

INDIA  
INTERNATIONAL  
CENTRE

# IIC Diary

IIC Experience: A Festival of the Arts, 2021

## Melodious Dance and Music

### INAUGURATION OF THE FESTIVAL:

by Shri N. N. Vohra

**FOLLOWED BY** *Shiva—Facets of Him*

**22 OCTOBER 2021**

*Hindustani Vocal Recital by Vidushi Shalmalee Joshi*

**24 October 2021**

The festive air with artistic theme-oriented rangolis matching the respective evening performances, and the earthen lamps hanging from tree branches and illuminating the pathways, created the perfect ambience for the 'The IIC Experience: A Festival of the Arts'. The inaugural performance 'Shiva—Facets of Him'—by Vaibhav Arekar, the renowned Bharatanatyam dancer/choreographer and the chiselled dancers of his Sankhya Dance Company, gave the week-long festival a flying start.

The iconic representation of Shiva as 'Nataraja', the greatest motif of all times, a metaphor for all cosmic activity—including creation, sustenance and destruction—has inspired a great deal of dance imagery in India. Vaibhav brought alive Shiva's multiple facets through his brilliant dance production. He strung together a number of his choreographic works to depict Shiva from Nirgun Nirakar to Sagun Saakaar. The 'Ardha-Narishwara' or 'Hari-Hara' interpreted male and female entities of the universe within the all-encompassing



*Shiva—Facets of Him*

Shiva. Vaibhav also depicted Shiva's consort Shakti, the most splendid manifestation of Devi, signifying universal energy, before concluding with the cosmic dance of the Nataraja, through group and solo numbers.

Compositions of great composers, melodious music with vocalists like Sudha Raghuraman, the succinct commentary, and above all Vaibhav and his excellent group of dancers, left the audience spell bound. Opening with raga *Kedar* defining the attributes of Shiva through a multiple-angled *Alarippu* covering the entire stage space, in contrast to the usual frontal version; the *Ardhanarishwara Stotra* by Adi Shankaracharya that sounded and felt like a *Varnam* studded with crisp and complicated *Jathis*; the *Devi-Stuti* 'Ayi Giri-Nandini...' to the Dhrupad Bandish in *Shyam-Kalyan* set to *Sooltal*; and Swathi-Thirunal's 'Chalo Mann tum Kashi' and the *Swarajathi* reaching the audience. Chidambaram Nataraja uplifted the dampened spirits of the artists and Rasikas alike, who were imprisoned in pandemic lockdowns for so long.



*Shalmalee Joshi*

A mesmerising concert of Hindustani classical music by Vidushi Shalmalee Joshi, the renowned vocalist of the Jaipur-Atrauli gharana was the prize event of the festival. This Khayal gharana is known for rare and *Jod-ragas* (a combination of two or more ragas). Hence her choice to open with a rare raga, like *Khem-Kalyan*, did not surprise the discerning audience. Shalmalee's meditative approach in unfolding the raga with a knowing restraint, and her leisurely 'Sur-dar Sur' *Badhat* (the gradual progression of Swaras) while rendering the Vilambit Khayal, gave the listeners an insight into her art right from the beginning. The Chhota Khayal set to medium tempo 'Addha Theka'



gradually reached the Drut laya of Teentaal, adorned with a variety of Aakar and Sargam taans.

Raga *Jhinjhoti* came next with a beautiful Bandish, 'Eri bhaag jaage...', in Rupak Taal, followed by a Tarana set to the challenging 14-beat cycle of Drut *Ada-Chautaal*. Vinay Mishra on the harmonium and Tejovrush Joshi, her talented son on the tabla, but for his obtrusive solo chunks, provided her excellent accompaniment. The concert ended rather abruptly, without the concluding thumri, bhajan or natyageet, due to the unfortunate and unexpected rain.

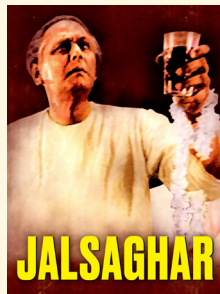
■ MANJARI SINHA

## A Kaleidoscope of Images

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**FILM FESTIVAL: Pen, Ink, Action: Satyajit Ray at 100**  
**22 to 26 October 2021**  
 .....

A selection of eight films by Satyajit Ray were screened to commemorate his centenary year.

*Jalsaghar* (1958), among Ray's most memorable films, is based on a story by Tarashankar Bandopadhyay about an impecunious, dying landlord, a Rasika of Hindustani music. He does not know time has passed him by. At the beginning, seated on his terrace with the Ganga in Murshidabad far in the background, he asks Ananta, his faithful factotum, 'Which month is it Ananta?' He spends his last penny hosting a classical music concert while an avaricious, upstart businessman is about to take over and usher in a new order. Chabi Biswas, as Bishambar Roy, the deluded zamindar, gives a towering performance.



