

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 Hariprasad 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 Hansdhwani, accompanied by Pandit Samar Saha on tabla, Priyanka Chakraborty on tanpoora and his protégé Vivek Sonar 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 *teen taal* and six *maatra* 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 tanpoora playing in the background. The performance transported everyone to a utopian land, 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



(Top) Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia performs on stage. (Above left) Minakshi Bhattacharya shares the stage with the maestro and his group and the audience listens in rapt attention

I couldn't believe that the maestro, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, would come to our school to perform. The audience was spellbound with his mesmerising performances. He played his favourite Hansdhwani Raga, and I was touched by its tunes. It was a rare opportunity watching him play the flute live and some students even sang with him.



— Om Sharma
Class VII

As soon as Panditji started playing the flute, the ambience in the auditorium changed. Later, when he embarked on the journey of his enchanting Hansdhwani and soulful Megh Raga, the captivating strains seemed to capture the deepest realms of one's heart and mind. However, it was only when Panditji took a break from his performance to enlighten us about his life and music that we became aware of the real person.



— Diya Tantiya
Class VIII

We had the golden chance to come up close, and personal with the maestro. The event started with a beautiful melody based on Hansdhwani Raga. This was followed by an interactive session. He was very friendly and asked us about our knowledge of music. We learnt about the importance of classical music.



— Aakanksha D. Vishwakarma
Class VII

After an enchanting performance, we were allowed to question Panditji. We asked him about his struggles, his inspiration and other curious questions. Finally, when Panditji left the stage, he inspired us all with his soulful performances. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that we all experienced.



— Devanshi Mallick
Class VIII

Just to be a part of the audience was an opportunity of a lifetime. It's a blessing for the students as well. We emphasise on Hindustani classical music and students as young as two years have formal music classes as well. This year, we will host the National School Intensive, whereby students from across the country will receive training in different art forms.



— Satabdi Goswami Bhattacharjee
Principal

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 artistes did not fail to impress him. Minakshi Bhattacharya of Class VIII shared the stage with him and sang *Mann bhaya re sawariya*. Panditji even informed her that it was based on Kerwani 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.