



A R Rahman and Sharmistha Ray during the unveiling of 'Maestro'

The maestro with a thousand crystals

EVEN as Indian artists prepare to commemorate Sachin Tendulkar at the NGMA later this year, that other diminutive and equally talented maestro, Oscar winner A R Rahman, got his own art tribute recently at the unveiling of Mumbai-based artist Sharmistha Ray's 'Maestro'. A signature work commissioned by the Berklee College of Music, it featured the musical genius's image covered with more than 1,000 Swarovski crystals.

This event was the second in their series for the Berklee India Exchange, which supports a fully paid scholarship towards the education of a musically gifted Indian at the renowned institute. The 36x36-inch work, a mixed-media work with charcoal, Swarovski rhinestones, inkjet print, synthetic polymer paint and resin on canvas, was auctioned for an undisclosed sum towards the scholarship, we're told. Nice!



Gita Pandit (above): 'Sharika Devi - The Saffron Goddess', one of her photographs

Poets, artists, saints

HER elegant, globetrotting parents Sunita and Naresh Kumar are a Kolkata institution, and through the intricate and many-textured embroidery of their international circle of friends that include artists, poets, statesman aristocrats and saints, Gita Pandit has had much exposure. But even so, the continuum of her creativity never ceases to amaze.

A crack sportswoman, she is a noted singer, a cordon bleu chef, a spiritualist and photographer. And this evening will witness evidence of the last, when an exhibition of her photographs, 'Divinity and

Nature', opens at the Jamaat gallery in Colaba. Described as 'layering photographs', Pandit, a full-time mom of three and wife of Ranjit Pandit, formerly of McKinsey India, displays a fine eye for the miraculous, the spectacular and the otherworldly qualities that she must have imbibed from M F Husain, Russi Mody and Mother Teresa, who made up her parent's inner circle and were frequent visitors to their home. We once met the legendary English poet Stephen Spender at her home, but that's another story.

'Divinity and Nature' will show for a month at the Jamaat.

overheard

I have also had others claiming Half Girlfriend defames them or whatever. It is FICTION. Fake. No real names. No intent to defame. Chill.

— Best-selling author Chetan Bhagat, on Twitter

A wharf for Mumbai?

CREDITING ourselves with an ear to the ground and an early register of signs and intimations, we think the fact that real estate tycoon Atul Ruia (one half of the team along with wife Gayatri, who created a whole new space in Mumbai called Lower Parel) is, at this moment, and perhaps even as we speak, in London, at the headquarters of its spectacular Canary Wharf redevelopment project marvelling at its ingenuity, might bode well for Mumbaiers.

After all, all it requires is one imaginative, impassioned visionary to transform the many cities' neglected areas into other upmarket retail residential and lifestyle hubs.

Is Ruia looking at a similar project for Mumbai's docklands? Hmm...



Atul and Gayatri Ruia

Private India, public triumph

IT doesn't get bigger than this. When best-selling author and one of the most unassuming writers in town, the affable Ashwin Sanghi, said "I am delighted to inform you that 'Private India', the crime thriller penned by James Patterson and me (and launched in Mumbai earlier in July this year) has hit the New York Times bestsellers list within a week of its US launch," few were surprised by the equanimity with which he announced this considerable

achievement. After all, humility is Sanghi's middle name.

Not only that, but we hear that While NYT lists the book at #6, Publisher's Weekly and AC Nielsen have listed the book at #4 among Trade Paperbacks and the book has also been included in the Top-10 downloads from the Apple iBooks store.

As they say, 'it couldn't have happened to a nicer person', and here's to more winning writing and reading from India!



Ashwin Sanghi



James Patterson. PIC/GETTY IMAGES

Finding Wonderland in school

LAST week, we had the privilege of being one of the judges at the Cathedral Annual School Play 2014 to spot and reward the talent that such an enterprise inevitably yields. Titled 'Finding Wonderland' and co-written and directed by our friend, the talented Kaizaad Kotwal, himself an alumnus, the play delved into themes that were not only contemporary, but also timely and often close to the bone.

The Cathedral School, as anyone will tell you, happens to be a frontrunner amongst the city's elite schools, boasting of a veritable who's who of alumni and its students hail from some of the most prominent of Mumbai families.

Therefore, to have an indigenously written play with a local theme and a plot that challenged conventions, gender prejudices and society canons was a very welcome departure from tradition. In addition, the acting was



Kaizaad Kotwal (left), with the cast of 'Finding Wonderland'

of a high calibre, the production values impressive and the presence of Meera Isaacs, the school's legendary principal, all made for a memorable evening.

One more thing: the evening reacquainted us with the famous Cathedral patois, that unmistakable dialect of swallowed consonants, Sobo swag and embarrassed entitlement, which we'd been hankering for, of late.

On the wings of a prayer

SOMETIMES, the depth of emotions and breadth of feelings on social media makes one realise how interconnected and fragile we are.

Even as the brave and beautiful Medha Gujral Jalota, wife of noted ghazal singer Anup, awaited the outcome of her second heart and first kidney transplant in America over the weekend, there was a spate of goodwill messages and prayers expressed by her loving friends and family as they ran in support of Organ India in the Delhi Airtel marathon on Sunday in Delhi.

That they were doing it on the same day and time when their loved one was undergoing her all-important surgery, after being the recipient of a heart and kidney from a kind donor, made it all infinitely



Medha and Anup Jalota

more poignant.

We remember Medha as a sparkling attractive woman who brought an unmistakable Delhi freshness to Mumbai.

Mercifully, from early reports, the surgery has been successful and the lovely and much-loved Medha is recovering well.