

Kolkata 1982 -86
by Hans-Jürgen Nagel

I

From Bonn to Kolkata 1981

I had joined the Goethe Institute/Max Mueller Bhavan at the beginning of 1981 after about fifteen years experience in different musical and cultural fields in Germany. After completing my studies in music and musicology, I was for some years assistant conductor at the Opera House in Bonn and the director of the Conservatory. Bonn was the hometown of Beethoven and a city with some reputation in the history of music, where Haydn and Mozart had met and where Paul Hindemith, Max Reger, Max Bruch and Robert Schumann lived and worked for some time. I became later responsible for the Chamber Music Cycles of the International Beethoven Festival and of the Days for Contemporary Music beside other so called innovative cultural projects. During this time I was privileged to cooperate with some of the most important international composers, interpreters and other artists.

At the same time I experienced my first cooperation with some of the finest Indian musicians of Indian Classical Music.

My personal interests had been always focused on discoveries, which reached beyond the usual professional “Western Music Life”, as for instance the discovery of other cultures or of new forms of corporations. I had been always more interested in “processes” than in “manufactured results” and furthermore due to the influence of the contemporary music, I had lost interest in the traditional Western Music.

When I got the offer of the Goethe Institute to become one of its directors, and I was asked, if I would like “to go to Kolkata”, I accepted this offer immediately.

Before I arrived in Kolkata, I had been in contact with Dr. Adi Gazder, who was a capable pianist and who seemed to be also a driving force of the Calcutta Music School and in the Western Music activities in Kolkata.

II

The musical mythos of the Oxford Mission and Fr. T. Mathieson

Adi Gazder introduced me soon to Rev. Father T. Mathieson of the Oxford Mission in Behala . I felt immediately, that I became part of a musical energy centre, which would have a lot of influence in the following years on my activities in music, which would be strictly separated from my work as the director of the Max Mueller Bhavan.

Together with extremely devoted instrumental teachers, - I would like to mention here especially the violin teacher Ananta Makhal, as a remarkable personality- Fr. Mathieson had

developed an impressive instrumental music center. I appreciated the idea of a combination of a completely voluntary education in music with the possibilities for social perspectives, which of course could not be anticipated. It reminded me also on some examples of the origin of Western Music, where the talents in music were mostly depending on the personal disposition of the so-called “simple people”. Vivaldi for instance had worked with orphans and had composed for their musical abilities, Telemann had coached the instrumental ensemble of Bach in Leipzig and not to forget Haydn, who was a violinist, who played on the streets.

Music was performed at this time in the West mostly by amateurs. The talents came neither from the “elite” nor from the big cities.

Fr. Mathieson was a kind of living example for the realization of his idea. Being himself a capable cellist, he combined in a most admiring way artistic understanding with the abilities for organizing rehearsals and their logistic details. He showed a permanent patient understanding for all kind of difficult situations combined with a never ending energy for solving problems.

When both of them, Adi and Fr. Mathieson, asked me for helping to renew the former tradition of an orchestra for Western Music in Kolkata, I agreed and started to work.

III

The first steps of the Calcutta Chamber Orchestra and the corporation with the Calcutta School of Music

The orchestra got the name “Calcutta Chamber Orchestra” and it became integrated into the Calcutta School of Music and its annual activities.

I would like to mention already here, that there had been a permanent support over the years by the Principals and Vice Principals of the School, by the secretaries and of course by its governing committees and boards. Some of them, as Roshan Gazder, Roshan Chowna , Fauzia Marikar or Sandhya Varma would become active performers in the coming events or were personal engaged as “managers” for the required financial support. Exactly this would be needed in the coming years for developing the young orchestra and for realizing concerts and other projects..

I would like to mention also the staff of the Max Mueller Bhavan, which helped in organizational matters whenever it was possible.

From the beginning the orchestra consisted mainly of string players, who had been taught at the Oxford Mission.

But there existed also a number of other quite capable string players in Calcutta, especially violinists. Most of them were engaged in the film music or in their own social or cultural fields of performing music.

