

CULTURAL

DIARY

Jullundur

December

THE Hariballabh Rag. Mela Music Conference was held in the Punjab in memory of Shri Hariballabh, the *yogi* musician of the Doaba. The Conference has now assumed an all-India importance. This year's conference was attended by some eminent musicians from all over North India.

Hyderabad

THE *Natya Kala Sangham*, the cultural branch of the Hyderabad Hindi *Prachar Sangh* organised a three-day *Nataka Mahotsavam* (Drama Festival) at the Exhibition Theatre. The programme of the Festival, inaugurated by the Governor, Shri C. M. Trivedi consisted of dramas in Sanskrit, English, Telugu, Hindi, Marathi, Kannada and folk songs and dances of Andhra, Gujerat, Punjab and Maharashtra.

Madras

THE Thirtieth Annual Conference of the Music Academy, Madras, was held in Madras which was the principal attraction of music lovers of the city. Inaugurating the Conference Shri Morarji Desai, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry said, "*people should cease to think in terms of North or South and make classical music universal in appeal...*"

Nadaswara Vidwan Thiruvizhimizhalai Subramania Pillai who presided over the Conference referred to the high musical standards maintained in the past, and appealed to present day *vidwans* to restore the art to its old level.

The Academy conferred the title of *Sangita Kalanidhi* on the President of the Conference,

Shri Tiruvizhimizhalai Subramania Pillai and Awards of merit on five veteran artistes—Vidwans Anayampatti Subbier, Balkrishnaier, Budalur Krishnamurthi Shastri and Vidushi Mylapore Gowriammal. The 7-day programme consisted of music and dance recitals by eminent exponents.

Assam

THE Fourth Annual Session of the All Assam Music Conference was held in Jorhat with Shri S. N. Ratanjankar presiding. Sayyad Fazl Ali, the Governor of Assam spoke highly of the ancient traditions of music and dance in Assam. "This state", he said, in the course of his inaugural address, "had its own requisite musical genius accompanying as wide a variety of forms as its topography and its many people." He also paid high tributes to Shri Shankar Dev who had made great contributions to Assamese culture, and with whose influence the Vaishnavite monasteries, *i.e.*, *Satras* of Assam, had fostered and kept alive certain important types of religious music and dance.

The session was attended by a large number of artists of Assam and from outside besides a record number of delegates and visitors.

Bombay

THE 39th Session of the Marathi Drama Conference was held at Bhagwat Chitra Nagar, Sholapur. The Conference which was inaugurated by Shri Keshav Rao Date, the well-known drama artist, was attended by writers and artists from all over Maharashtra. Speaking on the occasion Shri Paraswanath Altekar traced the history of the Marathi stage and dwelt on the causes of the degradation of the Marathi stage. "Since acting is the heart of

the stage" he said, "drama artists should take to art seriously and consider it as a part of their education"

Calcutta

THE Twelfth Session of the All India Music Conference was held in Calcutta in December. This organisation which is one of the most popular institutions, has striven hard to maintain its good standard of music. Attempts were made by the organisation this year to make their choice of artists as representative as possible.

Inaugurating the Conference, Justice Rama Prasad Mukerji spoke highly of the impetus given to classical music by organisations like these and compared the conditions prevailing two decades ago with those of today. In the course of her presidential address Smt. Padmaja Naidu, the Governor of West Bengal, welcomed the holding of conferences like this because it helped to preserve one of the greatest heritages of our country.

In its nine sittings varied features were presented both in music and dance by artists young and old. Some of them were Yeshwant Rao Purohit, S. K. Harsha, Pt. Tansen Pandey, Nissar Hussein Khan, Gangu Bai Hangal, Kesar Bai Kerkar, Bhimsen Joshi, Salamat Ali, Radhika Mohan Maitra, Buddhdev Das Gupta, Shyam Ganguly, Raja Ray, Vilayat Khan and Imrat Khan, Lalmani Misra, Cochin Sisters (Bharat Natyam), Jhaveri Sisters (Manipuri) and Krishna Majumdar (Kathak).

Madras

February

SHRI P. Sambanda Mudaliar, rightly called "the father of the Tamil Stage", was honoured at a civic reception in Madras. The grand old man of the stage is the author of eighty plays in Tamil among which are translations of Shakespeare also. He has contributed a great deal to amateur stage activity.

Delhi

THE Delhi Natya Sangh organised its Annual Drama Festival in which as many as thirteen amateur groups participated. The programme which spread over a period of eight weeks included brilliant plays in Hindustani, Bengali, Punjabi and English.

