

September 3, 2013

Healing notes



The Hindu

MMA's performance at the New Calvary Church. Photo: K. Pichumani

The spirit and purpose of music came through loud and clear at Madras Musical Association's charity concert

In a darkened hall at the Hindustan Bible Institute's New Calvary Church, a film spooled out casting disturbing images of children at risk. Forced into labour, sexual work and circumstances beyond their making, these are the children that the HBI reaches out to through its community transformation programmes. The Madras Musical Association lent its voice to support HBI's efforts in a charity concert over the weekend.

The choir over two days, under the baton of Augustine Paul, presented music that drew a fine balance between the ecstatic commemoration of the mass and secular music for the soul.

Beginning with the second movement of Beethoven's 'Pathetique Sonata', a chance for pianist Edwin Roy to show off his fine musicianship, the piece explored with sonority the tragedy of a lost childhood, setting the theme for the evening.

Over the next half hour, the choir performed Giacomo Puccini's 'Messa di Gloria', a theatrical piece that was written by the composer on his graduation in 1880. It lay shrouded in anonymity for 70 years till it was found by an Italian priest, who made it popular.

The mass has five parts — Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei — and draws inspiration from the Christian rite of service. The music speaks of redemption, glory, resurrection and peace.

The Kyrie is a solemn piece which ended on a sunny pastoral note with the piano singing a bucolic melody.

The Gloria, a breath-taking tour de force, exuded fanfare and pageantry singing of the contrasting simplicity of Christ's birth. Ebenezer Arunkumar's textured and resonant tenor voice gave a moving interpretation of it.

This was followed by the Credo, a technically difficult passage to perform. Aashish Joseph's tenor and Mhathung Odyuo's deep bass with other bass voices joining in lent it stark beauty and depth.

The Sanctus with the loveliness of a dance had a light and easy solo by Kingslin Ponbhabha while the Agnus Dei with Ponbhabha and Odyuo joining in proclaimed Puccini's soulful mastery.

Following this came a host of songs that were finely graded works of individual craftsmanship — 'This Is My Desire' (Preethi Angela and Nisha D'Mello), 'Every Time I Feel The Spirit' (Male voices with a solo by Pramod Venkatrangam), 'Blessed' (Maxyn Kingston) 'Enni Enni Thuthi Sevai' (Shirley, Anu, Jennifer, Shalom, Sonali, Tabita Robinson, Edser, Jackson and Moses with Jessanth Pandian on the piano and Rebecca Sam on the guitar), 'Heal The Wound' (a moving performance by Anupa Paul and Aishwariya Davis) and 'Jesus Take The Wheel' (a powerhouse performance by Nadisha Thomas).

And finally with much feeling, holding the audience at the centre, the choir sang John Rutter's 'The Lord Bless You and Keep You'.

The concert ended with poignantly beautiful music befitting the occasion.