

fridayReview

THE HINDU

Celebrating the Margam
Nithyakalyani reiterates the timeless appeal of the Bharatanatyam repertoire **p2**

Songs for the sojourn
Mahesh Kale's 'Abhangwari' recreates the journey to Pandharpur **p3**



MEET THE CREATOR OF THE CATEMARIO METHOD
Italian classical guitarist Edoardo's unique module is aimed at learners **p4**



Charumathi Supraja

Poetry can be a refuge, but it could also pull the rug from under your feet – sending you flying or leaving you sprawled on the floor with your shattered assumptions. *Wild Women: Seekers, Protagonists and Goddesses in Sacred Indian Poetry*, the anthology of sacred Indian poetry edited by Arundhathi Subramaniam, deftly does both by the sheer power and range of voices it packs. The collection's overarching feminine voice overthrows all previously held ideas on what constitutes sacred poetry, uncovers a realm of experience never collated in one place before, gently, offers clues on redefining pathways to refuge. At the Bengaluru book launch of *Wild Women*, she wanted to showcase the work of women of “different temperaments, backgrounds, orientations and women who had made very different life choices”. Thus, in this book, “you will find the voices of Buddhist nuns alongside that of vedantins, bhaktas, sufis, tantrikas and more. You will find poets – some cerebral, some devotional, some meditative and others more ecstatic.” Whether they wore ochre, blue jeans or just their own skin; whether they walked



Verse and wonderful
Arundhathi Subramaniam; with Bombay Jayashri and Alarmel Valli at the Chennai launch of the book. PHOTOS: ROHIT CHAWLA AND AMANULLAH

Paradise gained

Arundhathi Subramaniam's search for the many unheard voices of sacred Indian poetry culminates in the book *Wild Women*

women themselves – “fierce, courageous, sometimes outrageous – not demure or domesticated but with spine, nerve and astonishing chutzpah.” The project became “a way of re-drawing a family tree, reclaiming a lost genealogy, an erased history of female mentorship.” Arundhati exults in the gifts showered by poets like Punnika, the slave girl and Buddhist nun, who confronted a ritualistic Brahmin with questions on karma 2,500 years ago, or in the voice of 17th century Kashmiri mystic, Rupa Bhawani, who declared she would never bow to the divine because she was aware of the sacred within her. “In a fragmented world, it helps to be reminded of those who refuse to separate flesh and spirit,” says Arundhathi, “women, who acknowledge the wisdom of their bodies and puncture orthodox ideas around saliva and menstruation.” While the first section of *Wild Women* packs more than a punch in how it conveys the voices of women who owned their skin in all fullness, the second section of the book spotlights women as protagonists and not poets. The third section spotlights the Goddess – “one wild woman who never quite goes away.” This book is a rare treasure because it remedies centuries of omission and erasure. It does not take out a flag march, but instead, sings out loud in celebration. The colours it throws into the air – if we could call the poems that – are of too many shades to be named. And yet, the unquestionable success of this book is in how it drenches us in those hues – leaving us both content and newly restless.

I have not bowed,
I never will
The one who listens
Is resplendent, within me
That is worship, that's
what I do
The sword of meditation
slung by my side
I mount the horse of twin
breaths
The veena of the oriole's
song fills the air
The conches resound all
around
Cymbals ring, river of
practice springs forth
That is how I worship Shiva

Rupa Bhawani (Kashmiri poet,
17th Century CE, translated
by Neerja Mattoo)

alone, with a religious order or as householders with their partners as spiritual companions – she “wanted to honour the choices of each of these spiritual seekers.” In an e-mail interview, Arundhathi shares that the seed for this book was sown when she was working on an earlier volume of Bhakti poetry, *Eating God*. It bothered her that the celebrated women saints she read about “seemed to be pious devotees, serene songsters and docile followers... never presented as fierce spiritual warriors, wise foremothers, glorious ancestors.” The specific idea for this anthology, however, was born when she curated a Music and Sacred Poetry festival, entitled *Wild Women*, at Mumbai's National Centre for the Performing Arts in 2019. As the festival took shape, she discovered a “vast number of largely undocumented, unknown women – wild, wise and wonderful... who have been ignored or utterly erased

by religious and rationalist narratives. The intensity, passion and irreverence of their work took my breath away!” she says. Wanting to know more about this “vast mystic sisterhood,” she set about creating a work that would “acknowledge their uniqueness and celebrate them in polyphony.” **The challenges** The challenges were plentiful however. “I had no grant, no fellowship. It was a passion project – perhaps a lunatic project in some ways, sustained largely by my own eccentric curiosity. Other than the rigours of research, it also meant commissioning translations, which entailed endless email exchanges with translators. The content of this correspondence ranged from discussing broad approaches to translation to sometimes fretting over a single word,” says Arundhathi. The “biggest challenge was the magnitude,” with the compact list swelling to 56 poets! Though she