*Charulata* (1964) is considered by many to be his most polished, subtly modern and sensitive film. It is a period-piece set in late 19th century Bengal. Charulata (Madhabi Mukherjee), the lonely wife of an educated, upper-class Bengali gentleman publishing a socially aware vernacular newspaper, is inadvertently neglected by her husband, who gives precedence to work over home. She falls in love with her husband's charming, much younger cousin who is visiting. The film ends on a tender, ironic note with a hint of a movement forward.

Ray wrote extensively for young teenagers. His detective Feluda, modelled on Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, acquired cult status. *Sonar Kella* (1974) is in colour, unlike *Charulata*, *Mahanagar* and *Jalsaghar* which are in Black & White. *Sonar Kella* is about a golden fortress that a little boy, Mukul, dreams about and draws constantly, claiming he was born there in an earlier birth. Dr. Hazra, a parapsychologist, reads about him, and with the permission of his parents, takes

him on a trip to Rajasthan. They are followed by a couple of villainous crooks. Feluda is engaged to solve the case. Three parallel stories come to a climax in the fort of Jaisalmer made of golden-yellow rocks! *Sonar Kella* is actually about finding El Dorado for children, just as Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* is for adults.

*Mahanagar* (1963) is Ray's foray into contemporary life, based on Narendranath Mitra's short-story. It deals with a period of economic uncertainty, particularly in Bengal. The closure of fraudulent private banks is a parallel theme in the film. It is about a barely middle-class family moored in tradition, but with progressive ideas. Both the husband and wife work;

the husband (Anil Chatterjee) in a bank, and the wife (Madhabi Mukherjee) in a private company. The couple lose their jobs at the end, but decide to fight on. It is a perceptive, moving study in the courage of responsible individuals who must stand by other non-earning members of their family.



*Shatranj ke Khilari* (colour, 1978) is based on Premchand's famous short story set in Avadh of the 1850s in which two decadent noblemen, addicted to chess, neglect all their filial and social duties. Ray opened up the story and gave it an epic dimension about the dethroning of the artistically gifted ruler Wajid Ali Shah by the machinations of General Outram of the British-owned East India Company, while retaining the intimacy of the original along with its droll humour.

■ PARTHA CHATTERJEE

# Meaningful Cinema

FILM FESTIVAL: GLIMPSES OF WORLD CINEMA

25 and 26 October 2021

Part of the IIC's annual event showcasing the world of arts and letters this year brought us some of the best in contemporary world cinema. Apart from a retrospective of Satyajit Ray's films in his centenary year, we had a bouquet of six meaningful movies, two each from Hungary, Germany and Spain, bringing together the best of cinematography, along with a face-to-face with the contemporary socio-political realities of Europe.

The two entries from Hungary, the *Whiskey Bandit* (2017) and *Budapest Noir* (2017), interestingly represented the best of Hungarian cinema with its distinctive international flavour, known through the acclaimed works of Zoltan Fabri (1917-1994) and Istvan Szabo (1938-).

With these two films, one got a sense of the new 'global touch' of contemporary Hungarian cinema with the director of *Whiskey Bandit*, Nimrod Antal, adopting a global genre, crime and robbery, into the transnational reality, i.e., money being the only means to inclusion in an unequal society. The protagonist, a child from Transylvania, a guardianless boy, who spends his early life in a remorseless reformatory of Ceausescu's Romania, runs away into Hungary thinking this would give him a new life of freedom, equality and prosperity. All three elude him in the new-old Hungary where bureaucracy, unequal social order and corruption nullify his efforts at inclusion. Recourse to robbing banks and spending on himself and his girlfriend liberate him from this remorseless new world where his robberies, with the strong odour of whiskey at the crime scene, make him the new hero of the masses, thus giving the film its title.

*Budapest Noir*, unlike Szabo's famous *Budapest Tales* (1976), which referred to an abstract place, is set in a concrete and historical Budapest of 1936, with a leading politician's funeral being planned, indicating the date of the episode of a crime which sets the mood of the movie adopting the genre of crime. Heralding a return to the classic film noir, the film finds the protagonist, Gordon (Krisztian Kolovratnik), a crime reporter with a local daily, a quintessential Hungarian, physically robust and philosophically carrying a sense of tragic irony with which he talks about accepting life and death in Budapest with equanimity, and trying to find the truth behind the death of a young woman whose body was

found in the poor quarters of the city. The investigation that was being impeded by the highest quarters, however, reaches its climax with the killer being identified as an assimilated Jewish business magnate and the father of the victim who wanted to marry a Jew at a time when the businessman was surrounded by anti-Jewish mobilisation. Directed by Eva Gerdez, *Budapest Noir* brings the historical phase of inter-war Central Europe and its nights representing the approaching shadows of fascism, with its crime and tragedy being truly captured through brilliant camera work.

