

# FAREWELL RECITAL

10/30/1956

## Miss Barbara Fei Pleases Big Audience At Performance

### PLEASANT LYRICAL VOICE

(By ERNEST GOTTSCHALK)

Barbara Fei in her farewell performance in the auditorium of the University on Wednesday night proved to be of great credit to her teacher, Professor Chao Mei-pa. Her pleasantly timbered lyrical soprano voice, her clear enunciation and her musical way of performing was of great appeal to the audience which filled the hall to its last sea.

She was extremely fortunate to have as accompanist Mr Hector McCurrach M. A., Mus. B. whose striking musicianship was also evidenced by his solo-performances and by his slightly humorous but enlightening explanations of every item on the programme.

The joint recital was presented by the British Council and the Crescendo Choral Society which gave in this way Miss Fei an opportunity to say good-bye to her many followers and afforded Hongkong's musical public to be acquainted with Mr McCurrach who is staying here for a short while as Examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music. Miss Fei is going to France to further her studies.

#### Not So Fast

I enjoyed very much Miss Fei's rendition of a recitativo and aria from Handel's oratorio "Judas Maccabaeus" and Bach's "Bist du bei mir." In fact, her assured stylistically correct performance of these two items was for me the best oratorio-singing which I have until now experienced here. She sang the Cherubino-aria from Mozart's "Nozze di Figaro" not in such a fast tempo as she did at a recent

recital over Radio Hongkong. But I think the aria should be sung still a little more slow in order to make more clear the sensuous implications of the aria, which once was so aptly called the "puperty aria"

In her second group of songs which contained "Berceuse" by Gretchaninow, Strauss' all too often sung "Serenade," the celebrated "Chanson Triste" by Duparc and Jongen's "Bal de Fleurs," Miss Fei displayed her personal charm and the essential lyrical qualities of her voice. That this kind of songs are the best medium of expression for her became evident after hearing her sing de Falla's "Jota" and "Les Filles de Cadiz" by Delibes pieces which should be rendered with more dramatic verve as is adequate to the temperament of Miss Fei. However, it should be mentioned that she displayed specially at this group of songs a praise worthy *portamento*.

Miss Fei concluded with two Chinese songs, pleasant tit-bits which she rendered in the correct light manner and which were of delight to the greatly applauding audience. It was an applause which indicated that Miss Fei will be missed here, but also expressing best wishes for the success of her future studies.

#### Unpretentious Way

For his solo-performances Mr McCurrach had chosen a programme which was distinguished by its choice of music rarely to be heard at recitals and interesting for the historical and musical quality, ranging from the Elizabethan era to recent times.

To all this music—and that is actually too obvious even to be noted—Mr McCurrach brings an unusual understanding for each particular historical style and musical content.

But what was so extraordinarily fascinating and enjoyable was the unpretentious way in which Mr McCurrach presented the compositions. For him only the music counts which he makes absolutely his own, and he is only intent was to convey the music of William Byrd, Henry Purcell, Sibelius or Scriabin and his listeners shall forget all about himself.

Mr McCurrach succeeded only partly in this respect because one could not help noticing that one was fortunate in meeting in him a personality, extraordinarily in its musical absorption and its apparent intention to serve music for music's sake without being boring or pompous.