I discovered a vast number of largely undocumented, unknown women – wild, wise and wonderful... who have been ignored or utterly erased by religious and rationalist narratives

enjoyed “the immersion and discovery, the unrelenting, interminable” nature of the project left her frustrated. “I considered abandoning it a few times... but the poems of some of these extraordinary women – Bhadda Kapilani, Lakshminkara, Jiradei, Janabai, Shenkottai Avudai Akkal, Habba Khatun, Tarigonda Venkamamba, among others, drew me again and again. And muttering under my breath, I would resume the journey!” she says. For her, the greatest gift of this journey has been the

CULTUREBRIEFS

Nagaswaram festival

Sri Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha inaugurates its Nagaswaram and Tamil music festival on July 22, 6 p.m. V. Ramaswamy, managing director, Bhaggyam Constructions presides and confers the title ‘Vani Vadhya Kala Nipuna’ upon senior nagaswaram vidwan Seshampatti Sivalingam and ‘Vani Laya Kala Nipuna’ on senior thavil vidwan Thirunageswaram T.R. Subramaniam. A series of nagaswaram concerts by both established and young artistes will be presented from July 22 to 24 and music recitals on July 25 and 26. The series begins with Tiruvannamalai P. Balaganesan's nagaswaram recital on July 22, 6.45 p.m. He will be supported by B. Bageswari, B. Harini and B. Kanimozhi. Schedule: July 23, 6.30 p.m.: Mylai M. Karthikeyan and Koleri G. Vinoth Kumar. July 24, 6.30 p.m.: T.K.R. Ayyappan and T.K.R. Meenakshi Sundaram. The Tamil music festival will feature the following concerts: July 25, 5 p.m.: C.R. Vaidyanathan and 6.45 p.m.: V. Sankaranarayanan. July 26, 5 p.m.: Salem Gayathri Venkatesan and 6.45 p.m.: Chinmaya Sisters. Venue: Vani Mahal, T. Nagar.



Music, dance and theatre

Dancer Divya Kasturi's Srinidi, a cultural trust, conducts its annual festival on July 21 and 22 at P.S. High School, Mylapore. Organised in association with Brahma Gana Sabha, it will begin with the presentation of the Srinidi Lifetime Achievement award to musician Janaky Ramanujam, in the presence of art patron Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti, and senior dancer Parvati Ravi Ghantasala. Jaya Mahadevan, former Head of Programmes, AIR, Chennai, will felicitate. This will be followed by Vengal T. Guhan's nagaswaram performance (4.15 p.m.) and Jayanthi Subramaniam's Kala Darsana will present ‘Kapali - Arupathumooavar’ (5.30 p.m.). Day two will feature Bosskey's ‘Humorology - Motivation through humour’ (6.30 p.m.) and ‘Sixer’ - a collection of six short plays by Theatre Marina (7 p.m.). The festival is open to all.



An ode to the guru

Senior artiste Sailaja's dance academy, Saila Sudha, will present ‘Natya Rasaprabandha’ in memory of the legendary guru K.J. Sarasa, on July 20, 5.45 p.m. Titled ‘Guru Samarpanam’, the evening will feature the Bharatanatyam performance by Sailaja and her students. Venue: Rasika Ranjani Sabha.

Dance tribute

Bharath Kalachar in association with Abbas NTFans and Sivaji Ravi present the premiere show of Radhika Shurajit's ‘Mannavan Vandhanadi’, a natya tribute to legendary actor Sivaji Ganesan on his 23rd memorial day on July 21 at 6.30 p.m. at Sri YGP Auditorium, T. Nagar. The non-ticketed event, curated and choreographed by Radhika, will present some of the popular songs of the actor through Bharatanatyam.



Back after 14 years

Natakhapriya, S Ve Shekher's well-known drama troupe, will present *Mahabharathathil Mangaaththa*, a social, historical and sci-fi play, on July 20 and 21 (7 p.m.) at MGR Janaki College auditorium. The play has been revived and being staged after 14 years. It was first performed on March 13, 1980 at Mylapore Fine Arts Club. The play travels back in time to the period of the Mahabharatha, Shahjahan and Kattabomman when a scientist's son consumes time capsule pills. After living in the past, the boy consumes another pill and the play then travels forward to 5054.



