

MY AMEROPA EXPERIENCE

Abhro Roy



Being selected for this year's (2019) scholarship to Prague has given me some of the most enlightening and enriching experiences of my life. I have collaborated and performed with other musicians, some of them very experienced and proficient; I have exchanged opinion, shared ideas and had an opportunity to explore the minds of these musicians.

Master classes, ensemble lessons and performances aside, my biggest motivators and influencers were my peers, my fellow participants and co-performers, with whom I have shared the enthralling experiences of this world that is Music. When I first started working on a Scriabin Etude prior to my visit to Prague, I was not quite sure about myself and the piece, and it felt like a near impossible project; but ever since I returned, after three and a half weeks of extensive training, practice and a shoulder fatigue, I feel much more confident, and find things going much smoother than before!

I'm sure we all love challenges! Barely 2 weeks before I boarded my flight, I was mailed 60 pages of sheet music, that I was supposed to perform during my stay there. Sure enough I was spooked and surprised at first, but I gave it my best shot, like every other participant I guess and now that I reflect, it wasn't that bad at all!

Participants as young as 6 years of age all the way up to 60 years were part of this training, and frankly speaking, I have never seen two individuals, so distant age-wise, share the same zeal and passion for music and remarkable excellence during performances as well.

Performing wasn't limited to just one venue or city. We had the honor and opportunity to perform at some of the most famous concert halls like the Bohuslav Martinu Hall in Liechtenstein Palace, the Convent of St Agnes of Bohemia, Church of KutnaHora, Brandys Palace, Prague Monastery, and I might have forgotten a name or two, but each venue was no less than meeting a new person, someone with a new personality, a new voice and different responses to different echoes and harmonics, and exciting in its own way.

While at Kolkata, I've performed on Bostons, Rachals, B.Steiners, Kawais, and luckily, also on the Bosendorfer Concert Grand at The Calcutta School of Music. But during my stay at Prague, I had multiple opportunities to play on my dream piano, the Steinway, and there's a sound that I won't forget for a while. I've also played on numerous Petrofs, Grotrian Steinwegs, and some concert grands that were housed...in the practice rooms!

The first week involved one to one master classes where one of the works that I had prepared beforehand would be selected and then it would get polished, under the guidance of the Master, improve interpretation, technical challenges and naturally, commutatively, the performance of the piece. Every day after class, we would practice for up to 7 hours just trying to remember all

instructions and incorporate them to get it right; sometimes working over and over again to just try and feel satisfied that one irritating bar has been perfected at last. Compromise, we knew, would get us nowhere, and we all practiced our hearts out to prevent that.



The second and third weeks focused on the ensemble experience where we would team up in duos, trios, quartets, quintets or large string ensembles. It takes a surprisingly high amount of caliber to co-ordinate with so many musicians! However, the feeling is exhilarating, knowing that there are other musicians who are co-dependent during the performance and that adds a whole new kind of excitement to it. To me a French horn, a violin, a viola, a bassoon, a clarinet and last but not the least, a piano coupled together is so exciting. Their individual timbres and myriad of dynamic and frequency ranges, make the ensemble an amazing congregation. Back at home we are

limited to our own instruments and that is what we have been accustomed to but being on stage with a group of musicians playing the same or different instruments while still being in respective domains gives you an inexplicable high that lasts throughout the performance.

The saddest part about the ensemble experience is probably that I won't again be able to play the ensemble works that I worked on and performed for so many weeks with such excitement. It was at Prague that I witnessed for the very first time two cellos on the same stage, it was for the first time that I got the opportunity to listen to the characteristic sound of the oboe, the bassoon, the French horn, violas etc. Maybe if we could expose our budding musicians to this magical world that is living and breathing music all the time and in so many different flavors, they would feel enthused about looking at music as an option in life.

Finally, I would also like to add that getting to visit Prague which is a such a beautiful place is like a dream and I have to thank Mr. Debashish Chaudhuri and Mrs. Jana Chaudhuri, The Calcutta School of Music, the founders of Ameropa Mrs. Ada Slivanska and Mr. Vadim Mazo for an experience and opportunity of a lifetime and for this nascent impetus that I will make best use of to be a better pianist and musician.

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