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## Struck by thunder

Music - Anthony Braganza



The musical concert for the children of Udayan was the brainchild of Reverend Stevens, the chairman of the Calcutta-based organization, and Fauzia Marikar, a pianist, cellist and teacher. This was the fourth edition of the annual concert, and it was held in St John's Church. The neoclassical architecture of the church enhanced the ambience of the musical evening.

Udayan is Reverend Stevens's labour of love; it is an organization where children who are afflicted by leprosy, or whose parents suffer from leprosy, are educated, in order to infuse some purpose into their lives. Luminaries such as the former Australian cricketer, Steve Waugh, and the writer, Dominique Lapierre, are among the people who support this institution.

A dance by the girls of Udayan was a beautiful prelude to the concert. The choir of the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy did beautiful renditions of " *Holy Holy*", " *Ave Verum Corpus*" and the " *Hallelujah*" chorus. The now well-known Vachagan Tadevosian then did a haunting recital on the oboe, bass oboe and the duduk (an Armenian heritage instrument that is similar to an oboe). He was accompanied on the piano by Jennifer Heemstra. In the repertoire was " *March in the Old Style*" by Kedarnath Awati, which was a great performance.

The students of Fauzia Marikar - Nilanjana Datta, Deepanjali Lobo and Oishik Ganguly - performed. They delivered good performances of Schumann, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Kodály and Schoenberg. Biplaw Singh then played on the classical guitar with great control, and capped his performance with his own arrangement of Rabindranath Tagore's " *Bhenge Mor Ghorer Chabi*". Owing to his dexterity, he even produced the drone of Indian instruments like the tanpura on the guitar.

The next performance was the icing on the Cake. Heemstra, who is a pianist, chamber musician, vocal coach and musical explorer, and has earned a Master's degree in piano performance from the Cleveland Institute of Music, performed. Her technical skills and her mastery over the piano were exhibited in a performance, which held the

audience spellbound. Her rendition of the two *intermezzi* by Brahms, from Opus 118, brought out all the glorious colours of the Romantic period.

Heemstra went on to paint pictures and tell two stories *via* her performance on the piano - *A Hermit Thrush at Eve*, Op. 92, No. 1 and *A Hermit Thrush at Morn*, Op. 92, No. 2. The two compositions are masterpieces by the American composer, Amy Beach (1867-1944), whom many hailed as the first successful American female composer of large-scale art music. The delicate touch and control that Heemstra used on the piano keys brought to life the hermit thrush's activities in the evening and morning.

The next piece was Astor Piazzolla's "*Adios Nonino Tango Rhapsody*". This was capped by the Verdi/Liszt "*Rigoletto Fantasie*". The technical dexterity with which this piece was delivered was amazing. The chords and complicated rhythms were executed with aplomb. Heemstra left the audience thunderstruck with this finale. The programme concluded with a dance by the Udayan boys.

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