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THE HINDU



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THE HINDU

Colours of the seasons

Natyarangam presents Rithu Bharatham, an annual thematic dance festival **p2**

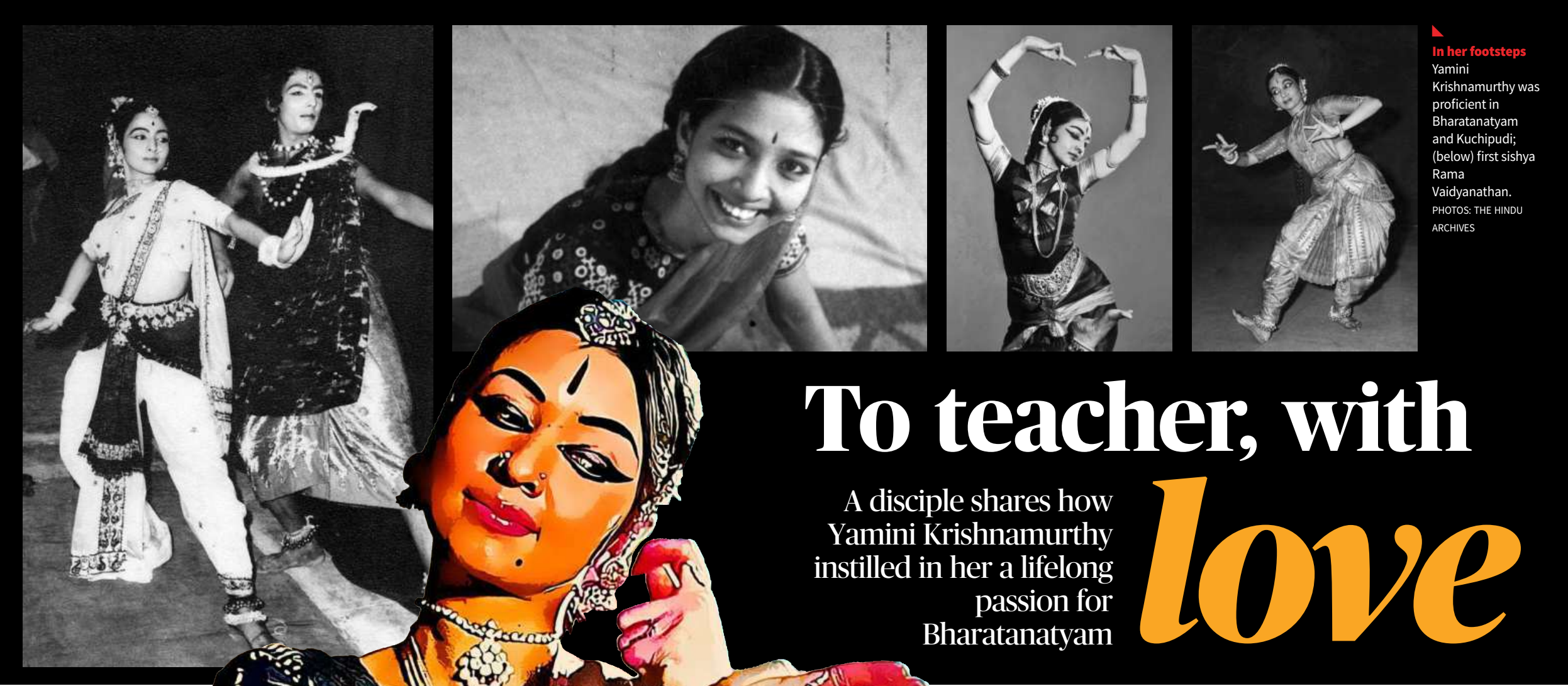
Monsoon melodies

Barkha Ritu series of concerts bring alive the raga-rain connect **p3**



C.V. SRIDHAR AND HIS UNIQUE BRAND OF COMEDY

Kadalikka Neramillai is among the director's most memorable films **p4**



To teacher, with love

A disciple shares how Yamini Krishnamurthy instilled in her a lifelong passion for Bharatanatyam

Rama Vaidyanathan

Yamini Krishnamurthy, the diva of Indian classical dance, passed away recently. It was difficult to see the body that moved with the grace of a gazelle lying still. Truly an icon, her presence on and off the stage was magical. She personified *Sringara Lahari*, her favourite composition by Lingaraj Urs in raga Nilambari, with her exquisite abhinaya and footwork. Her death marks the end of an era, but her spirit and style will continue to inspire dancers.

I was her first student, and during the years (1974 to 1987) that she taught me, Yamini amma, despite a hectic performance schedule, was completely focussed when in class. She never differentiated between what she danced and what she taught me; giving me everything generously and unconditionally.

My favourite memories are when she took me along with her for performances and made me do a tillana as a filler piece while she went in for a costume-change. These artistic outings taught me important lessons, including something as simple as

walking briskly. I have seen her alight from the car and get into the auditorium within seconds. It wasn't easy to keep pace with her. While watching her from the wings, I would marvel at her uncanny ability to own the stage and her commanding presence at every performance setting.

