

News from Nehru Centre

Devotional Songs by Hitaksha Ratta

The Nehru Centre invited well-known devotional singer, Hitaksha Ratta — fondly known as Munmun Ratta for a performance, on July 8. Accompanied by Bhavesh (Tabla), Atul (Keyboard), Pawan (Flute), Siddharth (Guitar) and Shailesh (Drums), Hitaksha mesmerised the audience with *sufi bajans* and *kalaams*.

Hitaksha was only six, when she started singing and performing on stage and has won a number of awards over the years.

Encouraged by the music legend



Hitaksha Ratta (C) and Siddharth (L) on the guitar performing to a packed auditorium.

A.R. Rahman, Hitaksha took her training under Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan in Mumbai. She has performed all over the world.

Commemorating Hafiz

The Nehru Centre in association with the Ilmi Majlis, London, organised an event — *Remembering Hafiz* — the Persian mystic poet on July 20.

The event highlighted the Indo-Persian dimension of Indian culture. Dr. Zia Shakeb, the Chairman of Ilmi Majlis, observed that the Persian language served as a language of administration and education in India for over 800 years and also had influenced several other languages in the country. Dr. Leonard Lewisohn of Exeter University said that people of



L to R: Tabla soloist Hanif Khan and masters of the Ghazal Sanjeev Loomba and Karuna Loomba.

all faiths, including Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Jews, loved Hafiz. He observed that Hafiz influenced Western poets like Goethe, Byron, Keats, and Shelley among others.

The London Indian Film Festival Networking Event

Ed Vaizey, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Wantage & Didcot, and Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries, attended the London Indian Film Festival (LIFF) industry event at The Nehru Centre along with several cinema professionals, including Dina Dattani (Fox India) and representatives from media companies, such as UTV, Reliance and Sony, among others. The head of Film London, Adrian Wootton, was also present at the event.

Celebrating the burgeoning movement of alternative Indian cinema, the second annual LIFF was held from June 30–July 12 in London, bringing a selection of cutting-edge films to the United Kingdom, from some of the India's

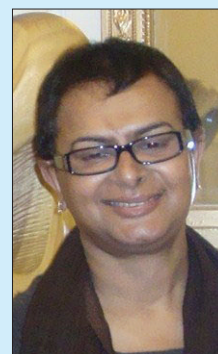


L to R: Gowri Shankar, the Deputy Director of TNC, Cary Sawhney, Director, LIFF, and Ed Vaizey, Minister, Culture, Britain.

greatest independent filmmakers. Following the Opening Night World Premiere screening of Aamir Khan's *Delhi Belly*, the festival showcased the work of India's new wave of independent filmmakers, including Anurag Kashyap, Ketan Mehta and Rituparno Ghosh. The films were screened at the



Ketan Mehta



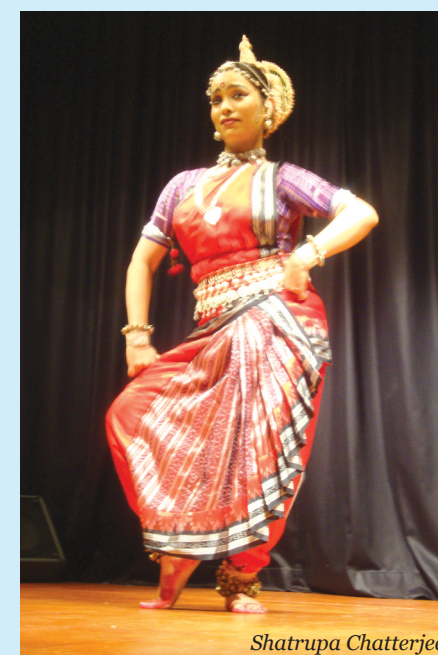
Rituparno Ghosh

Cineworld Haymarket, the Victoria and Albert Museum, BFI Southbank, The Nehru Centre, Watermans, Cineworld Trocadero, Feltham, Wood Green-Ilford and the University of Westminster. Singer and film composer Raghu Dixit performed at the closing night before the screening of the film *Autograph*.

Odissi by Shatrupa Chatterjee

Shatrupa Chatterjee, a disciple of well-known Odissi and Sattriya dance exponent Guru Gorima Hazarika, staged a recital at The Nehru Centre on July 19. Shatrupa also received training under the doyen of Odissi, Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra.

Her repertoire comprises compositions, choreographic creations and traditional pieces. Shatrupa enthralled the audience with her *Durga Stuti* (Mangalacharan) performance followed by Shankaravaranam Pallavi. She concluded her repertoire with an *abhinaya* piece, *Hari Riha Mugdha*, and followed it up with *Dasavtar* from poet Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda*, portraying the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu.



Shatrupa Chatterjee

Paintings, Ceramics & Prints Exhibition



Printmaker Simran Sandhu and ceramist Nirmala Sharma.

Renowned painter Veena Singh, printmaker Simran K. Sandhu and ceramist Nirmala Sharma exhibited their works at The Nehru Centre on July 12. Veena is a graduate in Fine Arts and has a master's degree in Business Economics from Devi Ahilya University, Indore, India. She has been conferred a number of awards, including accolades like the Raza State Award and the Sanskar Bharti Award (Bhopal). Nirmala is an established ceramist and a self-taught artist.

Simran is a graduate in Printmaking from Chandigarh College of Arts. She has been awarded at the Annual All India Arts Exhibition and has showcased her works all over India and at overseas events in Switzerland, Taiwan, South Korea and Canada.

Remembering Mala Sen

The Nehru Centre organised an event to pay tribute to the distinguished author Mala Sen, who died on May 21. Over a hundred guests attended the event.

Writer and her former husband, Farrukh Dhondy read a note on Mala's life — how she came to London and became a researcher in many television programmes and later, an author.

Rahim Baksh, a Bangladeshi colleague, recalled how Mala had encouraged members of the Bangladeshi community at East End, to fight for their rights. Playwright Ash Kotak read a poem by Kalidas, *Look to This Day*. Actress Sudha Bhuchar read extracts from the *Bandit Queen*, as did filmmaker and

friend, H.O. Nazareth. Actor Bhasker Patel read an extract from her second book, *Death by Fire*, while members from the artistic fraternity, including actors Harmej Kalirai, Rehan Sheikh, Ajay Chhabra, Leena Dhingra; filmmakers, Parminder Vir and Faris Kermani and artist Jeroo Roy came to honour and remember the woman who had been a source of inspiration for many.

Mala was also highly regarded by the Afro-Caribbean community, among whom she was active during the 1970s. Poet, Linton-Kwesi Johnson, and broadcaster Darcus Howe too paid their respects, as did Margaret Busby, OBE, the copy-editor of the book *Bandit Queen*.

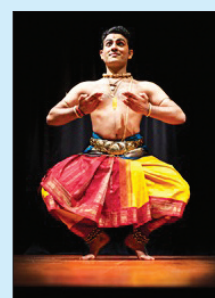
Natya Arpanam by Swarup Menon

The Nehru Centre invited the former disciple of Guru Prakash Yadagudde of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Swarup Menon, to present Natya Arpanam on July 15. Born and brought up in the United Kingdom, Swarup started performing since he was five.

He has performed at several events in the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Hong Kong and India as well. Among the prestigious accolades he has received are the Asianet Europe



An enchanting dance performance by Swarup Menon.



L to R: Pratap Ramachandra, Santosh Menon, Rajesh Raman and Ratheeh Kumar Manoharan.

TV Talent Award and the Keli International Kala Mela Award.