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MUSIC ACADEMY

Vintage fare from veterans

S. SIVAKUMAR

Vocal or instrumental the stalwarts offered music of a rich flavour.

Photos: V.GAnesan



Graceful: R.Ramani.

Smt. Ramani's veena recital was a graceful endeavour, exemplified by her treatment of the Bhairavi Swarajathi of Syama Sastri that really eclipsed all else. It seemed to devolve upon her, this task of an elaborate alapana and niraval at Shyama Krishna Sahodhari — untrammelled virtuosity at this ripe age.

Where then did she take the cue for picking up a whole set of heady ragas — Devagandhari, Saveri, Surutti, Bhairavi and then Khambodi for a morning session. The list also had an RTP in Kalyani! There were brisk numbers like Sri Sankara Guruvaram (Nagaswaravali), Padhavini (Salaka Bhairavi) Varanaradha (Vijayashri) but still one would have wished for a better trade-off.

The alapana for Khambodi (Evari Mata) had insightful prayogas with niraval and swaras at 'Parama Bhaktha Paradeenudanuchu.' The mridangam artist, Prapancham Ravindran, was a dream choice for the veena. All variations in sound, all sollus, all gumukis, all strokes uncompromisingly put the veena in the fore-front. The veena artiste could not have asked for anything more - the audience too. Teaming well with Vyasa Vittala (Ganjira), who also worked with the same bent of mind, a thani with representative usages was presented

Rich in values

Vidushi Seethalakshmi was the musician of the connoisseur. If you had wanted glamour you may not find it here. But if you wanted to soak in old world Carnatic values, in depth and weight, you could find it in abundance. She began with 'Mooladhara' (MayamalavaGowlai-Sankaranarayana Iyer) and Bhuvinidasudane' (Sriranjani-Tyagaraja) that followed had crisp swaras that could still bring out the bhava of the raga. Varali (Karunai Purindhu-Nilakanta Sivan) seemed tailor-made for her instincts. She knew just what phrase to linger on to draw pathos, the cracks and rough edges notwithstanding.

Khamas (Palayamamayibho-Swati Tirunal) had a short but sweet alapana and the treatment of Hindolam (Govardhana Girisam-Dikshithar) dismissed by pundits as being "lighter" among the classical ragas caught the discernor. Her alapana was guided by the path of studied gamakas applied delectably, thus giving it heavy hues that imparted it with the required fullness. Sri Harihara Sutha (Saramathi-K.C.Kesava Pillai) was sung in a gentle manner without any ornamentation. The main raga, Khambodi had a dignified gait about it, though the other raga alapanas seemed to outweigh this in merit.



Seethalakshmi.

The sangatis in 'O Rangasayi' seemed to be refreshing in their lilt with no aggressiveness whatsoever and the artist had the same approach during the niraval and swara sessions.

Senior violinist Savitri Sathyamurthi lived up to the reputation of one hailing from the school of tradition. The laya setup of Ramiah (mridangam) and Ravichandran (ghatam) was thankfully non-obtrusive. But they seemed to lack the kind of sensitivity expected of them while playing for the songs and lacked in presenting apt rhythmic patterns. Their thani, though it had substance, could have been curtailed a bit to make provision for the presentation of another composition.

Countless moments

M.S.Gopalakrishnan and Narmadha featured in a concert that had selections ideally suited both for the violin and the mood of the morning crowd that had come with the specific intention of listening to a veteran. It was a practice worth adhering to when Narmada in an exemplary manner sang the niraval line 'Shyame Sankari Digvijaya Prathapini' completely in a polished manner for

the Varali kriti ‘Mamava Meenakshi.’

The Ragam Thanam Pallavi was in Saveri and there were countless moments of joyous wonder as the violinists exchanged vintage phrases between themselves. In the ragamalika session associated with the pallavi one was filled with choicest versions of Kanada, Mohanam, Sahana, Hindolam, Hamir Kalyani and Anandha Bhairavi - the versions of Kanada, Hamir Kalyani and Hindolam were taken to their apex points with some intricate nuances and phrases.

Earlier the raga alapanas for Begada (Sankari Neeve) and Arabhi (Nadha Sudharasam) saw the violinists present rich and coloured elaborations. They also played a rare kriti of Tyagaraja, Mara Vairi Ramani, in Nasika Bhooshani. The laya accompaniment was provided by Anand (mridangam) and Shanker(Ghatam) .

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