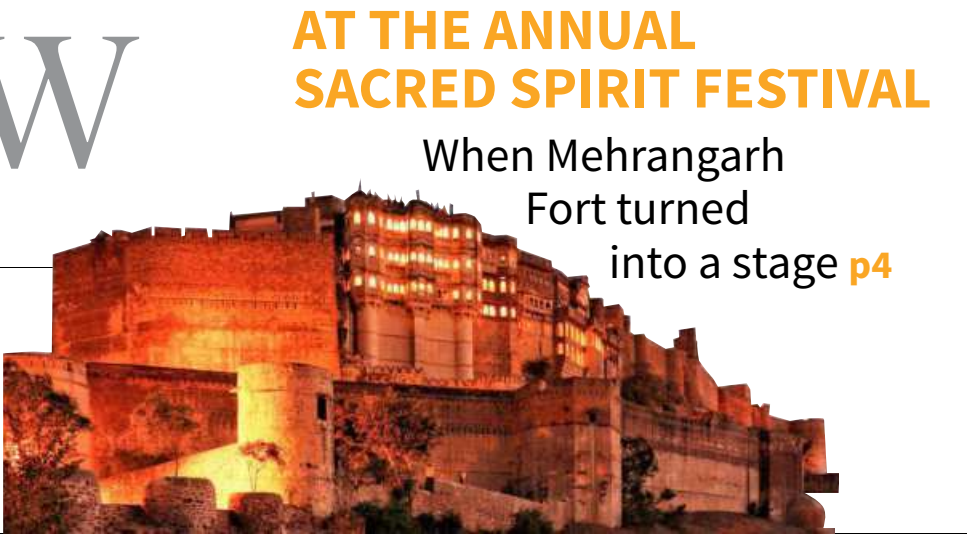


fridayReview

THE HINDU

Memories and melodies
How Mandolin Srinivas and Ustad Zakir Hussain continue to inspire artistes **p2**

An interesting session
T.M. Krishna and Alexander Babu will talk about music, humour, and more **p3**



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When Mehrangarh
Fort turned
into a stage **p4**



Role reversal

For Women’s Day, male artistes who don female roles speak about what it takes to get into the skin of the character

Chitra Swaminathan
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It was a chilly February evening in Konark, Odisha. The rays of the setting sun painted the majestic Sun Temple in warm golden hues. A little away from this 13th century stone edifice, at the Konark Natya Mandap (the venue for the annual Konark Music and Dance Festival) young boys ran around joyfully. Soon, beckoned by their guru, they entered a small room behind the stage, where they were quickly dressed up as girls in elaborate costumes, bright make-up and beaded jewellery. When they finally appeared on stage, the Gotipua dancers stunned everyone with their grace and agility.

What the boys did was carry forward an ancient tradition of cross-dressing to dance for Lord Jagannath. Gotipua is a precursor to the classical dance style of Odissi, which, ironically, is now dominated by women.

Not just Odissi, classical dance forms such Kathakali and Kuchipudi and some folk forms too were once exclusively practised by men, who also took on female roles. The tradition largely continues in some dance styles. And, Kuchipudi has undergone a transformation from being a male preserve to becoming a women’s bastion.

While women dancers have begun to call the moves in India, in the West, male ballet choreographers and company directors still exert immense influence. In 2022, the U.S.-based lawyer and activist Elizabeth B. Yntema’s Dance Data Project put out startling numbers that set the ballet world thinking seriously about sexism and gender inequality.

Gender identity is an intrinsic aspect of dance. It is largely impacted by socio-cultural values. Since the body is the core of dance, acting as a site for personal and cultural expression, movements have inherently been divided as masculine and feminine. This divide has, over the years, been shrinking with women getting into choreography, curation and teaching. However, it would not have been easy for women to navigate the male gaze, which perpetuated harmful gender stereotypes and limited creative possibilities.

Today, dance has emerged as a weapon for women to fight patriarchal power structures, allowing them to showcase their perspectives, experiences and emotions.

On March 8, when we celebrate women’s strength in owning her identity, we ask a few male artistes on how it feels to experience womanhood, albeit briefly on stage.

