



lounge

SATURDAY, MARCH 23 2024

THE PLAYERS TO WATCH AT IPL

From the 'everyyellow' Dhoni, the returning Rishab Pant to the rise of wicketkeeper-batsman Dhruv Jurel, and the reinvented Virat Kohli, IPL 2024 will be full of players bringing the tournament to life with their incredible stories

SEE PAGE 10



VEDANTA'S POST-SPLIT DEBT WORRIES BANKS | PAGE 16

WONDER, WISDOM & THE ART OF SCIENCE

THE BORDERS BETWEEN ART AND SCIENCE ARE BLURRING AS ARTISTS AND SCIENTISTS COLLABORATE TO ILLUSTRATE COMPLEX CONCEPTS SUCH AS CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL DAMAGE



FIRST
When Scriabin's 'Prometheus' played with a whiff of fragrance

HOW TO LOUNGE
SRK, 'idlis' and 'the Northie gaze'

CULTURE
A sense of intimacy at Art Basel Hong Kong

PAUSE
The rise of indie comic books



The fragrance of 'Prometheus'

The San Francisco Symphony brought together scent, sound and sight for Alexander Scriabin's 'Prometheus'

Shobha Narayan

It is early March and the Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall in California, permanent home to the San Francisco Symphony, is packed with patrons who have gathered to listen to Russian composer Alexander Scriabin's *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*. The performance has been billed as unique, nothing like the ones they have given since 1911. What has brought me and many other patrons here is the promise of scent. The House of Cartier has created three scents that will perfume the hall at three key points during the performance—but we are not certain how it will be achieved. The only clues are white vortex-shaped structures along the sides of the auditorium.

Before the concert, French perfumer Mathilde Laurent, who has been the in-house perfumer for Cartier since 2006, appears on stage in a white sparkly suit to speak about the process of creating a scent to perfume a symphony. Laurent, one of the world's most renowned "nose" artists, has created iconic fragrances such as La Paire and won every fragrance award worth coveting. This project came to her through French pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, who had for long wanted to work with Laurent on what he calls the "Prometheus project" because its composer Scriabin had synaesthesia, a condition where a person experiences the world through two senses simultaneously. For example, a person with the condition could see a certain colour while listening to a piece of music, or hear a name and see a shape. Scriabin had, in fact, left written instructions in his scores about the use of a "colour organ" that projected certain colours when certain notes were played.



(from left) Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Mathilde Laurent and Esa-Pekka Salonen, and the performance at San Francisco Symphony

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Titan who stole fire from the gods and handed it to humanity. "Fire is the origin of perfume, from which the word stems, *per fumum*, Latin for "through smoke". Fire is also the origin of jewellery, which is why the Prometheus myth makes absolute sense for Cartier."

SENSORY EXPERIENCE
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instance, in a Hindu temple or a Roman Catholic church, music, incense and beautiful imagery combine. How would the symphony recreate such an experience in the heart of modern-day San Francisco?

As it turned out, much to our delight, they used the dry-air diffusion method, where capsules filled with scent were lobbed out of the specially created "vortexes" at three points during the performance. Before the "fire", when Prometheus seizes the fire and offers it to humanity, during the climax, and after humans get fire and tame it. The fact that this musical composition is not a long concerto but a 20-minute poem also helped in deciding when the scents would be released.

To an untrained listener like me, Scriabin's composition had just too much going on. There was a full orchestra of musicians playing horns, trumpets, violins and cellos, and Thibaudet's solo. The chorus stood, singing. Colours and shapes were projected above the stage, keeping time with the music.

The pulls of perfume that appeared like a cloud above us came as a surprise. The first scent accord had notes evoking earth, ice and vegetables; pre-fire in other words. The second was a scent Laurent created 10 years earlier, called *La Prêtresse: Haire XII*, as a tribute to the power of fire with notes of burnt wood. The third signified humanity's transformation after fire and

had hisperic or citrusy notes of lemon, verbena, bergamot and fresh grass. Not that I could smell each individual note; I learned of it because of the information booklet.

Creating the scents was one thing but for Laurent, spreading the fragrance in time with a symphony carried its own challenges because, as she said in an interview to *The New York Times*, scent moves differently than music, which spread through "vibrations", or colour.

"Scent cannot be tamed... The speed at which olfaction moves is slower," she told the audience. She had to account for that during the climax when the vortexes pushed out the scent the moment before the top note. At the same time, Laurent was determined that the smell wouldn't overpower the music—a fine balance to create.

For us in the audience, sensing and inhaling a waft of perfume in the middle of a performance was a surprise and yet, seemed utterly normal. It was a wonder that more orchestras haven't thought of it, especially here in India, given our penchant for scents. In fact, every *baucheri*, Saffi concert or Dastgah performance ought to be accompanied by attars that amplify the music.

Shobha Narayan is an independent writer based in Bengaluru and has been a long-time contributor to Mint.

Medium Talk

More than small talk

Bans won't cut dog bites

WIZARD OF PAWS

Without educating both pet parents and people unused to dogs, a ban on certain breeds may not have much impact

nameeta Nalkarni



Any dog, if untrained, may become aggressive.

After a sad occurrence two years ago that resulted in a man's death from dog bite, this column discussed the reasons why specific breeds shouldn't be banned. Recently, the Union ministry of fisheries, animal husbandry and dairying proposed a ban on specific dog breeds due to the increase in attacks on humans.

The local governing bodies have been tasked with making decisions about the prohibition. The 23 dog breeds include Rottweilers, Pitbull terriers, mastiffs, terriers and American bulldogs. The goal is to stop these dogs from being sold, imported and bred. This is a small victory against the widespread, unethical and illegal breeding of these dogs. But how did we get to the point where these breeds are considered aggressive? (Those who already own these breeds are advised to get them neutered.)

