

The Hessler Street Duo will perform Elena Kats-Chernin's *Eliza Aria*, and Yao Chen and Austin Yip's *Miles upon Miles*

NEXT week, get ready to embark on an aural journey across nations, countries and continents with the *Hessler Street Duo*. Comprising pianist Jennifer Heemstra and violinist Patrick TS Yim, the duo in their concert from Hessler to Hindustan, will trace the ancient Silk Road, which connected several countries across Asia, Africa and Europe, to create a channel that facilitated the silk trade as well as the exchange of information between cultures.

The public performance at Goethe-Institut will witness the India premiere of Elena Kats-Chernin's *Eliza Aria*, as well as a music piece inspired by the Silk Road called *Miles upon Miles*, composed by Yao Chen and Austin Yip.

Alongside, the performance will also include Edvard Grieg's *Sonata for Piano and Violin*, a short love song by Mexican composer, Manuel Ponce and *The Jazz Suite No 1* by Russian composer, Dmitri Shostakovich. The recital will also



Patrick TS Yim

be accompanied by artist Viraag Desai's media art installations. While Jennifer has been quite a regular with her piano recitals in the city — having formed the Kolkata Classics trust in 2014, which has hosted as many as 80 concerts in Kolkata so far — this will be violinist Patrick Yim's first performance in Kolkata.

"This performance is a part of a concert series across India, Dubai, and Dushanbe," says Jennifer, the organiser of the event, who currently resides in Tajikistan.

While Elena Kats-Chernin is a composer and pianist from Uzbekistan, a stop along the Silk

Road, Yao Chen is from China, the place where it originates, and Austin Yip is from Hong Kong, which recently organised an exhibition for the Hong Kong Museum of History called *Miles Upon Miles: World Heritage along the Silk Road*. The music pieces by Yao Chen and Austin Yip were commissioned as a part of the exhibition.

"I discovered Elena's music in 2018, and we have premiered her works in Washington as well as in Dushanbe," reveals Jennifer.

Both Jennifer and Patrick were students of Cleveland Institute of Music, an institution that is not

too far from the Hessler Street, which inspired the name, Hessler Street Duo.

"The street represents a time and place in our lives that has shaped each of us into the musicians we are today, and the name pays homage to our former home and school," reveals Patrick, who also teaches music at Hong Kong Baptist University.

"It will be exciting to see how an Indian audience will receive these works, given that India also features on the ancient Silk Road," he adds.

Patrick will be perform-

ing the world premiere of *Violin Concerto No 1 Generation* composed by Austin Yip in the US, in the coming few months, besides teaching and performing in Germany.

He is also working on an album of solo violin pieces, commissioned by Austin Yip, Yao Chen, Michael-Thomas Foumai, and Kai-Young Chan.

The Hessler Street Duo will perform at Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan, Kolkata on April 30 at 6.30 pm.

— Vinita Tiwari

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Jennifer Heemstra

curtain call

Before *Mahabharata*: blind-sided by war

NATADHA revisits the mythological tale to shed light on the lead up to the epic battle

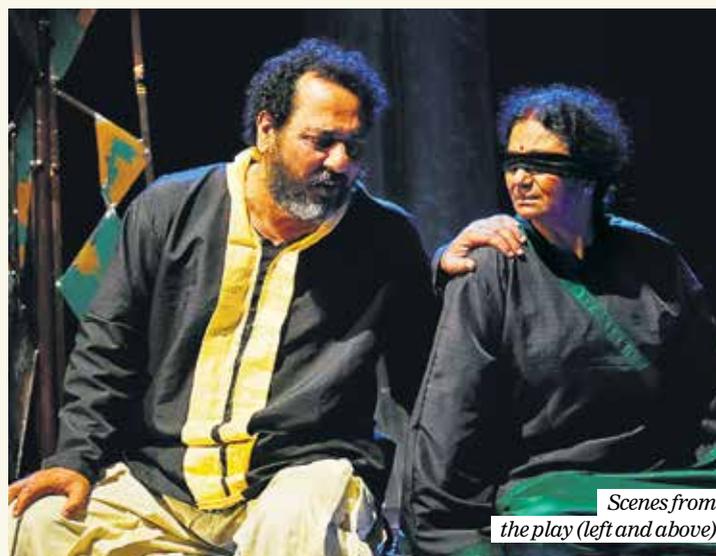


The cast in rehearsal

NATADHA, one of the oldest theatre groups in Kolkata, has come up with its second magnum opus, in the form of *Mahabharata 2*, this April. Directed by Arna Mukhopadhyay, the play is largely based on the text written by Shib Mukhopadhyay, which has been rewritten by the director, to suit a contemporary context.

The play depicts the age-old epic in the *Udyog Parva* (the fifth book of the *Mahabharata*) where the Pandavas return from exile, ready to claim their share of the kingdom from the clutches of the Kauravas. But the attempt does not meet with success, and eventually leads to the epic war.

"This is the second time that Natadha is staging *Mahabharata*. We don't deal with the war itself, but with the time just before that — when war is imminent, and chaos and confusion is playing on



Scenes from the play (left and above)

everybody's mind," explains Arna Mukhopadhyay, the director.

Incidentally, Mukhopadhyay will also be acting in the play, as the character of Duryodhana — who was born to a blind king, and a queen who's said to have adopted a willful sense of blindness, in deference to her husband.

The character of Duryodhana too adopts an attitude of willful malice — quite like blindness —

in his refusal to part with the kingdom, and to forcibly gag any voice of dissent that dissuades him from waging the war, even if it's from Shakuni, his own uncle. Here, one is forced to think about the validity of Duryodhana's argument, when he points out the flaws in the apparent 'godly' characters of the Pandavas.

"For me, the play seemed quite relevant in the current context.

People are either silenced into action, or they are confused about their own stance," explains the director.

"None of the characters in my play are larger-than-life or superheroes. Instead, there is a deliberate attempt to show them as normal human beings with flaws. For example, Uttora (played by Upabela Pal) and Abhimanyu (played by Rishav Basu) — both of whom are misfits in this scenario — question the validity of violence itself. It's very similar to those who are battling it out in Kashmir," reveals the director.

The dialogues are colloquial and the costumes are contemporary. The play refrains from becoming a 'traditionalist' interpretation of the text, and veers towards an experimental take on the age-old epic. Lights have been coordinated by Jayanta Ghosh, music has been arranged by Bandan Misra along with Arna, Bimal Maiti has designed the costumes, and the sets have been created by Milan Kundu. Notably, Tollywood actor Sohini Sarkar will essay the role of Draupadi, who will be shown as a strong, masculine character.

At The Academy of Fine Arts on April 28, 1.45 pm & 5.45 pm.

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