Graceful Shirisha Shashank. PHOTO: M. SRINATH

A seamless blend of bhavas

Shirisha performed at the Music Academy's mid-year dance festival

Manasa Vijaylakshme. C

When dance and music are seamlessly integrated, the performance becomes a sight to behold. Shirisha Shashank, a disciple of Priyadarsini Govind, presented a solo Bharatanatyam recital at the Music Academy recently.

The evening began with a Pushpanjali in raga Hamsadhvani set to Roopakata tala, followed by the Ganesha stuti 'Pahi pahi bala ganapate' composed by Mazhavai Chidambara Bharati.

The next item was the varnam 'Swamiyai vara solladi' in raga Purvikalyani and tala Adi. This composition by K. N. Dhandayuthapani Pillai conveys a profound sense of yearning and devotion.

In this piece, the heroine (the nayika) requests her friend (sakhi) to bring none other than Kumaraswamy, the lord himself, to her.

Having experienced his grace throughout her life, she now fully understands her love for him and longs to see him. She wonders why it is taking him so long, questioning his intentions and whether he has a heart of stone or truly loves her. Shirisha performed the lengthy piece with grace and ease.

Nuanced depiction

Following the varnam came a padam 'Mogadochi' in raga Sahana and set to Mishra Chapu, a composition in Telugu. In this piece, the nayika is preparing to bid farewell to Krishna. She says, 'It is time for me to leave. My husband is at the doorstep to take me away. Please do not forget the feelings I had for you, and please do not forget me'. She continues, 'Do not worry about me. Just as the sun and the lotus exist together, you, the sun, whose rays will always fall upon me (the lotus)'. The sentiment of love for god was beautifully expressed through nuanced abhinaya.

In raga Khamas came a javali 'Era rara'. Here, Radha is longing for the attention of Krishna.

The evening concluded with a thillana in Brindavani (Adi) composed by Balamuralikrishna.

Promising note

Nanditha Kannan's rendition was a proof of her training and lineage



Young team regale Nanditha Kannan with Chinmayi on the violin and A. Vamsidara on the mridangam. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

H.Ramakrishnan

In a technologically driven world, it is heartening to see several promising young artists learning directly from gurus. Watching Nanditha Kannan's vocal recital for Pushkaram Trust recently, I thought about the care and attention her guru, violin exponent R.K. Shriramkumar, would have bestowed upon her.

Nanditha's exhaustive Kalyani essay, preceding one of Dikshitar's masterpieces 'Bhajare rechitta balambikam', was indicative of her training. Her creative instincts came to the fore in the Madhya sthaya phrases. This composition in Misra Chapu, on the goddess at Vaithiswaran koil, was the highlight of the concert and was in the second Vibhakti. Many names of Devi that Dikshitar has used in this kriti are from Lalitha Sahasranamam. The devotional bhava of the kriti was in full bloom in the niraval and swaraprastara at 'Devim sakthi bijodbhava'.

beautiful raga which can instantly create the ambience of *kaarunya* (compassion). Syama Sastri, one of the Trinity, chose this unique raga for his composition 'Devi brova samayamide'. And, Nanditha offered an emotive rendering of it. She then sang Papanasam Sivan's 'Kumaran thaal paninthe thuthi' in Yadukulakamboji.

Nanditha's thukkada line up was impressive, and so was her singing of these pieces. No wonder, she had won the first prize in thukkadas (vocal) in *The Hindu* Margazhi Classical Music Competition in 2021. In this concert, she presented four pasurams commencing with



'Maanikkam katti vayiram idai katti' from Periya Thirumozhi in a Ragamalika, comprising Nilambari, Khamas, Hamir Kalyani and Surutti.

Her treatment of the shabad 'Thakur tum sharanahi aayo' in the Misra Nadai was apt. M.S. Subbulakshmi used to sing this at her concerts.

Nanditha concluded her recital with two songs by Subramania Bharati, 'Nenjukkum neethiyum' and 'Bharatha dessamenru peyar solluvar'.

Nanditha's co-artists of the evening succeeded in enriching the concert. On the violin was the young C.S. Chinmayi. She is the daughter and disciple of C.N. Srinivasamurthy, who in turn was a student of violin maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman. Chinmayi is an able accompanist. On the mridangam, another youngster, A. Vamsidara, disciple of Poongulam Ramakrishnan, was an asset to the vocalist. His thani in Misra Chapu, with Tisra Nadai and a short Chatusra-Tisra combination, was well-executed.

Overall, the young trio offered a wholesome concert.