After some time we succeeded, that many of those musicians were integrated, as far as their other obligations would permitted this.

Rehearsals were organized for about 4 hours always on Sunday mornings at Behala.

The first concerts started in 1982.

All programs, which were based mainly on compositions for strings at the beginning, will be specified below chronologically. The Cathedrals of St. Paul`s or St. John`s would be my favorites for the performances because of their acoustic advantages.

The next challenges for the development of the orchestra and the programs would become the possibilities of co operations with the St.Paul`s Cathedral Choir and with talented local vocal soloists.

This led to quite remarkable performances of sacred or secular music, as for instance the Viennese Evening at the Victoria Memorial. This program was recorded later in Usha Uthups studio and appeared on record, thanks to the support of Seagull Empire and Mr. Naveen Kishore.

The Doordarshan TV started to take over the Video recordings of the concerts for presenting them on TV . The events became more and more popular, also because of the additional performances in clubs and other places.

I remember a New Years Eve at the Tollygunge Club, when at midnight our performance of Haendel`s “Hallelujah” appeared suddenly on TV.

A problem for larger scale performances became the lack of woodwind players, as good Flutes or special Oboes.

Those instruments were required for instance for performing together with the string players, who had developed already in the meantime to a quite good standard, some of the finest musical works of the Baroque period.

By good fortune, it became possible to invite Flutists and Oboe players from Germany. They joined the orchestra and were engaged as soloists in works by Bach and Haendel.

Also the St. Paul`s Choir and the local vocal soloists were integrated in these concerts.

IV

The Calcutta Western Music Workshops and their results

A development has mostly its own logic and rules and things come as they have to come: more large scale orchestral and choir performances were required for the development of the orchestra, for the growing expectations of the performers and also of the audience.

As a result, the idea of the Calcutta Western Music Workshops with western instrumental soloists and teachers for participants also from other places in India was born!

Those workshops took place in the year 1985 and 1986.

I will quote details from a report, which was presented after the two workshops in 1985 and 1986.

The workshops were organized in corporation with the Calcutta School of Music and the Sangeet Research Academy. They were announced as workshops for participants in Flute, Oboe, Violin, Violoncello, Clarinet, Bassoon and Voice.

To my opinion the workshops were a model with a permanent relevance even for today and I think it to be worthwhile for recalling them.

Intentions: Professional teachers from abroad spent 5 weeks in Calcutta.

They helped local teachers to acquire and improve the best teaching methods for their instruments, and

advanced musicians, to improve their technique and appreciation of music.

There were offered also classes for beginners for Oboe, Flute, Clarinet, and Bassoon. Some instruments were available for hiring for the beginners.

Teachers: The following professional musicians from abroad conducted the workshops:

Irmela Bossler Flute Soloist, Mannheim (today Professor for Flute at the Mendelssohn Academy for

Music, Leipzig

Regine Meller Cello, Cologne

Edmund Reid	Violin, Leader of the English National Opera, London
Klaus Ditzel	Oboe, Solo Oboist of the Radio Symphony Orchestra Cologne
Michael Kasper	Bassoon
Jürgen Ohrem	Clarinet (today head of a conservatory near Cologne)
Jan Hermann	Vocalist (Bass) Member of the Ensemble of the German Opera

Berlin

Bernhard Kastner	Piano, Mannheim (today lecturer at the Mendelssohn Academy, Leipzig)
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Number of participating students:

20 violin Calcutta, Darjeeling and Bombay
 8 celli Calcutta, Darjeeling
 4 Oboes Calcutta, Darjeeling
 5 Clarinet Calcutta, Darjeeling, Bombay
 11 Flute Calcutta, Darjeeling
 10 Vocalists Calcutta
 6 Piano Calcutta
 2 Bassoon Calcutta

Concerts

Beside their workshops, the teachers had concerts at Tollygunge Club, at the International Evening at Calcutta Club, and at the Max Mueller Bhavan.

A concert with results of the participating students was held at the CSM

All teachers, as well as the most advanced students, joined the Calcutta Chamber Orchestra. The vocalists were engaged for solo parts or joined the choir. All came together for an intensive rehearsal period, followed by concerts.

