

## Performing Arts Perspective



Raja & Radha Reddy performing Kuchipudi

Indian performing arts covering dance, drama and music have been – like their counterparts of visual arts – more than individual arts. As exponents have noted, they are among the most powerful means of fusing the logical with the intuitive, the analytical perceptions with the sensory ones and the holistic understanding with linear thinking. They are the disciplines which, within themselves, deal with basic understanding of human experience and conceptualization.

Like architecture, sculpture and painting, the performing arts, too, manifest the principle of multiplicity and unity on the spiritual, philosophical and aesthetic planes. The innermost urge to communicate with the gods at a mystical level is expressed by the performer by making his art a dedication and a prayerful offering. At a philosophical level, the performing artist does not reflect life as it is, but reveals or re-creates through finite forms and symbols – a vision suggestive of the infinite universal being. He seeks again and again to transcend the reality of everyday living to a higher reality. At the aesthetic level, the artist attempts to achieve an experience to supreme bliss, second only to the absolute bliss (Brahmananda), a state of "release".



A scene from a Manipuri play "Chakravayuha"

Rasa (the evoked state), as conceived in ancient aesthetics and practiced by the artist, has two aspects. First is the state of bliss as experienced by the viewer (Rasika). The second is the sentiment and mood (Bhava), the permanent and transitory states, as has been the object of presentation. While the evocation of rasa is the ultimate objective of all artistic experience and expression, bhava gives the performer a unique way of abstracting, and thus universalizing the

content of art. It is the aesthetic theory of rasa which provides an underlying unity to the India arts.

The roots of the Indian music, dance and the theatre traditions lie in the treatise of Bharata's Natya Shastra composed around the second century AD. As a compilation of practice and belief pertaining to the performing arts, this remarkably comprehensive volume deals with dance, drama, stage, music and elocution. The possible movements of every part of human figure are distilled into those that can be put into choreography: movements of each single limb and organ of human body have an emotional quality, analogous to the emotional expression of the subtle intervals (sruti) in music. Like drama, the mime element of dance employs the entire human physique to speak in a language of movement as to evoke a mood, doing away with speech of the drama proper and employing only music for expression. While detailing techniques, movements and gestures of dance and drama, Natya shastra also describes the stage, theatre architecture make-up and costume. It speaks about both spiritual depths and esthetic heights of a performance, even analyzing the literary nuances of a text. The Natya Shastra has been a powerful, integrated encyclopedia of the performing arts – a source of inspiration for directors, playwrights, actors, dancers, musicians and designers – and its relevance has not faded with time.

All the seven classical dance-forms of India, namely, Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Kathak and Manipuri, derive their authority from the Natya Shastra, and are all divided into pure dance (nritta) and expressive dance (nritya). Nritta is a blooming of decorative patterns and an upholding of various parts of the anatomy, creating beautiful designs as seen in the miniature paintings. Nritya however, uses faces and hand gestures to mirror emotions and stylized expressions from everyday life. Their symbolic language is imitative, descriptive, suggestive or even abstract, conveying a whole world of meaning.

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## Cultural Calendar for July

- July 7** Kathak dance & Vocal music recital  
By Ms. Niroshini Sherene Perera & Mr. Asith Atapattu  
Bathkhande Music Institute deemed University, Lucknow  
Venue & Time: ICC 6.30 p.m.
- July 14** Film: Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (with English subtitles)  
Language: Hindi  
Directed by: Karan Johar  
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs
- July 18** Film: Kadala Kadala  
Language: Tamil  
Directed by: S.Srinivasarav  
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs
- July 21** Carnatic flute recital  
by Mr. Nikhil Narayan, disciple of Carnatic flute maestro Sangeeth Kalanidhi Padmashri Dr. N. Ramani  
Venue & Time: ICC 6.30 p.m.
- July 25** Film: Jab Jab Phool Khile (with English subtitles)  
Language: Hindi  
Directed by: Suraj Prakash  
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs
- July 28** Bharatha Natyam recital  
by Ms. Suriyakala Jeevananthan & her students  
Venue & Time: ICC 6.30 p.m.

(Admission to all programmes is free on first come first served basis)



Kathak maestro  
Birju Maharaj

Their semantics suggest the sky and the earth, the seven seas and the underworld. A dancer may interpret the accompanying song or may take an imaginative flight with the associations that the words suggest.

Origins of music in India are deeply spiritual and devotional. Symbolically, most gods and goddesses of the pantheon are associated with music and rhythm. The creative energy of Brahma is deified as Saraswati, inseparable from her veena (lute), Shiva dances to the beat of damaru (drum) and Krishna enchants the world with his strains of his flute. All manifestations of godhead are traditionally propitiated with music and dance. Indian music can be traced back to the chanting of the Sama Veda four millennia before, and the primacy of voice and the association of musical sound with prayers have remained essentially unchanged. While nada is the sound of Universe, anahata nada (sound produced without percussion) is not a matter of sense perception but a mystic experience in which sound and light are fused together in a direct perception of the absolute.