Calcutta.

A Special Committee of South Indians in Calcutta held a ten-day festival to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Shri Thyagaraja. Prominent artists of South were invited to participate in the festival. Smt. Bala Saraswathi and Smt. Kamala Lakshmanan presented Bharat Natyam while Alathur Brothers, Palghat Mani Iyer, D. K. Pattamal, Madurai Mani, Sem-mangudi Srinivasa Iyer and Smt. M. S. Sub-balakshmi gave the musical items.

Delhi

THE *Gandharva Maha Vidyalaya*, the seven-teen year old institution of Delhi organised a two-day programme of dance and music at the Sapru House on the 16th and 17th February. The principal attraction of the programme was a ballet called *Bhairavi* depicting the sentiments of bewailing Parvati when she is separated from Shiva.

Madras

THE *Kalakshetra, Adyar*, celebrated *Tiger Varadachariar Day* on 14th February on which occasion diplomas were awarded by Shri Mysore Vasudevachariar to students who had passed out of the institution.

Welcoming the gathering Smt. Rukmini Devi said that they were fortunate to have had *Tiger Varadachariar* in the *Kalakshetra* for nearly eight years and the students and staff of *Kalakshetra* could never forget the inspiration he gave them not only by his music but by his very presence.

Delhi

THE traditional manner of celebrating *Basant* by artists and musicians in particular was recreated in Delhi by the Sangeet Natak Akadami at a *Basant Mubarak* gathering on the lawns of the Constitution Club on 23rd February when all the artists of the capital were invited.

The entrance was choicely decorated with the Akadami's symbol, a lotus motif, deftly designed by Kumaril Swami with marigolds, motias and rose-petals.

It is said that in ancient times the musicians rejoiced the season by offering sarson flowers to their friends and singing melodies and songs

associated with the season. This custom was revived at the party where flowers and attar were offered to the guests who were later regaled to a feast of music on the Shahnai by Umrao Singh and Party.

Inspired by the melody, the Dagar brothers sang in the most informal manner, a Dhrupad in *Hindol Raag* "Basant mubarak hove aaj shubh din, Shubh ghari nar nari gavo mangal char".

The lyricism of the song floated over the lawns bearing its full impact on the gathering. This was followed by a song in *Bahar* by the students of the *Gandharva Maha Vidyalaya*.

The programme drew to a close with the vote of thanks. by the Chairman of the Akadami.

The main idea in organising this programme, which was the Chairman's at home was to enable the various artists in the capital to meet in an informal atmosphere and help each one know the other better.

MISS Eleanor Steber, brilliant Metropolitan Opera Soprano, came to this country under the cultural exchange programme of the American National Theatre and Academy. She is one of the best known names in the world of opera, not only in the United States but throughout Europe as well.

December-January

A 40 member team of Czechoslovak folk art ensemble "*Sluk*" arrived in Delhi on a tour of the country at the invitation of the Government of India.

The "*Sluk*" which stands for Slovak People's Art Collective came into existence in 1949 when artists from the various parts of Czech republic were brought together to recreate and preserve the nation's folk arts.

Thus "*Sluk*" is an urbanised edition as it were of traditional folk dances and songs ; the choreography and music being composed by highly trained specialists who have adopted folk dances and tunes fully in sympathy with the Slovak people.

The troupe has a rich and varied repertoire of 50 charming items and people have been

amazed at the rapid succession in which the items have been presented.

"It is an unusual pleasure" says a ballet critic "to watch and listen to the "*Sluk*" ensemble..... and it would be 'invidious to select anyone for mention from among the eight pretty ladies and eight well-built gentlemen, for they all dance with almost equal perfection and certainly with an infectious gusto !"

Delhi

January

A 7 day programme of Karnatic music was organised by the *Karnatak Sangeet Sabha*, Delhi in commemoration of Thyagaraja's *Samadhi* day (January 20). The festival ended on 27th.

Calcutta

January

THE fifth Children's Little Theatre Festival at Chowringhee, Calcutta was inaugurated by Smt. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya on 19th January 1957. The week-long festival had very colourful items presented by children.

Bombay

January

SHANMUKHANANDA Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha organised its Annual Drama & Music Festival at Bombay.

Inaugurating the Festival, Mr. B. Gopal Reddy, Home Minister of Andhra Pradesh said :

"An awakened nation must find its satisfaction in multifarious directions, and the interest that people are taking today in literature, music, dramaturgy, dancing etc. augurs well for our future".