*La Innocencia*, since its release in 2019, has become director Lucia Alemany's prosaic introduction to her own knowledge about Spanish villages and the way the young aspire for big things within those circumscribed surroundings. Lis (Carmen Arrufat) is just 15 and spends time in the village roaming around, flirting and enjoying the carefree life. She wanted to be in the capital Barcelona to join Circus school and eventually to join the Circus. The village cannot keep anything secret, and her relations as well as her possible pregnancy were to be kept guarded. She is therefore taken to the city, possibly for an abortion, a difficult choice for her conservative Catholic parents. While they wait for the train to Barcelona, the mother understands the aspirations of her daughter and agrees to take her to see the Circus school.



The Spanish film, *A Thief's Daughter* (2019), has won two prestigious Goya Awards for its director, Belen Funes. It begins with life at the state support centre where a single mother Sara, with an ear impairment, finds shelter with her baby for some days. But her days of crisis were not nearing an end. As the movie moves along, one encounters the difficult life of the protagonist, played beautifully by Greta Fernandez, the single mother with a physically challenged brother, and a friend who does not want to live together. The film, with rapid and dramatic moves, shows the loneliness and helplessness of individuals in today's neoliberal economy. To give and receive support too requires certification by agencies, which in turn ask whether one has financial sustenance. This is evocatively

depicted in the court scene when she is questioned about wanting to take her physically challenged brother into her own care, away from state custody. One begins to get inside the lives of the new times, the loneliness, marginality and the work of the single mother. The film ends poignantly, with the court seeming to not merely question her financial and working life but her existence itself. Sara's loss of confidence and plaintive cry about being left alone again starkly present to us the global experience of increasingly dismantled families, and the need for love and intimacy in the age of financial insecurities.

system. One form of society that it has been leading us towards is a securitised social scenario.

Another scenario was brought to us some 80 years ago, with the Nazis weaponising the sense of victimhood. This is the theme of the second movie *Transit*. Nazism is no longer treated as an a historical subject but has merged with the contemporary discourse on illegal migrants. Brilliantly acted by Franz Rogowski, *Transit* brings out, unlike the contemporary usage of double time frame, the two phenomena in one single time frame in representing the emergent time of fascist regimes and the efforts to escape it by many, and the ways of migration. Intricately weaving a set of stories about impersonation, the film is given its dynamic moments with the myriad ways the act of impersonation leads to intimate human drama.

The cinema of the end of the first decade of the 21st century from three European locations, from developed economies, and those from mixed heritage have been showing certain common characteristics. The contemporary is what underlined these films. The depression of contemporary times, joblessness, broken families with absolutely minimum support structures are what have come to define the times, and these prize-winning movies in fact brought us close to these endemic features we all are living in and will be living in for some time to come. The emergence of fascism, reminding one of its historical rise in the 1930s, remains the backdrop of quite a few of these films, and therefore may be termed as historically conscious films. The times they represent shows us the effects of a new stage of capitalism, which is rapidly



The two German movies, both recently celebrated with prizes at Cannes, explore crime and loneliness at the time of the rise of political extremism. *Relativity* is a fascinating movie about two characters—one who has lost a friend and the other who is fighting against the prospect of losing his daughter, who urgently needs medical care which in turn requires a lot of money which he does not have and is trying to earn. His desperation was leading him to the only recourse open to him—crime. The other protagonist, a lady living a life without her partner who died recently, decides to help the other person financially despite finding out about his criminal activity. In a fast-moving urban scenario, the film tries to capture the loneliness as well as helplessness of ordinary people, and the limited spaces for opposing the neoliberal



extinguishing all human agencies and a vacuum is very rapidly going to engulf the social and the political. Maybe political extremism in the garb of nationalism and fascism have come as a result of these trends. Brilliantly made, these six films give us a glimpse of both the times and the state of the medium, the cinema, which is capable of conveying to us the urgency of the matter with candour and seriousness.

■ RAKESH BATABYAL

# Joyful Cameos

**PLAY:** *Elephant in the Room*

Play based on a story by Yuki Elias

**23 October 2021**

This was a delightful evening, described succinctly by Rami Chhabra, chief guest, as 'raw, edgy, irreverent'. Although the play opened with sounds of anguish and a barely visible bent body thrashing about, the lights turned up to reveal a wonderfully quirky representation of young Ganesh, now upright and gently flapping silken ears. An hour of a high energy re-creation of Lord Ganapathy followed. Performed entirely by one woman, Yuki Elias, whose masterful use of voice and body was ably supported by creative costumes, sets, sound and lighting effects to convey the story of a young boy who becomes 'misfit, mismatched, misjudged' when his head is sliced off in a fit of rage, and later replaced by the head of a young elephant.

