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THE THUNDERING CALL OF MUSIC...

Bangladesh warmly welcomes the world's largest classical music festival

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK

As Tagore refers to viswa veena or the lute of the universe in many of his songs, the imagery of the solar system appears amid the beautiful lotus and the moonlit night. The lovely veena makes the heart of the worshippers dance to the rhythm of the universe.

The solar system indeed maintains a rhythmic beat. From the beginning of time, mankind has sought to harness the melodies of nature -- the vibration of the hunter's bow, the chirping of birds, the sound of lashing winds, pouring rain or a gurgling stream and those who have captured that essence in their music, have been recognised as true maestros.

Sub-continental classical music is akin to an island--unspoiled through the centuries. Pure classical is the root of all music and from it stems the different genres --such as light classical/ thumri/ dadra/ kajri/ chaiti/ hori to the film songs, which originated from folk tunes. Ragas are our emotional expression either through the instruments or vocals depicting various 'moods'.

As we listen to the clock ticking away, Bengal Foundation braces itself once again to host a brilliant week of Indian Classical music packed with riveting performances by maestros of the subcontinent.

The five-day mega event due to begin on November 27 with legendary musical greats and promising music exponents from India and Bangladesh is expected to draw an audience of 30,000-50,000 enthusiasts of all ages.

We thank Bengal Foundation's initiative - in its fourth year now - to bring the mas-



ters of Indian classical music under a single platform so that the people of Bangladesh particularly the youth population get a chance to listen to the great masters and satisfy or stimulate their love of music.

The exposure of young people to classical music is heartening. Music education has become more accessible with music classes in schools, colleges and universities and online-- while music institutions produce a number of graduates of various levels every year. Besides that, many are returning home after completing training or degrees on music from institutions overseas. Institutions such as Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay have also spread their wings by inviting stalwarts to train the aspiring artistes in Bangladesh. But we also need co-ordinated efforts between Bengal Foundation and private and public universities so that the art can establish firm roots in the country. An exchange of ideas

between the stalwarts and students would spread knowledge and expertise to the music departments of different universities such as Rajshahi University, Dhaka University, Government Music College or other private institutions such as Chhayanaut that has done so much to promote the arts.

But the other side of the coin is that as aspiring artistes training in classical music for decades, do not often find a platform to sing or cannot afford to pursue it professionally, many have switched to other forms of music or even to other professions. Most artistes who have received extended classical training are disappointed and frustrated today to be sidelined by singers of more popular genres.

Music is the soul of culture. Despite the current state of classical music in Bangladesh, we have to move forward.

Government, corporate houses and of course the media, electronic in particular, must come forward to promote the legacy.

The festival that Bengal Foundation is organising is an opportunity that could be powerfully utilised to take this art form to new heights.

But much more is required. Classical music should be included in school syllabus as it involves meditation, discipline, breathing techniques that will shape not only their music skills but personalities throughout their lives.

Young talents should receive good voice training so that they can hone the art and produce music that stands the test of time.

What had been the masterful pitch of Ustads reverberating across the rajbari (royal courts) of Mukhtagacha, Gouripur, Dhaka, Comilla, Barisal, Rajshahi and Chittagong of Bangladesh has slowly ebbed into hushed echoes. The sitar, pakhwaj, and esraj that had strummed so feverishly side by side with the vocalists have inevitably been orphaned to stillness.

But on a more optimistic note, the raw energy that one witnessed at the classical music festivals in the last couple of years, gives hope that the genre is sure to flourish once again in Bangladesh.

For the past three years, the massive attendance at the festival have carried a consistent and simple message. Music is on our blood and echoes with every beat of our heart. And while some in the audience come to reconnect to their love of music from an age long past, the growing number of young listeners bear a different message: we are ready. Ready to revive what has always been buried deep inside us.



(Clockwise from top left) Stalwarts Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma, Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia, Ustad Zakir Hussain, Vidushi Alarmel Valli and Kaushiki Chakrabarty are some of the most-anticipated artistes of this year's festival.

BENGAL CLASSICAL MUSIC FEST '15

'BOMBAY' JAYASHRI sets the tune



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the opening night of the Bengal Classical Music Festival 2015, Jayashri Ramnath (popularly known as 'Bombay Jayashri') will close the day's schedule with her Carnatic vocal performance.

