenary celebrations of Mukkamala Krishnamurthy Sastry, father of Sri Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamigal, the 70th Shankaracharya of Kanchi Math. A renovated pond and a garden complete with a walking path were recently inaugurated by Justice K.R. Sriram of the Chennai High Court.

Mukkamala Krishnamurthy Sastry was born in Thandalam in an agriculturist family. A Vedic scholar (Rig Veda), Krishnamurthy studied under renowned gurus, taught students through the Gurukula system, and upheld traditional values throughout his life. Those days, many students used to stay in his house and learn Vedas.

Krishnamurthy Sastry's primary source of income was rain-fed farming. When droughts disrupted his agricultural income in the 1970s, he sought the blessings of Mahaperiyava who asked him to join Polur Veda Patasala near Tiruvannamalai. In 1976, he took up the position of *Adhyapakar* for a monthly salary of ₹300. Living frugally, Sastrigal supported his family in Thandalam while continuing his duties at the Patasala.

A year later Krishnamurthy's fourth son, Sankaranarayanan, who was studying at Thandalam, joined him at Polur. Alongside his son, Krishnamurthy used to participate in Rigamrita homams for a decade conducted during every Navaratri at Kanchi Math.

A practitioner of Panchayatana puja and a tireless teacher, he raised a family rooted in Vedic tradition.

MATTRESSES • PILLOWS • CUSHIONS

MANUFACTURED IN : India's First Fully Automated & Continuous Natural Latex Foam Production Facility Plant

naturally cool

Natural Latex Foam With Consistent Foam Technology

24/7 8608507373 9884751983 www.foamsindia.com

NO SAGGING 20+ YEARS DURABILITY

EXCLUSIVE STORES #274, Royapettah High Road, Royapettah, Chennai - 600 014

MARKETING OFFICE #442/164, Bharthiyar Road, Poonamallee High Road, (Opp to Anna Arch) Arumbakkam, Chennai - 600 066

Manufactured by Foams India Bed Products DP P21, SIDCO, Thirumazhisai, Chennai - 600 124

CM YK

On a Jazz trip

The World Jazz Festival offered new pieces and classics at its India tour



Narendra Kusnur

Dressed elegantly in blue-grey, Netherlands-based alto saxophonist Femke Mooren did a charming rendition of jazz great Cannonball Adderley's 'Wabash' at the Mumbai leg of the World Jazz Festival recently. She followed it up with her upcoming original release 'Nellie', in a duet with trumpeter Charlie Philips. Joined by the vibrant Venezuelan pianist Francisco Rodriguez, Spanish bass player Eva Serrao Alarcon and Dutch drummer Rafael Slors, the two women filled Mumbai's St

Andrew's Auditorium with wafts of melody.

Over the next three hours, the audience was transported to sounds from various parts of the world, as 17 artistes performed in different permutations and combinations. Curated and presented by Dutch tenor saxophonist and bandleader Alexander Beets, the evening seamlessly blended old-school jazz with modern sounds, with an eclectic dose of Indian fusion added to the mix. The flow of sounds, assigning of musicians and sequencing of tunes plays an important part in such a multi-artiste concert, and Beets handled these details with elan. This was the fifth edition of the

World Jazz Festival in India, and covered Delhi, Pune, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Dehradun, besides Mumbai.

Launched in 2020, it is conceived and produced by Banyan Tree, in collaboration with the Amersfoort Jazz Festival of the Netherlands. On this tour, there was representation from the Netherlands, Brazil, Venezuela, Italy, Spain, Suriname, South Africa, Australia and Thailand. In Mumbai, one attraction was Brazil-bred, Amsterdam-settled saxophonist Lucas Santana, who dazzled on his original 'Trouble Maker'. South African trumpeter Darren English did his interpretation of Winston Mankuku Ngozi's tribute

to anti-apartheid activist Desmond Tutu. This was followed by a crossover interaction where musicians from the Banyan Tree Shishya's Collective played with jazz artistes. Vocalist Swar Sharma, sarangi player Sandeep Mishra, flautist Hrishikesh Majumdar and tabla player Rohit Deo later returned for the evening's final track, an Indo-jazz version of Duke Ellington's 'It don't mean a thing (If it ain't got

Enjoyable ensemble Artistes from around the world shared the stage at the fifth edition of the World Jazz Festival. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

that swing'). Both tunes had good individual parts, with pianist Rodriguez enjoying himself, though one felt a little more group preparation was necessary.

Post-interval, the audience was transported to the 1930s and 1940s, as vocalist Graziella Hunsel Rivero of Suriname rendered Ellington's 'Drop me off in Harlem'. Her selection of standards included the Billie Holiday-popularised 'What a little moonlight can do' and 'Crazy he calls me', Ellington's 'Mood Indigo' and 'In a mellow tone' and Dinah Washington's 'Mad about the boy'.

