

27 APR 1993

Independent

Strains of the koel's song

Sujata Patil on a programme of poetry, drama and music held earlier this month at Shivaji Mandir

SPRING IN Bombay... Bitter-sweet strains of the koel's song and the sun dripping down the branches of the Gulmohar...

Even as the city prepares to face the season's sunniest days, a programme of poetry, drama and music, organised on the evening of April 16, cheered one up with the thought that it is, as yet, spring — Vasanta — the season of colour.



Shruti Sadolikar gave an excellent performance

When Dr Ashok Ranade was approached by the Kala-Nirnaya people to organise a cultural programme to mark the birth centenary of founder Sriram Salgaonkar, he took on the project with enthusiasm. "Indian culture has a unique response to the cycle of birth, death, day and night," says he.

The programme began with poetry and who could have been a better choice than Mangesh Padgaonkar, the poet of nature? After Padgaonkar had finished

reading his poetry, the audience was treated to a spring seduction scene, directed by Waman Kendre, from the vintage musical play by Deval, *Shaapa-Sambhrama*, a 19th-century hit.

Arvind Pilgaonkar and Yajana Shivanand, familiar faces for those acquainted with Marathi *sangeet natak*, were quite at ease and sang well. Shruti Sadolikar gave an excellent performance.

The colours of spring can be brought out only by the right music. So the finale, appropriately, was a rendering of *natyasangeet* and *bandish* reflecting the response to Vasanta. Ranade explained that while in a pure *raga* words are overwhelmed by musical notes, in *natyasangeet*, which developed alongside Hindustani music, words — their meaning and the emotions they convey — are as alive as the *swara*.

Ranade, who has been singing himself over the past 20 years, used his insight into *bandish* to initiate the audience, and the singers, into the influences of tradition so that the performance was not just mechanical.

The combination of the three media — poetry, drama and music — powerfully conjured up the image of Vasanta for the audience, giving it a complete description of spring, its arrival, its celebration, its colours, its rhythm, its very soul.

So far as the stagecraft went, Ajit Dandekar had thought out a good design with an apt colour scheme.