

A voice steeped in classical music

HOW DR ATINDRA SARVADIKAR KEEPS INDIAN TRADITION ALIVE

by ASJAD NAZIR

A NEW wave of exciting artists are keeping classical traditions rooted in centuries of history alive in an Indian musical landscape increasingly dominated by commercial genres such as Bollywood, bhangra, pop and western contemporary.

One of these heroic talents is trained singer and composer Dr Atindra Sarvadikar. Having learned his craft under musical masters, the multi-award-winning Mumbai-based maestro has mesmerised audiences with his voice and won wide acclaim for his mastery on stage. His compositions have won the hearts of cross-generational musical connoisseurs.

Eastern Eye caught up with Dr Atindra Sarvadikar to discuss his journey, composing work, inspirations, musical heroes and challenges of keeping classical traditions alive.

What is it that first connected you to classical Indian music?

My mother is a high school music teacher, so from childhood I had opportunities to listen to good music. I started learning Indian classical music from her at the age of five.

How do you look back on your journey?

I was born in Solapur, a small district in southern Maharashtra. Since 2003, I used to travel from there to Mumbai every week to get training from Padmabhushan Dr Prabha Atré. In 2007, I shifted to Mumbai and struggled a lot. I did hours of *riyaz*. Music gave me economic stability and also inner peace, so I am very satisfied with my journey. My concerns always receive satisfactory responses from my audience, which make my efforts worthy.

Which of your achievements are you most proud of?

In 2016 at the age of 30, I got a PhD in music from the University of Mumbai. It was the first PhD given by the University of Mumbai in a music subject. I received 28 prizes in state and national level competitions during my college time. To be the only male and prime disciple of a legendary artist such as Padmabhushan Dr Prabha Atré is not an easy task. It demands a lifetime of dedication. I mostly sing my original compositions, which is also something I am proud of.

Tell us about your book?

My Marathi book regarding the analytical study of changing trends in Kirana gharana is published along with an audio CD. Its English translation is on its way. One more book, which is in the form of short stories of people who pursue music, is going to be released soon.

How much does performing live mean to you and which one has been the most memorable?
Performing live is everything for me and

something I always dreamed about. At the age of 19 or 20 I was invited by the legendary Padmabhushan Gangubai Hangal at Sawai Gandharv music festival Kundagol, Karnataka. She was in the audience and heard my complete performance and blessed me from her heart after it was over. This was so memorable. Two years ago, I got an opportunity to perform at an award function where my

Guruji Dr Prabha Atré was awarded with the Bharat Ratna Pandit Bhimsen Joshi Award by the Maharashtra government, where Pandit Jasraj was present. He stood and clapped for me after my performance, which was so memorable.

What kind of music do you most enjoy performing live?
Hindustani classical music, khyal and semi-classical, thumri/dadra.

Tell us about your original compositions?
I prefer to perform my original compositions, so I have composed in many musical forms such as bhajan, thumri, dadra, ghazal, Sufi, and fusion, among others. I have also created more than 200 khyal compositions, which will be released in a book format next year. In my compositions, I have experimented with known and rare ragas, as well as talas.

What connects you strongly to classical music?
Its depth and peaceful nature. Classical music is highly creative and gives much scope for originality.

Is it a challenge keeping the classical tradition alive in a world dominated by commercial genres?
Sometimes it's difficult as no media gives attention to classical music properly.

'There is scope for originality'

What are your future hopes for classical Indian music?

It will be alive and keep giving world peace, spiritual growth and satisfaction.

What can we expect next from you?

I wish to be an original artist with original content. I am a sincere student of our tradition and working hard to try and step ahead on this path.

Who is your own musical hero?

Firstly, my Guru Dr Prabha Atré. Her role as an amazing performer, researcher, composer, teacher and thinker always has enriched our tradition of Indian classical music. Apart from her, I deeply admire the artistry of Kishori Amonkar, Kumar Gandharva and Bhimsenji.

What do you enjoy listening to?

I enjoy listening to all genres of music, from folk to Bollywood and western.

What is the biggest life lesson music has taught you?

Continuous self-refinement, focus and to ignore unworthy attractions that come along on this path.

What inspires you?

Good music, interviews of greats, beauty of nature and observing people. Good poetry inspires me a lot. I always feel like my *alaaps* should come like good poetry.