Though my guru revelled in the traditional repertoire, she brought her own to every composition. For instance, she would re-interpret even an adavu in her own distinct way. Her interpretation of a lyric found diverse expressions at different performances. She never looked outside the genre to present something new. In the process, she made learners like me realise that imagination is the key to evolve as an artiste.

She was a teacher, who did not believe in hand-holding her students. Yamini amma hardly spoke in class but conveyed enough through her silence. The students knew what she expected them to do and how it should be done. Under her wings, we found the freedom to soar. She insisted that we engage with the artform at an individual level. Yamini amma lived in

Chanakyapuri in a government accommodation before moving to her school-cum-residence, 'Nritya Kaustubha', in Hauz Khas in Delhi. The city, which she began to call home, also opened up new vistas for her. Determined to popularise Bharatanatyam in Delhi, she reinvented her art to match the vibrancy of Kathak. Hence, her Bharatanatyam never had a dull moment.

For the past few years, Yamini amma's world revolved only around dance. As her health deteriorated, she was confined to the hospital bed. One of my fond memories of visiting her in hospital was when I sang *Sringara Lahari* and started dancing while she lay motionless on the bed. Everyone around was stunned when Yamini amma slowly opened her eyes and stared at me. I could also see her hand moving faintly.

This is my parting image of her because it reflected her passion for dance. I felt as if she was telling me to carry forward her legacy.

Yamini amma, I am humbled to have been able to internalise your art. I will keep you alive through my dance, and that's a promise.

The writer is a senior Bharatanatyam dancer

Independent note

Harpreet Singh's latest album is a tribute to the martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh massacre

Neha Kirpal

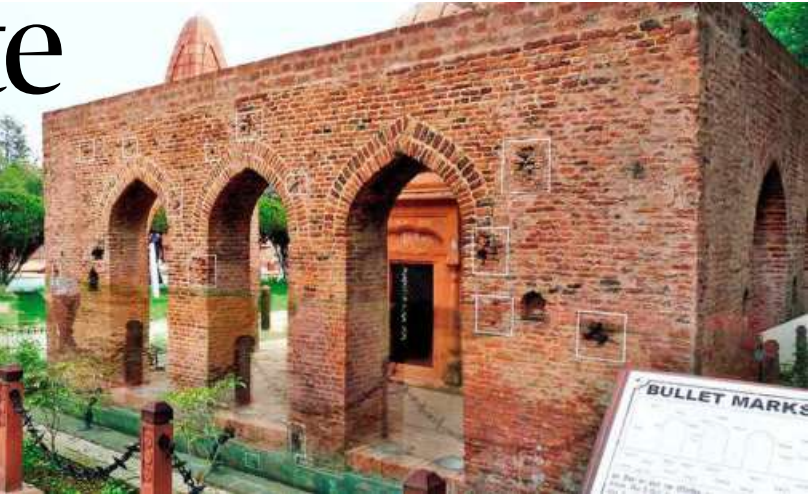
Singer-songwriter Harpreet Singh's new album is based on well-known Punjabi poet and author Nanak Singh's nearly 900 lines long 1920-poem *Khooni Vaisakhi*. The poem describes the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in detail and was banned by the British after its publication. Nanak was present at the Bagh on April 13, 1919, as part of a rally to protest against the Rowlatt Act, when he collapsed in the stampede during the civilian shooting. He regained consciousness and found himself under a pile of corpses. The poem is a survivor's account of the horrific tragedy.

Harpreet's project, which started five years ago, is one of the closest to his heart. In 2019, Teamwork Arts'

Sanjoy Roy, introduced Harpreet to Nanak Singh's grandson, Navdeep Suri, who was then India's Ambassador to the UAE. At the time, Navdeep was planning the launch of his book *Hymns in Blood*, an English translation of his grandfather's *Khooni Vaisakhi*. He wanted Harpreet to set the poetry to music.

Emotional connect

With nearly two decades of experience in musical adaptations of the works of various poets, the project deeply resonated with Harpreet. Further, having grown up in a Sikh family, he had always heard stories of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre since childhood, which created a strong personal connection to the book. "It was an honour to bring Nanak Singh ji's words to life through music," he said.



Harpreet composed a 10-minute piece from the book and performed it at the book launch on April 13, 2019, marking the centenary of the massacre.

The response of the audience was overwhelmingly positive, prompting them to take the launch to various parts of India, the U.K., Ireland and the UAE, where the reception was equally enthusiastic. This inspired Harpreet to create a full album that captures the book's narrative.

"All seven tracks in the album

outline the narrative of the book, focusing on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the events surrounding it," said Harpreet. The opening track, 'Prarthna', is an invocation to Guru Gobind Singh. 'Ramnavmi' is a poignant reminder depicting the unity among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, who celebrated Ramnavmi together. 'Phade jaan di

Music and memory Bullet marks at Jallianwala Bagh memorial in Amritsar; and Harpreet Singh

PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

khabar' describes the public's reaction to the arrest of Saifuddin Kitchlew and Satyapal by the British.

