

CULTURAL

DIARY

JANUARY

The ten-day eighth National Conference and Festival of the Indian People's Theatre Association concluded in New Delhi on January 1. About 1,000 artistes from 14 States participated in the Conference and the festival which was inaugurated on December 23 by the Vice-President,

I.P.T.A. Festival



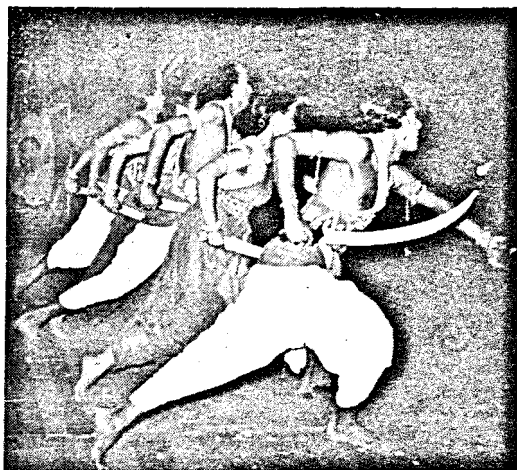
A scene from Bengali Jatra presented at the I.P.T.A. festival.



Shri Moghai Ozha, the famous drummer from Assam, as he appeared at the I.P.T.A. festival.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. Delegates from the Soviet Union and China also attended.

On the concluding evening of the I.P.T.A.'s festival of music, dance and drama, a number of the most successful items presented earlier were repeated. Among these were the Harvest Dance of West Bengal, the Fishermen's Dance of Andhra and the Chhau Dance of Bihar. One of the most outstanding features of the festival was a dance recital by Guru Gopinath, well-known exponent of Kathakali.



A scene from a dance number presented at the I.P.T.A. festival.

The Conference elected Shri Sachin Sen Gupta as the new president of the Indian People's Theatre Association, while Shri Niranjana Sen was re-elected as General Secretary. Shrimati Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, Vice-Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, was among the 13 Fellows elected to the I.P.T.A.

On behalf of the Bharat Sewak Samaj, cups were presented to various groups for the best items. The Conference passed a number of resolutions.

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Vidwan T. Chowdiah, President of the 31st Conference of the Music Academy, was presented with *birudu* and insignia of Sangita Kalanidhi on January 1 when the *Sadas* marking the conclusion of the conference was held in Madras. Sangita Kalanidhi K. Vasudevachar presided over the *Sadas*.

A large and distinguished gathering of musicians and music-lovers was present and cheered Shri Chowdiah and five other Vidwans as they were honoured and presented with awards. Prizes and Diplomas were also awarded to successful competitors in the various music competitions and also to the students of the Teachers' College of Music run by the Music Academy, Madras.

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The 16th All-India Music Conference, organised by the Prayag Sangit Samiti, concluded in Allahabad on January 6. The Conference, which was preceded by a four-day competition, attracted several top-ranking musicians of India. For three days the organisers gave an almost round the clock programme of Hindustani classical music, both vocal and instrumental, and dances.

The championship trophy was annexed by Vani Vidya Vithi of Calcutta. Kesar Sangit Vidyalaya of Allahabad got the runners-up shield.

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The 13th session of the All-India Music Conference came to a successful conclusion in Calcutta on January 9 when the programme for the tenth and last sitting was gone through. Demonstrations of Indian classical music by

Kesarbai Kerkar, Gangubai Hangal, Nazkat Ali and Salamat Ali and Vilayat Khan and Imrat Khan featured the programme of the concluding night. The duet Violin and Shahnai by V. G. Jog and Bismillah Khan and party provided an fitting finale to an eight-day music programme.

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The Annual Convention of the Bharatiya Natya Sangh was held in New Delhi on January 19. Nearly 70 delegates from all over the country attended the Convention which was presided over by Shrimati Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya.

The Convention decided that the Sangh should give high priority to the construction of a chain of theatres with rehearsal halls to hasten the progress of the theatre movement in the country. It emphasised the need for training in theatre crafts, particularly modern stage techniques, and urged the International Theatre Institute to increase the number of Fellowships for advanced studies in dramatic arts for countries where the theatre was in a depressed state.

The Convention, in this connection, welcomed the establishment of the Asian Theatre Institute in New Delhi.

Addressing the Convention, Shrimati Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya said the greatest tragedy of the Indian theatre was its complete divorce from the traditional classical drama. After briefly analyzing the causes of the decline of the Indian theatre, she said what was needed today was a standard for the theatre and "evolving our own style without employing of Western standards".

