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# Manuel offers broader view of musical possibilities

By Michael Anthony  
Staff Writer

The training of most musicians tends to focus and ultimately narrow their view of music. The skill of improvisation, for example, which was once expected of every "serious" musician, is now almost solely the province of the jazz or pop musician. An organ and piano recital at Macalester College in St. Paul Sunday offered a broader view of the possibilities of music. The performer was Handel Manuel, a native of Madras, India, who, as music director of the Madras Musical Association for the past 40 years, has led the kind of diverse musical life that is rarely encountered in the West.

He regularly conducts classical choral and orchestral concerts, has on occasion conducted stagings of American musical comedies, has played piano with jazz groups, has composed his own music and has had music composed for him — two works by the American composer Alan Hovhaness, one of which, an organ sonata, Manuel performed Sunday.

It is possible that Manuel is simply a unique individual and would have been so versatile no matter where he grew up. It is also possible that, because he grew up outside Western culture, he received the artifacts of



Staff Photo by Steve Schluter

**Handel Manuel at Macalester: He has led a diverse musical life.**

## A review

that culture — that is, its music — without the prejudices and imperatives that go along with it. Since he was largely self-taught, there was no one to tell him that Mozart was "more important" than Fats Waller. He simply liked both kinds of music, different as they are.

Needless to say, most organ and piano recitals (a rare entity, to begin with) don't include works of both Bach and Cole Porter, as did Manuel's program Sunday. The classical half of the program, the first half — the organ half — included music by Bach, Mendelssohn and Manuel — a

jaunty trumpet tune in Baroque style — all deftly and colorfully played. The Hovhaness sonata turned out to be a striking five-movement work that exploits this composer's long-time interest in Eastern melodic and harmonic ideas.

Returning for the second half with his jacket off, Manuel played on piano some light classics ("Country Gardens"), what used to be called novelty tunes (Zez Confrey's "Dizzy Fingers," a bit blurred at Manuel's too-fast tempo) and some pop tunes old and new, displaying a vigorous stride-style piano.

The program was overlong. It might have ended with Manuel's clever set of variations to "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," each variation done in the style of a given composer. Lots of people have done this. But Manuel does the hard ones, such as Debussy, and the more obscure ones, such as Paderewski, and then he does a variation in the style of Indian raga. The program was not just a breath of fresh air on a hot day. It was the United Nations set to music.

**THE INDIAN MUSIC SOCIETY OF MINNESOTA**  
and the  
**INDIA CLUB**

proudly present

A PIANO RECITAL by  
**HANDEL MANUEL of Madras, India**

Mr. Manuel has been awarded the title PadmaShri by the  
Government of India. He is the Music Director of  
Madras Musical Association  
Producer Emeritus - All India Radio  
Choirmaster and Organist - St. Andrews Church, Egmore Madras

**Sunday, July 29th, 1984**  
**4 P.M. to 6 P.M.**

at

**JANET WALLACE FINE ARTS CENTER**  
**CONCERT HALL**  
MACALESTER COLLEGE  
1600 GRAND AVE., ST. PAUL

**Tickets: \$4 At The Door**

**UPCOMING CONCERT: OCTOBER 13, 1984 MANDOLIN SRINIVAS**  
7 P.M., WILEY HALL  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

during the performance, and the devoted and enthusiastic skill of the conductor Mr. Handel Manuel upon whom everything hinges. He has done great things for classical music in Madras.

Handel Manuel played this long work magnificently in fact his playing throughout was of a very high order.

"Soloists, choir and orchestra followed readily the spirited conducting of Handel Manuel in his lively interpretation."

Handel Manuel's musical direction had a harmonising effect.

"That Madras is given the opportunity of hearing such masterpieces, and that so many music-lovers are able to take part in their rendering, must go to the credit of the untiring hard-working and resolute choir master, Handel Manuel, without whose devotion nothing would be achieved."

"The Westminster Choir was led in a very fine performance of the Indian National Anthem by Handel Manuel.

Undoubtedly the piece de resistance of the evening. was the pianoforte solo by Mr. Handel Manuel, an outstanding Indian pianist of exceptional brilliance".