Shades of Begada

The Begada alapana by Nanditha, who belongs to Veena Sabesa Iyer's lineage, had an old world charm about it. She succeeded in interweaving melodic patterns and bringing out its essence. She took up the fourth of Dikshitar's Tyagaraja Vibhakthi kritis, 'Tyagarajaya namaste'. She rendered swaras at the pallavi.

Nanditha commenced the concert with Tiruvotriyur Thyagayer's Sahana varnam 'Karunimpa', followed by a fast-paced rendering of 'Vadera deivamu manasa' (Pantuvareli) by Tyagaraja. Niraval and swaras were at the third charanam, 'Dhaatru vinutudaina'. Chintamani, is a

The timeless appeal of the Margam

Nithyakalyani Vaidyanathan's performance showed how the traditional repertoire balances the dance form's various elements

V.V. Ramani

It is not just the past six months of rehearsals, but many years of rigorous training I received from my guru in my early years, which has given me the strength and stamina to present the margam today "said Nithyakalyani Vaidyanathan at the start of her Poorna Margam performance for Natyarangam at Narada Gana Sabha mini hall.

At a time when sustaining audience's attention is a daunting task, Nithyakalyani held their interest for two-and-a-half hours.

Given her experience, it was no surprise to see the core elements of Bharatanatyam – adavus, attami and teermanams – presented with finesse. The performance was backed by nuanced abhinaya and fine selection of songs.

The opening pieces, an alarippu in Tisra Dhruva tala (choreographed by Adyar Lakshman) and the jathiswaram (choreographed by Kanjeevaram Ellappa Pillai) ushered in the rhythmic energy. This was followed by the popular sabdam 'Sarasiyakshudu'.

Layered with abhinaya
K.N. Dhandayuthapani Pillai built a grand edifice of musical aesthetics in his Navaragamalika varnam 'Swamiyai azhaithodi vaa', weaving appropriate ragas to suit the mood of the lyrics. The nayika requests her sakhi to go and fetch her lord, the one who is adorned with a crescent moon and the Ganga flowing from his hair. At the start of each line, Nithyakalyani conveyed the gist through mukhabhinaya, before expanding on the ideas with detailed sancharis.

In Kavi Kunjara Bharathi's padam, 'Yengaanum vara

vara' in raga Kalyani, and the Patnam Subramania Iyer's javali, 'Appudu manasu' in raga Khamas, the dancer showcased various nayikas with shades of contrasting emotions. But the highlight was the Kshetravaya padam 'Ninnu joochi'. Radha Badri's soulful singing enhanced its appeal. The padam describes the nayika's reaction as the hero returns home after a long time. Nithyakalyani's apt abhinaya let the audience experience the nayika's emotional state.

The dancer's experience once again came to the fore in the Behag tillana, which

was performed at a pace in which one could enjoy the rhythmic beauty of the piece.

The musical ensemble consisted of Jayanthi Subramaniam on the nattuvangam, Radha Badri on the vocal, K.P. Nandini on the violin, Guru Bharadwaj on the mridangam and Sruthi Sagar on the flute.



Expressive Nithyakalyani's abhinaya conveyed the essence of the lyrics. PHOTO: R. RAGU

CALENDAR



Choodamani awards

Sri Krishna Gana Sabha will confer the Nrithya Choodamani title on Bharatanatyam exponent and founder of Natya Vriksha Dance Company Geeta Chandran and the Sangeetha Choodamani on well-known

Carnatic vocalists Ranjani and Gayatri at its 68th Margazhi Mela in December 2024. Geeta will be the 56th recipient of the honour while the RaGa sisters, the 61st recipient of the award.

Dedicated to Dikshitar

Veenavaadhini Sampradaya Sangit Trust will launch the year-long 250th birth anniversary celebration of Muthuswami Dikshitar on Guru Purnima day (July 21) at the Murugan temple in Tiruttani. It is at this temple that Dikshitar composed his very

first song 'Sri nathadhi guruguho jayati jayati'.

Eminent veena artistes and founders of the Veenavaadhini Trust J.T. Jeyaraaj Krishnan and Jaysri Jeyaraaj Krishnan will render this composition along with their disciples at the temple. An upanyasam on Dikshitar by Dushyanth



Sridhar, explanatory concerts by senior vocalists such as Neyveli Santhanagopalan and Abhishek Raghuram, an akhandam featuring talented artistes, chamber concerts and workshops on Dikshitar kritis will be held in the subsequent months. The trust also plans to conduct interactive sessions at educational institutions and a global-level competition on Dikshitar kritis.



