

music

Angelic Notes Permeating the Weekend

CANTEMUS" (chamber choir), "Morning Sky" (chamber choir) and "Expatria" (vocal octet), three groups of singers brought their varied forms of pure notes on the weekend at the Armenian Church on the weekend. Despite the long turbulent dusty drive to and fro, and the oppressive heat in the church, due to the overflowing audience, one found the concert singing an ope after the "hard day's

by Fayza Haq

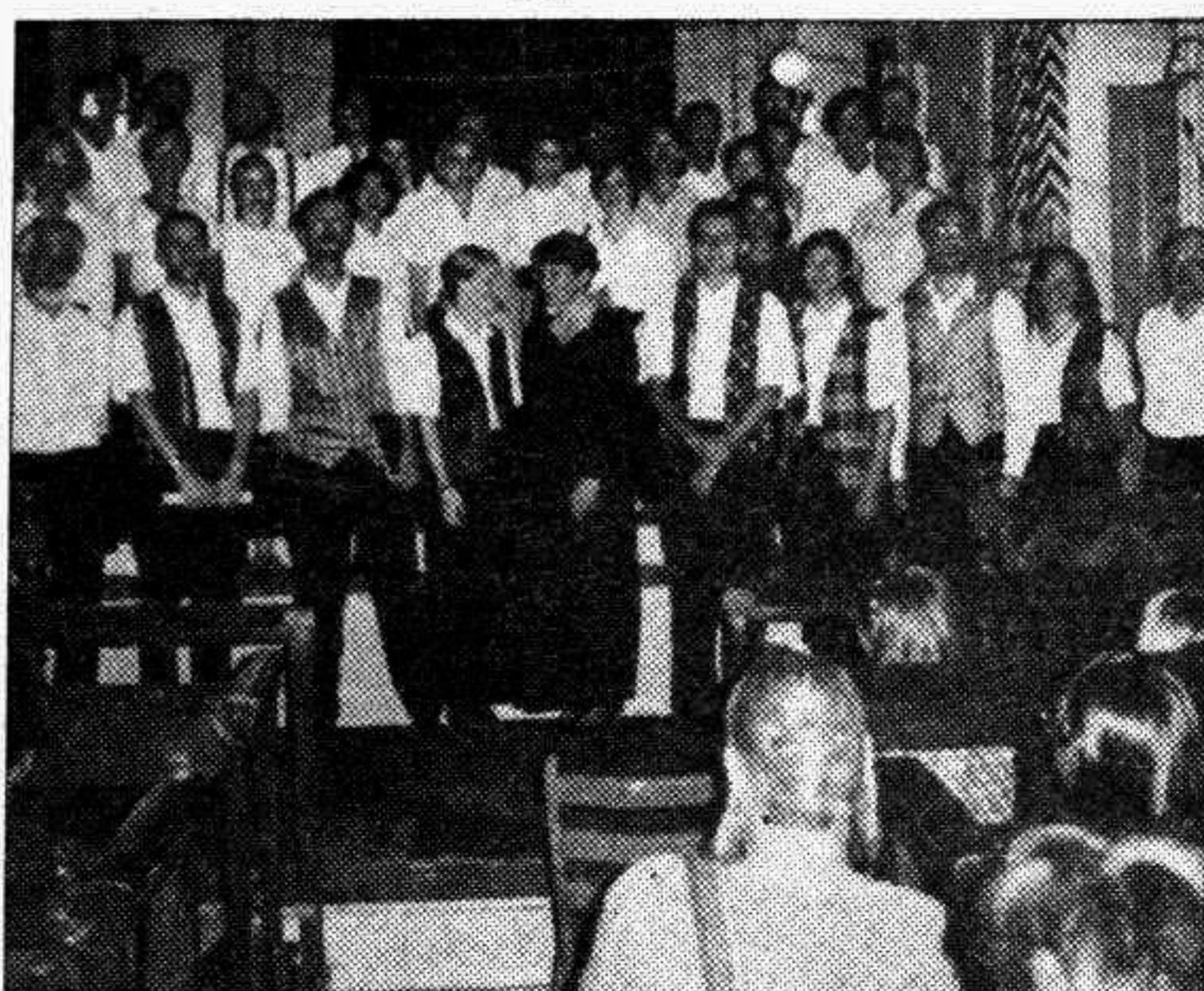
work" (The Beatles). The songs were ushering in the spirit of Easter in their sacred songs and were presenting a measure of western type restive in an ancient church that deserves to be visited and renovated.

"Cantemus" was established on February '96 and its first venture took place at the Belgian Embassy in May '96. Often it renders Christmas and Easter concerts in collaboration with "Morning sky" and "Expatria". That evening's effort was the 7th concert performed by the group, while its was its first formal concert with the other two groups. Its meetings are held weekly throughout the year and lends opportunity to people to share in the enthusiasm for music for choral music.