Referring to the Festival of Karnatic Music in a city where the prevalent spirit is Hindustani, Mr. Reddy said, it afforded an opportunity for northerners to come and listen to these concerts which would foster a closer relationship between the culture of North and South.

Calcutta

January

MILAN Chakra, the well-known organisation of Calcutta celebrated its 12th Anniversary with a three-day festival of music and

dance from the 11th to 13th January 1957. Natuvari Nriya Samrat Shambhoo Maharaj, Ameer Khan, Bade Gulam Ali, Hirabai Barodekar, Vilayat Khan and Ali Akbar were some of the distinguished artists who participated, besides a number of eminent local artists.

Bombay

April

THE fifth *Swami Haridas Sangeet Sammelan* was held under the auspices of the *Sur Singar Samsad* at Mumbadevi Park, Bombay from 2nd April to 21st April.

Calcutta

March

A galaxy of South Indian exponents of classical and instrumental music participated in the 10 day festival *Thyagaraja Utsavam*, organised by the *Rasika Ranjana Sabha* in South Calcutta from 30th March to 7th April.

The artists who participated in the festival were Maharajpuram Vishwanath Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer, Ramnad Krishnan, M.L. Vasant Kumari, Tirukoilur sisters (Vocal); S. Balachander (Veena) Karukurichi Arunachalam (Nadaswaram).

The festival concluded with a dance recital by Kerala sisters.

Delhi

March

DR. B. V. Keskar, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, presented *Lok Sangeet Dhwajas* to parties of folk musicians from different regions of the country in appreciation of their performances at the *Holi* and *Vinod Utsav* celebrations in March. The function was held at the Broadcasting House, Delhi.

Bombay

March

A drama festival was organised in March under the auspices of the *Bombay Keralaleeya Samaj* with veteran artists of the Malayalam stage like Vaikom Mani, Sebastian Joseph, Manavalan Joseph, Mavelikkara Ponnama, Ammini Amma, participating.

The two plays that drew popular applause were "Taj Mahal" by Shri Jagati Achary, and "Elanyedethu Rani".

Bombay

March

THE Government of Bombay has awarded prizes to best dramas written in Marathi and Gujerati during the year 1955-56.

Delhi

March

THE *Triveni Kala Sangham* presented its annual show of music and dance by the staff and students at the Fine Arts Theatre, New Delhi. The show which consisted of numbers in the three major styles of classical dancing, namely *Bharat Natyam*, *Kathak* and *Manipuri*, was in aid of the Indian Ex-Services Association and the Triveni Building Fund.

Laya Tarangini an orchestral composition made entirely of traditional Indian drums was the unique feature of the programme.

Bombay

March

THE Annual Drama Festival of the Bombay, Andhra Mahasabha was celebrated in March. Shri Prithviraj Kapoor who inaugurated the festival paid a tribute to the robust vitality of the Andhra stage incidentally recounting his own acquaintance with the finest of Andhra dramatic group in Vijayawada, Kakinada and other places. The first prize in Marathi goes to "Bhomikanya Seeta" by B. V. Warerkar, while the first prize in Gujerati goes to Shivkumar Joshi for his play "Sumangala".

Delhi

March

THE *Silpi Chakra* of Delhi had a unique feature in its Art festival—a programme of folk music from many countries. A UNESCO collection of gramophone records were played before a select gathering. The countries represented were, *inter alia*, Ireland, Greece, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Turkey and France. Though the languages were foreign the appeal was universal and a strange affinity could be traced in the folk music of India and other countries.

Varanasi

March

THE U. P. Government have appointed a *Lok Sahitya Samity* to popularise folk Music and folk tunes through the media of gramophone records. The *Samity* is composed of members from each dialect group such as Bhojpuri, Avadhi, Braj, Bundelkhandi, Garhwali and Kumaoni.

Inaugurating the conference on 20th April, Shri N. N. Dhebar, the Congress President paid glorious tributes to masters of music for having preserved the rich musical heritage of the country in the face of the adverse foreign influences.

He paid tributes to the Academy also for fostering art in that region.

Delhi

March

THE *Bharatia Kala Kendra* presented its sixth Annual Dance and Music Festival from the 9th to 13th March 1957. As a welcome departure from the previous years, the *Kala-Kendra* had introduced novel feature programmes, apart from the music concerts of eminent artists like Smt. Kesar Bai, Smt. Rasoolan Bai, Bade Gulam Ali, Bismillah Khan, Dagar Brothers, Ali Akbar Khan, Bhimsen Joshi, Manik Verma.