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» PAGE 3**



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► **Nostalgia unlimited**
Karthik, U. Rajesh and Stephen Devassy at the 10th edition of 'The Great Mandolin Show: Melodies and Memories'.
PHOTO: R. RAGU

Aishwarya Raghunathan

When art and emotion intertwine, magic happens. The 10th edition of 'The Great Mandolin Show: Melodies and Memories' was one such evening. It was a heartfelt tribute to two music titans, Mandolin U. Srinivas and Ustad Zakir Hussain. It wasn't just about revisiting their brilliance and embracing their everlasting influence, but celebrating their music which continues to inspire and resonate across generations.

Gathered under one roof was a formidable line-up of artistes bound by music and shared admiration for the legends – Mandolin U. Rajesh, Stephen Devassy, Lydian Nadhaswaram, Steven Samuel Devassy, Karthik, Rajesh Vaidhya, Devi Sri Prasad, Selvaganesh, Sivamani, Fazal Qureshi and Harmeet Manseta.

The show opened with U.

Chords and notes

A concert in memory of Mandolin U. Srinivas and Ustad Zakir Hussain was a celebration of collaborative music

Rajesh, accompanied by the piano prodigy Lydian and the dynamic Steven. Invoking Ganesha with 'Gananayakaya', it then transitioned into 'Hidden Trails', a composition by Srinivas that Rajesh revealed was very close to his heart. The piece, recorded for what would have been Srinivas' final album, resonated through the hall as Lydian's tuneful keys melted into

Rajesh's intricate *gamakas*, layered by Steven's pulsating bass. As visuals of Srinivas played in the backdrop, the air thickened with emotion, serving as a fitting, heartwarming tribute. The energy shifted with 'Tabla Tuning', a classic from Shakti's iconic LP, inspired by a cassette gifted to Rajesh by ghatam maestro Vikku Vinayakram. The chemistry between Lydian and Steven

was electric, their *konnakol* duel lighting a spark that rippled through the audience.

Karthik set the stage for the magnificent 'Mahaganapatim', alongside Sivamani's rhythm with beads, bells, and water sounds. Harmeet Manseta's keystrokes added depth, flowing effortlessly into 'That One Note', where Rajesh pushed the boundaries of Hindolam by adding an extra note. It felt surreal as Jazz met Carnatic, and past met present.

The stage then erupted into a kaleidoscope of sound as Stephen's high-frequency keytar clashed and harmonised with Harmeet's jazz swing, while Sivamani's drum rolls collided with Selvaganesh's rapid-fire kanjira. The piece took a turn towards folk rhythms, when jazz chords met earthy beats.

On the occasion, culture curators Lakshmi and Saraswathi who helped put the show together, shared

their personal bond with Ustad Zakir Hussain. Also, Fazal Qureshi was presented with the 'Mandolin Srinivas Award' by Srinivas' father.

The rhythm of the night reached its peak with a signature *Shakti* piece, beginning with a *korvai* and spiralling into a thani avartanam. Fazal, Selvaganesh, and Sivamani then engaged in a collaborative exercise. Their seamless synergy, combined with the audience's rhythmic clapping, transformed the concert hall into a pulsating instrument of its own.

Then, Devi Sri Prasad took centre stage along with Rajesh Vaidhya on the veena for a special Maha Shivratri performance. As the evening surged into its grand finale, every artiste returned to the stage for Sadashiva Brahmendrar's 'Pibare ramarasam'. It was no longer a performance – it turned into a jubilant offering and a collective celebration of music.

The power of nine

The highlight of Akshay Padmanabhan's thematic concert was the Navarasa varnam



► **Ode to Shakti** Akshay Padmanabhan.). PHOTO: S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

P Srihari

Some compositions are so awe-striking they leave an indelible imprint on the mind. One such masterpiece is Lalgudi G. Jayaraman's 'Angayarkanni', a Navarasa varnam that portrays nine emotions, akin to those mentioned in the Natya Shastra, in as many ragas. Primarily designed for dance recitals, its exquisite lyrics, appropriate ragas and the seamless fusion with rhythmic cadences (poruthams, the composer's insignia) combine to make it a catchy opening choice in Carnatic concerts as well.