The idea was, that the playing together with professional musicians should have a supporting impact on the instrumental development of the orchestra and also on the further education of all local players

The report mentioned, that “the concerts, held at St. Paul’s Cathedral were a tremendous success”

(Specification of the programs see below)

Remarks and Thanks:

The workshops were organized both in a last minute affair due to difficulties by inviting foreign teachers.

All invited teachers worked for the full time without any fee. The financial arrangements were based on the payment for travel expenses and for accommodation, which was organized under the most modest circumstances with the help and kindness of many music lovers of Calcutta.

Only thanks to the support of Vikram Thapar and of V.K.Kichlu, director of Sangeet Research Academy, as well as of Seagull Empire, the workshops and concerts could be realized at the end.

(Other personalities, who supported the events, were mentioned in the report)

So far the report to the workshops. It was presented in 1987.

I would like to add:

For collecting financial funds, Sandhya Varma, Vice Principal of the CSM had developed "An Appeal" which contained a description of the projects and was presented to potential sponsors or donators. This "Appeal" was forwarded and followed up by Sandhya herself and with never ending personal efforts.

By the end it was also her personal success and we all were extremely thankful to her.

V

The programs and soloists of the concerts of the Calcutta Chamber Orchestra 1983 – 1987 in corporation with the Calcutta School of Music and the St. Paul's Cathedral Choir (choir masters Anjali Sengupta and Daniel Paul)

March 1983

St. Paul's Cathedral

Works for string orchestra

Dances

Menuets, Laendler, Waltzes

by Mozart Beethoven Joh.Strauss

The program was repeated with introductions in the following month in clubs and schools.

November 1983

St. Paul's Cathedral

Works for string orchestra

Vivaldi Concert for 4 violins, strings and basso continuo

Britten A simple symphony

Bartok Hungarian Dances

Mozart Eine kleine Nachtmusik

February 1984

Victoria Memorial

Open Air Concert

A VIENNESE EVENING

Music and Songs

by Mozart Beethoven Haydn Bartok Joh.Strauss

Vocal soloist Sharmila Bose

This program was repeated with introductions at the Calcutta Club

In May 1984 this program appeared on record, produced by Seagull Empire

April 1984
St. Paul's Cathedral
Paul's Cathedral Choir

recitatives
of the time.

This concert was the first cooperation with the St.
and local vocal soloists.
The program was still focused on string players. The
were rendered by a narrator, which was a usual practice

Arias and Chorales
from
Joh.Seb.Bach The Matthew Passion

Vocal soloists
Sharmila Bose Soprano
Roshen Gazder Soprano
Aruna Sunderlal Alto
James Stevens Bass

Instrumental soloists

Ananto Mondal Violin
Ivan Roderick Violin
Soumitra Byapary Violin
Subroto Pramanik Violin

Fr.T. Mathieson Violoncello and Continuo
John Gayen Violoncello

Jogan Khan Bassoon

Narrator Jacob K. Jacob

The concert was repeated at St. John's Church

December 1984
St. Paul's Cathedral

Messiah",
Viola concerto

A concert of Christmas Music
by Bach Haendel Telemann Praetorius Dowland

The program included choral music and arias from "The
the Christmas Concerto by Francesco Manfredini, the
by Telemann, sacred songs and narrations

Soloists
Sharmila Bose Soprano
Daniel Paul Tenor
Ananto Mondal Violin
Subrato Pramanik Violin
Ashish Mullick Viola
John Gayen Violoncello

Jacob K. Jacob Narrator

St. Paul's Cathedral Choir (choirmaster Daniel Paul)

This concert was repeated at St. John's Church

March 1985
St. Paul's Cathedral

Three Concerts
to celebrate the 300th Birth Anniversary of
J.S.Bach and G.F.Haendel

I

Haendel Water Music
Bach Suite No.2 Bflat Minor
for Flute, Strings and BC
Bach Brandenburg Concerto No.4 G Major
for 2 Flutes, Strings and BC