A special word for the accompaniments of Handel Manuel, whose firm playing would demand attention anywhere.

"Mr. Handel Manuel's fine musicianship was heard at its best in the Mendelssohn "Prelude and Fugue in D minor" and the Bach "Fugue in G minor", both for the organ. His piano accompaniments for both the voice and the violin were entirely capable, if sometime a shade emphatic. Mr. Manuel carried through an exacting programme with the greatest of ease.

"The credit of the performance must go to the Organist and Choirmaster Mr. Handel Manuel, who besides being responsible for the singing, also accompanied on the organ".

## HANDEL MANUEL





# HANDEL MANUEL

"DEN NAMEN HAT ER VON HANDEL"- That was the headline in a German newspaper when Handel Manuel toured Europe in 1965. A performance of "The Messiah" by G. F. Handel at Madras, impressed Dr. Manuel, father of Handel Manuel. so much, that he decided to name his new-born son after the great composer Handel.

Pianist, Organist and Conductor, Handel Manuel is one of the few musicians in the world entirely self-taught and equally at home with both serious and light music. As soloist and accompanist, has played with well-known Indian and foreign artistes. Appeared as guest pianist with the Barrel House Jazz Group from West Germany, Bob Barnards Jazz Grop from Australia and Clark Terry and his Jolly Giants from the U. S. A.

The famous American Composer, Alan Hovhanes, has dedicated to Handel Manuel.

1. his " ARJUNA SYMPHONY "
2. An organ Sonata

The world premiere of the "Arjuna Symphony" was given in Madras, Conducted by Handel manuel with the composer at the piano.

The world famous Gospel Singer, Mahalia Jackson also dedicated a song to Handel Manuel, when he was specially invited by her to play at her concert in Madras.

In 1964-65 Handel visited the United Kingdom, Germany and France at the invitation of the British Council, German and French Governments. Has performed in Edinburgh. recorded by the B. B. C., London, French Radio in Paris, and televised in Germany.

The first Indian to hold the post of Music Director of the Madras Musical Association (for the past 40 years) As Conductor, directed Orchestral and Choral Concerts, Stage productions of most of the well-known Gilbert and Sullivan Operas and Musicals like "The Fiddler on the Roof"

"The King and I" "Hans Christian Anderson".

Has composed 1) Music for U. N. Hymn, sung by the famous South Indian Singer M. S. Subbulakshmi at the U. N., 2) "March India 1973" for Independence Day 1973, 3) Variations on All India Radio Signature Tune, 4) Music for a Childrens' Ballet.

Awarded a Diploma by the International Biographical Centre at Cambridge London for distinguished service rendered to Western Music, and recorded in the International "Who's Who in Music".

After retirement as Deputy Chief Producer, Western Music, All India Radio, was appointed Producer Emeritus. All India Radio and Doordarshan, Continues to be the Organist and Choirmaster of St. Andrews Church, Egmore Madras.

## EXTRACTS FROM PRESS REVIEWS

The accompaniments as played by Mr. Handel Manuel were throughout a model of sympathy and musicianship. This accomplished pianist gave additional pleasure by playing a Solo of his Own composition.

The solemn silence which followed the impressive close of the concert was a greater tribute than the applause which succeeded it. So it seemed to me I understand that the rehearsals were shortened through accidental circumstances; then difficulties were surmounted by the untiring efforts and skill of Mr. Handel Manuel-the conductor.

Handel Manuel treats accompanying as the subtle art which it should be and his efficient mastery of the keyboard made him equally at home in his solo item.

Mr Handel Manuel presented a varied programme for the concert of the Madras Musical Association last night at the Museum Theatre. He is to be congratulated on his well-trained choir.

Special mention must be made of Handel Manuel for his polished accompaniment.

Mr. Handel Manuel's conducting was sure, he set his tempos well brought in the voices accurately at their entries, and encouraged his choir and orchestra to reach an impressive climax.

It is proper once again to stress the hard work of the choir before at rehearsals and

*The only Indian invited as Guest of Honour to the Tchaikovsky International Music Competition at Moscow in July 1982*

*Awarded 'Padma Shri' by Govt of India in January 1983*