

Bindu Gopal Rao

In the realm of breaking musical norms, Pandit Kumar Gandharva's legacy shines as a beacon. His defiance of ghazal traditions and unique style resonate as legendary tales in India's musical annals.

To honour the maestro's birth centenary, the Bengaluru International Arts Festival (BIAF) has embraced his spirit as the theme for its 16th edition. Known for its global artistic melange, the festival promises an exciting itinerary of performances and displays, bridging tradition and innovation; under one roof.

Rest assured, attending BIAF lets one dive into diverse cultural experiences, fostering a deeper appreciation for varied artistic expressions and community identities through art. Curious about what awaits art enthusiasts in this year's edition? Let's explore...

### Artistic harmony

BIAF has consistently brought together artists from various countries, offering a platform for diverse cultural expressions. By presenting music, dance, theatre, and visual arts from different parts of the world in a crucible, the festival is a treat for pursuers of artistic solace.

"One of the festival's hallmarks is its emphasis on collaborative performances that blend styles, genres, and traditions. These collaborations have often led to ground-breaking performances that transcend cultural barriers, fostering a spirit of unity and mutual respect among artists from different backgrounds. Beyond performances, BIAF has placed a strong emphasis on interactive sessions and workshops led by visiting artists. These engagements offer participants hands-on experiences and insights into the creative processes of artists from around the globe. Such interactions not only promote understanding and appreciation of diverse art forms but also inspire local artists and enthusiasts to explore new creative avenues," says Dr Veena Murthy Vijay, Co-Founder and Director, AIM- Artist's Introspective Movement, organisers, and curators of BIAF.

At its core, BIAF's mission to promote "harmony through arts" has been a powerful message of peace and unity. In a world often divided by cultural, political, and social differences, the festival has stood as a testament to the unifying power of artistic expression, demonstrating how art can bridge divides and bring people together in celebration of our shared humanity.

### Curating creativity

In selecting artists for BIAF this year, the theme being the centenary celebrations for legendary Hindustani classical musician Pandit Kumar Gandharva, the emphasis has naturally been on integrating the essence and genres of Hindustani music into the narrative.

"The artists have been chosen

# LEGACY IN FOCUS

*The eagerly anticipated 16th edition of the Bengaluru International Arts Festival (BIAF) shines a spotlight on virtuoso Pandit Kumar Gandharva's legacy. Here is insightful preview into what awaits at the event...*

through a meticulous process that prioritises a deep understanding and proficiency in Hindustani music, ensuring that each performer can authentically interpret and convey the nuances of this musical tradition. These artists, comprising both seasoned performers and emerging talents, are selected based on their ability to embody the spirit of Pandit Kumar Gandharva's work—innovation within tradition, expressive depth, and technical mastery," says Vijay.

The four-day extravaganza (see box for complete itinerary) will begin a jugalbandi by Ronu Majumdar and troupe, a Carnatic vocal recital by Abhishek Raghuram and troupe, "Silapadhikaram - A Grand Dance Drama," and the tale of "Anklet", among others.

Veena exponent Dr Suma Sudhindra, remarks, "I am eagerly anticipating the jugalbandi with the country's renowned flutist, Pandit Majumdar. We hope the audience will deeply connect with our musical fusion."

Rama Vaidyanathan, who will be part of "Pratibodhana - The Awakening", expresses her excitement, stating, "I am eagerly looking forward to performing at BIAF 2024. My show 'Pratibodhana' is a dance performance that explores various interpretations of 'awakening.' To be aware and inspired through love, passion, and dance, and to wake up from the slumber of ignorance by treading the path of seeking the truth. I hope to take my audience on a journey of spiritual discovery."

The BIAF will see the launch of a campaign called "Go Green Bengaluru". It will feature a sapling planting ceremony, engaging the community and college students at Sukrushi Organic Farm, Greenpath, Marasarahalli, Nelamangala.

### Crafting connections

Over the years, the festival has made significant efforts to engage with the local community in Bangalore and beyond. Through outreach programmes, educational initiatives, and public performances, BIAF has worked to make the arts accessible to a broader audience, thereby spreading the message of harmony and unity through cultural exchange.

"By providing a platform for emerging artists alongside estab-



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### DR VEENA MURTHY VIJAY, CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF AIM

lished ones, BIAF has contributed to the sustainable development of the arts. This approach has encouraged the exchange of ideas and mentorship opportunities, ensuring that the legacy of harmony through the arts continues to grow and evolve," says Vijay.

Attending the BIAF this year presents a unique opportunity for several compelling reasons, making it a must-visit event for enthusiasts of culture, art, and global harmony.

"There's nothing quite like the energy and immersion of live artistic performances. BIAF features artists who are masters of their craft, and meeting them is both inspiring and exhilarating. Moreover, the festival's emphasis on collaborative performances means you will see unique combinations of styles and genres, showcasing creative synergies you won't find elsewhere," signs off Vijay.

### WHAT?

Bengaluru International Arts Festival (BIAF) is celebrating 16th edition spread over two weekends, from March 22 to 30.

### WHY?

The festival will commemorate the birth centenary of the legendary Pandit Kumar Gandharva, being observed this year. The maverick vocalist, hailing from Belgaum, forged a path in Hindustani classical music, defying tradition with his original musical style. Born Shivputra Komkali, the virtuoso, passed away 25 years ago on January 12, 1992.

### WHEN & WHERE?

#### March 22 - Inauguration and Evening Performances

- The event kicks off with the inauguration at Chowdiah Memorial Hall on March 22 at 6 pm.
- A jugalbandi featuring flautist Ronu Majumdar with Suma Sudhindra on veena, B C Manjunath on mridangam, S N Narayanamurthy on ghatam, and Rajendra Nakod on tabla follows.
- Carnatic musician Abhishek Raghuram performs with H M Smitha on violin, Arjun Kumar on mridangam, and G Guru Prasanna on khanjira at 7.45 pm.

#### MARCH 23 EVENING PERFORMANCES

- At 6.15 pm, Rama Vaidyanathan and her disciples present "Pratibodhana - The Awakening" in a dance performance at Chowdiah Memorial Hall.
- Following that, a 25-member dance ensemble performs "Silapadhikaram," a dance drama about the tale of Kannagi's Anklet.

#### MARCH 24 MORNING MUSIC EVENTS

- From 10 am to 1 pm at Chowdiah Memorial Hall, events include a Hindustani vocal performance by Vidhula Venugopal, a lecture demonstration by Nagaraj Havaldar on Kumara Gandharva's contribution to Hindustani music, and a Hindustani recital by vocalist Sangeetha Katti.

#### MARCH 30 CLOSING CONCERT

- Bhuvanesh Komkali, grandson of Kumar Gandharva, performs a Hindustani concert on March 30 at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Race Course Road, starting at 6.30 pm. He will be accompanied by Keshav Joshi on tabla and Vyasa Murthy Katti on harmonium.

#### MARCH 31 CONCLUDING EVENT

- The final day of BIAF concludes with a sapling planting drive at 10.30 am at Marasarahalli, Nelamangala.

\*\*\*TICKETS - <https://in.bookmyshow.com/special/aim-biaf-2024/ET00387808?webview=true>

