

'Performing is all about communication'

Says mezzo-soprano Viola da Cunha who will be performing in Goa today

Clara A Rodrigues

Having moved out of Moira at an early age, mezzo-soprano singer Viola da Cunha has decided once again to reconnect with her roots. That's the reason why she has made it an annual fixture in her calendar of events to perform in Goa. "Although I live in the UK, I make it a point to perform in Goa, as I have my family here."

Being a soprano singer, Viola understands that there is lesser audiences for vocal recitals as compared to that of instrumental recitals. "The vocals are a different instrument. And people need to have an understanding of this, which comes through listening and training. Also, there is an added dimension of language to it, explains Viola.

Viola studied music in Mumbai before leaving for the UK. "There were not enough facilities in India. That's the reason I moved out. It

was quite easy for me to adapt. Fortunately, I stayed with family there. The general knowledge in music is wide in the UK. Learning at the Trinity College of Music helped me a lot."

"It's my Goan roots and the Goan tradition that helped me develop an affinity for my choice of field. When in Mumbai, we would come to Goa on holidays. Those days we would spend in music, singing with friends *et al.* From Goan music to Brazilian and South America, all have had an influence over me."

Presently, she sings in *Amici del Arte*, a group of which she also is the founding member. "Amici del Arte is an Italian word and means 'Friends of the Art'. We play music that is popular with

the general public. The older generation, especially those who love opera and the operetta, identify with it. It's more a lighter side of Western Classical music."

Viola has also incorporated Goan folk music in her global performances. "I had a composer friend who was aware that folk songs are fragile and need a boost if it has to survive. That's how I got an arrangement of Goan folk songs which I added to my repertoire.

Aware that many like herself move out because of a lack of training facilities in India, she says that she has noticed that the situation is improving. "I also am aware that there are not many opportunities to earn from Western classical music in India. Abroad there are more avenues as teaching music is not the only option to earn. There is not much scope of earning doing mere recitals even in Europe; I don't do much of opera. I sing art songs so it's even more difficult for me. But things can change if more people are exposed and learn about such varieties. I have seen the movement of change taking place in India and that's a good sign."

"I love performing in Goa. The Goan audience is welcoming and warm. The audiences relate back. Performing is all about communication. This is very important for a performer."

She reveals she will play her favourite set of *de Falla* songs among others at her performance today. "I am sure the people will love it. These are Spanish folk songs and with the Portuguese Goan traditional music background present among Goans, it will be liked. I prefer singing a wide range in music, so that there is something for everyone. But you still have to keep in mind that you are performing for an audience," she says on a parting note.



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