

## Music should be a part of school syllabus: N Ravikiran

An orchestra of 200 American students effortlessly performed a Tyagaraja composition. The orchestra also played a Purandaradasa composition, in a perfect harmony of east meets west.



American students at a melharmony performance

Chennai:

The unique tonality of the Chitravina stands out among the 200-odd instruments. Orchestration, as a concept is alien to Carnatic music, but the performance was a completely enjoyable one. Rendered under the melharmony initiative of Chitravina exponent N Ravikiran, this is not the first such performance by American students, although this was a challenging one, which ended with pleasing results.

The concert was held at Wayzata High School Orchestra at the Melharmony Festival in Minneapolis conducted by Maestro Mark Gitch. Speaking to DTNext from Minneapolis, Ravikiran said what made it easier for the seamless blend of Indian and Western classical music is the exposure American students have towards music. “The school system in US and Europe as well is such that a lot of emphasis is placed on arts and music. Almost all schools have huge auditoriums for students to practice. Schools also invest in instruments and it is not unusual to find dozens of excellent instruments, all in great working condition,” says Ravikiran. Students in the US are also exposed to a lot of information on various musicians, says Dr Harini K, a resident of New Jersey. On any given day, they would know about the work of half a dozen composers such as Beethoven, Mozart, etc, she adds.

Ravikiran agrees and says many of the schools there have been receptive to melharmony. “I have introduced Oothukadu Venkatakavi’s compositions as well as the ones by Karur brothers,” he says. Melharmony blends the melody of Indian classical music with harmony of Western notes and the result is a global music that touches a cord. Ravikiran also makes it a point to make notations for the compositions, which is not a common practice. Indian music does not use notations, but western music does. “This is how they approach music, so I have made notations for even gamakas in

ragas such as Sahana ,” he points out. The American students also diligently attend rehearsals. “Their dedication is both heartwarming and heartbreaking for me,” he says.

Their value system lays an emphasis on music and arts literacy, while our schools still follow a rigid pattern of teaching only core subjects. “We need a macro system, whereby music is taught as a part of syllabus. The earlier central government took some strides in the right direction. They constituted a three-man committee for music education in schools and I was one of the committee members,” recalls Ravikiran.

He had proposed a friendly syllabus, one that was inclusive, taking the needs of rural students as well. “However, things are yet move to the next level at the Centre. Music is one of our value systems, and we need to take pride in it. Above all, it should be inclusive,” he adds.

The next Melharmony symphony piece, "Climatrix" by Middleton Community Orchestra will be performed in Madison on 12 November. This piece brings all the 72 mela kartas of Carnatic music to the West.