

October 14, 2013

A rainbow in the music horizon



The Hindu

Showcased by Green Meadows, Musee Musical and The Hindu, the concert was conducted by Augustine Paul and choreographed by Amrita Fredrick. Photo: R. Ragu

The MMA's concert 'Over The Rainbow' showcased the best of songs from well-loved musicals and operas

A girl on a yellow brick road, a chorus of Japanese maidens, a French working-class woman, a fiery gypsy and a governess to a royal brood... Different women from different times, different lands and in different costumes. On a weekend evening at the Museum Theatre they, along with the men from the Madras Musical Association, had one thing in common — they stretched their voices to belt out the best from musicals and operas across the ages.

Showcased by Green Meadows, Musee Musical and *The Hindu*, the concert conducted by Augustine Paul and choreographed by Amrita Fredrick took music beyond the confines of lines on a map and shone the spotlight on people, places and emotions. In this they were ably assisted by the musicians — Edwin Roy and Pratibha Santwan (piano), Shyam Benjamin (keyboard) and Navin Kumar (guitar) — who through the prism of their expertise cast a happy glow on the evening.

The opening song, Anisha Sarah Simon's 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow' (*Wizard of Oz*), had none of Judy Garland's saccharine simplicity. Anisha exchanged Garland's contralto voice for an improvised, individualised version that was equally beautiful. Four songs from *Mikado* followed — the chorus of men and girls balancing and holding notes with élan, 'Wandering Minstrel' by Ebenezer Arunkumar who exchanged his usual suit for a blue kimono, and 'Three Little Maids' by Anisha, Nadisha Thomas and Anupa Paul who charmed with their fans and voices.

Maxyn Kingston's powerful 'I Dreamed A Dream' (*Les Miserables*) filled the star-spangled universe that was the backdrop and held notes past their vanishing point. Pirouettes, tap dancing and clever lines filled Bernard Balachander's 'If I Were A Rich Man' (*Fiddler On The Roof*).

Both of Sangita Santosham's bravura performances — the French 'Habanera' (*Carmen*) and 'Worst Pies In London' (*Sweeney Todd*) — were flamboyant and guaranteed to inspire applause.

The overwhelming, heart-breaking story and rich music of the *Phantom Of The Opera* could have only been told so well by Nadisha Thomas. A powerhouse performer, her 'Think of Me' floated on a river of exquisite sound. Three sprightly songs from *Oklahoma* followed, an impressive solo 'Oh! What A Beautiful Morning' by Ashish Ittyerah Joseph, a pretty duet 'People Will Say We're In Love' with the sweet-voiced Shilvi Sharon and the foot-tapping, colourful 'Oklahoma Ok!'

Melodic numbers

Children took centre-stage with 'Hakuna Matata' (*Lion King*) and 'Bare Necessities' (*Jungle Book*) in a series of cute performances choreographed by the enthusiastic Pallavi Venkatarangan. She returned as the no-nonsense governess, Anna Leonowens to sing 'I Whistle A Happy Tune' (*King and I*) with Emmanuel Praveen and 'Shall I Tell You' with Edward Thompson, who in his blood-red robes, made for an impressive king of Siam.

Sharanya Gopinath is a sunny, amusing singer who wrapped her voice around 'Cabaret' (*Cabaret*) with its bumps and curls to bring alive a song and an act that was pure ecstatic art. Other songs with vim and vigour followed — 'Get Me To The Church On Time' (*My Fair Lady*) by Revi Thomas and Manoj Richard, 'Jackson' (*Walk The Line*) by Ravi Santosham and Sangita, 'With Cat-like Tread' (*Pirates of Penzance*) by Moses S. and Emmanuel Prathap Singh, 'Il Mio Tesoro' (*Don Giovanni*) by Ebenezer, 'Hail Holy Queen' (*Sister Act*) by Roshni Sharon Rajan and the grand finale 'Any Dream Will Do' (*Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*) by Prince Abraham and the choir.

The thing about the concert was that whether the songs were rock opera or beloveds by Gilbert and Sullivan, or demanded better enunciation, their renditions were spirited thanks to the richly textured voices. Add to this the rousing accompaniment and the audience was more than pleased to indulge in nostalgia.