



Golden evening

Hariharan's enduring legacy of 50 years takes centre stage in a grand musical celebration at Nazrul Mancha

Backed by an accomplished ensemble featuring Shahdaab Roshan Bhartiya on tabla, Dhiren Raichura on guitar, Rupak Mukherjee on flute, Akhlak Hussain Varsi on harmonium and Satyajeeth Sanju on keyboards, Hariharan journeyed through a repertoire that has shaped the emotional landscape of Indian music for half a century. The ghazals came first. Each composition unfolded with the patience and elegance that have become synonymous with Hariharan's artistry. His voice revealed its enduring magic. At 71, there remains a remarkable suppleness to his singing — the ability to move from whisper-soft vulnerability to soaring intensity without ever losing emotional precision. Whether it was *Bekhayali mein, Dil toh kya, Kaash aisa koi manzar hota, Log kehate hain ajnabee tum ho or Ajeeb saaneha mujh par guzar gaya yaaron*, each lyric hung in the room, lingering beautifully in the silence. The audience sang along, often completing lines before he could. Requests flew in from every corner of the auditorium.

WHAT THEY LOVED



Anindya Chatterjee, Arindam Sil and Shukla. "Hariharanji is undoubtedly one of the finest singers our country has produced. Listening to him is always a pleasure. Beyond that, he is a dear friend. Fifty years of Hariharanji is a remarkable milestone and a testament to an extraordinary musical journey. His voice remains as beautiful and captivating as ever," said Arindam Sil. "I was introduced to Hariharan — and to ghazals in general — at a very young age by my mother. I am here partly because Hariharanji's son is a friend of mine, but also because it is a wonderful opportunity to hear one of the great masters of the genre perform live in Calcutta," said Anindya.



"He is simply Hariji to us. Whenever he comes to this city, we will always come to hear him. He occupies a special place in our hearts. I only wish him the best of health so that he continues to bring us joy through his music," said singer Srikanta Acharya.



"We are incredibly fortunate to share an evening like this with Hariharanji and celebrate his golden jubilee in music," said music composer Joy Sarkar.



"Hariharanji has been a towering influence in my musical life for as long as I can remember. In many ways, he is like a guru to me. Hariharanji's presentation and interpretative depth are truly incomparable. What makes him exceptional is his versatility. I have followed his music since childhood, attended numerous concerts and had the privilege of spending time with him personally. I have always received warmth, blessings and encouragement from him," said singer Raghab Chatterjee.



"It was a beautiful evening. To witness Hariharanji perform live on this special occasion feels like a blessing. His songs were a significant part of our growing-up years," said singer Manomoy Bhattacharya.

Debanjoli Nandi

Pictures: Krishna Kumar Sharma

The chandeliers glowed softly above the stage, casting an old-world warmth across the auditorium. The lights dimmed. Conversations dissolved into anticipation. Thunderous applause swelled through the room as a silhouette draped in royal purple emerged from the dark and slowly made his way to the centre of the stage.

Hariharan had arrived. For a city that has loved him for decades, this was more than a concert. It was a celebration of a journey that has traversed genres, generations and geographies. 50 Years of Hariharan: Ustaad-e-Ghazal, held on June 20 at Nazrul Mancha, with ABP Onestop Weddings as the memories partner, was an evening dedicated to one of Indian music's most distinctive and enduring voices. Presented by Boroline, powered by Khukumoni and organised by Bengal Web Solution, the event was curated by Prasanta Sarkar, with production by Soumya Sarkar.

Taking his seat amid the wave of applause, Hariharan greeted the audience with his characteristic warmth. "I love Kolkata. I love all of you," he said, instantly dissolving the distance between stage and spectator. A crescendo of clapping filled the air, and what transpired over the subsequent two hours was not mere entertainment but a shared liturgy of memory. If technology has transformed music over the last five decades, Hariharan remains proof that certain things cannot be digitised.

After the concert, when we asked him what had changed and what had remained constant over 50 years, the maestro offered

a characteristically simple observation: "Technology has changed but human feelings have stayed the same." It is perhaps this understanding of emotion that explains his longevity. When asked what advice he would offer young musicians today, Hariharan responded with the same sincerity that defines his music: "Keep doing music. And a person who does music is in a very spiritual state. It gives you a lot of spirituality and peace of mind," he told *t2*.

Music, for him, is not merely a profession. It is a lifelong practice — one rooted in discipline, introspection and devotion. During the conversation, he also spoke passionately about the importance of regular *riyaaz*, describing it as both a form of artistic discipline and personal fitness. And when we asked him about the secret to

remaining timeless after 50 years, Hariharan's answer was immediate. "People's love."

Perhaps because he knows something many artistes spend entire careers trying to understand: audiences do not merely remember great voices; they remember how those voices made them feel. That bond was visible throughout the evening. It was there in the spontaneous sing-alongs, the requests shouted from the aisles and the smiles exchanged between strangers united by familiar melodies.

For Calcutta, Hariharan's visits have become a cherished tradition over the decades. Speaking about his relationship with the city, he said: "I get so much love. There is so much love, even now, when we come here, it's so much fun performing here." Fifty years into a remarkable career, Hariharan remains what he has always been: an artiste who sings not to a crowd, but to each listener individually. And on this beautiful evening, every person in the hall felt exactly that.



Hariharan dedicated the second half of the evening to the enduring classics. Opening strains of *Tu hi re* were enough to send a wave of recognition through the hall. *Raja jaaneman* followed, and suddenly thousands of voices became one. As Hariharan's mellifluous vocals floated across the auditorium, the audience instinctively joined in, transforming the performance into a collective memory.