'Jallianwala Bagh (Amritsar 1919)' recreates the evening of the massacre, highlighting the grief of

parents mourning the loss of their children. 'Shaheedan di awaaz' is about the martyrs addressing the nation, urging them not to forget their sacrifice. 'Shaheedan walon general Dyer nu' condemns General Dyer, labelling him a murderer. In the concluding track, 'Chitthiyaan dardan diyan', Nanak Singh becomes the voice of the people, who write letters filled with pain and sorrow to the British.

World tour

As part of the album release tour, Harpreet will be travelling with Navdeep Suri to Chennai (August 21, Chennai International Centre) and Bengaluru (August 25 at Courtyard Koota and August 27 at Bangalore International Centre). They will then head to the U.S. and Canada.

Currently, Harpreet is working in his Mumbai studio on several songs that he has performed but not yet released, including 'Bandhu' and 'Geetfarosh', among others. "These songs have done well at various music festivals, and I'm excited to share them with a wider audience soon," he said.



Well-coordinated
Akshaya Hariharan and Pragnya Srivatsan, disciples of Srekala Bharath, performed as part of the Aadi Naaty Vizha 2024, presented by Brahma Gana Sabha
PHOTO: S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

Partners in art

The performance was a showcase of talent and training



Manasa Vijaylakshmi. C

A Bharatanatyam recital performed as a duo is envisioned as an exercise in synchrony, where mime and movement find both individual and shared expressions. Akshaya Hariharan and Pragnya Srivatsan, disciples of Srekala Bharath performed as part of the Aadi Naaty Vizha 2024, presented by Brahma Gana Sabha at Narada Gana Sabha mini hall.

Akshaya and Pragnya commenced their recital with an anjali in raga Valaji and tala Adi. Following this Pragnya performed ‘Ananda narthana ganapathim’, a composition by Oothukadu Venkata Subbaiyer, set in raga Nattai, Adi tala. This piece shows how Ganesha wrapped a snake around his belly to prevent the modaks (sweets) from spilling out. Pragnya’s portrayal was impressive.

Detailed portrayal

Next, Akshaya performed a jathiswaram by the Thanjavur Quartet in Ragamalika and Misra Chapu tala. The centrepiece, the Daru varnam ‘Maate malayadwaja’, was performed by both Akshaya and Pragnya. This composition by Muthiah Bhagavata is set in raga Khamas and tala Adi. The varnam describes goddess Meenakshi, who vanquished the demons Chandan and Mundan. Later, she meets Shiva and realises her love for him. Pragnya portrayed king Malayadhvaja (Meenakshi’s father). In the line ‘Shatodhari shankari chamundeshvari’, Akshaya depicted the goddess while Pragnya took on the role of Shiva. Later, Akshaya played the demon, and Pragnya was the destroyer of the demons. Their coordination extended to their costume as well. Both performed solo jathis in the varnam.

Next came a composition by Bharati Tirtha Mahaswami, the Shankaracharya of Sringeri Mutt, ‘Garuda gamana’, set to Yamunakalyani and Adi tala. This piece, performed by Akshaya, describes Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu.

A javali by Pattabhi Ramayya in Purvikalyani and Adi tala was performed by Pragnya. In this piece, the nayika says, “Enough of your untruthful words that vanish like writing on water and magic that just flows away.”

Rukmini Raman’s thillana was the concluding piece. Set in raga Surya and Adi tala, it is in praise Nataraja. It was performed by both Akshaya and Pragnya.

CULTURE-BRIEFS

Spotlight on navarasas

Sruti Foundation presents a thematic dance performance titled ‘Rasaanubhava’, featuring G. Narendra’s Avigna Dance Ensemble, on August 10, 6.30 p.m., at Narada Gana Sabha. The event, open to all, is organised in memory of N. Pattabhi Raman, founder of Sruti. G. Narendra’s choreography combines classical dance and contemporary sensibility. The ensemble will present the Siva navarasa through compelling stories to portray the nine emotions. The production also features an abhang, sung by Bombay Jayashri, which highlights the vatsalya bhava, and a rare composition by the legendary M. Balamuralikrishna.



Sanskrit play

Samskrita Ranga, founded in 1958 by revered Sanskrit scholar V. Raghavan to promote Sanskrit theatre, celebrates its 66th anniversary on August 10, at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan main hall, at 10 a.m. Sandhya Purecha, chairperson, Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, presides and launches V. Raghavan’s book, *Sanskrit Drama and Dramaturg* This will be followed by the staging of *Bhagavadajjukkeeyam*, a full-length Sanskrit play written by Pallava king Mahendra Varman. Produced and directed by Nandini Raman, the play will be presented by the Samskrita Ranga team.

Young mind at work

Shabin Bright performed with maturity and sensitivity at the Music Academy’s mid-year dance festival



PHOTO: B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

V.V. Ramani

The lord of dance seems to be casting his benevolent gaze on male Bharatanatyam dancers. A lot more opportunities are now coming their way.

The mid-year dance festival of the Music Academy featured the young Shabin Bright. He is currently training under Divyasena.

