



GALLERY

Journée Inde - Fête de Holi ('India Journey - Festival of Holi')

Sun,
2015-
03-22
11:00



Photo: Simon Richardson
The Avatara Project

Ashok Pathak | Nishat Khan | Ravikiran | Photos: Santosh Sidhu

Journée Inde – Fête de Holi

22 March 2015

Théâtre de la Ville, Paris

Reviewed by Ken Hunt

What is the presentation of South Asian classical music crying out for? That is a subject way beyond a concert review. Yet when it comes to ideas, one long weekend in Paris supplied some refreshers. No doubt business studies graduates could talk in terms of paradigm this and alternative model that. Paris still uses its museum auditoria. **Chitravina N. Ravikiran's** concert in a greenhouse at **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** in the summer of 1994 remains seared in my memory, as does **Baha'ud'in Mohiuddin Dagar's** rudra veena recital at the **V&A** in December 2009. This particular weekend in Paris had major concerts at **l'Institut du monde arabe** and the **Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet** that whetted the appetite and proved thrilling or frustrating – since both were sell-outs. The **Guimet** had the coup of

Thank you for accepting cookies

Mohan Bhatt. Resurrect more mus

[Hide this message](#)

[More information on c](#)

You can now hide this message or find out more about cookies.

Journee inde – Fete de Holi ('India Journey – Festival of Holi') was a late celebration of Holi, the festival of colours. Opening it was **Ashok Pathak** who shone in the late morning to early afternoon slot. A sitar and surbahar player, he opened in *dhruvad* style with his daughter **Subhadra Pathak** on tanpura. *Dhruvad* is a stately galleon of a song form, historically linked with Hindu devotional expression and praise-song. He played **surbahar**, the sitar's *basso profundo*-voiced cousin. Historically, it was regularly used to open a *rāg* performance before being set aside for the sitar. Another performance convention favoured sitar-surbahar *jugalbandis*. Pathak, born in 1949, promulgates a third variation: he keeps sitar for the lighter *khayal* form and, as here, surbahar for *dhruvad*.

His instrument (by Kamai Lal & Bros) was a gift to his paternal grandfather, **Ram Govind Pathak** from **Raja Kamala Ranjam Roy**, the **Maharaja of Cossimbazar** (latterly rendered Kasim Bazar or Kasimbazar) in West Bengal. It looked sleeker than the ordinarily, in the vernacular, chunkier surbahars of yore. Its notes started spidery – wire (*mizrab* picks) on strings. Slowly *Shuddh Sarang* unfolded, taking on shape, identity and course. His *alap* and *jor* mood-setters felt like a peacock tensing and trembling before a display. The full display came with the *jhalla*. For it, pakhawaj player **Mohan Shyam Sharma** joined in. They revealed an empathy both here and in *Bhairavi*. Pathak revealed all manner of touches such as a punctuation passage of Morse code-like notes in the *Shuddh Sarang* and, in *Bhairavi*, physically 'swirling' his instrument's body to extend the sustain. They concluded with a delightful seasonal composition in a 10-beat cycle in *Hindol* composed by his grandfather; when pressed about its title, at his daughter's prompting, he suggested 'Ram Govind'. **Ashok Pathak** is an act not to miss live should the opportunity arise.

The 15:00 starting slot fell to the astonishing Carnatic *jugalbandi* partnership of **Chitravina N. Ravikiran** and the multiple *murali* player **Shashank** (Shashank Subramanyam). *Chitravina* (one translation is 'splendid vina') is an unfretted stringed instrument played with a slide. *Murali* is a synonym for bansuri, South India's transverse bamboo flute associated with Lord Krishna. Their 90-minute recital comprised two pieces. The first was the *kriti* 'Marivere dikkevvaru' set in *rāgam Latangi* by Patnam Subramania Iyer (1845–1902), one of the composers whose compositions expanded what might be hailed as the Hindu hymnal. The musicians, some ten years into performing together, complemented each other wondrously well. **Shashank** is the extrovert master-of-breath-control firebrand to the wise-beyond-his-years

maître **Ravikiran**. Their second piece was a *rāgam tanam pallavi* exploration of one of Ravikiran's own compositions (with extemporised passages) in *rāgam Vagadheeshwari*. To see these two musicians perform together on stage should be a goal of any music lover.

What stood out though was that it came close to a Balachander recital. The vina maestro S. Balachander (1927–1990) was famed for recitals presenting maybe one *rāgam*. LP and CD releases regularly consisted of one piece – examples being *rāgam Malahari* or *Chakravaakam*. I had never supposed I would witness something comparable to a live Balachander recital. This was it. **Ananta R. Krishnan** and **Karthik** provided, respectively, mridangam and ghatam support.

The 17:00-18:30 performer was the sitarist **Nishat Khan**, son of Ustad Imrat Khan and nephew of Ustad Vilayat Khan (incidentally, a pairing that produced some of most thrilling surbahar and sitar *jugalbandis* ever committed to vinyl). **Rachid Mustapha** accompanied on tabla. (All four percussionists were new to me.) Khan opened with *Yaman*, that workhorse of a romantic evening *rāg*. Lasting almost an hour, his rendition revealed the *rāg*'s ample charms with peppery *tāns* (phrases), feints and forays. It also went through discursive patches – discursive in the sense that grasping its narrative thread seemed to get eel-slippery at times. Or perhaps it simply eluded me. Better was his terser *Nand Kalyan* – partially perhaps because his playing reminded of the eloquence of his kinsman, the sitarist Rais Khan in his heyday. Any exposition of a *rāg* is down to telling a story, whether made manifest, implied or merely sensed. He ended with 'Bhole Bhale Saiyan' – a piece he also sang – alas pretty much inaudibly by Row G. Afterwards, he suggested it might be translated as 'Innocent Love' as it dealt with the boy Krishna's embodiment of love.

Journée Inde – Fête de Holi provided a compact alternative to Indian festivals. With the **Théâtre de la Ville** as its location, it is about as central a venue as any big city can hope for. It is close to a north-south, east-west Parisian public transport hub and Île de la Cité for crossing the Seine. Finishing before 19:00, it eliminated that bane of London venues: the essential early exodus for last trains and connections on Sundays. Neither were there any programming clashes, another bane of many a festival. There was time to absorb and reflect on the recital, to take in **Caroline Elbaz**'s insightful photographic studies of South Asian classical dance and music and to talk to performers in the foyer. And then head off to dine or drink. With special thanks to Théâtre de la Ville's Jacqueline Magnier.

[Login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

kadam connecting
asian dance and music communities.

Published by Kadam Asian Dance and Music
c/o The Hat Factory, 65-67 Bute Street, Luton LU1 2EY
+44 (0) 1582 481 221

info@pulseconnects.com
subscriptions@pulseconnects.com
www.kadam.org.uk

-
-
-
-

[Article](#)
[Review](#)
[Blog](#)
[Gallery](#)

[About Us](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Register](#)
[Subscribe](#)
[TalkingPE](#)
[Terms and Conditions](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)