Intervall

Bach Overture No.1 C Major
for 2 Oboes, Bassoon, Strings and BC
Haendel Music for the Royal Fireworks

Irmela Bossler Flute
Lene Lutz Flute
Kaushik Paul Violin
Klaus Ditzel Oboe
Dieter Scheler Oboe
Pranab Patra Oboe
Roshen Chowna Timpani

II

Haendel The Messiah (Excerpts)
a sacred oratorio

III

Bach The Matthew Passion (Excerpts)

Roshen Gazder Soprano
 Sharmila Bose Soprano
 Aloka Chakrabarti Soprano
 Aruna Sunderlal Alto
 Daniel Paul Tenor
 Jan Herrmann Bass

Irmela Bossler Flute
 Lene Lutz Flute
 Bobby Banks Flute

Klaus Ditzel Oboe and Oboe

Dieter Scheler Oboe and

Pranab Patra Oboe
 Jogen Khan Bassoon
 Jacob K. Jacob Narrator

St. Paul's Cathedral Choir

d'amore

Oboe d'amore

Workshop

Concerts in combination with the First Calcutta Western Music

to the fact

From 1985 the Calcutta Chamber Orchestra was privileged due
 that the legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray had agreed to be the

president of the orchestra.

17th December 1985
 St. Paul's Cathedral
 Major

Bach Concert for two pianos, strings and bc C

Roshen Chowna piano
 Adi Gazder piano

Schubert Symphony No.5 Bflat Major D 485

19th December 1985

Vivaldi Concerto for two Trumpets in C

St. Paul's Cathedral

Udo Koehne Trumpet
Heinz Clemens Trumpet

Bach Christmas Oratorio (BWV 248)
Part 1-3

Flute	Sharmila Bose	Soprano	Irmela Bossler
Thukral Flute	Sarah Paul	Soprano	Elizabeth
Oboe d'amore	Roshen Gazder	Alto	Klaus Ditzel
Emmerling Oboe d'amore	Aloka Chakrabarti	Alto	Bernhard
Violin	Anjali Sengupta	Alto	Ivan Roderick
Bassoon	Daniel Paul	Tenor	Jogen Khan
Trumpet	Digby Barrow	Tenor	Udo Koehne
Clemens Trumpet			Heinz
der Weiden Trumpet	Jan Herrmann	Bass	Klaus von
Christie Continuo Cello	Shanu Banerjee	Bass	Michael
Kastner Harpsichord			Bernhard

St. Paul's Cathedral Choir
Boys Choir of the Calcutta Boys School

November 1986
Alipore Horticultural Gardens
Calcutta
service to Education

In cooperation with La Martiniere,
on the occasion of celebrating 150 years of

OPEN AIR CONCERT

Carl Orff Carmina Burana
 Cantiones Profanae
 (in the original version for two
 pianos, percussions,
 vocal soloists and choir)

Sharmila Bose Soprano
Sarah Paul Soprano
Aloka Cakrabarti Soprano
Daniel Paul Tenor
Jan Herrmann Bass – Baritone

Roshen Chowna Piano
Bernhard Kastner Piano

Irmela Bossler Flute

Percussion Ensemble Toni Roeder

St. Paul's Cathedral Choir
Choirs of La Martiniere Schools

Concerts in combination with the Second Calcutta Western Music

Workshop

16th December 1986
St. Paul's Cathedral

Orchestra Concert

Mozart Sinfonia Concertante
 For Oboe, Clarinet, Horn, Bassoon and

Orchestra E flat Major

Klaus Ditzel Oboe
Juergen Ohrem Clarinet
Michael Kasper Bassoon
Felix Richard Horn

