

A FORTNIGHT OF EXCELLENCE

In the last fortnight there has been a plethora of really excellent talent. Apart from the Scots Kirk Concert which was indeed a revelation of very dignified artistry, the A.I.R. again is still in the forefront of Bombay's whirl of entertainment.

Scots Concert

The concert at the Scots Kirk was a notable one due to the high standard of excellence maintained in all the items. The only exclusive instrumental items were by the piano duettists, Miss Claire Maurer and Mr. George Faulds, in "Capriol Suite" by the famous British composer Peter Warlock; and, Mrs. Huguette ('cello') and Mr. Jack Whyte (piano) in Brevai's sonata for 'cello and piano and Schumann's "Phantasies." In these works the artistes showed deep interpretative sincerity.

Two vocalists—Mrs. Roshan Pundole (soprano) and Mr. Bill Watson (baritone)—also gave us insights into the Wigmore Hall



Mrs. Roshan Pundole

standards of vocal refinement. It was sheer joy listening to Mr. Watson—his quality and tone in the top register of his voice may not be classified as typically baritone; but, his gift for phrasing and expression and his noble decorum would no doubt provide an object lesson to most of our local male singers who have any pretensions for the concert stage.

As for Mrs. Roshan Pundole, well, her voice is indeed a gift from Heaven. Her Handel selection "Angel's Ever Bright and Fair" and Edward German's "Love is meant to make us glad" proved that she can easily transcend the austere heights of classicism and the lyrical qualities of modern composers with the rare charm and deportment which has won the hearts of all who have heard her sing.

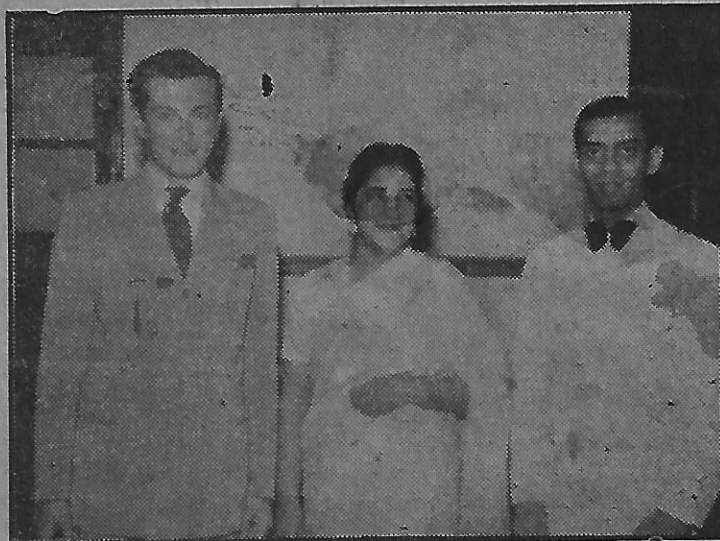


By CECIL MENDOZA

which showed that even in elocution "heavenly harmony" can be well sustained.

real" note without the slightest

AUGUST 14, 1955



Mr. George Lester, Mrs. Roshan Pundole and Mr. Khershid E. Mody.

Mrs. Roshan Pundole (soprano) possesses a most beautiful voice and her Mozart's "Alleluia" showed that she has the possibilities of becoming a specialist in Lieder of Schubert, Schumann and Hugo Wolf, if she feels attracted by these composers.

Bangalore.
24th November
1953.

Congratulations
with
Love & Kisses
Pa.

1951
MONDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1951

Good Ensemble Work In Madrigals' "Messiah"

(BY OUR MUSIC CRITIC)

THE Bombay Madrigal Singers' performance of Handel's "Messiah" on Saturday at St. Xavier's College once again demonstrated the need for adequate orchestral support in a work of this kind. The standard fell below what one has come to expect of the B.M.S., since nervousness, coupled with sheer carelessness and refusal to watch the conductor, marred the work of some of the soloists.

The ensemble work in general was very good, but although some of the contrapuntal portions proved to be the highlights of the evening, others showed that the singers had taken their cue from the raggedness of the instrumentalists.