As a vet, I have witnessed smaller breeds and Indies mixbreeds on occasions. The raising of both children and pets is at the root of the two-pronged issue. A few days ago, my Golden Retriever and I were on a ferry. A group of six children strolled over to our pet-friendly area and touched the dog without permission. It takes only a few children to encircle a dog and make it feel threatened. While my dog is socialised and trained, the incident was distressing and might have made any dog, regardless of breed, lash out in self-defence.

This prohibition recommendation has branded larger breeds as ferocious and aggressive because, in contrast to smaller types, they have the potential to seriously injure people. However, any dog, if it is not taught to navigate different situations, may become aggressive or behave

inappropriately. When dogs aren't trained or permitted to satisfy their innate need for physical and mental stimulation, they may find it difficult to adjust and may react with aggression.

The ban might not address the actual problem of dog bite incidents unless the causes are addressed. If my pet had snapped at any of those children who were touching him without permission, the ferry would have banned dogs. Similar incidences would eventually put even the beloved Labrador or Indie on the radar of breeds to ban.

Therefore, the answer to this issue lies in pet parents' increased knowledge of how to nurture each breed specifically to meet its demands. They must also accept full responsibility for their dogs in public areas since not everyone is at ease around them.

Dogs should never be left unattended or off-leash unless they are well-trained enough to have excellent recall, meaning they will come when called. It is advisable to keep them on a short leash when engaging with children or other adults who are not accustomed to dogs.

A dog needs to be properly trained

before it is brought into public settings.

Children often don't know how to interact with pets. Going by what I have seen, they frequently lift their hand over the dog's head and hesitate before touching them. A dog would find such a gesture menacing. As people are not familiar with canine body language, they are not always able to predict how a dog will react. It is the parents' responsibility to make sure that these interactions are supervised. Schools ought to host interactions between children and friendly dogs and veterinarians.

There has been a mixed reaction to this suggested prohibition, with some people fearing that these dog breeds will be abandoned and others celebrating that breeds that are not native to the country will no longer be bred unethically. Without addressing the lack of education on the part of both pet parents and people who are not used to pets, just a ban on these breeds may not be enough.

Nameeta Nalkarni is a practicing veterinary soft tissue surgeon and pet blogger from Mumbai.



(left) Chef Niyati Rao harvested silver berries, and traditional Khasi food by homecook Angelia Muktieth.



North-East's foods in focus

The first 'Hills On A Plate' festival in Shillong celebrates the region's legacy of fermentation and preserving food

Ritikanya Roy

The tiny peal barb or *Prantius sephore* is no ordinary fish. When fermented for three-five months, it transforms into a flavour-packed umami bomb. Known as *hangtap* in Meghalaya, the fermented fish is relished as a chutney, enhancing meals.

This, along with *hangymbai* or fermented soybean, *bitchi* or smoked rice beer, and indigenous millets feature in the first edition of the *Hills On A Plate (HOAP)* festival (20-23 March), being held in Shillong. The last few days have seen a collaborative pop-up (by invite only) between chefs, followed by interactive discussions and workshops with fermentation experts. On Saturday, enthusiasts can enjoy the traditional flavours of the state at a food festival at Ward's Lake.

Fermentation is a closely-guarded culinary practice in the North-East, where environmental factors such as weather and terrain put food preservation at the heart of the indigenous cuisines. The festival

showcases this aspect of the region's food tradition by celebrating the fermentation culture. It is the joint effort of the state tourism department, the North East Slow Food and Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS), and Meghalayan Age, a government enterprise that promotes tourism, e-commerce and cultural experiences.

Vijay Kumar D., commissioner and secretary, Meghalaya tourism department, says it is the ideal platform for a dialogue about indigenous foods like millets and fermented beans, and preservation techniques of the region. "The world usually talks about Japan when they talk about fermentation but our focus is to acknowledge the preservation techniques of India, especially the North-East," says Gayatri Desai, who was inspired to curate the festival from her own travels across the region since 2016. The chef behind the now-shuttered ingredient-driven restaurant Ground Up in Pune, Desai has been working for the past couple of months along with local chefs and community members. She has done recipe trips to remote villages in the Khasi, Garo and Jaintia hills.

The collaborative pop-up saw chefs Niyati Rao from Mumbai's Eka, Aketoli Zhimomi from Dimapur, Aditya Raghavan from Goa, and Kabyashree Borgohain from Project Oranga in Ahmedabad team up with Shillong-based chefs Ben Wankhar, Fufu Pamel Mawroh, Utam

Thanghiew and Adonijah Lyngdoh for an eight-course meal. "I was most excited to cook with the indigenous silver berries, smoked pork, *hangymbai*, wild fern and GI-tagged pineapples," says Rao. "There were product development workshops in association with IISM Shillong, and a talk on the cultural significance of fermentation by Prof. Jyoti Tamang, a food microbiologist from Sikim University, as well as a public screening of a seven-episode competitive culinary show produced by Meghalaya tourism, and judged by celebrity chefs, including Sarah Tockl of *MasterChef Australia*. The series, *Hills On A Plate*, will stream on Jojo Cinema in April.

On Saturday, visitors can experience the local culture through various food and handicrafts stalls. There are fermented wines and alcohol, kombucha, seasonal pickles prepared with native chilies, vanilla from the Garo Hills, and community stalls serving the foods of the indigenous communities like *jadoh* (meat and rice dish), *putharo* (steamed rice cakes), smoked pork and fish, and an assortment of snacks called *jungbam dish*.

The festival is open to public on 23 March at Ward's Lake, Shillong.

Ritikanya Roy is a Mumbai-based independent features writer.

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