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William Warfield, well-known American singer, gave a song recital in Delhi on January 19. Warfield, one of the greatest baritone voices the United States has produced in recent history, arrived in India on January 16 during his ten-week concert tour of Asia and the Far-East. Touring under President Eisenhower's special international programme for cultural presentation, the celebrated Negro singer gave 28 concerts in India, Iran, Pakistan, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Hong Kong.

The President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, inaugurated the Asian Theatre Institute in New Delhi on January 20. The Institute, founded by the Bharatiya Natya Sangh, with the help of UNESCO, the Government of India and the Sangeet Natak Akademi, will help train artistes and experiment with theatre craft. The first of its kind in India, the Institute will run courses in rural and children's theatre.

The Sangh has offered 20 scholarships to students from all over the country. Besides, the States of Madras, Madhya Pradesh, Mysore, Andhra and West Bengal have sent two students each to study at the Institute.

The services of two experts in children's and rural theatre, Mr. A. Ellmore and Mr. M. Lee, have been lent by the UNESCO.

In his inaugural speech, Dr. Rajendra Prasad spoke of the importance of drama and theatre in life "as a handy and popular medium of emotional expression". Every society had progressed from one stage of intellectual development to another "through social institutions like the community drama", the President said.

Earlier, Shrimati Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya said a long-felt need had been fulfilled by the establishment of the Institute. She hoped that the Asian Institute would shortly become the centre of study and experimentation of various forms of Asian theatre where students from all parts of the world would gather. Dr. Nihar Ranjan Ray, Director of the Institute, who also spoke on the occasion, referred to the important role the institute was going to play in co-relating various experiments made in new lines in the country by amateur as well as professional theatrical groups.

The Institute is shortly going to be taken over by the Akademi as part of its National Institute of Drama.

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The eighth Music and Dance Festival of Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha was inaugurated in Bombay on January 20. In his inaugural address, Mr. G.D. Somani, M.P., praised the work of the Sabha and said :

"If the country is to achieve its cherished goal such institutions should be encouraged."

The 16-day Festival opened with a concert by Semmangudi Srinivasa Aiyar and party. Ustad Vilayat Khan gave a recital of Hindustani instrumental music during the Festival. The Sabha has 2,700 members on its roll.

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Among Republic Day honours, the following artistes were included:

Padma Bhushan: Ustad Allauddin Khan (musician) and Shri Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar (musician).

Padma Shri: Nargis (film artist), Shrimati Devika Rani (film artist), Shri Debaki Kumar Bose (film producer), Shri Satyajit Roy (film director) and Shri Shambhu Maharaj (dancer).

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Teams from various States presented a rich variety of Indian dances in New Delhi on January 27, the first day of the two-day Folk Dance Festival held in the Capital in connection with the Republic Day celebrations.

Folk Dance Festival held in the Capital in connection with the Republic Day celebrations.

The participating troupes were from Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madras, Manipur, the Andamans and Nicobar Islands, Uttar Pradesh, Mysore, Bombay, Punjab, Pondicherry, Orissa, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala, etc.

Bihar won the Sangeet Natak Akademi trophy for the best performance at the festival and received it from the Prime Minister. Bihar bagged this coveted trophy in 1956 also. Silver cups were presented by Shri Nehru to the Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Pondicherry and Uttar Pradesh troupes for outstanding performances, while the N.E.F.A. group was awarded a special cup and Bombay and Orissa special recognition medals.

The programme on the opening day began with the Kashmir team performing the Gaddi



The Bihar troupe photographed with Shri Nehru from whom they received the Sangeet Natak Akademi trophy (seen in the photograph) for the best performance at the Folk Dance Festival.

dance in which only men took part. The musical instruments used were drums and flutes. Next came Madras with their dance item called Karagam in which brightly dressed men and women balanced pots decorated with flowers on their heads. The Manipuri dancers presented a piece called Jounei in which both men and women took part and sang and danced to the accompaniment of instrumental music.

The contingent from the Andamans and Nicobar Islands, which was represented at the Festival for the first time, performed a dance of Nicobari aborigines. Both men and women took part but there were no musical instruments.

Blushing women, bedecked with jewels, and boistrous men, from Jaunsar-Bawar in Dehra Dun district of U.P., performed an impressive dance, called Baradi Nati, a common feature at religious festivals. The Mysore team, dressed in black overcoats and white turbans performed the Balakat dance to the accompaniment of songs and instrumental music. This was followed by the Gaje dance by the all-male troupe from Bombay. These sturdy men from Satara, waving their coloured handkerchiefs, danced with great vigour and virility, this being a devotional piece dedicated to Lord Shiva.