Ganesh becomes the target of a barrage of taunts, such as: 'Listen Funny Face, are you a circle or a square; or a circle ON a square?' The little boy's anguish is compounded by having to learn to relate to a new brain as well: 'I couldn't touch what I could see, and couldn't see what I could touch'. Unable as yet to support the large heavy head, *Makadi* (who is a female spider) and her friend *Moork* (a poacher) make him look upward. He loses balance and falls backwards into their trap, set up as part of their plot to collect a ransom from his parents.

Fast-paced and witty, with dramatic voice changes, using assorted accents, and quick silver transformation of the simple yet exotic costumes, a whole range of characters appear and disappear as summoned by this virtuoso performer. Some of the conversations were little cameos, almost individual skits, conveying sociological messages on migration, homelessness and refugees; on ecology and consideration for all forms of life; on language, communication and meaning. These cameos flitted by fast, creating an impression of casual additions to the central plot, leaving little verbal nuggets floating in the air as they passed: 'tadpoles turn to, uh, toads!' 'Chitra, queen of cheetahs', 'the banyan network', 'Master Tusk'.



Woven through the playful narrative were gems of philosophic import: 'The forest knew, as it always does...' was how the unfolding of a new greater destiny for the forest was described. By killing an elephant for his head for their son, the gods had taken what was not theirs, setting an example for humankind to treat all other creatures as commodities. 'Only men will reign, and only men remain'.

But the play ended upbeat, with Third Eye Shiva, coming for his son who has by now adapted to his elephantine head. Iridescence descends with his advent, and his son thinks, 'The first time we met, he cut off my head. The second time we met he replaced my head. The third time I found peace...' and the proclamation is made: 'If the forests and animals were to disappear, man would too'. The performance was joyful, fluffy and light. One was hoping for a soufflé. We got a meringue.

■ BHARATI MIRCHANDANI

# Classical and Contemporary

**CONCERT:** *Sagun Nirgun*

*Kabir and Meera presented by Mir Mukhtiyar Ali and group from Bikaner*

**26 October 2021**

The presentation of a collective of Kabir and Meera bhajans by Mir Mukhtiyar Ali and his group as a musical finale of the IIC's annual Festival of the Arts was of the rubric of the essential bhajan singing tradition, which is classical in its soul and contemporary in its embellishments. Known for their rendition of the oral tradition of Sufiyana Kalam, the group also entertained listeners with renditions from the compositions of Baba Bulle Shah, among others.

The rendition, in an atypical folk tradition of the desert regions of Rajasthan, was sung to a high-pitched tenor and marked by a lively orchestration of percussion effects with tabla and dholak and a melodic overture of string accompaniments. Even though the choice of songs from the Kabir and Meera repertoire were familiar to most listeners, the group infused a new liveliness into them with their characteristic compositional flair of fast-paced taan patternings, alliteration of the sargam notes at intervals, and coordinated tabla and dholak playing. Also, the lead singers, Waqar Yunus and Mansab Ali, included several innovative touches, such as holding of the note and variations in the tempo in the rendition of Kabir Vani numbers, giving audiences a chance to savour the musical characteristics of their musicianship. Also, the musical scores were rehearsed and perfected into a melodic rendering, thereby making the entire concert throb with professional cohesion.

The venue of the concert in an outdoor setting, at the dusk hour, furthered its authenticity.

■ **SUBHRA MAZUMDAR**



## An Enriching Experience

**EXHIBITIONS:** *Kshetraja*

**COLLABORATION:** *National Gallery of Modern Art*  
**22 to 26 October 2021**

*Flights of Materiality*

**ADVISOR:** *Chandrika Grover Ralleigh*  
**22 October to 30 October 2021**

*A King's Gambit*

*From the collection of Shri Suresh Jindal*  
**23 October 2021 to 5 November 2021**

Resuming its Festival of the Arts after a two-year break because of the pandemic, the IIC, among other engaging events, held three art exhibitions: *The King's Gambit*, *Kshetraja* and *Flights of Materiality*. *The King's Gambit* displayed original costumes for Satyajit Ray's 1977 film, *Shatranj Ke Khilari*, under the umbrella programme 'Pen, Ink, Action: Satyajit Ray at 100'.

The role of a successful costume, explained well-known costume designer-historian Deborah Nadoolman Landis, 'is to draw audience attention to the character who wears it, rather than to itself, unless intentionally designed to do so. Woven seamlessly into the narrative and context of the story, it reaches the soul of a character, be it film, television or theatre, helping define both story and character.'