The B. C. A. orchestra needs to improve a great deal before it can tackle a major oratorio. Conductor Victor Paranjoti often had to leave the singers to fend for themselves and devote all his attention to the orchestra, but despite this the latter was often lacking in cohesion. More players drawn from the B.M.S., plus good, hard practice is the only way in which matters will be remedied.

Timothy Faria, tenor, sang consistently sharp. He has developed his upper tones but his low range is wanting in carrying power as well as quality. Basso Dunstan Roberts, off to a shaky start in 'Who might abide', was excellent in 'The people that walked in darkness', where phrasing, intonation and dynamics were all good. He too needs to watch his low register and to keep a check on his tempo in the recitatives.

Mary Noronha's strong contralto impressed throughout its range, but a lapse in memory made her go to pieces. Her later 'He was despised' was feelingly rendered. Both Maneck Sanjana and Nargesh Driver were off colour this evening, the former having difficulty with her top notes and intonation in general while the latter, although in pitch, disregarded phrasing and diction a good deal.

Cesar Coelho, too, has neglected his lower notes, which were almost inaudible. Coelho's weird and wonderful vibrato—to which he seems passionately devoted—coursed merrily along, leaving pitch and diction littered by the wayside. I failed to see the need for his persistent anticipation of the conductor's beat in the choruses; this was most noticeable in 'Glory to God'. 'Lift up your heads' and the penultimate 'Amen' of the finale.

ROSHAN PUNDOLÉ BEST

Olegario Frank had subdued his tone; his voice was full throughout its range, his pitch exact in

restraint and wise handling will still make a great singer of him. But of all the soloists, Roshan Pundole came over the best. Her voice is free of all affectation, and possesses purity as well as strength, particularly in her delightful tessitura. Both her diction and her intoning were crystal clear and perfectly pitched.

In the ensemble work, I noticed that although some of the entries in the fugues were on the weak side, most of the voices were clearly defined. In fact the best things were the contrapuntal choruses; which allowed the singers to shine in the interplay of the various parts. The Madrigal Singers know the value of contrast, as well as how to separate the finer shades of tone and volume, all these being shown in 'Since by man came death'. I felt that a rather tight rein was being kept on the choir in both the Hallelujah and the final Amen, so that the tremendous climaxes of these parts was lacking.

The Madrigals are putting the "Messiah" by for five years; this is all to the good, for most of the present lapses seemed due to over familiarity with the work. Perhaps lack of concert work may also be to blame, since for many months past the B. M. S. has been sponsoring rather than performing. Hard work lays the foundation but it is only frequent public performances that will smooth out the edges. And they had better do something about an orchestra!

CHORAL CONCERT BY Y.W.C.A.

Worthy Performance

By OUR MUSIC CRITIC

On Monday evening a choral concert was given at the Bombay Y.W.C.A. by the Y.W.C.A. Choir conducted by Mr. George Harris. The same programme had already been performed the previous evening.

The concert began with Mendelssohn's Motet, "Hear My Prayer"—a competent performance, but a trifle wooden, owing probably to an unduly slow tempo. Those who heard it, however, will not easily forget the exquisite soprano solo of Miss Roshan Pundole. Only an occasional misplaced portamento made one conscious of the fact that this work is usually associated with the peculiarly ethereal quality of a boy soprano's voice.

This was followed by the main work in the programme, Mozart's Twelfth Mass. The transparent texture of this work, like all Mozart's music, demands a sure, light touch in performance. Sureness there certainly was—a tribute to the hard and devoted work of Mr. Harris and the Choir—and the uncertain entries were commendably few. As in the Mendelssohn Motet, however, excessively slow tempi and a tendency to drag on the part of the violins made the Kyrie and even the Gloria rather ponderous. The remaining sections of the Mass, however, were given a much lighter and livelier performance, the Sanctus and Benedictus being particularly effective. The balance of the voices was generally good throughout.

Miss Roshan Pundole and Mrs. Edith Earnshaw, and Messrs. Cesar Coelho, Stanley Watts and Ian Gardiner provided an efficient team of soloists, the honours going to the two ladies. The orchestra were adequate, but a little more rehearsal with the Choir would have been an advantage.

Mr. George Harris and the Y.W.C.A. Choir deserve congratulation for introducing Bombay to a major choral work outside the usual repertoire and for giving it such a worthy performance.

