## audience

## Capitalise on culture

sabhas can do more to give it a world-class The December music festival is big, but feel, writes Chitravina N Ravikiran

with Hillary Clinton on culture, acknowledge Chemnai as the cultural capital of India last week at a luncheon gathering in the city Just as it was heart-warming when Belgian National Television ran a 10-episode series on India recently focussing on Mumbai for business, Hyderabad for food but Chennai for culture. The city earned the distinction of being the country's cultural capital natits reputation is now going global.

Culture in Chennai is more deep-rooted than in other metros and is a way of life. Even today, many parents are keen to give children a rudimentary education in classical music and or dance. There are more concerts of high quality artists held here every year than in classical music and or dance on to today's stars and aspirants deem it imperative to woo audiences here in order to 'belong'.

The December season in Chennai is statistically the world's biggest festival with around 3,000 concerts within 30 days. The charged atmosphere in The Madras Music Academy during some concerts would parallel that of Eden Gardens during a nail-biting cricket match.

But where is Chemnai in the global context? Wouldn't music lovers want to discuss what can be done to take it to the next level?

The question is: how many of the season's concerts are beyond the regional? A handful of musi-

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N Ravikiran | Musicu

cians and dancers are invited from other parts of the country and the occasional paper is presented by a non-Indian scholar Having played in festivals in the US, UK, France, Australia and other countries, I believe that leading organisations can take steps to make the festival more international. A couple of collaborative concerts between our musicians and artists from Western Classical, Jazz, Chinese, South American and African traditions would be the first step.

Sabhas and organisers could plan early, as it will help them apply for government grants, rather than rely on corporates. Every year, several crores of rupees as government grants go unutilised. Organisations must make every effort to apply for such funds. This will ensure that top performers are paid close to their market prices. The organisations must make every effort to apply for such funds. This will ensure that top performers are paid close to their market prices. The organisations must make every effort to apply for such funds. This will ensure that top performers are paid close to their market prices. The organisations afford the best artists.

Revamping hall acoustics and audio systems to meet world. From aboustics and audio systems to meet world close to their market be best artists.

Revamping qualified audio engineers from abroad for one or two seasons but the investment will be worth it. Improving the hall aesthetics to give it a more world-class feel is also something the organisations should aspire to scale-up without diluting the innate purity and classicism. After all, extraordinary is ordinary plus extra.

(The writer is a musician-composer of global stature, acclaimed as the initiator of melharmony)

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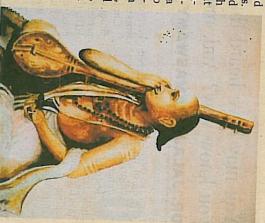
series on the composer. RAVIKIRAN in the first of his two-part compositions, writes CHITRAVINA N. Oottukkadu Venkata Kavi's genius is felt and experienced in all of his

ne of the greatest composers
that India has produced, e
Oottukkadu Venkata Kavi t
Subbaiyer) is said to have lived
sometime between 1700 and 1765
AD. He composed hundreds of brilliant songs in Sanskrit and Tamil and a few in Marathi. Around 500 have survived of which more than 60 per cent have been published. Though his versatility and predilection for music, dance, drama and poetry are obvious even at first glance, the depth and breadth of his works demand years of study by scholars of music, Sanskrit, Tamil and Srividya worship.
For over 200 years, these compositions were almost hidden from the mainstream music field but preserved by a small number of family members and a close circle of disciples. Around 1940, they gained wider exposure through noted Harikatha exponent Needamangalam Krishnamurthy Bhagavatar, a direct descendant of Venkata Kavi's brother. Those who learnt from him include artistes such as Rudrapatnam Brothers, Aruna Sairam, Savitry Sathyamurthy and Kunjumani Bhagavatar, nephew of Papanasam
Today, his torch is borne primarily by Alamelu and Subbaraman. The latter's thesis on Venkata Kavi's Tamil compositions proves

s mayanam and so forth) is the most leoquent proof of Venkata Kavi's thoughts, attitude and mastery. As Prof. T.V. Subba Rao affirmed, "These creations blend bhava, raga, tala, sahitya, shabda and swafra."

Venkata Kavi's compositions ald so give an indication of the places e he visited such as Chennai, Kanchipuram, Madurai, Tiruvarur, d Udupi, Pandharpur and Pazhani.
His references to historic persontt alities such as Jayadeva and Purandaradasa provide a vital clue to y his time period, since Tulasidasa seems to have been chronologically the last personality the poet mentioned.

Venkata Kavi has employed t compositional forms like krti, till-



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