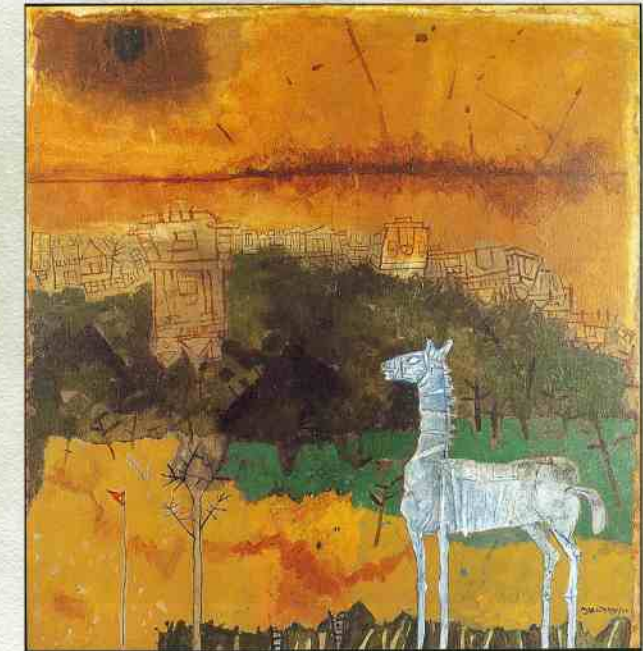
Ancient music has always been nourished by such diverse streams as the religious, folk, tribal and the courtly, The physical body of the music is to the musician what a writing tool is to the poet. The listener has to stay in tune with the highly-charged state of consciousness of the performer, rather than the physical condition of the sound that carries the music. The singing voice in Indian music is the earthy sound of the everyday speech, not a musical escape from it. All music in the traditional mode adopts the characteristics of intimate conversation. Raga, a central concept in all Indian music, has an intensity, a singleness of colour (not a rainbow) that the

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ICCR

July 2006



Shyamal Dutta Ray, The Blue Horse, Acrylic On Canvas, 91.5 X 91.5cms, 2003

## Indian Cultural Centre

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## In Retrospect .....

4<sup>th</sup> May

**Vocal music recital by Ms. Apoorva Shridhar**



Ms. Apoorva Shridhar an upcoming and talented vocalist from India presented a vocal music recital at the Centre on 4<sup>th</sup> May. She sang various styles of vocal music of India from Ghazals to Bhajans. The Honourable Mr. Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, Minister of Cultural Affairs & National Heritage and Mr.

A.Manickam, The Deputy High Commissioner graced the occasion. The evening was very well enjoyed by the audience gathered at the centre.

8<sup>th</sup> May

**Programme to mark the 145<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore jointly organized by the Indian Cultural Centre & the Tagore Society**



The Indian Cultural Centre in association with Tagore Society, Sri Lanka commemorated the birth anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore on 8<sup>th</sup> May with a programme that brought together several Tagore lovers and Shanthiniketan graduates.



Dr. Praneeth Abeyasundera made the introductory remarks during which he spoke about Gurudev. Smt. Nagma Mallick, Director ICC spoke on Gurudev's several visits to Sri Lanka and his relationship with Sri Lanka. The programme for the evening included a presentation of Rabindra Sangeet by Ms.



Thilini Priyankari Rodrigo & the students of Sharadha Kala Niketananya and an Esraj recital by Mr. Weerasena Gunathilake. The programme concluded with a brilliant performance of Rabindra sangeet on flute by Mr. Anil Mihiripenne, President of the Tagore Society and a renowned musician.

19<sup>th</sup> May

**"Maitri Sandhya" an evening of music and dance presented by the Indian Cultural Centre & Sri Lanka India Society**



An evening of music and dance, jointly organized by the Indian Cultural Centre and the Sri Lanka India Society, was presented at the ICC auditorium on May 19<sup>th</sup>. The programme included a variety of dance items from India and Sri Lanka presented by over 20 dancers. Each item was well rehearsed and beautifully executed. Colourful costume added to the beauty of their splendid presentation.



Students of Ms. Vasugy Jegatheeswaran, presented three Bharatha Natyam items based on traditional and folk music. The

students of Sandhya Bamunuwita presented three Sri Lankan dance items. It was a thoroughly enjoyable and entertaining evening, showcasing a unique mix of different dance styles depicting the different cultures of India and Sri Lanka.