The members in the group include P Dister, E Graham, L Jack, H Watson, as sopranos. The tenors are M Edwards, C Gomes, P Martin, S Martinez, and O Newberry. The altos include A Arnes, B Fleure, J Griffith, D Hodgkinson, V Reekie. Its bass comprise J Dister, C Jack, M Munshi, T Smith, S Tate and T Whipple.

"Morning Sky," now seven years old, restricts itself to women members who love singing. This group enjoys various types of music, including those sung in varied languages and loves modern composition. Recently they had a special programme to celebrate International Women's Day.

These enthusiastic and en-



terprising women who enjoy getting together and rehearsing songs in this group include P Dister, D Hodgkinson, N Itto, L Jack, A McKittrick, P Olsinski, A Quimpo, V Reekie, E Sparkhall, R Stiles, M Tomito and R Whittlesey.

The third group that performed on the weekend was "Expatria", who have more exposure than the other two groups. They began in the autumn of '96 and since then, they have performed a number of times, most recently in March '98 in the Armenian Church, and later in December at the Russian Cultural Centre where their concert was called 'Madrigals to Jazz'. The size and the repertoire of this group has expanded with time and performs music written for four to eight parts. Its soprano include J Jack and H Skjolden, its tenors are R Johnston and R Skjolden, its altos are P Hartman and E Sparkhall, while its bass singers are A Deluna and T Smith. Speaking with some of the singers yesterday, sitting on the graveside of the church, Rick Johnston tells me, "I'm a hydro-geologist from USA, working with the UNICEF here, and my group sang with the other two including 'Contamus'.

which means 'Let us sing'. Each of the three groups is a little bit different: Contamus is a large group comprising also and soprano while 'Morning Sky' are an exclusively women's group whilst ours specialize in eight voices—for each piece each individual sings a different line. More often we go in for four or five different parts. In some pieces we have two voices singing the same thing at the same time, and at times three people sing in unison, and at times all eight sing together. We felt that this church is a beautiful venue for a concert and so repeatedly chose this place to perform. M. Martin, the proprietor of the church, has always been very accommodating. I hope leads to it being a spring tradition to have concerts here, away from the madding crowd. The first half was a religious section while the second bit was secular. 'Expatria' is just a group of friends who developed from a smaller gathering of four. People come and go, so that it is a changing group.

"Most of us have been in choirs in the various places that we've lived. We can all read music and rehearse once a week at Effie's house. Today we did a

lot of serious straightforward music but we also sing all types of music, such as jazz, spirituals, and twentieth-century pieces, but in the church we thought that something like 'Tea for Two' or 'Jazz' would not be appropriate."

Alain Delaune, who is an assistant director at the Alliance Francaise, says, "I've never thought of music as a career, although I play the piano too, and for this I had formal training in France for 15 years. I concentrated on my studies i.e. law and teaching. I pushed in a French piece in our programme, and included some madrigals of my choice. This is serious music but serious music can also be entertaining, and I believe that the public enjoyed it all. We practiced for three weeks, meeting once a week. The selections were items that we liked and which we had with us. At first we had 30 to 20 pieces and we cut that down to eight. The first part had Latin church music and the second part was more popular music, having preference for the melody."

"The reason why sang here was to help renovate it and rebuild an interest in it. After all the Armenians were one of the first Christian settlers in Dhaka, coming much before the Portuguese of the British. Our singing brings the 4 church to life from time to time."

Leslie Jack adds, "I teach part-time at the American International School, and sing in all the three groups. I knew some of the people in the 'Contamus' group. 'Morning Sky' practices on Thursdays, and opens wide its arms to any woman who likes to come and sing. All types of songs, modern and old, from all types of countries are included in this. Our songs are sometimes accompanied and sometimes not, as it was today, by guitar or flute."

The evening was a wonderful interlude of soft ethereal music sung by people who were not professionals, but who found out enough time to dedicate themselves to rehearsals and gave immense pleasure to the audience at the Armenian Church, most of whom rushed off to be back home before dark, but some remained behind for cool sips of soft drinks and freshly fried snacks to discuss the concert's merits and possibilities of more such laudable performances, which appeared way out of this world.

areas, we're here for different reasons but the love of music brings us together. We don't necessarily practice for concerts but sing for the sheer joy of singing. It's a hobby type thing but we're grateful for the opportunity to perform. When we sang on March 5 at a park near Sheraton Hotel, it was exciting too. This particular experience let us enjoy a part of Dhaka which we would never visit on a working day. I love singing in all the three groups."

Rune Skjolden adding her piece, says "It is difficult to say which section of the programme AI liked best. I'm used to singing in churches in my home and so I truly enjoyed myself today."

Eifie Sparkhall, speaking at the end, comments, "We don't have a leader in 'Expatria', we just work as a group. My husband works for DFID (Department for International Development) which is a part of British Aid, while I do some free-lance music teaching at home, and do some substitute teaching at the American School. Talking about the purpose of the concert, she plays down her role and says "This was a good chance to come and sing in a wonderful atmosphere. The programme was actually organised by the 'Contamus' group, and we fitted in. The 'Morning Sky' group which is run from my house joined it too. This too is a democratic group."

