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## Strong bastion of genuine Carnatic excellence

MADRAS

Practice of calculated insensitive strategies of performing craft by popular musicians has commercialised Carnatic classical music and let a pervasive sterility infiltrate into a realm where expressive artistry should rule. It is against this background that Ravi Kiran's dedicated effort to keep traditional classicism with its purity of beauty and bhava intact acquires extraordinary significance.

There was the touch of the musical aristocrat in the regality with which Ravi Kiran presented the great Bhairavi Swarajati "Amba Karnakshi" at his gottuvadyam recital in the Music Academy festival. In the pallavi melody Nattakuranji, every phrase of the alapana crystallised the raga. The way Ravi Kiran kept classicism austere without moving it in the direction of popular instrumentation but rightly expecting the listening ear to come intently close to the music merited his being acclaimed as a strong bastion of genuine Carnatic excellence. A. V. Anand (mrindangam) supported with standard competence.

### Depth and dignity

Carnatic depth and dignity were again witnessed in D. K. Pattammal's concert. Despite the infirmity of her voice, she applied it with dedication to weighty musical values. Kalyani came through as a spirited essay of respectable substance. Among the song highlights were a very sophisticated Tamil piece of Gopalakrishna Bhargathi in Sama (Tillai) Shalagruru and an attractive new Natabhairavi creation in Sanskrit of Srivatsam Raghuvaram Raghavan (Raman). T. Rukmini (violin) contributed a vivacious Kalyani. Thanjavur Ramadoss (mrindangam) and Rangachari (kanjira) gave impressive rhythmic support.

### Sense of flash

Maharajapuram Santhanam drew a record crowd and he sang with the slant needed to please it. The attraction of his voice and his music which was characterised by a shrewd sense of flash and drama was well sustained except in Mohanam in which a brittle tonal quality stood now and then exposed. The impulse in favour of diluting rasa to serve numbers was least exercised in Dhanyasi (Paradevatha) and the conservative rasika was thankful. The listener was happy again in the main raga Todi. T. N. Krishnan (violin) gave glimpses of his class in these ragas. The melody of Vellore Ramabhadran's mrindangam and his rhythmic artistry made music with the music.

### Sangeetha dharma

On the strength of his selections alone the rasika could conclude that Mysore V. Doraiswami Iyengar is an aesthete and his veena playing too supported this thinking. The sequence covered Nayaki, Janarajani, Mukhari, Amir Kalyani, Narayanagowla, etc. Happily the outlook of the performance emphasised sangeetha dharma more than vadhya dharma and the virtuous and peaceful character of veena music was enjoyably maintained. The slips too were minimal. The recital was sensitively supported by D. Balakrishnan (second veena), Kuttalam Viswanatha Aiyar (mrindangam) and Manjunath (ghatam).

### Glorious opening

The Nayaki varnam "Sarasilaksha" has never been rendered as beautifully as T. N. Seshagopalan interpreted it and this glorious opening at his Academy concert made one look forward to a memorable performance. It was not to be for Seshagopalan unwisely exercised his voice in meaningless brika virtuosity in his Kalyani alapana and it lost its healthy condition, in spite of its impaired state, the vocalist

managed with poise to maintain the quality of his vidwat and held attention in Todi (Ninne Nannamanu), V. K. Venkataramanujam was the violinist in this show which gained vitality from Karakudi Mani's exciting mrindangam artistry. His skilful collaborator was Harishanker (kanjira).

### Thrilling alapanas

Abundant joy was had at T.V. Sankaranarayana's performance and the factors responsible for it were his gay and rhythmic swara-singing and his thrilling alapanas. It was significant that when he let his voice fly, he also took care to ensure raga rakthi and did not let the passages descend to the level of empty gyrations. One hopes the art of reposeful singing and weighty song rendition would come to this vocalist before long. His best raga essay was Arabhi while M. Chandrasekharan (violin) scored remarkably in Vachaspathi and Bhairavi. T. K. Murthy (mrindangam) lent a lot of spice to the show partnered by ghatam Gurusumathi.

### Tonal repose

Flutist N. Raman first proclaimed the difference between a modern instrumental score and an authentic musical composition by opening on a Suddha Saveri arrangement of his own and immediately after playing the great Gowlipantu piece of Tyagaraja. "Theeratheeyaka". The Begada and Kiravani ragas essays stood out as striking examples of Raman's art of maintaining tonal repose and pleasantness in colourful alapana venture. It combined instrumentation expertise with delicate phrasing artistry. Mysore Nagaraj (violin) was strong both in his tone and the appeal of his raga essays. Mrindangist Kamalakara Rao was unobtrusively effective.

### Fair account

Considering the downright bad condition of his voice when he started, Nedunurri Krishnamurthi should be lauded for having managed to give a fair account of himself. His undeniable vidwat in swara-singing gave a big helping hand and in his alapana of Shammugapriya, for instance, he gave glimpses of the one-time Nedunuri too. Violinist Tirupparakadal Veeraraghavan and Paigat Raghun (mrindangam) collaborated in a refined style to make the music content-worthy.

