

Welcome straws in the wind

In recent times, organisations have taken to extending a helping hand to senior, competent musicians who have not received their due. SVK writes of the functions held recently to encourage such artistes.

There are many trusts, foundations and other agencies trying to make amends for the neglect of some senior, highly competent musicians who have not been in the limelight for some reason or other. Not many who have enormous vidwat and even performing abilities got their due in their prime and their plight had been one of out-of-the-dais out-of-the-mind. But life has its own capricious ways of conferring compensation. Many artists have gained a reputation as first-class acharyas and in a way young disciples of such well-qualified artists are perpetuating their gurus' name.

Two such functions were noteworthy. The International Foundation for Carnatic Music associated with the Chitravenu exponent Ravi Kiran through the scheme of Musicians Welfare and Relief Fund honoured Calcutta Krishnamurthy (vocalist), Kalpagam Swaminathan (veena) and Allam Koteeswara Rao (gottuvadyam). That many young vocalists trained by Calcutta Krishnamurthy today are spreading the classical mould in which they have been shaped is well-known and the performing abilities of such trainees have come to be recognised too. It is far easier to be a performing artiste oneself than be a guru lighting several musical candles. Calcutta Krishnamurthy in this respect shines as a teacher nonpareil. It was only fitting that he should be felicitated with a cheque for Rs. 25,000.

As referred to recently in these columns that veena has been getting stepmotherly treatment, the case of Kalpagam Swaminathan, a veteran veena player came to mind when the International Foundation for Carnatic Music extended recognition to her and to Allam Koteeswara Rao. The gottuvadyam or chitra veena as Ravi Kiran would like it to be called, shares the same fate as veena.

In a similar function arranged by the Sundaraja Memorial Trust, Kumbakonam Rajappa Iyer, a veteran in mridangam and Pravachana Vachaspati C. V. Sivaramakrishna Sarma were felicitated. Like Calcutta

Krishnamurthy, Kumbakonam Rajappa has introduced into the percussion field many young mridangists who hold aloft the banner of Rajappa Iyer's teaching skill. Like veena and gottuvadyam the pravachana art has also suffered. But in recent times organisations like the Krishna Gana Sabha, Narada Gana Sabha, Mylapore Fine Arts Club and the like have taken to extending their patronage to Katha Kalakshepams too. These are welcome straws showing which way the wind is blowing. The Sundaraja Trust has not confined itself to the field of music but has given financial aid to many for meeting medical expenses. Similarly scholarship for education is also part of the Trust's objectives.

As part of the function by the International Foundation for Carnatic Music cutcheries had been arranged. Sanjay Subramaniam sang with such abrasiveness that he seemed to be not quite certain whether the listeners would recognise his talent if he sang with a milder tonal inflexion. So from the start of the Malavi varnam "Ninne Kori", a composition of

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Calcutta Krishnamurthy, to the end, with the exception of Sankarabharanam he saw to it that he did not slacken his vocal pressure in song or alapana. The way he rendered the Jaganmohini kirtana of Tyagaraja 'Sobillu saptaswara' - there was so much of drive in the style of interpretation. While the chittaswaras beautifully structured were set to enhance the sprightliness of the song, where was the necessity for swaraprasthara? Sanjay Subramaniam is not alone in this respect. There are many others who are inclined to gild the lily.

Before his slowly enveloping expanse of a stately Sankarabharanam alapana, he thrust in the Jyotiswaroopini kirtana of Koteeswara Iyer 'Ganaamudapanam' with a brief alapana. What an excellent bhani he displayed in the Sankarabharanam vistara! The musical motifs were clearly etched and the exposition was a picture of rare charm. Patterns of sancharas revealed his uncanny instinct for the radiance and bhava of the raga. When he finished the alapana it was something like recreating the golden era of Carnatic music. But every rose has a thorn. His bhani was superb, but the sancharas beyond the tara shadjam badly required a civilising touch. He sang the majestic song of Dikshitar 'Sri Dakshinamurthe.' The beauty of the song was unerringly conveyed. There was a contrast in the mood he created in Sankarabharanam and the other items that preceded it. Sanjay Subramaniam's musical impulses and violinist Vittal Ramamurthy's response were ideally

matched. The mridangist Arun Prakash was quite at ease with the performing methods of the vocalist.

Kumari Sowmya, following Sanjay Subramaniam represented the other pole of the musical sphere - softness to the extreme. It was a manicured picture she painted from the start — Surati varnam 'Enta Premo, Vasanta 'Sitamma Mayamma', Asaveri 'Rara Maainti'. The Asaveri alapana was one accommodating the changing sensibilities in Carnatic music, almost lullaby-like. She was ably supported by M. Narada on the violin, Melakaveri K. Balaji on the mridangam and S. Kartik on the ghatam. One noteworthy aspect of the team was that each one understood intimately the mind of the other.

ASIAN AGE

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Carnatic artistes presented award

Madras: Three eminent Carnatic music exponents — Calcutta Krishnamurthy, Allam Koteeswara Rao and Kalpagam Swaminathan — were presented awards by the International Foundation for Carnatic Music (IFCM) at a function here last night. Among those who offered felicitations were Indian bank chairman, Mr M. Gopalakrishnan Mr N. Ravikiran, founder of IFCM and film actor Kamal Hasan. (PTI)