Shabin began his performance with a sankirna ekam alarippu, which was marked by clarity of footwork.

The Nattakurinji varnam ‘Swami naan undhan adimai’, an ode to Nataraja, composed by Papanasam Sivan, was an ideal choice for Shabin to explore the form of Shiva, and he lived up to

its promise with a vibrant presentation.

Creative imageries

This varnam, which speaks about a devotee seeking the lord’s blessings is filled with imageries that lend themselves to dance – from details of the dancing feet ‘Namamrutha pathame’ to the description of Nataraja’s dance surrounded by Nandi, sage Bringi and Indra and from his matted locks adorned with half moon and the Ganga flowing from it to the smile highlighted in the line ‘Ila nahai thavazhum’. Shabin portrayed them all. But a more intense exploration and understanding of a devotee’s angst would have lent the varnam a philosophical slant.

The haunting notes of the

flute set the stage for the entry of Krishna in the Ashtapadi ‘Priye charuseele’. Krishna imagines lush greenery, cool breeze and a glowing moon as he goes to meet Radha. But the scenario turns gloomy, with the moonlight and harsh breeze torturing him, as Radha rejects his advances. The piece was danced with sensitivity by Shabin and the intensity of his expression when Krishna pleads with Radha to place her feet on his head was noteworthy. An energetic Behag thillana by Balmuralikrishna came as the concluding piece.

Soulful singing by Udupi Srinath, accompanied by Govindarajan on the mridangam, Ganesan on the violin and Muthukumar on the flute enhanced the impact. Divyasena wielded the cymbals.

Ten-day theatre fest

Mudhra has organised the third edition of its annual 10-day drama festival, from August 9 to 18, to be streamed on Paalamtv at 6.30 p.m. The curtains will go up with Sathyasai Creations’ *Sabash Mapillai*. Plays to be staged on other days are: Gurukulam Original Boys’ *Narkalikkur Idamillai* (Aug. 10); Koothapiran Navabharat Theatres’ *Soppana Kuzhandai* (Aug. 11); Dummies Drama’s *Engirundo Vandan* (Aug. 12); Augusto Creations’ *Jaittha Kudirai* (Aug. 13); Amritham Gopal’s *Udyogam Office Lakshanam* (Aug. 14); Mother Creations’ *Thalaimuraigal* (Aug. 15); Ajay Entertainers’ *Kanna Unnai Thedukiren* (Aug. 16); Legally Yours’ *Operation Ahimsa* (Aug. 17). The festival concludes with Mayurapriya’s *Enna Kavi Padinalum* on August 18.

Dance of the seasons

Dancers will explore the diverse hues of Nature at ‘Rithu Bharatham’

For centuries, the seasons have been celebrated through art. Poets, musicians and painters have expressed the changes in Nature in amazing variety and detail in their works. The flora and fauna of different landscapes often impact our mood and emotions.

Each season has its festivals in every region of India, bringing people together to offer an invocation to Nature.

Sangam poetry in Thamizh, dating back to the second century, features a five-fold classification of landscape – Kurinji, Mullai, Marudham, Neidhal and Palai. Kalidasa in his *Rithu Samharam* weaves an enchanting tale of love and longing, separation and union, wherein the vagaries of Nature morph into Alambana, Uddipana Vibhavas (stimulants of emotions),

Vyabichari bhavas (transitory emotions) and Anubhava (physical responses accompanying emotional responses), culminating in Rasa. The Ragamala paintings of the 16th century are sets of miniature paintings, which combine the seasons, ragas specific to each season, sringara and bhakti rasas.

Dancers will explore this vast canvas through Bharatanatyam.

Natyanrangam presents Rithu Bharatham at its 26th annual thematic festival, to be held from August 14 to 19 at Narada Gana Sabha (6.30 p.m.).

The festival will be inaugurated on August 14 at 5.30 p.m. by author, environmentalist and educationist Nanditha Krishna. Mohan Sreenivas, president, Narada Gana Sabha, presides. Leela Samson and other

A colourful canvas (Clockwise from below) Sudha Seshayyan; Uma Sathya Narayanan; Monali Bala; Nidheesh and Indu; Apoorva Jayaraman; Ramya Suresh; Vaibhav Arekar; and Rama Vaidyanathan.
PHOTOS: M. SRINATH AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



awardees will be honoured on the occasion.

The inaugural ceremony will be followed by Rama Vaidyanathan’s performance focussing on Vasanth (spring/ ila veynil).