Why do you love music?

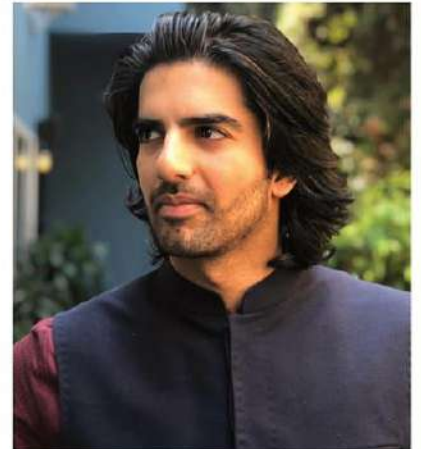
Music has the power to make you forget yourself. I cannot describe the feeling I get when I produce a beautiful musical phrase or perfectly tuned notes.

www.suvaratindra.com

DEDICATED:
Dr Atindra
Sarvadikar

MY PLAYLIST

with Umer Durrani



BORN and raised in Lahore, Pakistan, singer, songwriter and composer Umer Durrani has been surrounded by songs his entire life.

The marvellous music has fed the Los Angeles-based artist's creativity and enabled him to produce some stunningly unique work, which is worth finding. He also hosts the *Thinking Out Loud* radio show on global platform Rukus Avenue Radio.

Eastern Eye got Umer Durrani to create a playlist of songs he loves.

Longing by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Michael Brook: Nusrat was far ahead of his times and not only was he gifted, but his artistry was on an entirely different realm that one could only get a taste of while listening to his work.

Longing is one of those songs that reflect his genius. Ab Ke Hum Bichhde by Mehdi Hassan: Written by Ahmad Faraz, this track is a perfect marriage of poetry, melody and the ghazal craft. The poet's words have been elevated by an absolute legend.

Yaad Karna by Vital Signs: Being a 90's kid, this song has a special place in my heart forever. It is very reminiscent, deeply ironic, and always makes me feel that Junaid [Jamshed] is still with us.

Koi Nahi by Sajjad Ali: One of the few visionaries in the industry, Sajjad made it easy for generations to adapt to all genres of south Asian music by revisiting it in a refreshing and modern manner. I feel this track is one of them.

Khamaj by Shafqat Amanat Ali Khan: Skillful singing with eastern classical roots presented in a modern aesthetic, this song was a turning point in Pakistan's music scene. Shafqat was able to successfully extend his family's legacy and bring it to a wider audience.

Na Kaho by Aaroh: This song reminds me of my college days. I even recorded a cover of it and love this song

so much. Everything about it is special. The lyrics, melody and Farooq's simplicity and pureness are reflective in his singing. I remember when this track came out, it cut through a lot of noise and was refreshing.

Abhi Na Jao by Mohammad Rafi: My dad's favourite singer. When I was a kid, he used to listen to him all the time on his cassette player. This was one of the first tracks I learnt by heart and even won a prize at a school singing competition. Every time family gatherings happen; someone always asks me to sing it.

Satragi Re by Sonu Nigam: If there's one song that I would like to sing in front of Sonu Nigam, AR Rahman and Gulzar, it's this one. It captures the seven stages of love, namely *lubh* (attraction), *uns* (infatuation), *ishq* (love), *akidai* (trust/ reverence), *ibadat* (worship), *junoon* (madness) followed by *maut* (death). This song is sheer magic.

Aur Ho by AR Rahman: I was at a loss of words when this album came out. To this day, this is my favourite song composed by Rahman sir. Being a singer myself, I envied that Mohit (Chauhan) sang it. Everything about it is so divine, almost magical.

Bombay Theme by AR Rahman: No matter what mood I'm in, this song from the *Bombay* soundtrack has rescued me from my all-time lows every time. I've always felt a deep connection with this track. It signifies hope, an uplifting feeling and reminds me of the power of music.

Sajna Tere Bina & Run (cover) by Umer Durrani and Michelle Ray: Though I had been learning eastern classical music since I was 13, it was not until last year that I decided to record my voice and share some of my music. But I could not initiate my journey without paying homage to my favourite Pakistani singer, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. I loved collaborating with Michelle and working on this project.

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