

The Rainbow Makers

— Yukta Bajracharya

The Rainbow Project, initiated by visual artist Thomas Bertschi has been spreading rainbows of joy all around the world, especially amongst children here in Nepal. "Through the project, we are trying to build bridges between different cultures," Bertschi says. The Rainbow Project, through a combination of music and art, in particular, has been connecting Switzerland and Nepal and the culture of that part of Europe to the culture of this part of Asia. "It is not just a concept, but a growing process," Bertschi adds.

"The essence of the Rainbow Project is to look for what we all have in common, rather than to look at what we are different in," Bertschi sums up the objective beautifully, "We want to share the fresh and inspiring energy that music brings and bring it back to the children." The project is a place for exchange, a space to share and grow in this world which Bertschi considers to be a musical zoo.

The Rudra band is the music-maker associated with this project. Consisting of Shyam Nepali, Raman Maharjan, Babu

Raja Maharjan, Bishow Nepal and Kiran Nepali, the band has traveled across Europe and Japan playing traditional music from versatile instruments such as sarangi, basuri, djimbe, tabala, dhime and madal. Shyam Nepali is a fourth generation sarangi player in his family and has been playing for eight years. While Raman Maharjan started playing since he was in the tenth grade and though he did not get much support from his family initially, he never gave up on music. Babu Raja Maharjan on the other hand comes from a family of dhime players and learnt it as he grew up. The pentad got the band together more than a decade ago after they had been playing together casually for quite some time. The band is also occasionally joined during their performances by Bertschi, himself, on the murchunga.

"If we are able to share the music with one child, he will hopefully go on to share it with another. This way, the music survives as well," says Bertschi who opines that the new generation does not completely com-

prehend the importance of safeguarding their roots. "A part of what we are doing is all about sharing the knowledge that we have through a language that we can speak together – music," says Shyam Nepali, a renowned sarangi player of Nepal who has made contribution towards preserving and sharing the sound of the sarangi. "I saved my own sarangi," Nepali makes a powerful statement. As a part of the change that Rudra envisions, the band tutors underprivileged children such as those at the organization Mitrata Children Home and helps improve their musical abilities all the while helping ensure that local musical roots are preserved. Through various musical concerts and events, the Rainbow Project supports the education of these children, facilitates musical instruments for them and paves way for them to become self-sufficient via the music that they play. The children from Mitrata have also been able to make their voices heard through the CD Himalaya – one of the outcomes of the musical classes,



the benefits earned from which are being returned to the children themselves.

The Rudra band, under the project, has performed widely in Switzerland and other places

in Europe and Japan, and will be doing more of the same – traveling from mountain and mountain to echo the sounds of Nepal and bring back home more rainbows.