

mardi gras

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27 January 1976

Things are hotting up on the penultimate day of the Mardi Gras. Many of you will be setting out shortly in search of the pot of gold, or perhaps returning disappointed. Hope you enjoyed yourself anyway.

Yesterday at the dramatics some joker created a scare by throwing a rubber snake into the audience. In the ensuing stampede some girls were hurt. We're lucky that nobody was seriously injured. I have always regarded the practical joke as ranking even lower than the pun as a brand of humour and my opinion was confirmed yesterday. I would like to disembowel the humourist. A joke is a joke, but when people get hurt the humour has been stretched a bit too thin.

Another thing that bugs me is the sight of a large number of people, staggering around shouting "Peace, Brotherhood" etc. By all means have fun, but making a nuisance of oneself is hardly the way to do it. It's high time we, and, regrettably, some of our guests, remembered our obligations. If Mardi Gras is to be enjoyed by all, a little co-operation is necessary. Come now, it's not so hard.

JUST A MINUTE:

Today the final rounds of the 'Just a Minute' unfolded before the usual packed house. (Something really must be done about relocating the Literary events. Some imaginative thinking before next year's festival).

The first semi-final started slowly. C.A. Sundaram started with a flourish, but the others gradually woke up and things began to look up. Gangjee shot into the lead with a spate of grammatical objections; he did not lack humour however, and rocked the house with tales of 'strange bedfellows'. He used a few theatrical tricks but they were for a good cause. The results: Gangjee (NCC) - 12.5, C.A. Sundaram (Vivek) 6.5, Abhijit Biswas (IIT Kgp) 5.

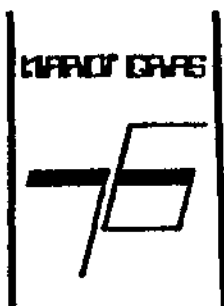
The second semi final did not produce such good fare. Vasudevan (UAS), yes we know his nickname, talked very fast and to no great purpose. He scored a number of points because of futile objections against him. Quick thinking by Manju saved her on a number of occasions, and her brilliant discourse on her 'Life with Picasso' earned her a place in the finals. Rahul Parrior (St Joseph's) played it cool, and after a nervous moment at the eleventh hour, sailed into the final with a timely interjection.

The Final Round: Gangjee, picking up where he had left off, assumed command at the outset with some marvellous stories about himself and his bulk. C.A. Sundaram caught up later, and overtook Gangjee who suddenly appeared to have fallen asleep. Sundaram was leading after 3 rounds and the judges decided that the finals deserved another round of topics. Gangjee and Sundaram raced to the finish neck to neck, and with the audience behind him Gangjee won. Sundaram was an unlucky second, and Biswas a lucky third - defeating Vasudevan in the tie breaker.

DRAMATICS:

Dramatics preparations ran along novel lines this time: the venue was shifted to the smaller OAT at Central School to accommodate only the interested few.

However, the evening commenced on a distressingly familiar note. The sound level was far below the audible range. The organisers explained it away as faulty microphones. Let us hope the explanations sufficed for those three very courageous ladies from VCC who had to brave the audience. Sincere apologies. For the records: They staged a play by Beckett.



Next on stage was Vivekananda with "Zoo story" by Edward Albee. Very nice acting there by Sundaram, though he did seem to be in a bit of a hurry to finish off his lines. A regrettable 'snake scare' threw the crowd into momentary panic. The play resumed, to climax in a slightly sloppy knifing scene. The ketchup bag proved too stubborn though, and we had to do with a blood-less murder.

The third play was Eugene Ionesco's "Bald Prima Donna" by the medicos from St John's who assured us that a doc either cures his patient or 'goes down under with him'. Very reassuring. An early sound problem was solved by strategic relocation of the mikes. Smooth sailing thereafter. The fresh talent from St. John's seems quite promising. There were a few veterans too - Ajit Bhide (fire-chief) who put up an excellent show, and Corinne Soares as Mrs Martin (She's been on the IIT stage before) who didn't seem to have a clear recollection of anything - not even the identity of her bed partner. Mrs Smith's (Anita Fernandez) role was a trifle overdone perhaps, but it helped to set off the 'English' atmosphere. All in all, rather a confusing 'antiplay' from the absurd theatre, but well-executed.

This was followed by Christ College who 'like man-ed' through some of their own observations about the generation gap, but it failed to bridge the gap between stage and spectator.

The last play of the night was Anthony Sheppard's "The Sleuth"; a rather tame whodunit, propped up by some excellent delivery and wanton abuses by Loyola's Vijay Harut (as Andrew). There was some scope perhaps, for better facial expression.