August 15: Apoorva Jayaraman (grishma/ mudhu veynil/ summer)

August 16: Vaibhav Arekar

(varsha/ kaar/ rain)

August 17: Ramya Suresh (sharad/ koodhir / autumn)

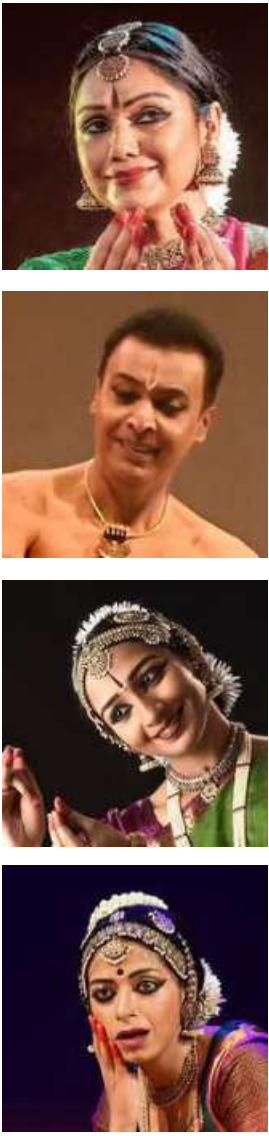
August 18: Uma Sathyanarayanan (hemant/ mun panir kalam/ early winter)

August 19: Indu Nidheesh and Nidheesh (sisir/pin pani kalam/ late winter)



Janmashtami special

Sri Gnana Advaita Peetam and Sri Vishnu Mohan Foundation will jointly present Sri Krishna Utsavam from August 11 to 15 at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore. The five-day festival will feature the following programmes: Sirkazhi Siva Chidambaram’s vocal concert (Aug. 11, 5.40 p.m.) followed by Gopika Varma’s Mohiniyattam (7 p.m.). Aug. 12, 6 p.m.: Sujata Mohapatra (Odissi) and Nedungadi Haridas (bhajan). Aug. 13, 6 p.m.: vocal concert by Deepika Venkataraman-Nandika Venkataraman followed by Alleppey Lakshmi Vinayak’s thematic presentation ‘Krishna Nee Begane Baaro’. Aug. 14, 6 p.m.: Damal Ramakrishnan’s upanyasam ‘Sri Krishna Vaibhavam’ and Aug. 15, 6 p.m.: Trichur Brothers. The events can be watched live on Zoom and SVME YouTube channel. For details call 9444381404.



Song and string

Anupama Bhagwat and Kaushiki Chakraborty showed why improvisation is the key to good music



Musical ode Kaushiki Chakraborty; and (below) Anupama Bhagwat at Acharya Bimalendu Mukherjee tribute event. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Vaishali K.S.

Acharya devo bhava’, a musical soiree to celebrate the birth centenary of Acharya Bimalendu Mukherjee, was organised recently by Kailas Sangeet Trust at Chowdaiah Memorial Hall in Bengaluru. Two well-known Hindustani musicians, Anupama Bhagwat and Kaushiki Chakraborty, paid tributes to the Acharya.

Anupama, one of the foremost disciples of Acharya Bimalendu Mukherjee and an exponent of Imdadkhani/Etawah gharana, chose the evening melody raag Shyam Kalyan for her solo sitar recital. She built up the raag through an expansive and meditative alaap. She embellished her raag vistaar with meends, emphasising the Kalyan and Kamod ang, with delicate stretching of the gandhar note that distinguishes it from raag Shuddh-Sarang.

Meticulous exploration Anupama’s improvisational abilities were discernible in her development of this raag through alap and rhythmic patterns of the jod and swift jhalas. In the gat section, Anupama took up a vilambit (slow tempo) composition in Teen taal for a meticulous exploration. She was ably supported on the tabla by Meghashyam Keshav. The deep inward quality of her music, devoid of any gimmickry, was a refreshing experience.

After the vilambit Teen taal composition, Anupama demonstrated the night melody Rageshree. In her Vilambit khayal composition ‘Sakal sukh devo kartar’, Kaushiki launched into a soulful alap, which was enhanced by the

nuanced sangat provided by Murad Ali Khan on the sarangi and Tanmay Deochake on the samvadini.

Kaushiki’s voice negotiated the three octaves with ease. Her felicity in the development of this sringar pradhan raag, bearing close affinity to raags such as Bageshree and Malgunji, was noteworthy. Equipped with a huge repertoire of bandishes, Kaushiki displayed her prowess by presenting a bouquet of three drut bandishes in Rageshree: ‘Kar phool sohe virajan par, chanda sohe amal gagan par’ (Teen taal), ‘Jao jao giridhari’ (Roopak taal) and “Sundar naveli nar’ (Ekwai taal) with sargams characterised by vibrant speedy taankari. The vilambit exposition contrasted beautifully with the drut renditions.

Ishaan Ghosh, the young tabla artiste, impressed the audience with his ebullient performance. Teen, Rupak or Ekwai, Ishaan was in his element while executing the tihais. He created attractive rhythm patterns with his explorations and variations of the taals.

Kaushiki next showcased her proficiency in bol banav thumri as came up with a poignant rendition of ‘Jiya mora na lage bairi balamva’ in raag Mishra Piloo, with suitable musical inputs from Tanmay Deochake and Murad Ali. Ishaan was at his best in the swift laggi section as Kaushiki sang a plaintive ‘saiyya na ja’ refrain.

The individual performances were followed by a jugalbandi of a kajri in Manj Khamaj and Dadra, ‘Barsan lagi badariya rumjhum ke’, popularised by the legendary Girija Devi.

Kaushiki and Anupama seamlessly interspersed their Manj Khamaj with Malhar.

