

Did you know this Samrat?

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Samrat at a Live Concert

 Indian Classical Music, Indian Light Classical Music

Son of late Pandit Jagdish Prasad, Samrat Pandit is undoubtedly an able torch-bearer of his family traditions. An English graduate from Calcutta University, Samrat has performed at various prestigious concerts, showcasing his extraordinary expertise over both the Khayal and Thumri styles of gayaki in Hindustani vocal music.

When and how were you first introduced to music?

Well, this is a tricky one. I was born in the centre of music only because my dad, my grandfather, my whole family, they all are musicians. The whole fraternity knows me by music since I was born in this family, my father being Jagdish Prasad. Also I had a passion for music since childhood.

Did you always know that this is what you wanted to pursue? When did it become more than a hobby?

It was always more than a hobby. I always knew this is what I wanted to do. This is what I was best at I guess.

A few words on how your father influenced you...

Well, basically I grew up listening to him. He was one of the bests in business and I loved the kind of music that he pursued. Not that I knew of this from birth, but as I grew up and listened to more music, I realised that this is what touches me the most. And also the gharana he belonged to (Patiala Gharana) is known for its soulful melody which really attracts me.

Apart from your father, who are the other musicians whom you idolise?

Of course I listen to Barkat Ali Khan Sahib, Ghulam Ali Khan Sahib, Bhimsen Joshi. I listen to a lot of instrumental music- Ustad Ali Akbar Khan Sahib, Pandit Ravi Shankar ji. I also listen to a lot of world musicians.

What other forms of music are you into apart from Indian Classical?

I listen to a lot of Balkan music, which is not very popular in India. It sounds strange but I have grown up listening and seeing Michael Jackson and a lot of other stuff. I think it gives you a different dimension when you are doing your music. I don't know whether it's good or bad but anyway, I heard and still hear all of them.

Apart from music, what are your other interests?

I am an ex-boxer. I did a lot of physical activities. I still do yoga. I do a little bit of adventure sports, like mountain hiking and all.

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think, but then there are also amazing people around who have done great jobs, they are still young and they are doing absolutely fantastic. That's amazing to see.

How do you think classical music has evolved over the ages?

Well, I haven't been there through the ages (laughs). But I think everything has its good and its bad parts. I don't think I'm the right person to comment on it but if you ask me I think we need to spend more time on our music. And there is a hunger as I told you, because of the competition, the market, change of society and all that. But then I think that this kind of music, like classical specially, it needs more time. It should not be seen as a profession, but more as a way of life. In the times of my dad, his disciples have stayed here, practised, and made it a part of their lives.

I feel we have evolved a lot. There are a lot of recordings, internet, YouTube and this and that have helped. You can find anybody in the internet and get access to their music, but then it is after all a 'Gurumukhi Vidya'. It has to be taught by the guru and you have to be living a very saintly life to get to the bottom of it. That's how I feel, but it can vary from person to person. Of course there is an extra burden of the change of lifestyle that we have now, but then it's normal. We are doing good I guess!

You have been performing at other places as well. Is it a special feeling when you come back and perform at Kolkata?

Well I am a resident of Kolkata and there are so many people here, like Indrayudh, doing this thing (Show Velvet Baithak, to be held on 24th July, 2016). This is mind-blowing! When I spoke to him, I was shocked because this is a young guy doing such a thing; he already has a big responsibility on him because he is the son of a very big and absolutely awesome musician (Pandit Tejendra Narayan Majumdar), and then he is doing this part also, where he is taking care of the shows, trying to promote new talent. It's absolutely fantastic. So every time I'm here I see such people and it's very touching and it needs to be applauded, that's what I would say.

Speaking of performances, do you feel the audience needs to be formerly acquainted with the nuances of classical music to truly appreciate it or do you think it's equally appealing to the common man?

These are big questions you are asking (laughs). Well, I think people do need to be groomed a little. If they have some knowledge it's more enjoyable and understandable. But if you speak of appeal, I would say when you hear a true voice I don't think you need to distinguish the genre or go into the technicalities, it just touches your soul. But about the details, the raag-dari, all the knowledge and gyan, that needs to be taught. Apart from that, music is supposed to be enjoyed universally.

How do you want yourself to be looked upon by others?

I want to be looked upon as a musician, that's it! And also as a friendly guy and a good human being, who served music without having to do with the commercial aspects and who did justice to his art. I should be able to justify my subject.

How does it feel to be performing at Show Velvet Baithak on 24th July?

I feel absolutely amazing as I told you. Indrayudh has done a great job, simply awesome! I didn't actually know about this thing long back and was told about this by his father. We are very close, like family. He told me about it. And then I spoke to Indrayudh and he introduced me to the great bunch of work that he has already done. It's so delightful to see a young boy like him doing such a thing. He's probably junior to me, has sound knowledge about his work and is doing a great job. It feels amazing to be a part of it and I am looking forward to it.

Can I have a list of your favourites?

Sure

Favourite musicians- I am very touched by my dad's music. Lata Mangeshkar of course. If you go on asking, there are tonnes of other musicians whom I like.

Favourite sport- Boxing and Soccer

Favourite food- Sea food and continental

Dream Destination- I have already been to places like Paris, London. So it's no more a dream. But I would really like to visit Corsica.

Describe yourself in one word.

Genuine

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