*Shatranj Ke Khilari* is based on Munshi Premchand's 1924 short story of the same name, and one of the only two Hindi

films made by Ray. Created after a huge amount of research, and sketches by Ray himself, the costumes were fabricated by Manju Saraogi, and made by local dressmakers, under the watchful eye of Shama Zaidi.

Other than the dresses, shawls, turbans, costume jewellery and footwear, of great interest to viewers were stills and working stills, copies of letters, and pages from Ray's *kherorkhata* or cloth-bound notebook, digitalised by the National Digital Library of India. Observations by Shama Zaidi, Shabana Azmi, Sanjeev Kumar and others lent precious insight into the character of Ray the man and the filmmaker, while making a telling narrative of the making itself.

The clothes were deliberately kept to a muted hue, in keeping with trends of the time—gold, bronze, copper and pastel shades of green, blue and peach. Most of these costumes were procured from Lucknow, Hyderabad and Calcutta, quite a few heirlooms generously loaned by Wajid Ali Shah's great great-grandson Anjam Qudr, resident of Metia Burj in Calcutta.

Shabana Azmi recalls how Ray asked her to get into costume immediately on arrival, to 'absorb better the anguish of a Begum', away from the pair of jeans she had come in. After the first take, he said 'Very good', then walked up to her and gently added, 'Now can you break that up into part complaint, part anger, part hurt?' 'That one line from the master made all the difference,' she remembers.

Inherently, film-making is a team activity of several people and multiple departments, unlike almost all other creative pursuits. However, through the rows of exhibits, the one thing that was established is that in a Ray film there is but one department: Ray; and all others its satellites. The mesmerisingly detailed set drawings, properties and notes showed the master's commitment, ability and deep connect with his work—a lesson for every filmmaker who wishes to excel.



*Kshetraja*

Also of immense interest were texts on plates that accompanied the displays, most of them interestingly anecdotal and insightful. Shama Zaidi's remark of shopping with Ray was that 'it was like shopping for your daughter's wedding trousseau!' Of divergences between Premchand's treatment of characters and that of Ray's, critics, Zaidi says, felt Ray has been quite indulgent with the characters of the two Nawabs, Mir Roshan Ali and Mirza Sajjad Ali, where Premchand himself had been far more censorial. With Ray attacking two negative forces in the film, feudalism and colonialism, he understandably did not wish to dwell on the weaknesses of either ruler or the ruled, being in danger of appearing to justify the annexation.

An enriching experience, brilliantly researched and written by Indrani Majumdar, translator of Ray!

*Kshetraja* showcased 12 artists of unparalleled virtuosity and genius, who not only infused new meaning into Indian art but also embodied a Swadeshi consciousness, eager to respond to their own environment. Deeply influenced by Gandhi's leadership, their art mirrored their anti-colonial stance. The exhibition was prepared in conjunction with the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA).

Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benode Behari Mukherjea, Ramkinkar Baij, Sunayani Devi and Upendra Maharathi were among the artists included. Most of them came from Tagore's crop of artists, continuing his sensibilities and aesthetics. Already a celebrated writer, poet, educationist,



*Flights of Materiality*



composer and philosopher, Tagore began painting in his sixties, at that point more enthralled by line and colour than words.

The only chosen woman artist, Sunayani Devi, was of illustrious descent, born into the Tagore family and married into that of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Self-taught, her subjects included dolls, players, actors, her own surroundings, and the Radha-Krishna saga. A rich tapestry of paintings these, though NGMA could have done a better job of printing them.

*Flights of Materiality*, put together by Gallery Espace, was a sculpture display, an attempt to stress the impact of man on the planet, supposedly outdoing nature's own phenomena, individually and collectively leaving a signature on this Earth.

Humans, it proposes, now change the earth's systems more than all the natural forces combined. Remembering that we too are a part of that very same nature, it may also be said that this, too, is a part of the natural evolution of the past, present, and times to come.

Karl Antao sculpts in wood or bronze, making compact freestanding works to be viewed on the round, the special textures arresting the eye. G.R. Iranna always comes up with highly imaginative works, this time an inverted leafless branch called 'Invisible Ego', in bronze and bricks, to imply: 'If the temple is within us, is there need for other temples?'

Sambhavi's iron flower like 'Earth'—rain, petals alternately solid and symmetrically perforated, is soon to travel to the MOMA, New York. Puneet Kaushik's 'Entangled', in cast iron, and suspended from a tree—hammock fashion—appeared to be incorporating the massively entangled roots forming the tree trunk into the mood of the work. Arun Kumar HG's sculpturally complex 'Empty Shell' and 'The Churned Mountain' were in mixed media. Sculpturally speaking, an engaging collection.