Ustad Amir Khan, Ali Akbar Khan, Begum Akhtar and Shiv Kumar Shukla participated in the music festival, while the artists of the Academy presented Gujarati dramas and variety entertainments.

Calcutta

April

Mention must be made of the *Vasantotsav*, Spring Festival which started this year's festival with a series of colourful dances and songs portraying the mood of *Holi*. Items presented included Rasdhari Dance of Brindaban, Garba, dance of Gujrat, Ghoomar Dance of Rajasthan. Mela Jatra of Himachal, Folk Songs of U. P. and Rajasthan and Phagleela. *Phagleela* song and dance ensemble by the *Kalakendra* group of artists was one of the highly appreciated items just as *Manini*—a dance-drama in *Odissi* style, presented on the following day.

A festival of plays organised under the joint auspices of the Theatre Centre, Calcutta, and Humayun Theatres was inaugurated by Shri Ahindra Chowdhury, the noted Bengali actor and Dean of the Faculty of Drama of the State Academy of Dance, Drama and Music.

The festival has been held for three years in succession, giving an undoubted impetus to the theatre movement in Calcutta. Prof. N. K. Siddhanta, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, distributed the prizes to the winning groups in the one-act play competitions held by Theatre Centre, Calcutta, in September last.

In the course of his inaugural address Shri Chowdhury remarked that the one-act plays now being produced by various Indian groups could successfully compete with the best in the Western world both in the contents and technique . . . ”

Twelve groups participated in the festival staging plays in 7 languages . . .

The third day was dedicated to Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the patron of *Kathak* and *Thumri*, hence the programme consisted of a series of choice *Kathak* items depicting a few stages in the evolution of *Kathak*. Shri Shambhu Maharaj conducted the programme in which Shri Briju Maharaj and Shambhu Maharaj's disciples at the *Kalakendra* contributed items.

Bombay

April

Rajkot

April

THE Saurashtra Sangeet Natak Academy organised a four-day music and drama festival at Rajkot in memory of the late Aditya Ram Vyas, famous musician of Kathiawar who flourished in the last century. The festival is the second of its kind to be held by the Academy.

THE Bombay Kannada Sangh, Matunga organised the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Bombay *Kannada Rangabhoomi* with a 3-day programme, inaugurated by Mr. Justice K. G. Datar. A portrait was unveiled of the late A. V. Varadachar, one of the pioneers of modern Kannada drama—who had contributed largely to the renaissance of the Kannada theatre.

Bombay

April

AN eight-day Seminar on Indian music and dance, organised by the *Sur Singar Samsad* was inaugurated in Bombay by Smt. Nirmala Rajee Bhosle, Bombay's Deputy Minister for Education.

Eminent scholars and musicologists participated in the Seminar.

Delhi

April

THE Music Section of the International Cultural Forum was inaugurated by Mr. Justice T. L. Venkatarama Aiyar at the Films' Division Auditorium, New Delhi, on April 18.

Welcoming Mr. Justice Aiyar as a connoisseur of both Hindustani and Karnatic styles of music, the Forum's president, Mr. C. K. Kochokoshy described the organisation as one which sought to establish cultural amity between different nationalities and schools of opinion through the media of fine arts and other cultural pursuits . . .

The inaugural address was followed by a programme of music recitals by young artists.

Pathankot

April

AN All-India Sangit Conference organised by *Pathankot Sangit Sabha* with a 3-day programme from 15th to 17th April, by outstanding musicians was largely attended. Those who highlighted the programme were Begum Akhtar of Lucknow, Khan Sahib Habibuddin of Meerut and S. N. Khalilkar of Poona.

Delhi

April

"EVERY unit of India has a different culture, literature and art, and yet these variations underline the inherent unity in diversity of which we should feel proud", said Shri V. K. Krishna Menon inaugurating the Third Kerala Art Festival, organised by the Delhi Malayalee Association in New Delhi on 11th April.

Referring to *Kathakali*, he said, "about three decades ago, this precious art of Kerala was looked down upon as a devil dance, but today it has come to be hailed as one of the finest and greatest forms of dance in the world"

The festival had a rich fare of dances and songs—main being dances and ballets by Shri Gopinath and party. Malabar Raman Nair gave a delightful performance of *Ottam Thullal*.