

Tehzeeb Festival 2012: Of sensational Sarangi and cross border collaborations

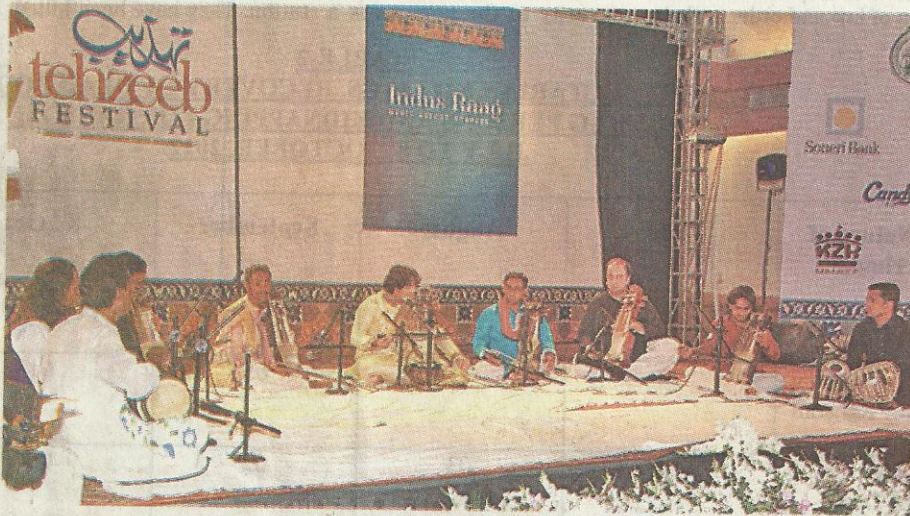
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If last year's festival brought the instrument of 'sitar' in the spotlight, the same can be said for 'sarangi' this year as the 4th edition of Tehzeeb Festival concluded in Karachi recently.

The event almost always draws respect from music lovers and critics, owing to the immaculate logistics and an intriguing playing bill. The audience maybe small in numbers but it is usually made up of staunch music lovers from all walks of life.

This year's 'Sarangi Ensemble' exhibited potential of the otherwise depleting instrument, which has been used in South Asian music for centuries. The participants from Pakistan were Zohaib Hassan (Lahore), Akhtar Hussain and his son Gul Muhammad (Karachi), Shafqat Ali Khan (Multan), Dr Temur Khan (Rawalpindi) and Mazhar Umrao Bundoo Khan - a classical vocalist and a Sarangi player (Karachi).

They played a classical raag ('Maru Behag') and a Rajasthani folk number. It was a solid start to the proceedings and the crowd was visibly de-



Indian artist Kamal Sabri performs during the two-day Tehzeeb Festival

lighted. In fact, the response from the audience seemed to motivate the participating artistes further. According to Dr Temur Khan, it was by far his most inspiring recital, which gave him a lot of confidence.

The first day included official launch of 'Indus Raag' - a project of classical music featuring artists from India and Pakistan. The producer has



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named it "music beyond borders" and terms this music as a highly exportable artistic commodity. Eminent guest speakers Uxi Mufti, Javed Jabbar and Pir Aftab Shah Jilani spoke on the occasion and rated 'Indus Raag' as a significant effort towards preservation of classical music of the subcontinent, Professor Piotr Balcerowicz, an authority on Indian classical arts, who is also the head of the South Asian Chair in Warsaw University, also gave his appreciation to the idea of 'Indus Raag'.

'Story of Indus and its music' was yet another hallmark with Sheema Kermani and her students weaving their choreographic presentation around the original tracks from 'Indus Raag'.

The first day ended with a vocal recital by Ustad Naseeruddin Saami who is highly respected for his meditative 'gayeki' both in India and Pakistan. Saami presented *kheyal* and *tarana* in raag

'*poorbi*' and '*kedara*'.

The second day of the festival opened with a *kheyal* performance by Karam Abbas and his brother Waseem Abbas - young vocalists from the Gwalior gharana. The evening formally started with a *jugalbandi* between Indian artist Kamal Sabri (Sarangi), Mumtaz Sabzal (Banjo) and Ustad Bashir Khan (Tabla). They played raag '*bhopali*' and a Balochi Folk tune, which proved to be a fair example of skill between the participating musicians.

Shahid Hamid's appearance was a pleasant surprise for many people who didn't know him before. Shahid is an educated man in his late fifties, a banker by profession, who left his banking career for the love of music. He is an accomplished vocalist and a music teacher who has also written a book about 50 or so raags. Shahid had the crowd captivated with his interpretation of raags. He was accompanied

on sarangi by Dr Temur Khan, a disciple of Ustad Allah Rakha Sarangi Nawaz. The combination was pleasantly appreciated by music lovers and came across as a ray of light by the organizers as far as the future of classical tradition goes.

Noor Zehra Kazim, who plays the unique instrument that is sagar veena performed raag '*jaijai wanti*' and was accompanied by Shaukat Raza on tabla. Her performance was one of the highlights of the evening as she mesmerized with her command over the sagar veena. The mother of Noori brothers Ali Noor and Ali Hamza, Noor Zehra previously introduced the world to her unique instrument on the third season of *Coke Studio* when she performed with Noori on the song, '*Hor Vi Neevan Ho*'.

Vidya Shah from Delhi was visiting Karachi for the second time - first time being last year's Faiz Centenary Celebrations held by the Government of Sindh in collaboration with Tehzeeb Foundation. She started with a *kheyal* in raag '*kedara*' and then presented a few *thumris* and *ghazals* originally sung by the great singer Begum Akhtar. Owing to the high nostalgic value, her performance eventually turned into a tribute to Begum Akhtar (whose 99th birthday anniversary was being marked).

Ashraf Sharif Khan flew in from Germany to give a sitar recital. He appreciated Tehzeeb Foundation's endeavors for the preservation of classical heritage of Pakistan. His rendition of raag '*Mian Ki Malhar*' in a master's style was a treat for everyone.

The last performer of the evening was Ustad Shafaqat Salamat Ali Khan - the young master vocalist of present times, who held his own and reminded one of his father's singing style.

The performances displayed at Tehzeeb Festival were proof of artistic excellence from this part of the world. Such festivals are important because they give much needed exposure to our classical artists to show case their talent to others. It also provides a chance to local artists to interact with visiting artists from other parts of the world.

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