*A King's Gambit*



■ ARUNA BHOWMICK



# Vignesh: 'The Artist to be Watched'

**PERFORMANCE:** *Carnatic Vocal Recital*

by Vignesh Ishwar

**25 October 2021**

As the festival meandered to a close, we were treated to a sumptuous dessert of a concert by young Vignesh Ishwar. The team of accompanists was a clear indication of the treat to come—R.K. Sriramkumar on violin, K. Arunprakash on mridangam, and N. Guruprasad on ghatam.

Vignesh set the tone with a leisurely rendition of 'O Jagadamba' in *Anandabhairavi*, reminiscent of his current guru T.M. Krishna. This was followed by a sumptuous alapana in *Varali*, a preface to the majestic Dikshitar composition 'Mamava Minakshi'. Vignesh's rich voice lent itself beautifully to this raga, laden with *gamakas*, and his team was in complete sync through the composition. The brief but unhurried *neraval* helped embellish the raga.

This was followed by a cameo in raga *Bahudari*, the popular Tyagaraja composition, *Brovabarama*. Vignesh displayed the power and range of his voice, enhanced by the energetic percussion support from Arunprakash and Guruprasad. The crisp *kalpanaswaras* flowed with ease and reflected the raga aptly.

With short brushstrokes, Vignesh quickly established raga *Kapi* anticipating the composition, 'Inta Soukhya'. He traversed the three octaves with ease with an assertive turn here and a cajoling note there that is so quintessentially *Kapi*. Sriramkumar responded beautifully to the alapana. The composition flowed with a clutch of *kalpanaswaras* to round it off. Arunprakash and Guruprasad concluded with a neat *tani*.

Vignesh then ushered in the lilting notes of *Mand* through 'Ranga Baro', a Purandara Dasa composition. He then wound down with an energetic rendition of the Subramania Bharati composition in *Sindubhairavi*, 'Nenjukku Neethiyum', immortalised by M.S. Subbulakshmi.

He concluded with an Abhang in *Yamunakalyani*, 'Dhava Vibho', sung at a very slow tempo. The structure of the composition was quite unlike the usual Abhang one is used to. He brought out the delicacy and beauty of the raga with excellent percussion support from Arunprakash and Guruprasad.



Vignesh's concert was a mix of tried and tested compositions and ragas familiar to Carnatic music connoisseurs. And the team's presentation justified his choice. Vignesh displayed consummate mastery of all aspects—alapana, compositions with *sangathis*, *neraval*, *kalpanaswaras*. His voice, traversing three octaves effortlessly, added lustre to the renditions.

On several occasions, Vignesh began to delve deeper and seemed ready to explore uncharted territory. Those are tantalising possibilities one looks forward to in future concerts. Vignesh demonstrated the skills and potential to do so in future. He certainly justified the 'artist to be watched' media tag.

■ RAHUL RAJAGOPALAN





## Shades of Indian Cinema between Two Covers

**LAUNCH OF IIC QUARTERLY:** *Indian Cinema: Today and Tomorrow: Infrastructure, Aesthetics, Audience (Winter 2020–Spring 2021)*

**GUEST EDITORS:**

*S. V. Srinivas, Ratheesh Radhakrishnan, Subhajit Chatterjee*

*Edited by Omita Goyal*

**CHAIR:** *Dr. Karan Singh*

**25 OCTOBER 2021**

The launch of the *IIC Quarterly* during the IIC Festival of the Arts is an event which bibliophile members of the Centre usually look forward to. Owing to the pandemic this could not be held last year. Omita Goyal mentioned the fact that the double issue being launched comprises many contributors who in one way or the other have been affected by the pandemic, yet none of them opted out of writing their piece.

She thanked the members of the Editorial Board who had also contributed in no mean way in bringing out the issue.

Dr. Karan Singh said that the IIC had the multifarious role of being a centre of cultural, intellectual and social activities. He looked back at some memorable films he had seen, like *Ram Rajya*, *Bharat Milap*, *Bandini*, *Pyasa*, as well as the masterpiece *Mughal-e-Azam*, which had outstanding performances. He decried the trend of violence and vulgarity often seen on the silver screen nowadays. He also rued the fact that classical dance did not find space in new cinema. The talent of Vjyayanthimala and Hema Malini, for instance, were not utilised by Bollywood. He said that despite advances in online reading through kindle and other means, books would never disappear; just as the *IIC Quarterly* never would.

