

Herald Cafe

Icelandic folk songs to play in Goa



The members of the Umbra Ensemble-Iceland, four strong women are soaking in all the experiences of India as they are excited to perform Sur Jahan on Saturday with Iceland's unique musical instrument, Langspil along with the Indian harmonica

music as well. They have a composer in the group in Guðbjörg, who composes the songs that are arranged by the band. They are also doing new music, but always in the environment of this old sound with their instruments in their soundscape. One unique instrument is the langspil, a traditional Icelandic drone zither. It has a single melody string and 2 drone strings. "For a long time, this was the only instrument that was used because when we became protestant, the instruments were banned. This is the only one that survived as a local instrument. The women in Iceland used this instrument to play little songs together for storytelling. But I would like to add one thing regarding the instruments because on the concerts here, I also play Indian harmonium. And I have one at home in Iceland that was bought especially for me in Chennai from a business trip," says Arngerður María Árnadóttir.

Speaking about the exposure for women artists in Iceland, Lilja Dögg Gunnarsdóttir informs that men and women share an equal status in every field. "There's a strong equality in Iceland. We had the first elected woman president in the world, who won the 1980 presidential election and right now, we have Iceland's youngest prime minister, who is a 36-year-old woman. Culturally speaking, women and men are equal and we have a law that you have to ensure equal gender rights. Women rights are a big force in Iceland and we have come a long way compared to many other countries."

The band has been here for ten days now and they see a vast difference between both the countries. "Iceland only has 400,000 people in the whole country and there's space for everybody. The first day in Kolkata and we got a cultural shock. But what we have noticed, that people are always so warm and wear beautiful clothes in Kolkata. In Goa, we went to the beach which is so warm. We will do sea swimming in Iceland but it's freezing cold. It's very healthy for the body to have cold bath," says Lilja.

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The folksongs of Iceland will be performed for the very first time at the Kala Academy, Panjim on Saturday, February 8, all thanks to the Umbra Ensemble. The band was formed a decade ago with four women bringing in not just folksongs but a mix of original arrangements of medieval tunes and contemporary songs composed by the band members. Alexandra Kjeld, Arngerður María Árnadóttir, Guðbjörg Hlin Guðmundsdóttir and Lilja Dögg Gunnarsdóttir, received a great response for their concerts in Kolkata and are now looking forward to their performance in Goa.

"The reception was great and it was an outdoor concert. The audience listened very carefully of what we have to say and sing and play and after the concert, we got a chance to speak to the audience. This was really good experience for us to come here and we don't take it for granted because this is very different music from Indian music. Although we can say that the stories are the same type, but the music

MEMBERS OF THE BAND

Alexandra Kjeld (double bass, langspil and vocals)

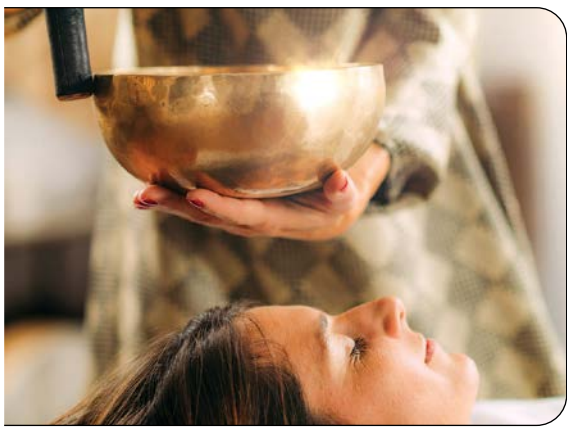
Arngerður María Árnadóttir (celtic harp, harmonium organ and vocals)

Guðbjörg Hlin Guðmundsdóttir (langspil, violin and vocals)

Lilja Dögg Gunnarsdóttir (lead singer, percussion and flutes)

is totally different. We are very grateful that we did have this good reception," says Guðbjörg Hlin Guðmundsdóttir, a member of the touring band that has performed in various European countries as well as China.

The band has a big repertoire in ancient and medieval music, and also contemporary



SOUND HEALING: CAN VIBRATIONS & FREQUENCIES HEAL THE MIND AND BODY?



WORLD CANCER DAY CELEBRATED WITH A MISSION OF HOPE

Arle Moller brings soulful folk tunes to Goa's vibrant music scene

The big daddy of Swedish folk music, Ale Moller is in town and will be performing today at the World Peace Music festival at the Kala Academy



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Arind Staffan Moller or Ale Moller will be performing in Goa at the World Peace Music festival, Sur Jahan. The former trumpeter who can play around 37 instruments is in Goa for yet another show. A fan of the country and of the average Goan, who he thinks is very open and likes to listen to different sounds, will be performing on Saturday at the Kala Academy.