The Assam troupe presented the Bihar dance generally performed during harvest time. In this, both men and women participated and a number of musical instruments were used.

Dressed in colourful costumes, the men and women dancers from the Punjab presented the Nati dance displaying grace and rhythm. The tempo of the dance mounted to a climax when the artistes danced vigorously to the accompaniment of drums. The team from Pondicherry performed a tribal dance dealing with the trapping of animals. They were followed by the martial dancers from Orissa who performed the Paik dance. With swords and shields in their hands, these dancers, belonging to different age groups, presented an impressive miniature battle scene. The Rajasthan team provided a tribal dance with both men and women. The last item of the day was a Dhuriya dance by the troupe from Madhya Pradesh. This was a typical folk dance—gay and vigorous—with men and women dancing to the tune of instrumental music.

On the second day, dancers from N.E.F.A., Kerala, Bombay, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Orissa, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Pondicherry, Punjab, Manipur, Rajasthan and Bihar participated in the programme.

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Dr. B. V. Keskar, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, inaugurated the Rajasthan Sangeet Natak Akademi in Jodhpur on January 29. In his inaugural speech, Dr. Keskar said sangeet was the best

medium of expression and understanding even where language difficulties came in the way. The Union Minister congratulated the Rajasthan Government on reviving the cultural heritage by establishing the Akademi. Mr. M. L. Sukhadia, the State Chief Minister, thanked Dr. Keskar.

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Agnete Obling, the celebrated Opera singer of the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, Denmark, gave a concert in Delhi on January 30. This was arranged by the Delhi Music Society.

In the second part of her programme that was devoted to Danish songs, Agnete Obling appeared to be at her best and introduced her listeners to the music of her country. She acknowledged the long ovation she received at the end of the programme with a graceful 'namaste'

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FEBRUARY

There was good fun for children in the capital when the Children's Little Theatre, Delhi, celebrated its three-day Fourth Annual Festival which concluded in New Delhi on February 2. Among the special invitees who attended was the Prime Minister, Shri Nehru.

There were group dances, playlets and ballets, etc., in which children of a number of schools in Delhi danced, sang and acted to the delight of hundreds of boys and girls who watched them with rapt attention.

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The fifth session of the All-Assam Inter-College Music Conference was held in Shillong from February 11 to 15. In the competition on about 35 varied items of dance, drama and music (including special tribal items) 14 colleges from all over Assam and Manipur participated.

Marius Goring, the well-known stage and screen star, and his company of English actors, who were on a two-month tour of India sponsored by the British Council gave a number of performances in New Delhi beginning on February 21. The company presented two different programmes—the first wholly Shakespearean and the second, a panorama of British drama from the earliest times to the present day—the Mirror of Time.

Marius Goring

The company gave performances in Bombay, Madras, Bangalore, Aligarh, Agra, Allahabad and many other towns in India.

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The three-day celebrations of Shree Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Sabha to commemorate Saint Thyagaraja concluded in New Delhi on February 23. About 40 students of the Sabha gave a good account of themselves and their training during the celebrations.

Thyagaraja Day

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Dramas staged in Manipur will be exempted from the entertainment tax. This was agreed upon by the Advisory Committee for Manipur which held its meeting in New Delhi on February 25 under the Chairmanship of the Union Home Minister, Pandit Pant.

No Entertainment Tax

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MARCH

The Mongolian Cultural Delegation, which arrived in New Delhi on March 1 at the invitation of the Government of India, gave performances of music, dance and acrobatics in the capital on March 2 and 3.

Altogether, 17 items were presented in both the shows which were organised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi and were in aid of the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.

The delegation, which consisted of 19



The members of the Mongolian Cultural Delegation photographed at a reception given by the Sangeet Natak Akademi

members, included eminent dancers and musicians of Mongolia in whose honour the Sangeet Natak Akademi gave a reception on March 2.

The items presented on the first day con-

sisted mostly of folk dances and music. The dances reflected various aspects of Mongolian life. The "Dance of Horseman" was a pleasing number while the two folk songs, "Four Seasons of the Year" and "Fly on the Window" were thoroughly enjoyed by a packed house.



The leader of the delegation presenting a Mongolian musical instrument to the Akademi.

Some of the items appeared to have an astonishing similarity with the Indian folk dances and tunes. Some of the Mongolian instruments resembled our sarangi and jal-tarang.

