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Rich with feeling



Stunning expertise Gayatri Venkataraghavan Photo: V. Ganesan

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Gayatri Venkataraghavan was in total control of the Carnatic idiom

Where all others strive to make a mark, Gayatri Venkataraghavan comes out in flying colours, and the arena of her expertise is manodharma, swarakalpana to be precise. Throughout the concert as part of the Indiranagar Sangeet Sabha music festival, it was evident that kalpana swara was her forte, not just reeling out the tri-kalai patterns but instilling them with an emotional quotient that is inherent in the raga and the lyrics. Ironically, at times, the lyrics of the compositions she chose to present were not as emotively rendered as her manodharma! The closing notes fell into a cascade as if they were measured and brought to a finish without a flaw.

The Pancharatna kriti “Jagadananda karaka” in Nata made for the opening statement instead of the customary varnam. The artiste seemed in full form and control of her tone as she ambled through this lengthy kriti with its rhythmic variations, endowing it with her brand of musical tilt. Two dasa keertanas seemed customised for the Kannada audience which showed the vocalist’s feeling for the pulse of the audience. While the “Gajamukha vandisu” was the invocatory piece, “Manava janma doddado” in Mayamalavagowla was a stylistic exercise with the artiste tossing the syllables with a break at ‘ma-na-va janma’ hedging it with an eloquent swarakalpana in three cycles of speed which was very impressive. The Yadukula Kambhoji piece, “Kumaran taalpaninde Tudi” (Papanasam Sivan) was in the fast track and a straight rendition sans embellishments. This rhythmic song ignited the percussionists who gave a brilliant exposition for the conclusion.

Spicing her recital with a brief on the composers she was presenting, Gayatri made it an interesting event. She took up a beautiful composition of a less-known composer, N.Ch. Krishnamacharyulu, which ran on the lines of a Dikshitar kriti-mitram et al- and launched into a lovely alapana of 10th melakarta, Natakapriya, gently opening the petals of the raga till it bloomed with fullness. The sangathis for the kriti, “Maara jananeem ashrayae” flowed in a profound sequence as if invoking the celestial goddess of prosperity. The centrepiece in Shankarabharanam was the enriching “Swara Raga Sudharasa...” which was further enhanced by an alapana that scaled the heights of the raga with violinist Narmada, closely tracing its contours immaculately, though in the upper octaves the violin nearly squeaked. The neraval at the first charanam ‘mooladharaja nadamerugute...’ sounded so appropriate and inspiring. Though the climax to the swarakalpana was the regular phraseology (prayogas), Gayatri managed to make it expressive and lively. Here was an artiste who got so carried away by her own song that she visibly enjoyed doing what she did which in turn was infectious as the audience got totally immersed in the concert. The tani avarthanam was replete with complex permutations and combinations by mridangist Poongulam Subramanyam while ghatam artiste, Sukanya Ramgopal took the challenge thrown at her. It was like watching a wrestling match between equals. The RTP, close on the heels of the intense Sankarabharanam, more than testified the musician’s prowess. The breezy Brindavana Saranga attained a dimension in her sonorous rendition. Gayatri left nothing to be desired as she embraced the raga whole-heartedly elucidating its subtleties with refinement. The tanam marked the pinnacle of her expertise while the pallavi, “Naayike, Varadayike, Ranganaayike” was explored to the fullest extent with extensive neraval and swarakalpana.