gious," says Jhunu.

Fifty years later the crowded rooms of BAFA attest to the fact that many parents are not only eager to see their childrens' knack for singing, dancing or painting turn into serious pursuit, they are willing to sacrifice their own time to oversee how the learning is taking place. In the junior sections of BAFA mothers are allowed to sit along the wall, and they willingly occupy that place to look over how the teaching is going on.

BAFA's popularity can be traced to its total intake year round. "The number of students stands at around four thousand during admission. However many of them fail to continue as it later dawns on them that it is really tough to pursue studies in the arts," says Amanullah Chowdhury, secretary of BAFA. Although the office could not provide a dropout rate, Amanullah attests that among the four to five thousand that take admission one to two thousand fail to reach the final year. BAFA provides a four-year-long course for both children and adults. "In the senior section there is no





Annual student intake in the BAFA branches is so high that the authority is contemplating opening up two new branches.



The age-old structure at Wiseghat that houses the main branch of BAFA.

age limit, so that anyone who crossed the age of 10 or 11 is eligible as a candidate, and this provides an opportunity for those who have a late awakening. Having students of various age is advantageous, students show more enthusiasm," says Naosheen Laila, who teaches Nazrul's song at BAFA. Naosheen became a popular name by winning several awards in the BTV organised Natun Kudi competitions when she was a child. BAFA's teaching body is replete with such renowned artists. This has been the strongest point of BAFA, and having a competent teaching staff has its results. "BAFA is an organisation that produced most of the talented artists of the country," Chowdhury points out.