IIC President, Shri N.N. Vohra, mentioned that on assuming office he had taken the decision for all Members to get a copy of the *IIC Quarterly* without a paid subscription. He said the hard work which went into bringing out this quality publication deserved to be recognised. Director, Shri. K.N. Shrivastava, noted that the *IIC Quarterly* was the intellectual arm of the Centre, and all previous issues were being digitised for the benefit of Members of the IIC.

■ ARVINDAR SINGH

## Evening Delicacies

The dining festival at the IIC Experience 2021 was a special Focus on Chefs. These included 'From the Land of the Five Rivers: Traditional Punjabi Cuisine' by Chef Manjit Gill and Chef Priteeka Gill Malik; 'Tok, Jhal, Mishti: A Bengali Dinner' by Chef Chitra Ghose; 'Kaeshur Khyen: Cuisine of Kashmiri Pandits' prepared by Chefs of Samavar Restaurant; 'From the Land of the Magyars: A Hungarian Dinner' by Sonia Taank, Chef of the Embassy of Hungary; and 'Revisiting IIC Classics' by Chef Vijay Thukral of the IIC.

## Panjab and Kashmir

**FOOD FESTIVAL:** *From the Land of the Five Rivers: Traditional Punjabi Cuisine,*  
**22 October 2021**

*Kaeshur Khyen: Cuisine of Kashmiri Pandits,*  
**24 October 2021**

The Food Festival during the annual IIC Experience is, for me, one of the most anticipated aspects of the Experience. This year, all the more so, because the IIC Experience could not be held in 2020 because of the Covid pandemic. This year's food festival had a theme—Focus on Chefs—that made it all the more anticipated.

'From the Land of the Five Rivers: Traditional Punjabi Cuisine' was prepared by Chefs Manjit Gill and Priteeka Gill Malik. The highlights of this dinner were the starters, particularly the non-vegetarian ones. *Bhatti ka murgh* and *Machchi Amritsari* were absolutely amazing. Both were completely different from the preparations we normally associate with these names. Just writing about them makes me want some more! The vegetarian starters—*Arbi tali* and *Kathal sukha*—were good, but I keep waiting for the time when not all vegetarian starters are fried.

In the mains, the vegetarian dishes (*Paneer Imlidar*, *Aloo wadi* and *Baingan Bharta* among others) won over the non-vegetarian ones (Meat *saloon* and *Anardana murgh*) which were a tad insipid. The desserts—*Kodo malpua* and *panjiri* as well as Kheer were good. We could see the chefs checking on the service and hoped we would be introduced to them—given that the theme of the Food Festival was 'Focus on Chefs', but that was not to be.

'Kaeshur Khyen: Cuisine of Kashmiri Pandits' was prepared by Chefs of Samavar Restaurant. The *Tabak Maaz* was possibly the best I have ever eaten. The meat was so tender



and had been fried very carefully so that it was not over-rich. It was such a wondrous dish that I will not take issue with what it was doing in a Kashmiri Pandit meal! Sadly, the mutton seekh kebabs tasted like they had come out of ready-to-serve packets.

In the vegetarian starters, both the *Nadur churma* and *Marach wangun pakoda* were excellent. The vegetarian mains were very good, though I thought the *Tsoonth vangan* won hands down. Sadly, the non-vegetarian mains didn't quite hit the spot. And what is *Lababdar kebab* in red gravy—possibly a new entrant in Kashmiri cuisine! The chutneys that accompanied the meal—*Doon chetin* and *Kuji chetin*—were excellent, as was the *Kehwa*.

■ SUNANDA GHOSH



## Culinary Delights

**FOOD FESTIVAL: CHEF'S SPECIAL:** Tok, Jhal, Mishti: A Bengali Dinner With Chef Chitra Ghose  
**23 October 2021**

Chitra Ghose's reputation as a Chef for connoisseurs was largely justified. There were enough culinary delights for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. The *Mochar chop* (banana flower cutlet) was good enough to make avowed non-vegetarians enjoy it. The *Chanaar chop* was not far behind. Mutton cutlets and shrimp spinach rolls, both mouth-watering, were the non-vegetarian starters.

The main course comprised six vegetarian and three non-vegetarian dishes. *Begun bhaja* (fried brinjal), *Cholar daal, narkol* (chick pea lentils with coconut), *Aloor dom* (lightly spiced potato cooked in a tomato and yogurt gravy), *Labra* (mixed veggies cooked in onion and garlic), *Karaishutir kochuri* (puris stuffed with green peas), and *Dhokar dalna* (gram flower dumplings in gravy) provided enough variety for different palates.



*Bhetki macher shorshe posto* (fish in mustard and poppy seed paste), golden *chingri malai* curry (giant river prawn cooked in coconut milk), Chicken *rezala* (eastern Indian style of chicken slow-cooked in a yogurt-based curry) gave pleasure to many diners. There was *Jeera* rice and the short-grained *Gobindo bhog* rice to accompany the dishes. To add to the delicacies were Pineapple chutney, and Tomato Khejuri chutney (sweet tomato and date chutney).