Bach Rendered Well

PLEASING BOMBAY CHURCH CONCERT

By Our Music Critic

Amid the turmoil of the vulgarised and paganised music of today, a church concert with its quiet calm and exaltation, and its serene atmosphere, comes as an oasis in the desert.

Offering a programme containing a pudicious leaven of fine works, Roshan Pundole, soprano, and Charles Velu, organ, combined to give a pleasing concert at St. Thomas's Cathedral, on Monday evening, in aid of the Cathedral Organ Fund.

Mr. Velu, who is one of our most versatile musicians, and an organist of note, gave lovers of organ music the all-too-rare opportunity of realising the greatness of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (in the Dorian Mode), his beautiful Chorale Preludes, and the Chorale No. 3 in A, by Cesar Franck, a gripping and powerful work.

Although purists in music often decry the organist's brilliance and esprit, Mr. Velu had a power of utterance and a technical virtuosity in the latter work that were not to be denied. His performance was highly vitalised and impressive, and most effectively voiced in detail and timing.

FULL & SONOROUS TONE

Mr. Velu's tone was full and sonorous in the Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, though a slightly impudic use of the 'Swell' pedal caused some of the contrapuntal writing to be submerged.

The Chorale Preludes were given an appropriately plangent and devotional rendering, with excellent fingering, footing, and registration. Other interesting works performed were Charles Wood's "Two Movements from a Suite in ancient style", and Herbert Howells' "Psalm Prelude."

Roshan Pundole contributed substantially to the programme by singing arias from Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Gounod.

Equipped with a voice of appealing texture, a style for feeling, and warmth of expression, Roshan Pundole sings effortlessly and with admirable restraint.

Particularly well rendered were "Hear Ye, Israel" from Mendelssohn's "Elijah", in which she displayed great technical facility and clarity of tone, and Gounod's expressive "O Divine Redeemer". The religious sentiment in Handel's "Large" was likewise well observed.

Y.W.C.A. CHOIR EXCELS

Handel's "Messiah" At Cathedral

By Our Music Critic

The first part of Handel's "Messiah" was performed at St. Thomas' Cathedral on Wednesday evening by the Y.W.C.A. Choir (Augmented). Mr. George Faulds, who conducted the choruses in the absence of their conductor, Mr. George Harris, rose nobly to the occasion at short notice. The mainstay of the entire evening was undoubtedly Mr. Charles Velu, who supported the whole performance magnificently by his brilliant contribution in each and every number at the Hammond Organ. His unmistakable stamp of fine musicianship and deep knowledge of Oratorios was clearly in evidence from start to finish. Mr. Caesar Coelho's singing of the tenor Recit and Aria "Comfort Ye" and "Every Valley" was very pleasing, though a bit on the dramatic side.

Mr. Robert Sutton (Bass) has a fine voice, his higher register being beautifully resonant. Except for a little unsteadiness in his "tempi", his rendering of "But who may Abide" was most enjoyable.

RICH TONE

Miss Mary Noronha was very convincing with her rich contralto in "O, Thou that tellest."

Mrs. Roshan Pundole, in her performance of the celebrated Soprano aria "Rejoice Greatly", was the outstanding soloist of the evening. Her lovely timbre suited the devotional atmosphere of the Cathedral ideally.

Among the several fine choruses "And He shall purify" was particularly well tackled, its fugal character being clearly enunciated.

We hope we will be privileged to hear the rest of this masterpiece by the same ensemble at a not too distant future.

Superb Choral Concert

REFINED QUALITY OF PERFORMANCE

By Our Music Critic

Victor Paranjoti and his Madrigal singers staged on Saturday at St. Xavier's College quadrangle, the most refined of the four performances of Handel's "Messiah" given by them in the last three years.

Even the orchestra showed marked improvement over last year's effort. Tenor Timothy Paria was not in good form, but the audience was once more captivated as the work proceeded.

Notable characteristics of the performance were its easy mellowness, the absence of any semblance of strain, and the extremely clear diction—every word was audible.

