

# A storm of rich melodies

Young Amaan Ali Bangash, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan's elder son, rocked the four-night Dover Lane Music Conference at Nazrul Manch with a one-hour fifty minute sarod recital in Malkauns. Amaan worked up a storm of melody, rhythm, *tan* and *bol-kari* that most older instrumentalists could not match either power and tonality or in spirit and appeal. It also surpassed his recent depiction of Shri in impact. His recital was preceded by well-structured and melodically rich *khayals* in Bhupali by Ustad Raza Ali Khan, who also sang his Kasuri Jangla *thumri* and the demand item 'Ayena balam' charmingly. Arti Anklekar Tikekar's Jogkauns and Sohini late in the night and Pandit Manas Chakraborty's Lalita Pancham (the rare variety) early in the morning were good in parts.

Playing his *alap* in Ginji Kanada with much of his old melodic magic, sarod maestro Ustad Ali Akbar Khan gave the first night its best moments. Fingering and stroke problems spoiled parts of the *jod* and *gatkari* in this *raga*. The Zila Kafi *aochar* and *gats* were, however, well-played with son Alam Khan on a second sarod showing a very clean and tuneful pair of hands. Unfortunately poised after the maestro's recital, Hariprasad Chaurasia's Malkauns and Ahir Bhairav on the flute sounded rather flat. But it goes to his and

accompanist Debapriya Chatterji's credit that they still managed to hold audience interest. The night, which had opened with Vijay Kumar Kichlu's well-sung *khayals* in Nand and Jog ended with dull and repetitive *khayals* in Basant Mukhari and Bibhas by Malini Rajurkar. Her Kafi *tappa* and *tarana* at 5.48 in the morning were unsuited to the hour.

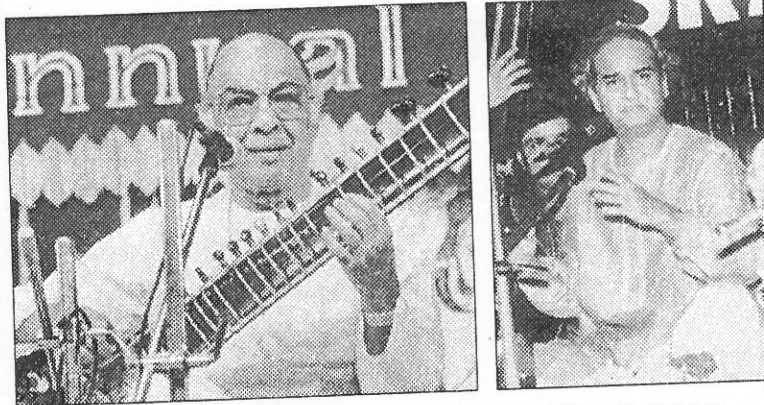
On paper, sitar maestro Ustad Vilayat Khan was the star of the third night. But judging by his last performance at 5th conference, serious listeners did not expect much from him. The maestro, however, sprung a surprise by showing how much an artiste of his level can achieve with minimum effort. The brief *alap* and *gatkari* in Bihagda served as a launch pad for one of the best *thumri*-style *aochars* in Mishra Bhairav that the *ustad* has played in recent times despite the occasional chromatic craziness. The concluding Mishra Khamaj Ragmala *aochar*, played at strong audience demand for more, too, was quite charming. The *ustad's* one-hour 54-minute recital knocked the mickey out of the well-organised *khayals* in Malkauns that had been sung before it by Ustad Mashkoor Ali Khan. It

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*khayal* in Bhairav was however, fairly good to listen to.

The concluding night opened with an excellent *alap* in Puria by a sitar-player Deepak Chowdhury.



SPRINGING SURPRISES: Vilayat Khan and Ulhas Kashalkar

also cut down to size the violin-Hawaiian guitar duet in Charukeshi by Kala Ramnath and Barun Pal in course of which the former made the latter sound pedestrian. Pandit Jasraj's *khayals* in Basant Mukhari early in the morning displayed unusual dullness. The brief *drut*

The Khammaj *gats* could not match it in any way. Then came the best vocal recital of the conference: Ulhas Kashalkar's masterly delineation of the Nayaki-ang Kaunsi Kanada. The balancing of Nayaki and Malkauns material in the melodic elaboration, the impact of the rhythmic *tans* and

the power and thrust of the *bol tans* added up to the best moments of the conference. The pieces in Sohini and Kafi were also well sung. The unruly disjointed sarangi-cum-singsong recital of Sultan Khan and the unnecessarily long vocal recital by Sipra Bose ruined the rest of the night. These also apparently affected the mood of the final artiste, sarod maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, who, pent up in the green room for two hours, played an *alap* in Simhendra Madhyamam and *gats* in Ahir Bhairav in a polished but rather half-hearted manner. The moving power and overwhelming impact seemed to be absent throughout.

After some tuneful wandering around in the *alap*, some concreteness was achieved in the 34-minute *jod*, though the artiste seemed disturbed with the sound system. The best parts of the recital were in the Simhendra Madhyamam *jod*. The emphasis here was clearly on exquisite melodic phrasing though some mild *lahaks* and *lapets* were played on the bass strings in two phases. The best part of the encore Mishra Bhairavi was the old-style *bol-ang ati drut gatkari*. Shafat Ahmed, one of Amjad Ali's regular accompanists, provided dry and uninspiring accompaniment on the tabla. Still, routine Amjad Ali soothed ears sore by four nights of amplified music.