Mozart Concerto for Flute and Orchestra G major

KV 313

Irmela Bossler Flute

Beethoven Symhonie Nr.1 C Major

18th December 1986
St. Paul's Cathedral
Suessmayer

Mozart

REQUIEM
completed by Franz Xaver

in its traditional form
KV 626

Sharmila Bose	Soprano
Sarah Paul	Soprano
Aloka Chakrabarti	Soprano
Beulah Rajuh	Soprano
Roshan Gazder	Alto
Anjali Sengupta	Alto
Daniel Paul	Tenor
Digby Barrow	Tenor
Jan Herrmann	Bass
Juergen Ohrem	Clarinet
Margaret Toews	Clarinet
Michael Kasper	Bassoon
Jogen Khan	Bassoon
Geoffrey Baker	Trumpet
Alan Fiel	Trumpet
Johann Voithofer	Alto Trombone
Francis Toews	Tenor Trombone
Michael Junghans	Bass Trombone
Roshan Chowna	Timpani

Calcutta Chamber Orchestra
St. Paul's Cathedral Choir

VI

Epilogue and concluding remarks

“To refuse experiments means to be satisfied with the achievements one has reached, but it means also to fall back”

(Berthold Brecht)

When I had come to Kolkata, I definitely did not have the intentions for engaging myself in the performances of Western Music. But things turn often in another direction and later I discovered, that it is worthwhile to find through the understanding of other cultures also a new relation to the own culture. For me the experience in Calcutta was a kind of “cultural

injection” which would have an effect on further musical activities following in many other countries.

I assume that those activities were for everybody who had been involved, a kind of experiment and a special experience at the same time.

I have already thanked again to a number of personalities for their corporation. But I think everybody will agree when I bring Mrs. Roshan Chowna into special prominence.

Over all the years Roshan had been engaged with an incredible discipline in many fields of our activities. She was the only repetiteur for all choir rehearsals and for most of the vocal soloists; she was the accompanist for the solo recitals of the singers,

She was a piano soloist in some of the concerts with the orchestra and she even agreed to enlarge her instrumental abilities by learning to play the Timpani for some of the concerts (which is a great and responsible challenge especially in Beethoven symphonies). Fortunately we could continue our corporation, when I had a concert some years ago in Mumbai.

Again many thanks to her!

When we had to leave Calcutta, I was very happy to know, that the work which we had started would continue. I had already some cooperations with Digby Barrow during the concerts and I had discovered his all - round abilities as a choir leader, singer, conductor and pianist. Digby had agreed to continue and there have been a number of very successful concerts in the following years.

Reading this report, everything might look clear and easy. We have to consider that all those international corporations were possible without emails, internet, fax and with halftime working telephones! May be that’s why it worked!

The soloists of the music projects have all been specified. I would like to add a specification with most of the names of the string players of the Calcutta Chamber Orchestra.

In some concerts the orchestra had a size of nearly 60 players and the choir of over 40 singers.

Violin I	Ivan Roderick and Ananto Mondal	Leader	Violin II	Ananta Makhal Erna Bose
	Edmund Reid (temporary)			Asish Biswas
	Joe Pereira			Sandeen Dey
	Soumitra Byapary			Situ Sarkar
	Chintamani Rath			Anirban Nandi
	Arindrajit Saha			Daniel Mondol
	Samuel Mondal			Brigitta Roy
	Binoy Sakar			Gargi Ghose
	Debshankar Roy			Uday Singh Gahatraj
	Jyotishankar Roy			Amit Tamang
	Kaushik Paul			Krishna Pasaily
	Abhijit Mazumdar			Probhudan Malakar
	Pember Tamang			Santu Katwar
	Budra Mani			A. Sakar
	Asim Sakar			A. Saha
	Raja Singh			
	Subhash Seal			

Viola Patrick Banerjee
(temporary)
Asish Mullick
Anthony Shome
Baren Sutar
John Gharami
Kankar Bhattacharya
Prakash Gahatray
Rumi Ghosh
Ranjit Roy

Violoncelli Regine Meller
Fr. T. Mathieson
Tapan Mondol
John Gayen
Mridul Roy
Tapan Mullick
Philip Hazra
Pratau Chettri
Fauzia Marikar
Gopal Sardar
Prakash Gahatray
Kankar Bhattacharya

Double Bass Josef Wolf (temporary)
Nirmal Banerjee
Bidyut Kayal
Francis Xavier

