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2nd Melharmony festival at Oregeon brings Tyagaraja, Mozart alive

By A Special Correspondent

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ORGEON (WI), December 3: The Tyagaraja-Mozart Melharmony festival organized by Indian Music Circle of Wisconsin and Arohana School of Music brought two all-time-great composers from two different parts of the world – Tyagaraja (1767 - 1847) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791) - on the same platform via Melharmony, a new age music pioneered by Chitravina N Ravikiran.

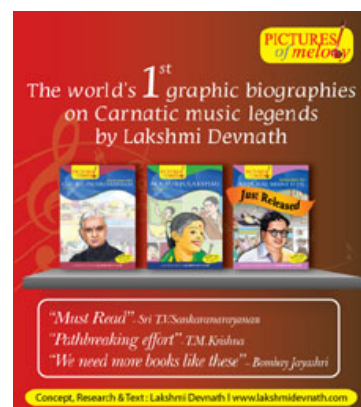
This year's multi-composer multi-cultural festival attracted audiences from thousands of miles away across the U.S. - from California in the West to Virginia in the East. The festival was held on November 15, 2014 at Oregon, WI.

Tyagaraja in Western world

One of the highlights of the festival was a performance of Tyagaraja's masterpiece Paramatmudu (in Vagadheeshwari) by Madison Bach Musicians (Kangwon Kim, Nathan Giglierano, Martha Giese Vallon and Micah Behr). This is the first time that this great composition is presented by a western classical orchestra. And, it received a resounding ovation from the multi-cultural audience. Ravikiran, who had Melharmonically- arranged the masterpiece for the string quartet, also joined them on the chitravina. The Quartet also played the first movement of the Mozart String Quartet in G major, K 387.

Rhythmic magic

The ensuing duet (Alchemy) by four-time Grammy winning drummer Glen Velez and vocal percussionist Loire Cotler was sheer rhythmic magic. Porke Yorash, a Sephardic piece in Latino, seemed to be based



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on the Minor Scale (Raga Keeravani), was rendered brilliantly by Ravikiran, Glen and Loire, billed as the ta-ki-Ta Trio.

This was followed by a short solo by guest star Gaurav Mazumdar (sitar) in Behag with Hindole Majumdar (tabla). The highlight of the evening was Tel Halaf - rhythmic streaks of thunder and lightning on the Frame Drum and vocals, painted on a clear blue canvas of Shanmukhapriya eloquently played by the indomitable Ravikiran. The concert ended with a beautiful but short RTP composed by Ravikiran in Abheri, and included interactions between Carnatic, Hindustani and Western.



Guest of Honour Maestro John DeMain (Conductor of the Madison Symphony & Opera) spoke eloquently of the "consummate musicians" and the "contemplative, meditative, and beautiful music". He was especially appreciative of the coming together of the quartet and Ravikiran.

Leyla Sanyer (Director of the Oregon School Orchestra) welcomed the gathering, and announced that their orchestra would premiere Tyagaraja's Shara shara (Kuntalavarali), melharmonically arranged by Chitravina N Ravikiran on December 11. Ravikiran explained how Melharmony showcased similarities between the Eastern and Western systems, and enriched both by creating new types of chords and counter-points with an emphasis on melodic rules.

The all-day festival also featured individual/group recitals by nearly 100 participants from various cities in the U.S., who presented works of both Tyagaraja and Mozart. Individual/group dance recitals included interpretations of Nagumomu (Abheri) by Meenakshi Ganesan, Brovabaramma (Bahudari) by Sulakshana Jayaram, and a Kuchipudi version of Paramatmudu (Vagadeeshwari) by Dr Sangita Rangala.

There was also a short panel discussion on Mozart and Tyagaraja by Dr. Gloria Chuang & Vanitha Suresh, moderated by Sriram Emani (CEO - Indian Raga). This was followed by neat renditions of Tyagaraja's Meluko Dayanidhi (Sowrashtam) and Shambho Shiva (Shankarabharanam) by over twenty students/musicians from the Midwestern States of the U.S.

In summary, the second annual Melharmony festival showcasing the works of Tyagaraja and Mozart was as successful as its predecessor (Oottukkadu Venkata Kavi) OVKBach Festival.

The organizers have announced that the 2015 festival would be the (Muttuswamy) Dikshitar-Beethoven festival.

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