25<sup>th</sup> May

**"The End is the Journey"  
Lecture & exhibition of paintings  
by Ms. Nalini Jayasuriya**



Nalini Jayasuriya, multimedia artiste, artist, musician and writer shared her experiences and discussed how the religions & the arts has had enormous impact on the live's of human beings through out the world. The talk

was followed by an exhibition of paintings. The exhibition was inaugurated by the High Commissioner of India Her Excellency Smt. Nirupama Rao. Around 12 of Nalini Jayasuriya's works were on display for 3 days and were viewed appreciated by several art lovers.

## LIBRARY Recent Library Accessions

### History of Buddhist Thought

Thomas, Edward J.  
New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal  
Publishes,1997  
316p.  
002491  
294.3  
THO

### Inheritance of Loss

Desai, Kiran  
New Delhi : Penguin,2006  
324p.  
002488  
F  
DES

### Relationships (Jogajog)

Tagore, Rabindranath  
New Delhi : Oxford University,2006  
275p.  
002487  
TAG

### Buddhism

Pant, Pushpesh  
New Delhi : Lustre Press,1997  
96p  
002477  
294.3  
PAN

### Understanding Security : A New Perspective

Oommen, T.K  
New Delhi : Macmillan(India),2006  
174p.  
002492  
355  
OOM

### Army War College : Into Battle with Resolve

Mhow : Army War College,2006  
113p.  
002493  
355  
ARM

### Important Documents on Security and Diplomacy

Gupta, Arvind  
New Delhi : Manas Publications,2005  
518p.  
002450  
355  
GUP

### Muffled Heart

Sengupta, Jayita (ed.)  
New Delhi : Rupa & Co,2005  
304p.  
002486  
F  
MUF

## Films in July

**Kuch Kuch Hota Hai**(with English subtitles)

Language: Hindi  
Directed by: Karan Johar  
Starring : Sharukh Khan, Kajol & Rani Mukherje



**Kadala Kadala** (with English subtitles)

Language: Tamil  
Directed by: S.Srinivasarav  
Starring : Kamal Hasan, Prabhu Deva,  
Rambha & Soundarya



**Jab Jab Phool Khile**(with English subtitles)

Language: Hindi  
Directed by: Suraj Prakash  
Starring : Sashi Kapoor, Nanda,  
Agha Shammii & Kamal Kapoor



## Performing Arts.... Contd.

performer must create anew every time he performs, to suffuse the hearts of many. Each raga is an incipient melodic idea, with its own rules of ascent and descent in the octave, prescribed resting places, characteristic phrases and a distinct ethos of its own, evoking a state of feeling relating to the human condition and to nature. The Carnatic music, in particular, has an extraordinary feature – the constant presence of classical music is a part of the daily life. A Kriti can be a part of the daily prayers of a housewife while placing fresh flowers before the family deity; the same Kriti can be heard on a formal concert platform from a professional artiste.

Natya Shastra is still the companion of traditionalists as well as experimentalists on the contemporary theatre scene, besides Nandikeshwar's Abhinaya Darpana, Abhinav Gupta's Abhinava Bharati and Dhananjaya's Dasa Rupaka, in common with other performing arts. The classical Indian theatre in Sanskrit evolved into the modern language theatre well into the second millennium and continued in various parts of India, giving rise to a regional theatre identity influenced by local conditions of geography and politics. With the incorporation of folk traditions into the classical framework, an enriched theatre idiom found more access to the people. A Similar process was visible in literature, where regional languages were gaining importance, influencing – in turn – the culture and symbols of theatre. The art of the actor is the process of communication and Indian theatre, through many languages, has been exploring its roots and its thrusts in new directions.

The all-pervasive harmony is discernible not merely among the performing arts, but also spills into the graphic and plastic arts. The first example is the classic Geeta Govinda composed in Sanskrit by Jayadeva in the twelfth century. Its lyrical text, with its many layered annotations, is found all over India and Nepal. Singers have sung it in designated (or improvised) ragas; dancers have danced to it in all the classical forms; painters have created masterpieces in miniatures and murals alike; manuscripts have illumined it lustroously and sculptors have been inspired by it in their work of adorning temples all over India. Another instance of unity is evident in the tenth century Chola temple of Brihadishwara, with its rigorous architectural aesthetics based on the Shilpa Shastra fully in tune with the sanctifies texts if Agama Shastra its individual niches and corners adorned by sculptured images, with their own prayer-chants, invocation music and celebratory dance, and its halls and pillars resounding with daily, seasonal and special fairs and festivals. It is a living temple where all the performing arts blend seamlessly with the grand spectacle of Shiva's choreographic exuberance, blending with panoramic images of the Nayanar saint-poets. Geeta Govinda and Brihadishwara both capture harmony in India's heritage.

Source: Utpal K. Banerjee, India Perspectives