On audience’s farmayish, they concluded with raag Bhairavi as Kaushiki sang a tarana and Anupama played a composition of her guru Acharya Bimalendu Mukherjee.



Shallaja Khanna

Thematic concerts have made listening to classical music an exciting experience. Curators are forever looking to present concerts in new ways. Banyan Tree’s Barkha Ritu is one such series, which explores the ancient connect between monsoon and music. This year marks the 23rd edition of Barkha Ritu.

In Delhi, the festival opened with a vocal jugalbandi of Shounak Abhisheki and Anand Bhate. Despite belonging to different gharanas and having different voice pitches, the Pune-based duo have performed together before. Shounak is the son of Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki, whose singing style combined features of various gharanas, including Agra and Jaipur. In addition, he was one of the most prolific teachers and composers, with a vast repertoire and a rich legacy.

Fine breath control

Anand Bhate is a Kirana gharana singer, and a disciple of Pt. Bhimesh Joshi. His vocal dexterity and fine breath control result in intricate taans.

Hearing both of them together was a pleasure, as each brought a different slant, making the concert enjoyable and multi-layered.

The concert started with Shounak singing raag Mian ki Malhar. His delineation, highlighting unusual aspects, created a wholesome picture of the raag. The rare madhya laya composition ‘Sakhi kaase kahoon’ by Pt. Ratnakant Ramnathkar ‘Premrang’ was in

The rain raga

For more than two decades, the Barkha Ritu concert series has been presenting monsoon-inspired melodies

Jhaptaal. The second Teen taal drut bandish was again not an oft-heard one. A composition by Pt. Sharad Chandra Arolkar, Shounak began unusually from the twelfth beat, like many instrumental compositions. The lyrics of the antara ‘dharak dharak chateeya’ were sung with gamak movements, which echoed clearly on the tabla played by Bharat Kamat. On the harmonium, Suyog Kundalkar was careful not to intrude during the raag delineation. Abhed Abhisheki as an accompanying vocalist showcased his prowess.

Though the duration was less than 30 minutes, the music lingered on.

Anand Bhate sang Surdasi Malhar; a Malhar attributed to saint-composer Surdas. Hence this Malhar has a more devotional appeal. Though Mian ki Malhar composed by Tansen around the same time is more popular and is today regarded as the Malhar, Surdasi has its own beautiful flavour. Anand sang a slow, prolonged and traditional Ek taal composition, showcasing the Kirana gharana features.



The drut Teen taal ‘Badarwa barasan’ was redolent with breathtaking swaras. Suyog on the harmonium frequently stepped in, confident of his role to enhance the music.

Favourite abhang

Both singers, well-known for their abhangs, concluded the concert singing together ‘Abhir gula’.

Tuned by Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki, this abhang never fails to uplift the spirit of the audience.

The evening concluded with a concert by sitar exponent Shujaat Khan, who was accompanied by two young Delhi-based tabla artistes, Shariq Mustafa and Zuheb Ahmed Khan.

Shujaat decided to play raag Bihag instead of another Malhar. He said concerts themed on the monsoon tend to get boring with the focus being only on Malhars. His Bihag was expansive and lyrical. In the jor section, he chose to present rudra veena-inspired stroke work, with a dhrupad-style tabla accompaniment. Shujaat shared his playing was inspired by rudra veena maestro Ustad Dabir Khan, whom he had heard as a child. Shujaat concluded with Bhairavi.

Celebrating rhythm

Nandhikeshwar Thala Vidyalaya celebrates its 29th annual day from August 9 to 11 at Arunagiri Nadhar Arangam, Kumarankundram, Chromepet.

Jayashree Vaidyanathan’s concert will set the tone for the festival. Day two will feature Thalamalai by the students of Nandhikeshwar Thala Vidhyalaya (4 p.m.). The Lifetime Achievement award and the Laya Vidyarnava Nandhi Dasa title will be presented to vidwan Madirimangalam S. Swaminathan. Other artistes to be honoured with titles are: Mridangam vidwans Kumbakonam K. Ramakrishnan and Paiyur C. Gopalakrishnan (Laya Vidyacharya Mani) and Srirangarajapuram J. Ganesh and Maduranthangam D. Arul (Yuva Laya Nandhidasa). Honouring mridangam artisan Thanjavur Soosainathan Kabriel and presentation of the title Bala Laya Nandhi Dasa to the disciples of Thillaisthanam R. Suriyanarayanan will complete the day’s programme.

Day three will begin with a performance by the disciples of I.S. Kavitha Murali (8.30 a.m.). In the evening, students of Nandhikeswar Thala Vidyalaya will perform (4 p.m.); followed by ‘Skanda Rasam’ and ‘Shiva Shakthi Rasam’, a musical tribute by the students of Saiswaras (6 p.m.). Shyamala Venkateswaran, Lakshmi Ananthakrishnan and Villivakkam S. Raghuraman will be honoured with the ‘Nadha Vidyarnavam’ title.