BESIDES CLASSICAL ORCHESTRAS my early influences were Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller, but slowly I got drawn to John Coltrane and Charlie Parker.

LUCAS SANTANA

'My roots will always be Brazilian'



Raised in Brazil and settled in Amsterdam, saxophonist Lucas Santana first came to India two years ago as part of the World Jazz Festival. "It was great to meet Indians, show them a bit of Brazilian culture, and learn a bit about Indian lifestyle and music," says Santana, who plans to collaborate with an Indian musician.

Born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Santana grew up in the countryside where his father had taken up a music teaching project. He initially learnt the clarinet but took to the saxophone when he was 11, moving from classical music to jazz. "I was watching this movie, and I saw this guy play a saxophone. I wanted to be exactly like him. Besides classical orchestras, my early influences were Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller, but slowly I got drawn to John Coltrane and Charlie Parker," he recalls.

After getting scholarships from the Music School Of State Of Sao Paulo and later the Latin Grammy Foundation of Netherlands, Santana shifted to Amsterdam. "It's a city where all people and cultures come together. That helps me learn more about other kinds of music, though my roots will always be Brazilian," he says.

Santana has released three albums – *Reflections*, *Ambivalence* and *Bosquejos do Brasil*. He explains the latest release: "Bosquejos means sketches. I have worked with the string quartet called Adam, and that gives a new dimension to my music. Hopefully, I will be able to come up with many more concepts like this," he concludes.

Accompanied by the Round Midnight Orchestra, she interacted charmingly with the crowd, walking down the aisles and getting people to chat along.

From the classics, the set moved to Thai saxophonist Pang Sappackgirl, who played two originals 'Steppin' up' and 'Dream town'. Her performance was filled with energy and smart improvisation, and one wished she played a couple of more tunes. Likewise, it would have been great to hear saxophonists Adam Simmons and Rolf Peter Delfos as lead artiste, though they played in the group settings.

One point worth noting was the presence of six saxophonists and two trumpeters. These days, one normally sees more prominent use of keyboards and guitar, but this time was welcome to have raw horns and consistent use of the grand piano and double bass. Quite simply, it was jazz as older fans have known it.

CALENDAR

In memory of GNB



A special event has been organised to mark the 60th memorial day of the legendary musician G.N. Balasubramaniam. Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti will inaugurate the event at 6 p.m. To be held on May 1 at Narada Gana Sabha mini hall, the evening will have Shubasree Ramachandran rendering some of the songs popularised by GNB. This will be followed by Trichur V. Ramachandran's lecture demonstration 'The Maverick Genius Maestro' at 6.35 p.m. It will highlight GNB's manodharma in kritis, ragas, niraval, swaras and RTPs, his own compositions and tukkadas. Recordings will be played by Shiv Viswa.

Special line-up

As part of the year-long samvatsara mahotsavam, being conducted by Veenaavadhini Sampradaaya Sangit Trust, to celebrate the 250th birth anniversary of Muthuswami Dikshitar, a series of special programmes will take place on April 27, at Arkay Convention Centre, Mylapore. To be inaugurated at 8.45 a.m. the line-up begins with Mala Chandrasekhar's flute recital (9 a.m.). She will be accompanied by M.R. Gopinath (violin), Neyveli K.V. Ramkumar (mridangam) and H. Prasanna (ghatam). This will be followed by V. Navaneeth Krishnan's vocal recital (10.45 a.m.); Usha Rajagopal and Meera Sivaramakrishnan's violin duet (12.30 p.m.); Radha Bhaskar's vocal concert (2.15 p.m.).

The celebration concludes with a special four-hour veena recital by Jeyaraaj Krishnan and Jaysri Jeyaraaj Krishnan (4.15 p.m.).



Samunnati and Rasikapriya jointly present the flute recital by J.B. Sruthi Sagar at the Hiranandani Club House, on April 27 at 5.30 p.m.

Discourse

Madhuradhwani has organised the Sangeetha Natya upanayam 'Trirguna Sambandar', on April 26, 6.15 p.m. It will feature a performance by S. Ramaratnam and Gayatri Ramaratnam. The event includes some of the compositions of Prof. P.N. Natarajan.

HCL concert

The Music Academy will feature K. Shahana's Bharatanatyam recital as part of the HCL concert series. The event will take place on April 28, 6 p.m., at the Kasturi Srinivasan Hall.