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event

8th Spring Poetry Festival April 12

THE famous Bengali essayist Pramath Chowdhury once wrote "I come to know it is Spring only by looking at the calendar." He was quite right about the silent and mute presence of Spring in Bengal. But whatever the impact of Spring on our nature, Bengali poetry is rich and abundant in praise of the season, which has been branded as king of all seasons. To the Bengali poets the call of this season is irresistible, for over thousand years poets in this language have been drawing inspiration, mental and spiritual from Spring to laden their poems with the beauty and verve of the season.

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Kabikanta, the longest serving poetry journal of the country, has been holding Spring Poetry festivals for over a decade with, of course, inter-

by Ziaul Karim

mittent gaps. The magazine in its effort to connect modern poetry with its rich traditional past and organising a congregation for poets found Spring the best possible season for a meeting of the creative minds and for reading the works of the poets before an audience.

This year the festival, basically a brainchild of Kabikanta, the editor poet Fazal Shahabuddin, will be held on April 12. Leading poets of the country are likely to join the congregation. As usual poet Fazal Shahabuddin will introduce the participating poets while poet and novelist Alauddin Al Azad will chair the two-hour programme. This year's guest poets will be most likely Academy Award winning Marathi poet Dilip Chitre and front-ranking Pakistani poet Ahmad Faraz.

Farida adds about her range of hues that she uses. "I adore earthy browns, blacks and beige tones. My preferences also stretch to olive-green and maroon. My mother does all the embroidery by hand, while I do the basic patterns and designs of 'shalwar-kameez' sets and 'saris' in my batik work and my painting too, my mother helps with all her might and patience.. asked to elaborate on her selection of her shades for her clothes."

Dwelling on her selection of motifs and asked how long she spends on creating each item, the designer says, "My choice of motifs varies from geometrical patterns to floral motifs and abstractions. I believe in working according to my moods as that lends spontaneity. It takes my mother and me at least a week just to prepare the shades of colours that I require. If there is embroidery to go with

fashion

Labour of Love

FARIDA Yasmine Qalium (Rainima), a self-taught designer, who held her exhibition of 'shalwar-kameez' and 'saris' recently at the Alliance Francaise, with vegetable dye designs and hand embroidery, began her experimentation's last year. Farida explains, when asked to

by Cultural Correspondent

elaborate on her choice of use of materials, "Chemicals can be put on clothes quite easily having bought them in the local shops. But it is difficult to take out the juices from 'harkatki', which gives shades of ash, olive green, gold, yellow and pale-green; dry beetle-nut, which provides a variety of pinks, 'kair' which lends maroons and browns, the dry shell covers of dalim which give me different varieties of beige; tea-leaves that supply me with dull browns; turmeric that provides golds and yellows; and the dust of the roots of 'manjil' tree that gives me a great range of reds. What I find interesting is that I can experiment with the dyes and so use different shades of colours at different times."

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this, it takes us a month more. The process requires boiling, drying, printing, plus hand-embroidery. All this is time consuming although it is a labour of love."

"Yes, the fine embroidery is a strain on the eyes, and the basic work which is done in a separate room, along with the kitchen (boiling) and the bathroom(washing) can be messy. However, even my father, uncle and other members of the family like cousins, enjoy lending a hand to keep up the production. I work from my house at 6/1 South Kallyanpur. It is a pity that people do not often comprehend or appreciate the toil that goes into such work and fail to appreciate our pricing that range from Tk 1,400 to Tk 2,000 for 'shalwar-kameez', and Tk 1,800 to Tk 3,000 for 'saris'."

In order to convince the customers of the need for vegetable dyes, Farida points out, "Chemical dyes appear insipid and monotonous when compared to vegetable dyes, which are a product of nature. This has undoubtedly contributed to our 'newwear' designs and fashions of late for at least a decade. To me this type of colouring appears more aesthetic and healthy. Here we have 'eco-friendly' colours to choose from, and the colours do no damage to health and hygiene of the wearer. I hope I will have more time to experiment with these dyes and create more combinations of hues and designs in future. If these vegetable dyes are applied on pure cotton or silk, as I have done, using materials that are available locally, one can only boost the local culture and industry."

CORRIGENDUM
In our interview, on the culture page, under the title Jurassic Park: Modhumita's Ed Giff it was written Ziauddin, brother of Mr Iftekharuddin is dead. In fact it was his eldest brother Salauddin who is dead now. We regret the mistake.

TV Guide

Monday 22nd March

All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star

STAR SPORT

ZEE CINEMA

MUSIC ASIA

8:30 PGA Tour Golf

8:15 Ujala Hi Ujala

10:00 Indoor Athletics International

12:00 Fox Sports News Live

1:00 International Motorsports News

2:00 Tour of Langkawi 1999

2:30 New Zealand Cricket

3:00 South Africa Tour to NZ

4:00 West African Football League 1998/99

5:00 Trans World Sport

8:30 PGA Tour Golf Bay

9:00 Hill Invitational

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