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A Spanish awakening



The Zarabanda trio

The Zarabanda trio will traverse the heart of Western classical music at a concert this evening

It's an unrestrained journey through some of the best of Baroque and Renaissance music through the sounds of a recorder, viola and guitar. Zarabanda, a trio led by maestro Alvaro Marias on the recorder and traverso, and named for the zesty dance that found its way to the soul of Spain from its colonies, performs today in the city. The concert, open to all and brought to Chennai by the Embassy of Spain and the Prakriti Foundation, is at 7 p.m. at The Folly, Amethyst Café, Royapettah.

Formed in 1985, by Marias, the trio comes to India in its smallest form with the “young and excellent” cello and viola player, Alejandro Marias and “one of the best Baroque guitar and lute players of today”, Ramiro Morales. “This is our first visit to India, though I’ve wanted to visit it my whole life. My father, the Spanish philosopher Julian Marias came here in 1959 and wrote a book *Imagen de la India* which nearly 40 years later was translated into Hindi. So India has always been on my mind,” says Alvaro, “and we are excited to introduce our music to the audience here.”

The trio will showcase plenty of virtuosity both in tonal freedom as well as dissonant chords, drawing inspiration from music and literature written nearly 400 years ago. “In the first part of the concert, we will perform music from the time when the second volume of *Don Quixote de la Mancha* was being penned by Miguel de Cervantes in 1615, in an attempt to create the modern novel, and Italian composers for their part were changing the history of music. Our repertoire will showcase Spanish and Italian mannerist music that flourished between the Renaissance and Baroque periods. It's an extraordinarily innovative style, one that I have studied my whole life, not just as a performer, but also as a theorist and music historian. I think this will be something new for the audience here,” says Alvaro.

Coming as he does from a family of intellectuals with an abiding interest in music, Alvaro earned a degree in the Humanities from the University of Madrid, and followed it up with studies on the flute and recorder at the Royal Conservatory of Madrid. Finishing with top honours, he won the Juan March Foundation Scholarship that opened doors to study under foreign tutors across the world such as Kees Boeke, R. Lopez del Cid, and K. Hunteler. He has also performed across the globe at prestigious halls and festivals such as Wigmore Hall, London, Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Moscow and Europalia Festival, Brussels and Bienal in Venice. Composers have debuted their work through his musicianship and the group has recorded the works of the Masters for well-known music labels.

Zarabanda's forte is that they perform music, especially Baroque chamber music, in the historical context in which it was written, in the hope that it captures its spirit best. With a temperamental affinity for Iberian music, Alvaro however says, "we cling largely to classical pieces such as the charming 'The Nightingale in love' by François Couperin and although we perform a bit of flamenco, haven't really been drawn so much to folk music." Adds Alvaro, who sometimes performs on ivory and silver flutes made in the Classical era (1750-1830), "Our idea is to read the audience and give them an experience they will not forget. That is our reward." Given their expertise, it will be easy to achieve for a trio so much in tune with each other and with the spirit of the time.