

Learning beyond school

It was back to *gurukul* tradition at Spicmacay: National School Intensive hosted by The Newtown School

The Newtown School wore the look of a *gurukul* during the week-long Spicmacay: National School Intensive 2016, where students from across the country imbibed lessons in performing arts from mentors and had a peek into the richness of Indian art and culture.

Around 527 students of Class VIII and above, from 80 schools across the country, spent the winter vacation in the city to take lessons in performing arts from stalwarts in their respective fields. The sessions were spread over 17 different genres, ranging from Hindustani vocals, folk dance forms of India to traditional schools of painting, puppetry and yoga.

This was the first time that Spicmacay held the national convention in Calcutta. Students from Akshar School, Bidya Bharathi Girls' School and The Newtown School attended the sessions. The outstation students represented St. Xavier's School, Haldia, IES Public School Bhopal, DPS Pune, Coimbatore, Ludhiana and Patna among others.

On the last day, the participants put up presentations on what they have been taught by the mentors in a week. Apart from the intensives, the event included slots for dance recitals, musical concerts, cinema classics and yoga sessions.

Students of The Newtown School had attended two international conventions of Spicmacay at IITs, Guwahati and Mumbai, and a similar national convention at DPS Coimbatore. It was then that Satabdi G Bhattacharjee, principal, had a talk with Kiran Seth, founder, Spicmacay, about hosting the national convention in the city.

After the curtains came down on the event, the delegates were taken on two separate tours to different places in the city, including Kumartuli, Sovabazar Rajbari, Jorasanko Thakurbari, Belur Math and St. Paul's Cathedral.



The participants of the national school intensives, including parents and teachers who accompanied the students, practised *Bhadrasana* under the guidance of the members from Shivanand Ashram, Calcutta.



Padma Bhushan violinist L. Subramaniam flagged off the event along with Sujata Mohapatra, classical dancer, and Dushyant Nariala, IAS and secretary of school education.



The workshop on the now-waning Kalighat school of paintings saw Kalam Patua, who is a postmaster by profession, teaching students ways to depict the 19th-century Bengal on canvas.



Students learnt the moves of Sattriya, a classical dance form that originated during the 15th-century Bhakti movement, from Guru Ghanakanta Bora and her assistant Anwesha Mohanty.



Students explored the finer nuances of Odissi, which originated in the temples of Odisha in ancient times, with the help of Vidushi Sujata Mohapatra.



Malabika Mitra, who conducted the workshop on *kathak*, taught the students ways to depict the theme of a presentation through proper steps and facial expressions.



Kalamandalam Amaljeet, a Kathakali exponent, enlightened his disciples with demonstrations of different moves that help performers portray a particular story.



Sudeep Gupta, the founder of Dolls Theatre in Calcutta, trained the students in making puppets with papers during the workshop.



The workshop on Sholapith craft thrilled the students as they learnt from Ananta Malakar, the mentor, ways to replicate faces of deities and other objects related to temples by using the herb.



Participants of the workshop on Gottipua, a traditional classical dance form of Odisha, train in performing acrobatic figures by members of the Konarak Kala Kendra.



The papier mache workshop, conducted by Hema Devi, taught the students to make paper pulps and create the mixture that is required for sculpting.

FROM PAGE 12 ▶



Mairabam Manton Singh taught students to perform the Manipuri dance Pung Cholom, which is usually a prelude to Raas Leela and involves Manipuri martial arts such as Thang Ta and Sarit Sarak.



Tarapada Rajak and his troupe from Purulia came down to the city to train the participants in Chhau dance.



Karuna Chitrakar gave hands-on training to students in Patua folk painting, which uses organic colours made from flowers and vegetables.

This is the second year of our school and we are keen to promote Indian culture and values among the students. In a bid to help the students of other states explore the richness of Indian art and culture we decided to host the national school intensives of Spicmacay. The dance recitals were an enthralling experience for me and I stayed back in school till late at night to enjoy the concerts.

— **Satabdi G Bhattacharjee**
Principal, The Newtown School

We sought to highlight the importance of the ancient Gurukul system of learning through the intensives where the mentors stayed with their students and handed down their knowledge to them. We had organised an international convention of students in Calcutta earlier. We have had good response from students in this national convention too.

— **Kiran Seth**
Founder, Spicmacay

We are happy to host the pan-India event where students got to explore about Indian art and culture. Be it music or dance, we follow a structured curricula in school and our students take part in such events throughout the year. Many students of our school worked as volunteers in the event besides participating in the workshops.

— **Sunil Agarwal**
Founder-director,
The Newtown School

Hindustani vocals encompass several genres of classical music. The intensives focused more on the grammar of classical music, on the basis of which one can develop a unique singing style.

— **Madhura Purakayastha**
Class IX, Bidya Bharati Girls'
High School

The intensives on *dhrupad* were interesting as it taught us to depict mythological stories through music. I usually sing Western music but equally enjoyed learning this particular genre of classical Indian music.

— **Yathartha Singh**
Class IX, G D Goenka Public
School, Gaziabad

I have been learning Bharatanatyam since Class V. *Kathak* is another major genre of Indian classical dance, so I chose to attend Malabika Mitra's workshops on the same. I also understood the differences between the two dance forms and I want to present a fusion of the two in future.

— **Anoushka Singh**
Class VIII, DPS Patna

WORKSHOPS



Students of the Odissi dance workshop enthralled the audience with all that they had learnt over the past few days.



Participants of the puppetry workshop showcased the dolls they made and also performed with their creations.



Students from different schools enthralled the audience with their *kathakali* dance presentation.



Students put on display the handicraft items that they learnt to make at the workshop on *sholapith* art.

I was a part of the intensives on Pung Cholom, which also taught me about the martial arts in Manipur. This was a good learning experience for me. I had seen some Pung Cholom performances on YouTube clips before.



— **Aryan Mallick**
Class VI, The Newtown School

I am interested in Chhau dance and the national school intensives of Spicmacay gave us an insight into the traditional performing arts of Purulia. During the workshops, I also came to know about the tribes who practice it to continue with the legacy of their ancestors.



— **Shreyav Kumar**
Class VI, The Newtown School

I got the real taste of a Gurukul during the week-long national school intensives. During the zero hours of the intensives, I used to exchange my views about classical performing arts in India with other participants. I joined in the intensives on Odissi dance.



— **Pooja Desai**
Class XI, Sri Kumaran Children's
Home, Bangalore

The national convention on traditional performing arts in India was an entirely new thing to me. We know a lot about Western culture and dance forms these days, but we should not forget our own traditions as well. I attended the intensives on Odissi.



— **Muskan Roy**
Class VIII,
The Newtown School

I learnt some new styles on how to sing *kheyal* from Vidushi Subhra Guha who had conducted one of the workshops on Hindustani vocals. I hear and sing classical Indian music during my spare time.



— **Rishi Sood**
Class IX, Akshar School

I had no clue about what was going to happen in the national school intensives. I was thinking of how to spend my winter vacation and I decided to join the event where I got to know many things about Indian folk music and dance forms.



— **Amany Sharma**
Class VIII, Akshar School