Real distinctions between soft and loud, piano and pianissimo were achieved with greatest economy of means. In "For Unto Us," the choir almost eclipsed previous attainments. Equally impressive was the atmosphere of grief in No. 24, and the pianissimo and diminuendo in "All We Like Sheep" had to be heard to be believed. This was followed by wonderful pianissimo singing in "Since By Man came Death."

Roshan Pundole was particularly outstanding as a soprano of great sweetness and purity. The duet with Nergesh Driver was superb. Mary Noronha, Maneck Sanjana, Dunstan Roberts, Cesar Coelho and Olegario Frank each had their share in this labour of love.

Bandra Concert

By Our Music Critic

Brahms' D minor violin sonata was musically the most rewarding item at the Bandra Music Society's concert on Sunday. This difficult work has a profound Adagio, reminiscent of Bach and requires two musically and technically well-trained players. Vera da Silva and Norma Carneiro Alphonso gave it a performance which stood in its own right and had style as well as profile.

Cellist Egidio Verga selected a Sammartini sonata from the unexplored musical treasures of the 17th and 18th centuries. His play is never dominated by technique, and the quality of his tone has further deepened. The "grave" received a moving performance.

Roshan Pundole's wonderfully clear soprano reached the high notes with effortless ease. Beethoven's Appassionata confronts pianists with the vexatious problem of power reserves and their judicious distribution. Silloo Clubwalla, whose previous performances of this work were praiseworthy, conserved her energies in the opening movements, thus throwing the sonata slightly off-balance.

Baron Sevier van Brabant pre-

BMSO Concert

Timings

EXPERIMENTS NOT HAPPY

By Our Music Critic

Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* would probably be excellent on the BBC's Third Programme. The music would be most suitable for a study group. But in my view, it is unsuitable for general Indian consumption. Not all Maurice Clare's fine violin playing, not all Vere da Silva's careful handling of the Bombay City Orchestra could reconcile me to 50 undiluted minutes of the *Four Seasons* (6-50 to 7-40 p.m.).

Incidentally, the BMSO's recent experiments with concert timings are not happy for middle-class folk.

At 7-45 p.m. it was announced that Mr. Clare would play only the 2nd movement of the Mozart Violin Concerto No. 4 in D Major. This was most regrettable. Surely, the undue length of the programme could have been gauged during rehearsals? And surely the *Four Seasons* could have been reduced to two or even one, and the Mozart work given in its entirety?

LOUD PASSAGES

As the contrabassi parts were practically identical with those of the cello, the huge bass section was overpowering in the loud passages—although, where necessary, it was as nimble as a circus elephant! The orchestra continues to improve.

The Bombay Madrigal Singers began Faure's *Requiem* at 8-15 p.m. and sang its last chord at 8-55 p.m.—surely a most unreasonable time for suburban as well as city dwellers? In the louder passages the BMS sopranos and tenors tended to be strident. This was a pity as the soft singing was pleasingly rounded. There were minor blemishes, but the choir, despite its smallness, sang with cohesion. Jose Remedios, the baritone soloist, sang pleasantly. Roshan Pundole sang the soprano aria with characteristic vitality. Her singing, as always, gave much pleasure.

IMPORTANT MOMENTS

It is some time since I saw a score of this work: but if my memory serves me aright, the organ part is integral in Faure's scoring, and there are brief but important moments for a harp. Charles Velu did what he could with a harmonium (should I say harm omnium?) to imitate the organ. But not even Marcel Dupre could have succeeded in such a task, and the absence of the organ was keenly felt.

Cesar Coelho in all sincerity presented the Faure Requiem in an atmosphere of deep black and general gloom. Both choir and orchestra were subdued. This would have suited most other requiems, but unlike all other works of this type, the Faure Requiem appears to be addressed to the God of whom Omar Khayyam said: "Pish! He's a good fellow, and 'twill all be well." The gloom and dread are barely stressed. Throughout the work there is an unwavering confidence in a swift and sure salvation. And this, without taking into ac-

CANTATA FOR CHRISTMAS

Soloists' Success

On Sunday night, at the Y.W.C.A. Hall, Mayo Road, before a very enthusiastic audience Mr. Harris conducted a small but adequately trained choir ably led by Mrs. Roshan Pundole (soprano) and Mr. Caesar Coelho who were also the principals in Dr. Eric Thiman's Christmas Cantata entitled 'The Nativity.'