INDIAN LIGHT MUSIC:

Set in sylvan surroundings, the programme got under way nearly an hour late. SIET started the ball rolling with a team of two. Although they were hampered by lack of accompaniment they sang well. The crowd was surprisingly docile and maintained a commendable silence.

IIT M came on next with Srikanth at the helm. He played the harmonium well. S R Rajan played delectably on the Hawaiian guitar, though the notes might have been amplified more.

Loyola, were the first electric group and started (at last) after inevitable problems with their equipment. The introduction was their own composition and the vocals were quite flat. The Tamil number was much better.

REC(T) came on with a well equipped group and concentrated on faster and more catchy tunes. Guindy specialised in Tamil. Their Hindi duet could have been done better with a good female voice.

PSG produced some violin numbers that flew straight over the audience; they too concentrated on Tamil music. Stella borrowed the services of a percussionist and put up a pretty good show. They requested audience participation in their group numbers, always a rash thing to do.

Pachyappa's maiden venture started on a bad note when they chose a difficult opening piece. They graduated to Tamil numbers but the audience had already had enough of these.

Acharya Patshala (Bangalore) came on as the air cooled, and revived the audience with some lilting tunes. The singer was good and chose the right songs.

Jyothi Nivas, were keenly awaited, but much to the disappointment of the crowd did not make an appearance in uniform. They made up for their sartorial deficiency with some good vocals; their final qawali was well rendered.

IISC did not fare too well, their music was a bit highbrow. Vivekananda were right on the ball and produced some good music - they kept the audience happy. St Joseph's had a very versatile vocalist in the person R Mohan. He commanded a respectful silence from a depleted audience.

St John's put up a very brief performance and had hardly come on stage before they left. Gandhi Medical College also relied on one vocalist.

A criticism of the whole performance was that the Hindi numbers were sung without the nuances which breathe life into them. The Tamil numbers were delivered with greater verve but the audience was generally unresponsive.

RESULTS:Best Vocalist

- 1 Subroto Mitra, Acharya Patashala, Bangalore
- 2 Chitra, Stella Maris
- 3 Srikant, Gandhi Medical College, Hyderabad

Best Instrumentalist

- 1 S R Rajan, IIT Madras
- 2 Ramachandran, PSG Coimbatore
- 3 Ramesh Babu, IISc Bangalore

Best Group

- 1 Vivekananda College
- 2 Stella Maris College
- 3 Jyoti Nivas, Bangalore

Best College

- 1 MCC
- 2 Vivekananda
- 3 Stella Maris

Best item judged by audience ballot: "Dekhana Haire" by Subroto Mitra, Acharya Patasala, Bangalore

Story Telling:

The competition was disappointing. St Joseph's came on first and did tolerably well. They had a basically good story-line, but the nervousness of the first two speakers diminished the impact of the suspenseful build-up. R Warrior redeemed the situation somewhat, and won them the third prize. 'It's a long time since I've been in a stranger's bed' - the lament of a Labrador bitch. Vivekananda inundated us with stale jokes.

MCC made dirty jokes seem like polished humour. Prakash (Best Speaker) contorted his face and voice to lend verisimilitude to the role of MGR. Their subtlety was refreshing, despite the earthy cracks. The story, though extremely entertaining, seemed at a tangent to the topic "Some people find oil, others don't". They should have scored better for their originality.

REC(T) profited greatly by their experience last year. Mexicans remained their vehicle, but they used them well. Swaminath who has an expressive and mobile face, was particularly good. Their topic "Laughter has no foreign accent".

Results:

- 1 REC (T)
- 2 MCC (Prakash: Best Speaker)
- 3 St Joseph's

PERSONALITIES

Rafiq Gangjee: He was overwhelmed by the massive support he received from the crowd in the 'Just a Minute' finals, and felt that the unscheduled fourth round was a bit rough on Sundaram (fair play and all that). Endowed with the impressive bulk and lumbering gait of a Calcutta jute baron, Rafiq is impossible to miss. He is fond of wisecracking at his own expense, and reasserted that he weighs all of one hundred and seven kilograms. Off-stage he is articulate in a more subdued manner and inclined to reserve his comments on delicate issues. Having seen quite a few festivals, Gangjee feels that the standard of the 'Just a Minute' here was far superior. In his second year B.Sc (major-zoology), Rafiq is non political, likes to read and listen to music. He does not foresee MCC diminishing in its role of nursery for multifarious talents. He looked a bit fazed at the story telling this afternoon but we look forward to seeing this likable person in the Group Debate tomorrow, and at the festival next year.