Music Sans Frontiers

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Music is all about interaction, it's all about the special connect that you make with your audience in the few hours of a performance. Brazilian classical guitarist Arnaldo Friere doesn't need words to communicate with his audience nor does he have an array of instruments to display his skills. All he has is a simple guitar, and that's all he needs to transport his audience to a few hours of musical bliss.

Friere performed to a packed audience in a concert organised by Alliance Francaise de Dhaka (AFD) and the Embassy of Brazil in Bangladesh on May 9 at AFD's La Galerie. the Star Magazine caught up with the maestro to learn more about his stay in Bangladesh, his future projects and his ideas of enhancing appreciation of world music in the country.

The Serendipitous Tour

"I didn't originally plan to come to Bangladesh. I was invited to perform at the Guitar Festival in Hong Kong, and as it is quite far from Mexico, where I currently live, I decided to make the tour as productive as I could. Many social interactions begin and end on Facebook in these modern times, and so, through this social networking site, I began to communicate with musicians and music lovers from all over the world.

Incidentally, I saw a video of students from the Classical Music Academy of Dhaka perform a composition by Russian musician Tchaikovsky. I was so impressed by the beautiful interpretation that I contacted Iftekhar Anwar, the cello performer at the academy. Anwar also teaches at Alliance Francaise and he made this concert happen. So, I first played in India, then there was the festival in Hong Kong and then I performed in Bangladesh."

Erasing Boundaries

"I teach music at a foundation that offers training for poor students in Brazil. There are over 12 students and we also have a Facebook page. So, when I came here, I asked Iftekhar to help me out by making tutorial videos that could be put up on the page. My students can learn from these tutorials and can even improvise in their own way. This is the best thing about music; you don't need to be from the same country or understand each other's language to share your knowledge with others."

First Tryst with Music

"I was adopted, and I don't know who my biological parents are. My father was Portuguese and so there was a lot of Portuguese music being played at our house when we were growing up. However, I learnt to appreciate world music as I grew older. Interestingly, I am the only musician in the family. One of my sisters is an industrial designer and the other is a homemaker.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Brazilian classical guitarist Arnaldo Friere.

You know, I was not supposed to be a guitarist in the first place. When I was around 11, I asked my father to get me a piano because I was a huge fan of Elton John. He got me a guitar, instead! (laughs) I kept the guitar and learnt how to play it. And the rest as they say..."

Teaching Vs Live Performances

"It's basically two sides of the same coin. I have more freedom in live performance, so I can improvise. As for teaching, you have to follow strict rules, you have to be disciplined and teach through examples. But that doesn't mean that I don't like teaching, on the contrary, I love it, particularly when I meet well-prepared, diligent ones, like the students of CMAD."

Teaching and Learning

"Students from the CMAD performed at my concert here before I took the stage. We called this performance "Echoes From Dhaka", in honour of the various sounds you get to hear in this city! I had only met and practiced with them once before the performance and I didn't even need to teach them anything; I just had to make some corrections and that was that! Their performance was pitch-perfect.