Dr. Thiman makes ample use of recitatives, chorales, tutti or semi-choruses and unaccompanied work to enhance the continuity or cyclic form in a most admirable manner.

The chorus was really good in the unaccompanied work and throughout maintained an excellent pitch. But the success of the evening was due to both Mrs. Pundole and Mr. Coelho who were in excellent form.

Mr. Charles Velu accompanied at the piano paying ample heed both to the choir's capabilities and to Mr. Harris who conducted the work very well indeed.

(Further comments on this cantata in the next edition of The Sunday Standard.)

—CECIL MENDOZA.

BANDRA MUSIC SOCIETY

Successful Concert

By Our Music Critic

Cecil Mendoza's Philharmonic Choir, conducted by Hyacinthe Brown-Mendoza and assisted by Cecil Mendoza from the piano, opened and closed the programme at the Bandra Music Society's successful third annual concert, presided over by Mrs. Dhunjibhoy Bomanji at St. Stanislaus' Hall, Bandra, on Saturday. Cecil Mendoza played with grand flourishes and also accompanied the baritone, Urban D'Lima in three items.

Urban D'Lima has a very sympathetic voice. He was temperamentally not inclined to make the fiery elements of "Carmen" as convincing as they might have been, but he was in good form in the songs. Roshan Pundole's Soprano always gives pleasure. Gounod's "Ave Maria" was her best item, and if she adds just a trifle of expression and clearer enunciation, she will be able to surpass her achievement.

Huguette Whyte, cello, with her gifted musicianship and accomplishment, played Faure's incomparable Elegie, as well as a gipsy piece by Jeral with equal skill, and was in top form. Mr. John Whyte accompanied with his usual reliability.

Lea Vaz, piano, showed a well-trained left hand in the "Revolutionary" study, with a slight tendency to eclipse the right. Her instrument did not always respond gracefully.

Yvonne Verdes impressed more than on previous occasions. Her soprano has interesting qualities, but diction and phrasing are not always clear. The choir, directed and fired by Mr. Cecil Mendoza

THE TIMES OF INDIA—FEB 23 '61

Purcell Music Is Well Rendered

CHORUS COHERENT AND DISCIPLINED

By Our Music Critic

It was an adequately and intelligently rendered performance of Henry Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas" that the Bombay Madrigal Singers' Organisation presented at the C. J. Hall on Tuesday evening under the direction of Cesar Coelho. Since the chorus was modest in size (somewhat under forty) with support provided by half that number of strings, the orchestra coloured the music instead of getting drowned out (as happens with over-large choruses) in moments of climax.

The compactness of the group also made possible a certain intimacy of atmosphere which ideally suited the Purcell music. By and large those choruses in which the tempo was more leisurely came out best; in the more rapid movements the strings were somewhat ragged, though this fault never persisted for long. Both Dido and Aeneas (Roshan Pundole and Rusi Sethna) were in excellent voice and made the most of their music. As regards diction, the hero and heroine were, in fact, the only soloists who were audible right through, the other lead singers tending to "eat their words" at times so that it was impossible at certain moments to know what was going on.

NOTABLE PIECE

Sethna's notable pieces included the recit "If not for mine, for empire's sake", and the song "Jove's Commands" at the close of Act II. Roshan Pundole's "Ah! Belinda" was beautifully intoned, firm and clear, and perfectly on pitch. Her recitatives were nicely phrased and in the ensembles her volume was carefully adjusted.

The highlight, of course, was the glorious "When I am laid in earth", a superb lament to which even a bad singer can do fair justice but which, in the hands of a capable performer, can move close to tears, as it did this evening.

Of the other soloists, I liked Conal Almeida's deep chest tones and the mid range of the Misses Fay Sequeira and Yvonne Verdes. With both the last named, however, the upper notes were either weak or indefinitely pitched.

The chorus was disciplined, coherent and well blended in the matter of timbre. It was also responsive to its leader's direction. In fact, much of the time it maintained continuity so smoothly that I began to wonder whether many of Mr. Coelho's gestures weren't just a trifle superfluous.