The guru-sishya bond

The guru-sishya tradition is not just a method of teaching but a bond that transcends time. To celebrate this bond, veteran dancer-teacher Vyjayanthi Kashi conceptualised 'Mulam', a national seminar and dance festival, eight years ago. It features seminars, discussions and dance performances by eminent gurus and students. The panel discussion by gurus and shishyas addresses various issues.

The ninth edition of 'Mulam - the Root' will be presented by Shambhavi School of Dance on July 20 and 21 at Kondajji Basappa Auditorium, Bengaluru. The two-day event brings together artists from different dance forms to share their experiences followed by their performances.

Day one begins with a discussion on 'Navigating through the ever-changing dynamics in the guru-sishya relationship' (4.30 p.m.) featuring Sandhya Udupa, Avijit Das and Avani Gadre as panellists followed by their respective Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi and Kathak performances (6 p.m.). Nagesh V. Bettakote, Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Gangubai Hangal Music and Performing Arts University, Mysuru, will be the chief guest. The panel discussion continues on day two with Kuchipudi dancer Geetha Padmakumar, Odissi dancer Sharmila Biswas and Kathak dancer Mysore B. Nagaraj participating as speakers (4.30 p.m.). The session will be followed by their performances at 6 p.m. Vidya Rao, Head of Department of Performing Arts and Cultural Studies, Jain (deemed to be) University is the chief guest. For details call 98869 56596 / 9448146110.

Music contest

The Indian Fine Arts Society's annual music competition will be conducted on September 1, at Ethiraja Kalyana Nilayam, Alwarpet. Application forms are available at the office. The same can either be downloaded from the society's website or through mail ifas75@rediffmail.com. Last date of submission is August 15. For details contact 78457 55481/87544 37939.

Vocal solo



Arunachala Ramana Sangeetha Sabha will feature the following concerts at Arkay Convention Centre on July 21. Schedule: 4.30 p.m.: Abhishek Ravishankar (vocal) with Deepika Venkatraman (violin) and Kishore Ramesh (mridangam); 6.30 p.m.: Ashwath Narayanan (vocal) with B. Ananathakrishnan (violin) and Sumesh Narayanan (mridangam). The concert will be held under the auspices of Madhuradhwani.

Narendra Kusnur

The atmosphere was electric, as the incessant rain didn't deter fans from packing Mumbai's massive Shanmukhananda Hall on the evening of July 13. The Abhangwari concert, conceptualised and presented by singer Mahesh Kale, had the entire crowd in a daze, basking in the melody of Marathi abhangs like 'Kaanada Raja Pandharicha', 'Avghhe Garje Pandharpur' and 'Sakha Panduranga'. Towards the end, everyone chanted 'Vithnal Vithnal' along with the singer, who walked down the aisles.

Now settled in the San Francisco Bay area, Pune-bred Mahesh started the Abhangwari series eight years ago. The idea was to present the abhang genre, dedicated to Lord Vitthal, and musically depict the annual visit of thousands of pilgrims to Pandharpur in Maharashtra, on Ashadhi Ekadashi day. He says, "Besides the songs, I wanted to create an experience for the audience. Thus, *teeka* is applied on the foreheads of those entering the hall, and *topis* given to them. We also show visuals of scenes that take place on the way to Pandharpur."

Maresh points out that though the basic theme remains the same, he has a new script written every year. This year, Prajakt Deshmukh worked on the script and Subodh Bhawe was the narrator at the

Abhang
euphoria

Mahesh Kale recreates the varkaris' journey to Pandharpur through songs on Vitthal

Mumbai show. Mahesh's effort is to popularise abhangs outside Maharashtra, and this year's schedule thus includes Hyderabad, Chennai and Bengaluru. For this tour, he has written a special song called 'Abhangwari', which will be used as a title track.

Mahesh started learning music from his mother Meenal Kale, and gave his first performance of a

devotional song at age three. He later learnt from Purshottam Gangurde, before being chosen as a disciple by the renowned Pt Jitendra Abhisheki.

His focus now is on abhangs, and spreading the reach of classical music in the Bay area, where he and his wife Purva Gujar-Kale run the non-profit organisation Indian Classical Music

& Arts Foundation. "This is my way of trying to preserve tradition," says Mahesh, who won a National Award for his song 'Aruni kirani' in the 2015 Marathi film *Kativar Kaliat Ghushi*.

Before this tour, Mahesh had performed at the Stanford Jazz Festival along with saxophonist George Brooks, kanjira exponent V. Selvaganesh, bassist Kai

Eckhardt, pianist Frank Martin
and drummer Scott Amendola.

