

MUSIC

t2 CHATS WITH THE PERCUSSION WIZARD AND THE KATHAK MAESTRO



A vase to pots and pans from the kitchen, Sivamani shows he can make music with almost everything, at the Goenka residence. Pictures: Rashbehari Das



SOUND IS EVERYWHERE. ALL I HAVE TO DO IS SET IT TO RHYTHM, WHICH THEN BECOMES MUSIC... MY FOCUS IS ON RHYTHM. RHYTHM TRAVELS WITH ME

everywhere. All I have to do is set it to rhythm, which then becomes music.

You are also in the news for turning film music composer... I have scored music for the film *Arima Nambi*. It's my debut in the Tamil film industry as music composer. The opportunity has come to do something on my own, thanks to the producer (S. Thanu), who has seen me grow. April 13 will be a big day (the music will be launched). A.R. Rahman, Ilayaraja sir, S.P. Balasubrahmanyam, Shankar

Mahadevan, Hariharan and many other well-wishers... they are all going to come. I am going back to my school-college days, to what I had learnt back then. There will be some surprises!

Are you working on a new album after your critically-acclaimed *Drums On Fire* and *Mahaleela*? Yes, it's called *Tu hi tu*. Runa Rizvi and Stephen Devassy are involved in the project. There is a song in which the rhythm has been created by playing on water. For another song, I have this idea of using the sounds heard in beauty parlours. This album will have a visual element. I am going to show that sound is everywhere.

When did you realise music was your calling?

The day I was conceived in my mom's womb and heard her heartbeat. When I came out, I realised that my father (S.M. Ananan) was a drummer. My life is only about music. I don't even read magazines or newspapers unless somebody asks me to read a particular article. My focus is on rhythm. Rhythm travels with me. I don't differentiate the audience in Calcutta with those at other venues. Wherever I go, God helps me create magic.

Your first album didn't release because the mastertape was reportedly stolen...

I had asked somebody to bring a suitcase from the hotel which contained one of my musical instruments. But by mistake another one was brought, one that contained the mastertape to the album. And then the suitcase went missing. I managed to recreate some of the songs on *Mahaleela*.

Some percussionists to look forward to?

There are many good young percussionists around. Gino Banks (son of Louiz Banks) is phenomenal. He takes music very seriously. In Bangalore there is a drummer called Arun.



A delayed flight tired him out but that didn't stop **PANDIT BIRJU**

MAHARAJ from meeting members of the Goenka house and, of course, Sivamani. He then spent a few minutes with t2.

Has there been a change in kathak training?

The beauty that was there and the training one used to put in, that has changed. I still run after my students until they have perfected their techniques.

How is your school (Kalashram in Delhi) doing?

There are 400-odd students and some of them are from different countries — America, France... They devote themselves to learning the dance. I keep telling parents to keep alive the classical *parampara* and to instil this into young minds. Students

who are dedicated to training will always have a bright future.

In way of choreography, you had contributed to Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khilari*. Your take on films now?

I GET TO SEE ONLY A HANDFUL OF FILMS WITH GOOD DIRECTORS, LYRICS, A HEROINE IN THE MOULD OF MADHURI (DIXIT) OR A HERO LIKE KAMAL HAASAN. THEY ARE REALLY GOOD ACTORS

I get to see only a handful of films with good directors, lyrics, a heroine in the mould of Madhuri (Dixit) or a hero like Kamal Haasan. They are really good actors.

A favourite memory of Calcutta?

Manmatha Nath Ghosh Babu's All Bengal Music Conference. I was 14 years old when I performed there and everyone liked it very much. Since then I have considered Bengal my mother, the mother to my career.

Finally, how do you stay fit? Treating your body to rhythm is always a good thing (smiles).

Mathures Paul