Music

Music has been a constant leveler in my life. And I don’t know how I would picture myself without it.

I’ve been learning music for the past 8 years. My mother is a musician herself and I picked up while listening to her teach. So when people ask me how long I’ve been learning, I’m not quite sure since it took a long time for my mother to realize that I was in fact singing!

Despite having stayed outside India, I could boast of a lot of exposure to classical music and performing artists, thanks to my mother’s organization which regularly organizes workshops and concerts by highly acclaimed musical experts from India such as Grammy award winner Pandit Vishwamohan Bhatt and Oscar nominee Bombay Jayashri (from whom I occasionally learn now!). Through the course of my tutelage, I had the opportunity of performing at the most coveted theatres in Kuwait and thereafter cut out a few albums. Moreover, I could participate in fascinating collaborations, some with Arab musicians (an Egyptian santoor player and a Kuwaiti oud player), a Romanian clarinetist and a Swedish percussionist, trying to bridge Indian music with Chinese, Philippine and Arab music.

My parents feared that college would distract me from my music. Well, that is true to quite an extent. But luckily for me, college has been quite a blessing in that aspect also.

As soon as got to Bhopal, I switched to online classes. My music classes steadily got harder to cope with. Waking up at wee hours of the day, catching nearly four hours of sleep, seemed quite a Herculean task. But music class was the perfect start to a routine day at college.

It’s quite heartening to look back at how my easily my music schedule got adjusted. The month after I joined, I participated in a classical music reality show organized by SPICMACAY. It was definitely an experience of a lifetime, to be able to interact with extremely talented musicians from all over the State. Most of them were performing artistes, truly experts in their own fields. And then I was informed that I had qualified to the top 20 participants from Madhya Pradesh. Since I was the only contestant who practiced the Carnatic style of classical music (which is unique to the south Indian states), it made it harder for me to prove my mettle amidst the others. But after SPCIMACAY, my parents were quite convinced that Bhopal would treat me well, even musically.

During my holidays, I made it a point to invest twice the time and effort into learning and practicing music, so that I could make up for what I’d lost. I completed my music exams. Now, I have a degree in music and tabla (the Sangeet Visharad, which is equivalent to an MA in music).

During my winter break, I gave a few concerts and attended music classes with my Guru in Chennai. My one-on-one interactions taught me to value music and strive to improve my musical abilities. That it was an endless journey of learning and re-learning. I plunged right into it, knowing full well that this sojourn would not disappoint me, that the thrill and the satisfaction that I derive from music will never cease.

I’ve had my share of adventures too (only ironically, mainstream was my adventure). I auditioned for a random realty show, since the entire hostel was home and I wasn’t. In the process, I got to jam with several talented musicians from all over the city. It was a rejuvenating experience, quite a break from hostel where I would be faced with preparation for my intrabatch moot. I discovered that the winner of the reality show would get to perform with Sunidhi Chauhan who was to give a concert in Bhopal two days later. In a random stroke of luck, I qualified to the top 5 and then I gave it up when I was asked to do road shows for two days since I had my intrabatch finals the next day.

 And then, PULER happened. PULER gave a new meaning to music itself. I never thought I could share my music as I do with the children at Mindori. It was a slow process but thoroughly satisfying. When the kids were to give their first performance at Rangmanch, I was spending an average of four hours at Mindori every day. I would have succumbed to the exhaustion were it not for immense joy that teaching music gave me. Running into my second year with the children, I have come to understand that music does not have any language. It’s the most beautiful expression there is in this world. While the Mindori kids may not be pitch-perfect, their music is moving, because it is heartfelt. Their music reflects their sincerity.

Now, scuttling from my room to the library during moot preparations and racing against time so that I don’t miss my classes, doesn’t seem all that daunting. Participating in programs from my room or trying to escape the hostel clamor so that I can pull off a recording does not feel odd

anymore. However, I’m glad that my music has matured. I continue to give concerts and maximize music classes during holidays. My understanding of musicality has become more nuanced. I do not know whether my musical endeavors will taste success or not, but one thing I know for sure is that music will be my constant companion. To help me cope with life’s unpleasant moments and to keep balanced in the face of my rare successes.

Raghavi Vishwanath

Batch of 2018