“The jazz show was called Indian Jazz Journey, and George and I present it every year with a different line-up. He is familiar with Indian music. He has some jazz pieces and I have some Indian classical pieces. We try to have a musical conversation.”

days, things have changed with social media and unlimited television programming. “During my growing up years, I used to hear the musical greats on radio. When I first met Pt Jitendra Abhisheki, I was totally in awe. I remained like that even while I was training under him. When I entered his gurukul, music became a way of life for me.”

After Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki passed away in 1998, his son Shounak became Mahesh's mentor. "I travelled extensively with him, and in the process honed my performance skills."

Talking about getting the National Award, Mahesh says that it was not only the first time he sang in a film but it also marked the revival of Natya Sangeet. “It was an amazing experience because most of the songs in the film were my guru’s (Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki) compositions. There were some originals also, including the one for which I got the award.”

The singer also spends a good amount of time composing new tunes, especially sant sahitya. At the Mumbai concert, Mahesh sang an Urdu verse on Vitthal. “The audience response shows how they enjoy when you push the boundaries and come up with novel ways to engage with the art,” says Mahesh.

Abhangwari will be held on July 20 at Narada Gana Sabha (6.30 p.m.). Tickets on bookmyshow.



Journey thus far

From Kalakshetra to Kalamandalam, Krishnakumar on how he pursued his passion for Kathakali

Sreevalsan Thiyyadi

When Kalamandalam Krishnakumar joined Kalakshetra in Chennai as a teacher, the young Kathakali artiste had to unlearn a few things to meet the institution's requirement as a part-time Bharatanatyam dancer. This exposure came in handy when Krishnakumar next got posted at his alma mater in Cheruthuruthy, not far from his native village in central Kerala.

"I taught Kathakali till my retirement in 2018, but on stage I sometimes found Bharatanatyam footwork and movements suited better the characters I portrayed," he says, citing charming Kacha's bonding with Devayani in her father Shukracharya's ashram or sage Vishwamitra giving lessons on abhinaya to the Rati-Virati duo in *Harischandracharitam*.

Krishnakumar's request and sent him to Padmanabhan Nair to learn the northern (Kalluvazhi) methodology. Krishnakumar also trained under Vazhenkada Vijayan and Kalamandalam Gopi. The training lasted for almost a decade, after which he realised a dearth of opportunities to perform. "I began to play the harmonium for a teacher. I wanted to learn the instrument since my friends told me it could fetch a job abroad." Krishnakumar then came to know about the vacancy for a Kathakali tutor in Kalakshetra. He applied and landed the job only to realise that Bharatanatyam was the institution's mainstay. So he gained know-how about the dance form's repertoire.

At this point of time, Krishnakumar's batch-mate Kalamandalam Vijayakumar and make up artiste Barbara of Manchester invited him to perform at events at their institute in the U.K. This meant taking long breaks from teaching. Eventually, he quit his job in Kalakshetra and went back to Kerala.

In 1990, Kalamandalam appointed Krishnakumar

From folk to classical
This is Krishnakumar's 50th year in Kathakali. Through the journey, he has constantly reinvented himself and his art. He moved from the folksy Ayyappanpattu to Kathakali and from the southern school of Kathakali to the northern.

"As a teenager, I had no clue about the stylistic differences between the two streams," says Krishnakumar. "I made the change because the lone teacher of the southern style, Madavoor Vasudevan Nair, used to be busy with night-long shows."

to its Kathakali department, which he later went on to head. The three decades that Krishnakumar spent there, he had a huge number of disciples and performances across the state and outside the country.

“I have performed all the major hero and anti-hero characters. I have shared platforms with exponents of both schools of Kathakali. Over the years, I have realised that the art form should adapt to contemporary sensibilities,” says Krishnakumar, who is now reviving his connect with Ayyappanpattu, which he learnt as a young boy from his father Achuthan Nair. Achuthan briefly trained in Kathakali when Kalamandalam was in Thiruthiparambu, near his village.

"I think I was destined to become the first full-fledged Kathakali artiste in my family," says Krishnakumar, running his hand over the hourglass-shaped udukku of his father. "Occasionally, I play this for my grandchild."

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சனி மற்றும் குாயிற்றுக்கிழமை,
மாலை 10.00 மணி முதல் மாலை 8.00 மணி வரை

இடம்:
இலலம் ஹாஸ்பிட்டல் துண்ட் பங்கெட்ஸ், சிலம் ஹால், 3வது தளம் (மாடி), ராஜீவ் காந்தி சாலை, OMR, போழிங்குடல்ஹார், சென்னை - 600119.