The delegation presented a Mongolian musical instrument to the Sangeet Natak Akademi as a token gift. Members of the delegation took part in Holi celebrations in the capital on March 6. At their request, they were taken to Chandni Chowk, where they got out of their cars and joined the colour-splashing holi crowds.

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The first American amateur dramatic troupe to visit India presented some selected plays in New Delhi on March 4

Wayne 'Varsity Group and 5. The troupe consisting of 13 students and three staff members of

Wayne State University, visited India to promote cultural understanding between this country and the U.S.A., and acquainted amateur groups here with the techniques of the U.S. theatre.

The troupe, which had already given performances in Bombay, Baroda and Ahmedabad, presented Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex" in the capital on March 5 and two one-act plays the following day.

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The seventh annual Festival of Music and Dance organised by the Bharatiya Kala Kendra, New Delhi, was held from March 8 to 11.

B.K.K. Annual Festival Among the prominent

artists who participated in the Festival were Amir Khan, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Kesar Bai Kerkar, Gangu Bai Hangal, Bismillah Khan and party, Dagar Brothers, Ali Akbar Khan, Vilayat Khan, Begum Akhtar, Shamta Prasad, Ghulam Sabir Khan, Shiv Kumar Shukla and Girja Devi. Among the younger musicians who took part were Uma Shankar Misra, Bahadur Hussain Khan, Imrat Khan, Sharan Rani Mathur and Mujaddid Niazi.

A new feature of the Festival this year was a brilliant orchestral performance by the Maihar team who presented five pieces composed and

conducted by Ustad Allauddin Khan. This was the first appearance of the Maihar orchestra in Delhi.

Another interesting item in the programme was Tal Vadya Kacheri by the famous percussionists, like Shamta Prasad of Banaras, Purshottamdas of Nathdwara and Bafati Khan of Lucknow.

There were only two dance performances by Birju Maharaj and Miss Maya Rao, a pupil of Shambhu Maharaj. In the dance number, Birju Maharaj displayed his rich knowledge and mastery of the Kathak style.

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Under the auspices of the Triveni Kala Sangam, Ravi Shanker, the well-known sitar player, presented "Melody and Rhythm", a two-hour programme of light and classical music, in New

"Melody and Rhythm" Delhi on March 14. The programme sought to cover different facets of Indian Music—from the ancient *dhrupad* style to folk melodies and modern songs. The five-day programme concluded on March 18.

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Shri Chembai Vaidyanath Bhagwatar, who won the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Karnatic

Shri Chembai Honoured Vocal music this year, was felicitated in Delhi on March 15. Mr. Justice

T. L. Venkataram Aiyar, who presided over the function, praised the artiste's service to the cause of Karnatic music. A gold chain was presented to Shri Chembai as a token of appreciation.

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One of the attractions on the opening day of the sixth Swami Haridas Sangeet Sammelan organised by the Sur

Sur-Singar Samsad Singar Samsad in Bombay was Vyjayanthimala in a Bharata Natyam recital.

Sudha Malhotra, Pandit Onkarnath Thakur, Virendra Kumar Mathur and Kamal Singh

were among the other artistes who took part in the Sammelan.

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The Government of Bombay has sanctioned grants totalling Rs. 1,00,000 to 91 drama institutions in the State and Rs. 32,500 to literatures, stage artistes and drama directors in recognition of their merits. This was announced by the State Minister for Social Welfare, Shri N. K. Tirpude, in Bombay on March 17.

Grants

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Guru Gopala Panicker, 80-year-old Kathakali artiste, and his son, Ananda Shivaram, a well-known dancer, were felicitated in Bombay on March 22. Shri S. K. Patil, Union Minister for

Guru Panicker Honoured

Transport and Communications, who presided over the function, said that the exponents of India's art and culture played a unique role in the revival of her ancient traditions and glory.

"Kuchela Vritta", the well-known episode of the meeting between Lord Krishna and Kuchela was enacted through Kathakali by the father-and-son team on the occasion.

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The Madhya Pradesh Government organised in Gwalior on March 22, a three-day music festival in honour of the great singer and composer, Tansen. The festival was held in the picturesque setting of the mausoleum of Tansen and many noted musicians from all over the country participated in the celebrations. The artistes did not charge any fees and presented their programmes as a token of their homage to one of the greatest figures in Indian music.

Tansen Day

The Festival Committee arranged learned discourses on various aspects of Indian music and its development.