### Not natural

Many in the massive crowd that turned up for Sankaran Nambudiri's concert felt disappointed. His music was beautiful when he sang in tune with the remarkably expressive talent that came naturally to him, but this was less on view for he seems to have been programmed excessively to perform with a circus slant. The boy is not yet ready for this type of show and the failure points were many. T. V. Raman (violin) and T. V. Vasan (ghatam) assisted admirably.

### Efficient duet

Duetting methodology applied with thoroughness to cutteri exposition saw the Bombay Sisters (C. Saroja and C. Lalitha) keep the show going efficiently. A significant song selection was the great "Kaarubaru" (Mukhari) but their "pata" made the piece resemble "Ksheenama" in places. M. S. Anantaraman always had something up his sleeve and in Suddha Saveri he emphasised the Western origin of the violin by practising vadhya dharma and offered diverting non-Carnatic melodic arrangements. R. Ramesh (mrindangam) collaborated with verve and precision partnered by N. Govindarajan (ghatam).

### Technical grip

The ring of authentic vidwat was present in R. Vedavalli's presentation in which her technical grip was exhibited without ado. Her alapana artistry came through in Kanbhaji. Shivakumar (violin) and E. M. Panchapakesan (mrindangam) gave tidy support.

### Dance shows

Chitra Visweswaran's dedication was writ large all over her performance. The challenging choreography of the Varnam and her sterling

artistic response to it revealed her willingness to stretch herself unsparingly in effort and her ability to be grippingly effective. Her kalaparama integrity in movement and footwork was remarkable.

The vitality of Kathakali came to the festival in "Duryodhana Vadham". The theme and the extravagant stylism of this vividly dramatic dance form of Kerala met powerfully to lend impact to this dance-drama presented by the Margi Kathakali troupe of Trivandrum. Kalanadram Krishnan Nair was stupendous as Powdra Bhima in the Duryodhana slaying scene.

### Refreshing

Ritha Rajan gave an exhibition of aesthetically refreshing cutteri vidwat and should certainly be able to establish herself if she can sharpen her suswara gnaa even if it means shedding some quantum of her skill in raga workmanship. She sang a respectable Madhyamavathi while Narmada Gopalakrishnan (violin) scored in Malavi maintaining raga sharpness and precision all through her elaboration. Mrindangist Sumathi made the show an all-woman trio and was both lively and seasoned in her rhythmic collaboration.

A little nervous, Subashri Mani gave for a long while the impression that she can do much better than what she was actually doing and eventually did so in her alapana of Todi. Abdul Hafeez (violin) tried to be eventful without possessing the requisite melodic finesse. T. Ramanan (mrindangam) was sedate and helpful. Endowed with a solid and strong voice, Sushila Raman used it for classically weighty rendition too and generally revealed herself as a vocalist worth backing though one could see that she has to acquire a lot more of confidence for gripping performance. M. A. Sundaresan (violin) and V. Ramesh (mrindangam) were her accompanists.

### Hindustani recitals

Hindustani vocal music too figured in the afternoon concerts and the exponents were South Indian women singers. Sowmya Mahanagopal communicated her artistry with commendable authenticity of accent and sweetness though a little tempering of tone seemed called for in her high-octave forays.

An emotive tone and performing keenness aided Sakuntala Narasimhan to present her proficiency with some force but she could neither fully conceal the Carnatic orientation of her voice nor thwart harsh and awry notes from making their appearance now and then.

### Mrindangam prodigy

Pleasant-voiced T. N. Raviprasad was interesting for the suggestion he gave of being caught between the cinematic and the serious. His violin accompanist P. K. Vijayakumar was good but the star of the show was the tiny boy C. N. Balaji. This mrindangam prodigy played like a ripe laya vidwan.

### Decent level

Even as the mind was meditating on what the cutteri formula has done to Carnatic music, Jaya Krishan sang Dhanyasi and "Dhyaname" and one felt happy and relaxed. Jaya maintained a decent level of performance though her form on the day was not her best. Radha Sundaresan (violin) was sweetly competent. Manakkal Sriram (mrindangam) was impressive.

Both in respect of skill and sweetness, Padmaja Srinivasan gave a creditable account of herself in Kanbhaji and "Evarimata". K. Seshadri (violin) contributed a respectable Suddha Saveri. Tiruvudaimarudur Sankaran (mrindangam) gave pleasant rhythmic support.

Mohanachandran's music was pleasant and a little anaemic too in the early stages but he tightened up in Todi and "Dasarathe" gave an excellent account of himself. He was well supported by T. V. Parthasarathi (violin) and Jayaprakash (mrindangam).

Correction: The kruti, "Paridhanamichchithe" is a composition of Patnam Subramania Iyer and not that of Thyagaraja as published in our issue of Dec. 31, 1984, while reporting S. Balachandrar's lecture on "Vivadi Ragas" at the Indian Fine Arts Society.