An Academy Award-nominated music composer, Jayashri gave her first concert in 1982. Since then, she has performed at various festivals and venues in India and abroad.

The ever-innovative Jayashri has collaborated with various eminent global artistes, among them Egyptian singer Hisham Abbas and Senegalese singer Thione Seck. In 2008, she was part of an Indo-Finnish venture "Red Earth and Pouring Rain", where she sang "Kuuntokai", an ancient poem from Sangam literature with Avanti, a Philharmonic Orchestra from Finland and set to music by Eero

Hämeenniemi. In 2012, she sang the poetry of Mirza Ghalib composed by Eero Hämeenniemi at the Vantaa festival, Finland.

Jayashri is also a much sought-after playback singer and her limited foray into film music has won her the Filmfare award for the popular number "Vaseegara" for the Tamil film "Minnale" which later was remade in Hindi as "Rehna Hai Tere Dil Mein". Jayashri worked with Oscar-winning director Ang Lee on "Life of Pi". She wrote and performed the lyrics for "Pi's Lullaby", which was nominated for the 2013 Oscars in the Best Original Song category.

Jayashri featured in the first full length Carnatic music film "Margazhi Ragam", conceptualised by Director P Jayendra. Along with T. M. Krishna and YACM, she initiated "Svanubhava", a week-long annual Music Festival, exclusively for students of music.

Curtains rise today on Bengal Classical Music Fest 2015

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The fourth edition of the Bengal Classical Music Festival, organised by Bengal Foundation, begins today at the capital's Army Stadium. Presented by Square, supported by BRAC BANK and powered by Robi, the five day (November 27- December 1) fiesta will run from 7pm to 5am every day, and will feature the most prominent names in Classical Music. This year's festival is dedicated to the memory of eminent artist Qayyum Chowdhury.

For the first time in the festival, legendary Ustad Zakir Hussain will perform solo, while Carnatic vocalist Padmavibhushan Dr. Balamuralikrishna will present a jugalbandi with Grammy nominated flautist Pt. Rano

Majumder. Among other first-time performers, noted flautist Dr. Jayaprada Ramamoorthy, popular khayaliya Shubha Mudgal and Shruti Sadolikar; Dhruvadiya Wasifuddin Dagar will perform solos, led by legendary 'singing violin of India' N. Rajam, three generation Carnatic violinists will diffuse melody; noted couple Raja and Radha Reddy will showcase Kuchipudi dance; Irshad Khan [son of Ustad Imrat Khan] and Shujaat Khan [son of Ustad Vilayat Khan] with roots in Bangladesh will play Surbahar and sitar respectively; Saraswati Veena will be presented by Jayanthi Kumaresh while Shubhayu Sen Majumdar will debut the esraj.

Many big names of the classical music world will return to the festival. Pt. Hariprasad

Chaurasia, Pt. Shivkumar Sharma, Pt. Ajoy Chakrabarty, Ustad Rashid Khan, Rahul Sharma, Kaushiki Chakrabarty, Bombay Jayashri, Alarmel Valli and Guru Karikudi Mani will be returning to the big stage.

Bangladeshi performances at the festival will include group dance performances led by Minu Haque and Warda Rihab, sarod solo by Yousuf Khan, group vocal and instrumental presentations by artistes of Parampara Sangeetalay and Rajshahi University's Music Department, a group dhamar performance and solo vocals by promising artistes.

Registration for the festival is closed now, while organisers have disseminated special instructions to all attendees to ensure safety and hassle-free observance of the festival.

PERFORMING TONIGHT AT THE FESTIVAL

- Bharatnatyam by **Pallavi Dance Center**
- Tabla Kirtan by **Parampara Sangeetalay**
- Carnatic Flute by **Jayaprada Ramamoorthy**
- Dhrupad by **Music Department, University of Rajshahi**
- Santoor by **Rahul Sharma**
- Vocal by **Kaushiki Chakrabarty**
- Sitar by **Pandit Kushal Das**
- Vocal by **Vidushi Bombay Jayashri**



Jayaprada Ramamoorthy



Rahul Sharma