

# Miss Barbara Fei's Farewell Recital

10/30/56  
Yet another young artist is leaving Hongkong to pursue further studies in Europe. Miss Barbara Fei, long well-known to Hongkong audiences for her clear soprano voice and her charming delivery, gave her farewell performance last night at the University Hall.

The concert was sponsored jointly by the British Council and the Crescendo Choral Society, whose creator and conductor, Professor Chao Mei-pa, has been Miss Fei's teacher for the last six years.

She shared the concert with Mr Hector McCurrach, pianist, who is in Hongkong for some months as Examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. Mr McCurrach not only played two groups of solos, but also accompanied Miss Fei, and moreover explained both the songs and the piano works to the audience with delightful lucidity.

Both Professor Chao and Miss Fei herself are to be congratulated on the improvement in her voice and her musicianship generally. As I first remember her, she was a competent singer with a voice kept well in tune but was inclined to be harsh and "edgy." The sharp edge has disappeared now, the voice has rounded and softened and the range increased.

Miss Fei takes her high notes with ease, and always produces a pleasant tone.

I think she could aim at a greater variety of interpretation, for her rendering of all the songs was rather uniformly sweet, serene or gay. She will probably find that she continues to do better in the lighter and more lyrical than in the heavy and dramatic, but should experiment with other styles.

## CALM CONFIDENCE

Bach's "Bist du bei mir" had a winning and calm confidence, and the German words were well enunciated. It was rather odd to hear later the French language being used for both German and Spanish songs—the Serenade by Richard Strauss and de Falla's exciting "Jota." In the latter, we could have done with the old harshness, for some of these Spanish songs require a hard quality and a strong attack. To help all-round development, it is always well for a singer to attempt a song in its original language if possible.

The "Serenade" and the "Jota" both have splendid accompaniments, and Mr McCurrach carried them out with fluency and sympathy. In him we have a fine example of the musician *par excellence*, who is not a brilliant technician, but an artist to his expressive fingertips. His predecessors were also of his stamp—Michael Head, Angus Morrison, and others; Hongkong has been lucky that its music examiners have all been such distinguished musicians.

## LOVELY WORKS

Mr McCurrach played a group of lovely Elizabethan works for virginals by Giles Farnaby, Peter Philips and Byrd, and a Toccata for harpsichord by Purcell. His second group consisted of Sibelius' Romance, an emotional work which foreshadowed some of his later tone poems; and four Preludes by Scriabin. Both Scriabin and Medtner have been somewhat

neglected in favour of the more impressive Rachmaninoff, but both produced some highly successful and pleasant piano music, worthy to be heard oftener.

Miss Fei also sang a recitative and air from Handel's "Judas Maccabaeus," recently performed in its entirety by the Crescendo Choral Society; an aria from "Figaro" and a group including a Russian, a French and a Belgian song. She ended the concert with two gay Chinese songs obviously great favourites with the audience, which demanded an encore and gave her a great send-off.

She should do much credit to Hongkong's profession of singing teachers, and takes with her our best wishes for her further studies.—X.X.