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Remembering director C.V. Sridhar and his unique brand of comedy as *Kadalikka Neramillai* completes 60 years

Suganthy Krishnamachari

Dull-u, dull-u', goes a song in the film *Ratha Pasam*, released on August 14, 1954. The career of the young man C.V. Sridhar, who wrote the story, was anything but dull. Veteran actor T.K. Shanmugam was the one who chose the title *Ratha Pasam* and took it to the screen from the stage. Sridhar's future began to look up. Soon, he became a partner in the production house, Venus pictures.

track, which had Thangavelu, pretending to be a famous writer, was brought out as a 78rpm record. But the comedy does not dispel the heaviness in the air. At the end of the film, you have this giggling question – isn't it far better to be breezy and jaunty like Thangavelu, treating all of life as a joke, than to fret over a lost love the way Gemini does? Did Sridhar, perhaps, want us to ponder this? Sridhar's canvas was broad and he went on to make films in Telugu, Kannada and Hindi. He paid particular attention to the songs in his films, and was hard to please. *Nenjil Or Alayam*, which won a



Flashback (Clockwise from far left) Kadalikka Neramillai; Kalyana Parisu; Mammam Magal; and C.V. Sridhar. PHOTOS: THE HINDU ARCHIVES

dropped, and the tune was changed to suit TMS' voice," says Perumal. "Sridhar ran a 16-page broadsheet on films, called *Chitralaya*, the name of his production house too. It was printed on glossy paper," recalls Annadurai.

Sridhar had a great sense of humour. Even in a serious film like *Maaman Magal*, there was no dearth of subtle wit. In one scene, comedian T.S. Durairaj observes that the visitors to Balaiah's house must be husband and wife, because the man has no opinion of his own, but agrees meekly with everything the woman says. Sridhar penned a delightful comedy – *Yaar Paiyyan*, in which the little boy Poori (played by Daisy Irani) latches on to unmarried Gemini Ganesan. Every time someone asks Poori who his father is, he points to Gemini and declares, "Maaganam porundiya Srimaan Sundarrajan (the Honourable Mister Sundarrajan)."

But Sridhar's most memorable comedy was *Kadalikka Neramillai* (KN) released in 1964, with terrific lines for Nagesh from the pen of Sridhar's friend Gopu. Why did the later comedies *Utharavindri Ulle Vaa* and *Ooty Varai Uravu* not acquire the cult status of KN, although they were just as funny? The answer is not far to seek. *Utharavindri Ulle Vaa* has a villain trafficking in women, an unwed mother, and an abandoned child. Besides, Mali is left alone, while all his friends are paired off with their lovers. *Ooty Varai Uravu* has a villain chasing an heiress and rich Balaiah abandoning his daughter.

But *Kadalikka Neramillai* has no negative tropes, no narrative tension. Even when Ravichandran is sacked from his job, he demands his job back, through a song and a dance!

Instead of *Kadalikka Neramillai*, Sridhar could have given us a film where the heroes handled problems more philosophically, to compensate for the dejected heroes of some of his earlier films. But, to borrow a line from P.G. Wodehouse – "dismay – that perspiration of the soul" cannot be "absorbed by the pocket handkerchief of philosophy." So Sridhar gave us the only anodyne that would work – the dream world of *Kadalikka Neramillai*, where nothing could go wrong.

That is why, even today, *Kadalikka Neramillai* appeals to impetuous youth and world-weary elders.

Presidential award, was shot entirely in a hospital setting, and the atmosphere was sombre.

The release date had been fixed and re-recording was to begin the next day, when Sridhar asked for a song to lighten the mood. "My father wrote the lyric 'Muthana Muthallavo' in less than 10 minutes, and the scene was shot late in the night," says Kannadasan's son Annadurai. Likewise the song 'Poo sumanthu pogirai' (film *Policekaran Magal*) was an afterthought, but turned out to be a fitting finale to the film.

There was one occasion when Sridhar was not happy with anything MSV-TKR and Kannadasan came up with. He took them with him to Bombay, hoping the change of environment would help. A month went by, before the music directors gave him a tune he liked, and Kannadasan managed to capture the elusive Muse. The result was the song 'Nenjam marappadillai', an ethereal melody about love.

After he had recorded the song 'Vizhiye kaday ezhudu' for MGR's

film *Urimaikkural*, Sridhar was told that MGR's approval was required. Kannadasan was politically opposed to MGR at that time. So, upon his suggestion, Sridhar told MGR that Vaali had written the song. "MGR recognised the Kannadasan stamp at once. However, he wanted the song to be included in the film," says Annadurai.