Bhavan's short-term courses

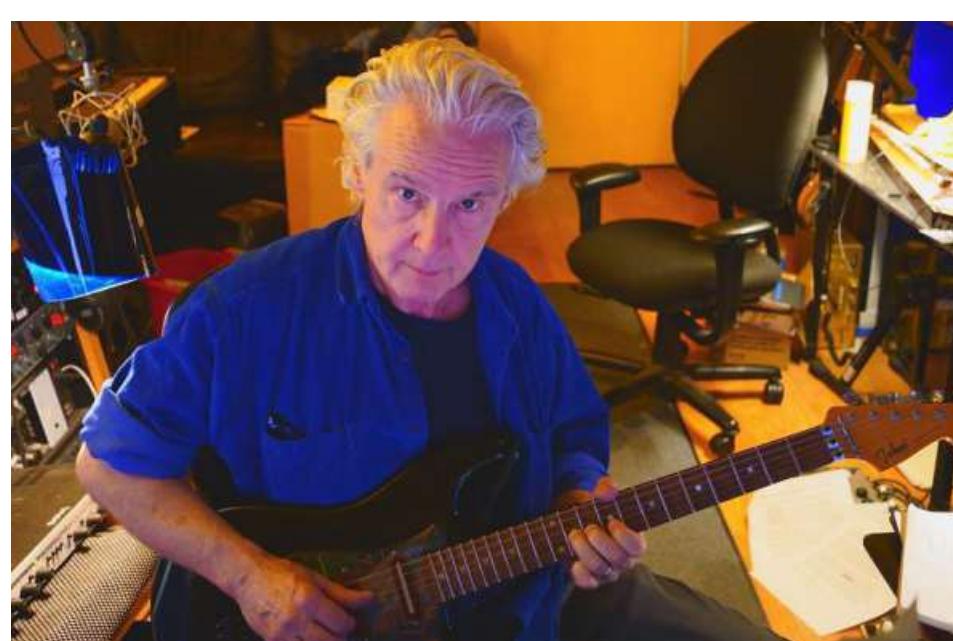
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chennai Kendra, has organised 'Summer Camp 2025' for the performing arts, yoga, arts and crafts, storytelling, cultural tours, and shloka chanting from April 28 to May 9, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., at its Mylapore venue, and conducts short-term courses from May 1 to 31. For details call 98843 35700 / 98843 66700 or 98843 64700.

Thematic performance

Jagyaseni Chatterjee, disciple of guru Lakshmi Ramaswamy, presents her solo Bharatanatyam recital 'From Flame to Fragrance: A Journey of Devotion, Desire and Dharma' at Rasika Ranjani Sabha on April 28 at 6.30 p.m.

Lecture

Tattvaloka has organised an illustrated lecture on 'Ancient Temples of Tamil Nadu' to be presented by historian Chithra Madhavan tomorrow at 6 p.m. Venue: 76, Eldams Road, Teynampet.



Song by the Brook

Composer Michael Brook and singer Devika come together for 'Wisteria'

Neha Kirpal

Celebrated for her fusion of Sufi/Indian folk and contemporary music, singer-songwriter Devika recently joined forces with Grammy-nominated composer and producer Michael Brook for their new collaboration 'Wisteria'. The poignant Punjabi ballad, with its universal themes of unrequited love and restlessness, blends Devika's emotive vocal melodies with Michael's timeless production.

The collaboration started with Devika listening to a few short guitar sketches from Michael's library. The one that spoke to her was called 'Wisty' – it inspired her to create a melody and lyric. "The song is a heartfelt expression of love, longing and restlessness. It was a reminder of past bittersweet moments," says Devika.

In her formative years, Devika was obsessed with *Night Song*, a collaboration between Michael and Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. Nominated for the Best Global

Music Performance Grammy Award, it was the first album to blend the sounds of traditional Eastern folk singing with new-age Western electronica. Needless to say, she was thrilled when she got the opportunity to meet Michael in his home studio and start working with him.

It was a fulfilling, interconnected song writing process. Devika would record vocals and send them over to Michael. Her vocals inspired additional compositional development from him, such as adding the violin, guitar and other instruments. Those additions would shape her next iteration. "It was an open and exploratory process – we weren't trying to restrict ourselves to any specific formula, format or genre; we were just creating something that was meaningful and impactful for both," she recalls.

The collaboration resulted in a soulful Punjabi ballad that blends traditional roots with a contemporary feel. "It is full of surprises and has unique elements – vocals that transition

varying levels of intensity, and a rich palette of music - nylon string guitar, 12-string guitar, bass, cello, violin and string instruments," adds Devika.

Trained in Hindustani classical music, Devika has been collaborating across genres, including with renowned artistes such as Bohemia, Amaan Ali Bangash, Ayaan Ali Bangash, and Mike Klooster of Smash Mouth. Her tracks 'Jab se piya' and 'Mast qalandar', were submitted for Best Global Music Performance category at the Grammys. The San Francisco-based, New Delhi-born artiste's voice also features on Apple's iMovie App's Bollywood Trailer.

Both the sounds of the instruments and the element of expression in Indian music appealed to me deeply

MICHAEL BROOK

