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2 Jan, 2011, 12.32AM IST, Ashoke Nag, ET Bureau

Pianist Pervez Mody strikes an Indian note



“You don’t forget your country just because you live abroad,” says Pervez Mody , a Germany-based professional Western Classical pianist who recently performed in Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata at the invitation of National Centre for the Performing Arts . But the “piano” happened by chance to Mody who was brought up in Mumbai.

A family friend of the Modys didn’t have space in his house to keep his piano. So, he requested Pervez’s father to move the piano to their flat in Mumbai because it was a large apartment. Thus began Mody’s affair with the black & white keys. He would play melodies, “with one finger” on the piano and his father realized the little prodigy was a gifted musical ear. Mody Senior took Pervez to a piano teacher, from where he

went to another one before ending up with the “fantastic” mother and daughter duo, Farida Dubash - Feroza DubashLabon.

“I was a very relaxed child from the start, because I knew that, music, and not academics, was my future,” says Mody. “There was always music at home. My father would play the accordion and harmonica while my mother sang. You see, Parsis have this tradition that one has to learn an instrument.”

Even though the Mody family was well off, studying in the US looked exorbitantly expensive. “So, I decided against pressurising my father and look for a full scholarship in Moscow. Actually, I was also deeply influenced by Russian pianists. I was hugely lucky to get a full scholarship at the Moscow Conservatoire in 1987,” says Mody.

One of Pervez’s favourite composers is the Russian, Scriabin. According to him, Scriabin was deeply influenced by Indian philosophy and theology. “Besides, despite being involved in Romantic compositions to start with, Scriabin was deeply drawn to modernism and experimental music. He was born in the third quarter of the 19th century, but he also went on to composing music that found colours appearing on a screen as one played the piano. I even found a synthesizer developed by him at the turn of the 20th century,” says Mody. Pervez spent seven years of training at the Conservatoire before returning home. He was at the crossroads for a while. “It happens to many of us, I suppose. You suddenly doubt whether the road you are on is your career path,” says Mody. Then, two friends, a Cuban and a Kazakh pianist prevailed upon him to move to Europe and pursue his career as a pianist.

He finally left for Germany in 1997.

Back in India after 13 years, the pianist says he enjoyed playing for the Calcutta School of Music and in Mumbai and Delhi. “Indians are very receptive and open-minded. I would love to perform here again. Besides, it’s my birthplace,” says Mody, who gave 63 concerts crisscrossing Europe and has 35 concerts lined up for next year.

Mody’s favourites include Olivier Messiaen who was also influenced by Indian music. “Yes, I’m strongly bound by my Indian roots. But, I’m also tremendously fond of Liszt, Chopin, Beethoven and Bach. I feel Bach is the god of Western Classical music while Beethoven is the messiah.”