The sumptuous meal was rounded off with three kinds of Bengali sweets: *Langcha* (sweet made from cottage cheese and evaporated milk solids), *Rajbhog* (a popular Bengali sweet made from cottage cheese stuffed with cardamom), and *Chhanar payesh* (cottage cheese cubes cooked with condensed milk). A good time was had by very many diners.

■ PARTHA CHATTERJEE

# A Taste of Hungary

**FOOD FESTIVAL: CHEF'S SPECIAL:** *From the Land of the Magyars: A Hungarian Dinner With Chef Sonia Taank, Embassy of Hungary*  
**25 October 2021**

Chef Sonia Taank curated a fascinating array of Hungarian preparations. The food also went along with the hospitality of the Hungarian cultural team. The Hungarian Ambassador and his staff welcomed guests and the Director of the Liszt Institute-Hungarian Cultural Centre, Ms Marianne Erdo, even introduced them to the cuisine that also represented different regions of Hungary. It was a unique experience for many.

The dinner comprised starters ranging from *Káposztás rétes* (cabbage strudel), *Lángos* (traditional fried bread), and *Lecsó* (crepes stuffed with pepper and tomato) on the vegetarian side; and *Halas rétes* (seabass strudel), *Töltött paprikás* (mixed bell peppers stuffed with minced meat, rice flavoured with paprika), and *Hortobágyi palacsinta* (crepes stuffed with minced chicken) in the non-vegetarian section.

Soup for the vegetarians was mushroom with tarragon; and chicken soup with tarragon for non-vegetarians. In fact, there was a long queue for the soup as Hungarian food has become almost synonymous with Goulash, the soup of exquisite delicacy. The main course was an assortment of Hungarian favourites, with *Rakott zöldbab* (layered green beans with rice, cheese and sour cream), *Rántott sajt* (crumb coated fried cheese served with fried mushroom, cauliflower and tartare sauce), *Paprikás krumpli* (potato cubes cooked with tomato, bell peppers and paprika), and *Krumplisztészta* (pasta and potato, served with dill pickle) for the vegetarians. I found *Rántott sajt* quite a favourite with people across streams: vegetarians and non-vegetarians.



Non-vegetarians were also treated with elan: *Mátrai borzaska* (chicken breast coated with freshly grated potato), *Harcsa paprikás* (seabass paprika served with cottage cheese pasta), and *Brassói* with pork (roast pork strips served on a bed of potatoes).

Sumptuous desserts concluded the excellent display of Hungarian delights, in the form of cottage cheese dumplings and *Aranygaluska* (Hungarian golden pull-apart cake with walnut and served with custard sauce).

For the Indian gourmet, the range also displayed similarity and difference. The ever present potato of the Indian cuisine, more prominently in north Indian cuisine, was also a phenomenon in Hungarian preparations. Cheese, the unique Central European delicacy, was used with Hungarian uniqueness. Similarly, the Indian palate was not disappointed with the use of Paprika. The bread and rice also reminded guests about the common culinary ancestries of the two people.

■ RAKESH BATABYAL AND PRERANA PURNIMA ROY





## An Evening of Special Flavours

### FOOD FESTIVAL: CHEF'S SPECIAL:

Revisiting IIC Classics With Chef Vijay Thukral  
26 October 2021

The rousing performance of bhajans, folk songs and Qawwali based on Kabir and Mirabai compositions by Mir Mukhtiyar Ali and group from Bikaner concluded in the IIC Rose Garden, festooned with awnings, with cuisine prepared by Chef Vijay Thukral of the IIC.



For vegetarians, there was Anna Potato, Asparagus with Cashew Nut and Orange Sauce, Mushroom in Red Bell Pepper, Aubergine Cannelloni, and Jardiniere platter of vegetables. All the dishes had subtle and piquant flavours.

There was an array of starters with Leek Quiche and Spinach Croquettes, washed down with gin and tonic, tomato juice and other drinks. The menu offered various options, both for vegetarians and non-vegetarians. Starting with Tomato and Orange soup and salads of diverse types, the Fish Orly and Chicken vol-au-vent were outstanding.

There was also the IIC staple, Roast Stuffed Leg of Lamb, apart from Fish Grenobloise and Chicken Veronique! Colours, tastes and aromas abounded. The accompaniments were Rice Creole and assorted breads. The superb dining experience, in the company of family and friends, ended with an Almond Souffle and Lemon Meringue Pie. Chef Vijay Thukral's long association with the Centre resulted in this delicate continental fare.

■ RACHNA JOSHI

