Master of the flute

He spins magic with his strains and every raga that he plays touches your soul. When Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia performed at The Newtown School, young spectators were held spellbound.

When a legend performs on stage, all one can do is listen with rapt attention. From a seven-year-old child to a 70-year-old music lover, the audience applauded in the same way when Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia took to stage, along with his entourage, at The Newtown School. It is only a maestro like Panditji who can bridge the age gap and bind everyone to the music of his flute.

The revered flautist started with Raga Hanumanwani, accompanied by Pandit Samir Saha on tabla, Pradip Chakraborty on tanpura and his protege Vivek Somar on the flute. As soon as Panditji held the flute to his lips, the music emanating from it captivated the audience. Everyone closed their eyes and let the music sink in. The Raga with ten anudis and 16 makaras filled the auditorium and the hearts of the listeners with its sweetness. The main attraction of the session was the confluence of flute and tabla, with the two instruments playing in the background. The performance transported everyone to a utopia, so perfect and serene: “It was certainly a blessing to watch him play and experience the music filling up the senses,” said principal Satabdi Goswami Bhattacharjee.

The octogenarian soon donned a different avatar and went on to a candid conversation with his little fans, who bombarded Panditji with different questions. Queries such as who taught him to play the flute, what inspired him to train in that instrument, whether he plays any other instrument were shot at the great artiste. With great patience, Panditji answered all the questions and even had a friendly chat with them. “I have been trained under many gurus and I am still learning. I play only one musical instrument, and that gives me life,” quipped Panditji enquiring light-heartedly if he could get admission in the school.

He encouraged his young fans to make music a part of their lives. “It is important to develop love for music, choosing a genre follows later. I would insist you all to learn or at least listen to music, no matter how burdened you are with academics or distracted by new gadgets,” urged the guru.

The maestro coaxed students to come up to the stage and show their singing skills. And the budding artists did not fail to impress him. Minakshi Bhattacharya of Class VIII shared the stage with him and sang Mera mauji na saara. Panditji even informed her that it was based on Kowari Raga. The musical treat concluded with a bhajan, “I love interacting with children,” said Panditji, emphasising the role of good music teachers and the harmony that is brought by music in life.

Text by Farah Khaloon, pictures by Sayantan Ghoosh