

Round the Metropolis

BY *Kightangle*

Songs and Smiles—Children's Troupe—Renunciation

"WHO taught you the song?"

Petite Mrs Khanh Van smiled back in answer. I repeated the question in Hindustani. Again a long smile. Before I could fathom the mystery of her smiles a young Viet-Namee in blue suit came to my rescue. "She doesn't speak English nor even Hindustani." "Then how did she learn that song?" I asked. The song in question was "Chanda mama etcetera, which young Mrs Van sang with delightful verisimilitude at a preview of the dance and song ensemble presented by the visiting Viet-Nam youth troupe at Sapru House on Saturday. "Oh, she learnt it from a disc on her way to India." I was told, "and all in a matter of two days." The disc was sent to her by a member of the Viet-Nam Embassy in New Delhi. In fact, Mrs Van knows another Indian film song "Aso bachoo . . ." etcetera, and intends learning a few more during the troupe's current tour of the country. (Indian film music, after all, is not without its appeal. AIR should encourage it further.) What I particularly liked about the troupe was the native character of their property and instruments—bamboo guitars, bamboo parasols, bamboo baskets and bamboo stems. The latter were effectively used to build up a group dance which is very close in its pattern to one of our own folk dances seen during the Republic Day celebrations.

"COME and see me play the turtle this evening," said the bright-eyed Devdas Karmarkar, and stretched his arms full-length. "It will be this big," he said. And it was. The fete organized by the American Women's Club in the lawns of Mandi House

—the stage was rigged up under the picturesque canopy of a neem tree—provided a lively evening for the children. Indian dress is making slow and steady conquests. I saw two young American girls attired in salwar-kameez duly self-conscious of their diaphanous dupattas which they kept on adjusting and readjusting in the best Punjabi manner. The main attraction of the evening was " And the Animals Danced for Christmas," presented by Richard Maitland's International Children's Dance Theatre. Mr Maitland and his children have been combining pleasure with good causes. In the past two years they have given several performances the proceeds of which have gone to help slum-clearance work, leper relief, hospitals and so on. "Who are the other prominent members of your group?" I asked young Karmarkar. He came out with a long catalogue: "Birgit Larsen, Manuela Albuquerque . . ." The list was truly international.

THE Bengali community in the Capital, by no means small but scattered widely, gets very few opportunities to see their own language films. The Nalanda Films of Calcutta and the Buddha Vihara, New Delhi, therefore did well to screen *Amarpali* in Bengali at the I and B auditorium, Janpath, yesterday. Among the interested audience was the Vice-President, Dr Radhakrishnan. A low-budget production, acted in the grand manner with adequate restraint, though not outstanding, *Amarpali* is satisfying in many respects. What I liked about it was its unostentatiousness. It did manage to evoke to some extent the atmosphere of the golden age when romance and renunciation were both important.