It has been quite a journey for Ale who grew up in a family that did not have a musical bone in their body. The resident of Stockholm started off in music pretty late, in his early teens, when his older sister came home with her boyfriend who had a guitar who was singing songs in a very merry fashion. This touched him and from that day he started playing. As most young boys and girls of his generation, he listened to a lot of music from England and America. It was pop music which was great and to which he listened to quite a lot. But the world was certainly bigger than that. His older brother came home after spending a year in India travelling around the country with memories and music records.

He brought music of the shehnai maestro Ustad Bismillah Khan and that opened his eyes.

Ale said, "This is very soulful music and there is a whole world of music. I met immigrants in my town and they were from Greece and I started playing with them. I went to Greece to learn music. I learned with a famous music composer playing in big arenas and in small cafes, I learned a lot and the Greeks sometimes would ask me about my country's music. And as a city boy, I had not heard anything. I returned home quite confused". He realized he knew nothing of his country's folk music despite spending all his life in it. He looked around and realised there were so many good players tucked around. After his love for rock music, it was jazz that had caught his fancy. He played jazz on the trumpet for several years to earn his livelihood. He realised folk music was just as complicated as jazz music. It had rhythms he could not understand. He decided to leave his city and move into one where there were a lot of folk musicians.

He became a student to older musicians. They gave him a lot of inspiration. The starting point of his music now is this music but he has now been working hard to modernise it in an artistically interesting way with new instruments but keeping the soul of the music intact. He said there was so much to like in folk music and it was important to play it. The music now he says has revived and is studied at university level and it is also possible to study other folk music styles from around the world. He has met musicians from all over the world and recently met a musician from West Bengal in Stockholm.

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Ale Moller

He has visited India on numerous occasions and it has always surprised him with its music which he feels is very rich and deep. Playing in Goa, he said, "I have performed twice and the reaction is lovely and they come after the show to thank you or to pose a question. I really love that. They are great listeners here."

THE BEST IN GOA'S ART

Kala Academy Goa recently declared the result of 49th State Art Exhibition (Artist Category). Among the 186 works that were received, nine artists were awarded in three categories, painting and graphic print, applied art and graphic design and sculpture



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With a wide varieties in art styles, Goa is a melange of colours and artistic expression. The same reflects in the annual State Art Exhibition that offers art lovers to experience the beauty of Goan art as well as encourages young artists to explore their talent.

Kala Academy Goa recently declared the result of 49th State Art Exhibition (Artist Category). In the Painting and Graphic Print Section, the three awardees were Aniket Navanand Kuncolikar, Shailesh V Dabholkar and Omkar Sagun N Banaule. In Applied Art and Graphic Design Section, Rajaram Naik, Vikram Hoshing and Shriyash Shivprasad Kanekar were awarded and in Sculpture section, Shubham Laxmikant Naik, Pandurang Anand Naik and Bhisaji Gadekar were the awardees.

For this exhibition of competitive nature, a total of 186 works were received in all the three sections, out of which 128 exhibits are selected for display. The judges were Dr Subodh Kerkar, Maria Ferreira and Tanaji Shet.

The exhibition will be inaugurated today, February 8 at 4.30 pm at the Art Gallery, Kala Academy, Panjim and will be on display till February 12 between 10 am and 7 pm.

SHAILESH DABHOLKAR
This is Shailesh's third State Art Award after winning in 2016 and 2025.

I encountered a mythical statue of cement at Bicholim and was surprised by the hybrid figuration. It triggered me and made me curious and I began the journey of this artwork from that point onwards. The mythical being creates a captivating tension, inviting viewers to explore themes of resilience, transformation, and the mystical unknown.



BHISAJI GADEKAR - DIALOGUE, HORIZON AND STAGE
This is Bhisaji's second State Art Award after winning in 2016

This work is an endeavour to explore the potential of the energy trapped within us in the form of super conscious mind. These sculptures navigate the intricate web of human interaction, portraying the individual as a conduit for collective experiences, emotions, and aspirations. The narrative unfolds as a poetic exploration of the symbiotic relationship between the individual and social web that defines our existence in the world. This sculpture illustrates the birth and assimilation of new ideas that shape our perceptions of life. The artwork encapsulates the metamorphosis of life into a taboo, an enigma that often eludes our comprehension.



OMKAR SAGUN N BANAULE - WORKSPACE - IV

This is Omkar's third State Art Award after winning in 2018 and 2019

This painting is inspired by the portraiture studio and staff room at my workspace at the Goa College of Art, Altinho, Panjim. The space immediately struck me as ideal for horizontal composition due to its rectangular layout, expansive walls, spacious floors, large curtains, and the interplay of light and shadow. The colors and the geometric appeal of the rectangular wooden panels further made it more interesting to paint. I am particularly drawn to painting interiors for their stillness, the defined shapes within the space, and the dynamic effects created by light and shadow.

