



Building confidence

On the very first day, the mood was abuzz from the get-go as the SOI string players listened to the young musicians play their instrument to gauge the level of playing. From there on, SOI violinists Averell DeSouza and Prabhat Kishore worked with young players in groups of three, while Deon D'Souza worked with two viola players. "Our aim was to get the participants to play in ensembles, rather than play solo. That's what they do on a regular basis anyway," Averell explains.

Days at the music camp spanned 10 am to 4 pm, beginning with instrument tuning and practising of scales, arpeggios, left-hand exercises and several types of bow strokes. This was followed by one-on-one lessons with students practising a solo piece. Post lunch, the three string musicians practised duets and orchestral works with their students every day. "I had a great time teaching the violin. Some students were at a great level and were good at reading music. They would go home and practise their musical difficulties and play it again the next day," says Kishore. Averell echoes him, saying, "I was quite surprised with their level of playing because in Goa there aren't many opportunities to learn the instrument at a good standard. I was impressed with the students and most played with the right technique."

Two viola players tutored by Deon worked on a classical piece arranged for the instrument. "The level of playing was fairly good," he says, even as he noted that their understanding of and playing as an ensemble needed work. "Instilling discipline during group rehearsals was a bit of a task. We encouraged each child to play their part. The style of playing bow strokes was new to them. They did manage to correct some technical habits in this short period of seven days," he says. Dr. Dias was always around and ready to lend a hand to those who needed assistance with music camp homework at the end of the day.

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Interactivity at its best

Widening the range of the camp were audiovisual music appreciation sessions. Led by Deon, these interactive sessions were lively and unlike formal lectures. The first session included an introduction to instruments and sections of the orchestra, which in turn encouraged the young participants to think beyond their instrument and observe the presence of other orchestral instruments. "They were encouraged to listen to the music as a whole instead of listening to their part only. Videos of all orchestral instruments were shown to help them grasp the unique sound they produced. They were further asked to guess the sounds without watching the videos," he explains. At the second session, they were introduced to important eras of Western classical music with masterpieces of prominent composers from those eras played for the group. Besides, faculty members shared their stories about their journey to become full-time musicians.

"Children need this exposure to widen their horizons and to be aware of various career opportunities in music for those who are thinking of deepening their study of music," says Dr. Dias. "The SOI is potentially an enormous resource for music education, and we experienced this first-hand during the week of the intensive, quite exhilarating, music camp." The week culminated with the youth putting on an enjoyable concert for their families, featuring Felix Mendelssohn's Adagio from String Sinfonia no. 8 and Pieces for 4 violins, Op. 178, by Charles Dancla.

The string players then enthralled the audience with performances featuring Dvořák's Terzetto in C major, op. 74 and Baryton Trio Hob. XI:14 by Haydn.

Dr. Dias says, "We look almost instinctively to the SOI for its assistance. It is the country's only professional orchestra, and it is of exceptional calibre. This collaboration with Child's Play is a form of outreach

into Goa, arguably the country's most fertile ground for the blossoming of music, particularly Western classical music. It makes perfect sense for the SOI to make inroads here, given also that Goa is quite close to Mumbai. We look forward to having even more robust and sustained pedagogic collaborations with them again." ■