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திருமண சேவையில் 24 வருட அனுபவம்



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கூடுதலாக
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வாய்ப்பு

From Italy with love Edoardo Catemario performed two concerts in Mumbai recently.
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Narendra Kusnur

On July 9, the SOI Chamber Orchestra was joined by a special guest on two compositions at Mumbai's Tata Theatre. Edoardo Catemario, classical guitarist from Italy, first accompanied them and conductor Barbara Poplawska on Antonio Vivaldi's 'Concerto In D Major for Guitar'. However, Edoardo's own creation 'Fantasia Napoletana' was one of the programme's highlights, with its emphasis on guitar, flute and percussion.
"I wrote it in the form of a potpourri. It is a succession of eight Neapolitan themes, and I have used the folklore of my homeland, Naples, to create a journey through different moods," says Catemario. He adds that he used styles from different composers, and the piece is conceptually similar to Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky's suite 'Pictures At An Exhibition'. This fantasy was specially composed for the Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI), and blends Neapolitan tradition (from Naples) with refined orchestra, late 19th century concerto styles and elements of modernity.

Performing with SOI

This was Catemario's first visit to India, and he did two shows, playing with SOI at the Prithvi Theatre the night before. Besides the pieces featuring Catemario, the orchestra played creations of Italian composers Gioachino Rossini, Pietro Mascagni and Ottorino Respighi, though none featured guitar. The tour materialised after Catemario met SOI music director Marat Bisengaliev in Cremona, Italy. He says he had the privilege of sharing the stage with him a few years ago. "We met a few times after that, and this visit was planned at



Strum like Edoardo

The Italian classical guitarist, who was on his maiden visit to India, has devised a novel method for learners

one meeting," he adds. Besides being an active concert performer, the 58-year-old guitarist is known for devising the Metodo Catemario (or Catemario Method), a practice-based protocol used in helping students develop a musical ear. He elaborates, "Society has changed a lot. Technology has simplified our lives on the one hand, but at the same time, it has taken away some abilities from the younger generation. Some skills needed to play an instrument have been lost." The musician feels that earlier, most musicians had the ability to recognise sounds intricately. He points out, "But of late that has reduced, and so have the skills required to sing in tune, keep the pulse and improvise. My method tries to fill the gap that has arisen. It is meant to teach how to play by ear,

how to form and develop the capacity to recognise sounds and chords and, at a later stage, to combine them in various patterns." Catemario has used elements of the Neapolitan tradition while devising this method. He adds, "It is available on Amazon and other online platforms. I also try, if my schedule permits, to conduct intensive courses where young teachers can learn on the road."

Innovative approach

These innovations clearly evolve from a life-long dedication to music. Interestingly, Catemario doesn't have an answer when asked why he chose the guitar. His father was an amateur musician who could play 16 instruments, from the violin and mandolin to piano and guitar. He says, "I was only five years old when I showed interest in the guitar. Maybe I just liked its sound. Maybe it's the same reason why you like certain food dishes. My father, of course, said there were too many bad amateurs in the house, and if I wanted to play, it had to be under the guidance of a proper professor. That was the beginning."

Looking back, he feels it was a wise choice. He explains, "The guitar is human, and has the same extension of the voice. It is challenging because every single sound you play has to find its position on the fretboard. It has to be shaped, trying to imitate a small orchestra and you have to focus on every detail."

One of Catemario's early heroes was Spanish guitarist Andres Segovia. Naturally, he was thrilled to win the first prize at the Andres Segovia competitions in Almunecar, Granada, in 1991 and Alexandria, Egypt, the following year. His other idol was Romanian conductor Sergiu Celibidache.

Besides performance, he enjoys teaching. He says, "I try to make my students feel their soul, and use those feelings in their musical language. I also try to help them overcome limits they often create for themselves. Classical western music is complex, but if one can find beauty in small things, every little improvement becomes a case of true happiness." That joy was evident at his shows in Mumbai.

CALENDAR

Natya festival



Brahma Gana Sabha's Nalli Aadi Naatya Vizha will be inaugurated by art patron Nalli Kuppusami Chetti on July 22, 5.30 p.m., at Narada Gana Sabha Mini Hall. The ten-day festival features performances (5.45 p.m. and 7.15 p.m.) by young artistes. Schedule: July 22 - Sneha Mahesh (5.45 p.m.) followed by Mahitha Suresh (7.15 p.m.). July 23: Mrinalini Sivakumar and Smrithi Rajesh. July 24: Vibha Veeraraghavan and Adithi Sriram. July 26: Akshaya Hariharan - Pragnya Srivatsan followed by Abhinaya Senthil and Maharani Parisumuthu. July 27: Avani Shandilya followed by Manjhari. July 28: V. Pravalikaa (4.30 p.m.); Aparna Sarma (5.45 p.m.) and Trinethra Mahesh (7.15 p.m.). July 29: Gayathri Prasanth followed by Aradhana Padmanabhan - V. Narayani. July 30: Sathya Sukumaran and Sri Sandhya Ganesan. The fest concludes on July 31 with the performances by B.A. Vaishnavi, Harini.S, Medha Kannan, L. Varuna, M. Kiruthika and M.V. Lakshmi Chaitanya at 5.45 p.m. followed by Ruchira Saraswathi Rajesh's recital at 7.15 p.m.