Singing for Sivaji

Amara Deepam had two music directors Chalapathy Rao and G. Ramanathan. But the MLV song 'Yenge Maraindayo' was tuned by her guru GNB. M.S. Perumal, former station director, Doordarshan, says that 'Oru Naalile' (film *Sivantha Mann*) is originally sung by Balamuralikrishna. T.M. Soundararajan pointed out that in the film *Thiruvilaiyadal*, TMS's voice for Sivaji was the one that 'defeated' Balamurali's voice (for Balaiah). TMS was skeptical about how Sivaji's fans would respond if the 'defeated' voice sang for Sivaji. "The Balamurali recording of 'Oru Naalile' was

Nandini Bhatia

Purane Chawal, a Hindi idiom for people with lived experience, is also the title of a two-act play directed by Sumeet Vyas. Adapted from master playwright Neil Simon's *The Sunshine Boys* (1972), *Purane Chawal* is a tragicomedy about two old-time friends and comic actors, Khushaal Mehendi and Vijay Das, played by the seasoned Kumud Mishra and Shubhrajyoti Barat. Though the two performed together for 42 years, they have now fallen apart. Ghanshyam Lalsa, who plays the nephew-turned-manager, tries to mend their strained relationship. But it's again a play that brings them together – in life and on stage. Sumeet Vyas, of *The Permanent Roommates* (2014) and *Tripling* (2016) fame, directs the story as adapted by Farrukh Seyer and Avinash Gautam. His familiarity with the two veteran actors comes through in the play's design and performance. "They have known me since I was 17. I have grown up watching them perform and rehearse. Directing them was nothing short of a theatre workshop for me," says Sumeet.

Relatable script

Adaptations are tricky but *Purane Chawal* retains the flavour of the original Neil Simon play and yet, breathes a new and Indian life into it – as New York becomes Bombay, New Jersey becomes Alibaug and *Weekly Variety* becomes the popular Indian magazine *Mayapuri*. For a



A window to the past

Purane Chawal, adapted from Neil Simon's *The Sunshine Boys*, retains the flavour of the original

play written over five decades ago, one that has been adapted multiple times since, Sumeet admits that "one has to make the script palatable for today's audience...the

essence of this play for me is friendship. I treated these two characters like a couple, who've been with each other for 42 years. From that lens, it will always remain relevant."

Sumeet believes in letting the play evolve on the floor – a method he follows himself, be it as an actor, a writer, or a director. In the end, the goal is to create something that

Old-world charm From the Hindi play 'Purane Chawal' PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

nods to a simple question that he asks himself: "Would I buy a ticket and watch this?"

Sumeet has been behind the curtain as much as he has been in front of it. In theatre or cinema, "everything starts with a script" but there is something special about theatre after all – "that it happens where it happens and then it is never going to happen again. It's always a different experience because it's alive," he says. As for his return to "experimental theatre" after a long tryst with movies and web-series, Sumeet emits great pride and a delightful optimism: "It pushes you to step out of your comfort zone and find narratives that are more stimulating for the audience. I have really enjoyed directing plays all my life, but *Purane Chawal* has been the most rewarding experience for me."

The play, a D For Drama production, premiered last November at Prithvi Theatre in Mumbai, where it has been staged almost a dozen times since.

It is now in phase two as the crew brings it to other cities in the country. Set to perform in Bengaluru, Pune, Bhubaneswar, and Allahabad, it has already been staged in cities such as Bareilly, Lucknow, Rewa, Indore, and Delhi.

As for the future, Sumeet hopes to see (and maybe even create) more contemporary writing on stage.

CALENDAR

An evening of fusion music



Three city-based musicians, who call themselves The A.S.K. Trio, will be presenting an evening of jazz, rock and funk today (8.30 p.m.), at Bay 146 stage, Saveria Hotel, Myslapore.

Bassist Keith Peters, drummer Shyam Rao, and young guitarist Amithav Gautam will be joined by special guests – Timothy Madhukar, Sharanya Gopinath and Shilvi Sharon on the vocals. For tickets call 9710976976.

Thematic dance recital

On the occasion of the 11th annual day celebration of Sankara Natyalya, Thiruvveezhimizhalai Kanaka Krishna Prashanth will premiere her production 'Adi Saivan Arooran' on August 11, 6 p.m., at R.R. Sabha, Myslapore. The production depicts the life of saint Sundaramurthy Nayanar. Kanaka has chosen lyrics from Periya Puranam and Thevaram for this production. Besides choreography, Kanaka has also composed the music. The orchestra comprises G.V. Guru Bharadwaaj on the mridangam, T.V. Sukanya on the violin and Sowmya Ramesh on the veena.

Anniversary event

Hamsadhwani celebrates its 34th year with a series of special programmes. Details: August 10, 6.15 p.m.: Rithwik Raja (vocal). August 11, 6.30 p.m.: Komal Theatres' Roudhiram Pazhagu'. August 15, 6.15 p.m.: Subhashree Thanikachalam's special QFR live titled 'Paatum factum'. The evening will feature some of the evergreen hits, which will be interspersed with interesting anecdotes about the songs. Venue: Youth Hostel, Adyar.

Flute recital

Madhuradhwani has organised B.V. Balasa's flute recital today, 6.15 p.m., at Arkay Convention Centre, Myslapore. The accompanists are Embar Kannan (violin), K.V. Prasad (mridangam) and V. Suresh (ghatam).

Listening session



Ganakaladhara Madurai Mani Iyer Rasikas Association presents this month's 'Guided Listening Session' on August 11 at Vivekananda Hall, P.S. High School. The event will be held between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. The recording of a concert by the legendary musician will be aired.