Recommended Volume

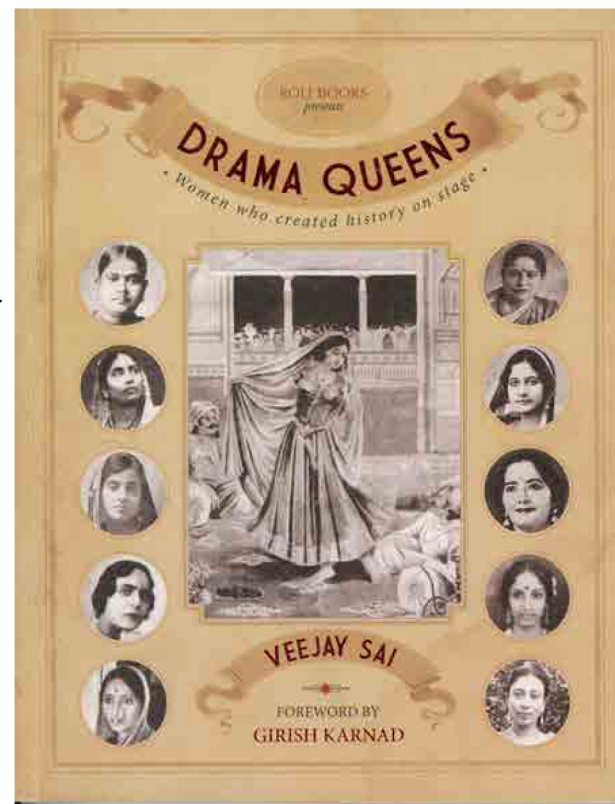
Every month, **Sujata Jadhav**, Head - Libraries & Documentation Centre at the NCPA, introduces a must-read book from the NCPA Reference Library. This month, she discusses a crucial history of forgotten women of the Indian stage.

Drama Queens: Women Who Created History on Stage
By Veejay Sai
Publisher: Roli Books, New Delhi

This month, I would like to recommend *Drama Queens: Women who Created History on Stage* to our members and readers. This is an exceptional historical document of women in theatre during the 19th and 20th centuries, a time when performing artistes who happened to be women were treated with much indignity.

The book, authored by award-winning writer, editor, columnist and culture critic Veejay Sai, is the outcome of extensive research into the lives of ten of the most acclaimed women of the Indian stage. In the foreword, actor, writer and director, Girish Karnad has written, 'Veejay Sai not only deals with the lives of artistes who weathered this century of transition and laid the foundations of a whole new aesthetics, he covers the entire panorama of theatre across the country, in different languages and cultures, detailing the stresses as well as the richness of their work, the financial and social challenges they faced, and the glorious legacy they left behind.'

The book is formatted chronologically with the text divided into 10 chapters, one allotted to each personality. It shines the spotlight on the cultural history of the country and includes rare pictures that make it even more intriguing. The book is also filled with interesting anecdotes that would have otherwise been forgotten. For example, productions by celebrated Marathi thespians, like Bal Gandharva, had special, subsidised tickets



for women who came from courtesan cultures. The photographs enhance the sequential curve that the author covers, while the variety of language theatres Sai has referenced, provides a comprehensive, national perspective.

Featured in it are:

- Kumbakonam Balamani (Tamil)
- Tarasundari Devi (Bengali)
- Munni Bai (Parsi)
- Mukhtar Begum (Urdu)
- Hirabai Barodekar (Marathi)
- Malavalli Sundaramma (Kannada)
- Jahanara Kajjan (Hindi)
- Moti Bai (Gujarati)
- Rushyendramani (Telugu) and
- Thambalangoubi Debi (Manipuri)

These women were courageous,

adventurous, ambitious and did not reflect the traditional expectations of society. The struggles they faced were all-encompassing—they faced resistance on stage and in life. Sai describes how and why theatre producers began hiring women, and how the next 50 years saw the rise of female singers and actresses, who soared to the top of the charts in theatre and recording industries. The artistes in this book were integral to the success of the theatre economy of their times yet their contribution was largely ignored. In fact, they were instrumental in introducing the song and dance element in our films that remains integral even today.

The book is one of a kind, in that it resuscitates the lives of women performing artistes who broke through impossible

barriers that prohibited women from acting on the public stage. Join us at NCPA Library to explore this rigorously researched piece of work. ■

The NCPA Reference Library is open to visitors from 10 am to 5.15 pm on weekdays. The reference library membership is complimentary for NCPA Members. The books and LPs in the Stuart-Liff music library are available for reference to Friends of the SOI at no cost. The reference library membership is open to the general public at a nominal annual fee of ₹500/- (April-March). Casual Membership for Visitors (for outstation visitors only) is available at ₹100/- per day. For more information, please call 022-6622 3715.