Competition

Narada Gana Sabha will conduct the annual music competitions (vocal and instrumental) on August 11, 18 and 25. Application forms are available at the sabha office, Alwarpet, between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Call 2499 3201, 2499 0850.

On Vitthala's trail

Sankara TV presents an Ashada Ekadashi special titled 'Chennaiyil Pandharipuram' featuring harikatha exponent Vishaka Hari and popular Hindustani vocalists Jayateerth Mevundi and Anand Bhathe on July 23 at Narada Gana Sabha (4 p.m.). Tickets on bookmyshow

Tamil play

- Under the auspices of Narada Gana Sabha, at Sathguru Gnanananda Hall, Gurukulum Original Boys Co.95 will stage its Tamil play *Idhu Dhaan Swargam* today at 6.45 p.m. and J.C. Creations will stage *Meendum Thanikudithanam* on July 21, 6.45 p.m.
- United Visuals presents *LKG Aasai* on July 21, 6.30 p.m. Organised by P.B.R. Associates, the play will be staged at Vani Mahal, T. Nagar. Directed by 'Vedam Pudhithu' Kannan.
- Prayatna premieres the Tamil play *Sarvam Guru Mayam* by K. Vivekshankar on Swami Ramakrishnananda, on July 28, 6.30 p.m., at Narada Gana Sabha. Produced by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, the play will be staged under the auspices of Kartik Fine Arts.

Debut performance

Abhinya Natyalaya presents 'Hariyum Haranum' a thematic Bharatanatyam arangetram by the students of Shalini Vilasathy - Akshayalakshmi, Avanthika Ramasubramanian and Harini Rajan on July 21, 9.30 a.m. Venue: Rani Seethai Hall.

Vyasa puja

Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi, the 70th pontiff of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, will perform Vyasa puja on July 21 and observe the Chaturmasya vratham at Sri Thirupurasundari Samedha Sri Chandramouleeswara Swami Puja Mandapam, near Mahaperiyava's Manimandapam, Orikkai. It concludes on September 18 with Viswarupa yatra.

The birth of a musical idea

Indian alternative rock band Peter Cat Recording Co's new album BETA brings alive childhood memories

Neha Kirpal

Peter Cat Recording Co.'s latest album *BETA* has a common theme running through its tracks. "Somehow diverse ideas found a single expression in the songs. Through the making of the album, as songs were being written and tuned, themes kept popping up," says Dhruv Bhola, the Delhi-based alternative rock band's bassist. The themes range from philosophies of life to love stories and from childhood memories to having children. The band members dealt with a wide range of subjects. Even for the title of the album, they came up with several options, wrote them on pieces of paper, put them in a hat and made drummer Karan Singh's six-month-old son pick one out. That was how *BETA* serendipitously emerged. The album's first single, 'People never change', attempts to bring together diverse cultures and forms of music. With more than half a minute of bhangra beats, it slowly descends into a mellowness with Suryakant Sawhney's velvety croon.



Contrary to its name, the song ironically underwent the maximum number of changes. With several versions, it also took a long time to create. Often emerging from expression of momentary thoughts and feelings, it changed and evolved much like the people who wrote it, collecting and discarding ideas and themes along the way, until all the songs sat together and seemed to be talking to each other. Coupled with frontman Suryakant's marriage, a celebratory mood enveloped the music. Since it was formed in 2009,

Peter Cat Recording Co (PCRC) is known to blend various influences in their music, such as psychedelic, jazz, alt-rock and others. "Years of listening to music and imbibing it, subconsciously pinpointing elements that make certain music tick, experimenting with our own method, simultaneously paying homage to older sounds and forms, trusting our instincts but also doubting them," is how Dhruv summed up the band's musical inspirations. PCRC is gearing up for one of the largest tours by an Indian band. The 77-concert 'Good Luck Beta 24' run will kick off in August, covering North America, Europe, the U.K. and India (December). The tour will have the band performing new music after a gap of about five years.