Akshay Padmanabhan, in his thematic recital 'Thaaye Dayapari' at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Tamizh Isai Vizha, opened with this varnam. It celebrates Goddess Meenakshi's responses to Shiva's *Thiruvilaiyadalgal* (divine play-acts) and extols her own virtues. The nine ragas and the corresponding sentiments are Bilahari: *Anandam* (happiness), Hussen: *Sringaram* (love), Valaji: *Adbhutam* (wonderment), Saranga: *Hasyam* (laughter), Sucharitra: *Bheebatsam* (disgust), Atana: *Roudram* (anger), Rasikapriya: *Bhayanakam* (fear), Sahana: *Karunyam* (compassion), and Nadanamakriya: *Santham* (peace).

Rare kriti

Maintaining the momentum, Akshay presented a brief alapana of Jagannohini segueing into Gopalakrishna Bharati's 'Sivakamasundari' in Rupakam. The song, predominantly set in madhyama kala, is apt for kalpanaswaras, and the vocalist made a good account of himself, rendering the same at the pallavi opening. Papanasam Sivan's seldom-heard 'Vaani arul purivaay' in Dhanyasi was sung next. The pleasing chittaswaram enhanced the appeal of the song that seeks the blessings of Saraswati.

When Akshay took up Begada, his voice had settled into a better space, providing a polished sheen to the raga rendition. Expectedly, he sang

'Kadaikkan vaithu' by Ramaswami Sivan in Misra Chapu. The niraval and swara passages at the charanam line 'Santatam pugazhndu' were engaging as the accompanists M. Vijay (violin), B. Sivaraman (mridangam) and K.R. Sivaramakrishna (kanjira) complemented Akshay well.

The popular 'Thaaye tripurasundari' (Suddha Saveri-Khanda Chapu) by Periyasami Thooran was rendered with zest. The long and iconic chittaswaram served as perfect flourish to the ode dedicated to the goddess of Thiruvannmiyur.

Enjoyable Bhairavi

The main number of the evening was Papanasam Sivan's 'Thaaye Bhairaviye', and Akshay reserved his best for it. He unfolded Bhairavi with measured grace, employing the gamakas with precision, and vividly brought out the devotional fervour of the song. The niraval and swarakalpana exchanges were well-articulated.

Akshay added colour to the concert with another ragamalika. 'Nee thaana thunai neelambari', composed by N.S. Chidambaram, has been set in eight ragas whose names denote various forms of Devi – Nilambari, Vasanthabhairavi, Gowrimanoohari, Saraswati, Sriranjani, Mohanakalyani, Durga and Jyotisarupini. The concert concluded with Subramania Bharati's 'Thedi unai saran adaindhen' in Sindhubhairavi.

Akshay's ally is his crystalline voice. At home in the middle and lower octaves, it, however, tends to be less pliable when hitting the high notes. His skirmishes with sruthi early on in the concert were a bit of a dampener.

Vijay exuded confidence and sparkled in all his raga alapanas, Bhairavi being particularly sublime. Sivaraman and Sivaramakrishna played out a sedate but subtle tani, and displayed good anticipation overall.

It would have been ideal had a song or two on Lakshmi been included since the theme translates to 'O, Mother Compassionate!'. However, one on Saraswati rightly made it to the list.

Bhakti as leitmotif

Shanmugha Sundaram performed compositions on Shiva at the Sarasalaya Dance festival

V.V. Ramani

During Shivaratri, Rama and Krishna take a breather and Shiva makes an appearance in all his majesty on dance platforms. Performing at the Sarasalaya Dance festival, Shanmugha Sundaram presented 'Shivane potri', a compilation of three compositions on Shiva. The presentation highlighted the feeling of devotion and surrender. A Thevaram by Tirunavukkarasar was the opening piece, where the form of Shiva and his various attributes were depicted.

Shanmugha Sundaram then moved on to explore

the emotions in the Thodi raga Pada varnam 'Roopamujoochi' (Muthuswami Dikshitar). The devotee requests Shiva to not be angry and accept his love and cast his benevolent gaze on him. The opening sequence showed how the devotee, who is busy plucking flowers, rushes to catch a glimpse of Shiva, who is being taken in a procession on the Rishaba vahana. He is overwhelmed at the sight. The dancer's presentation included all the details such as the shape of the vahana, grandeur of the temple and the instruments carried in the procession.

The dancer effectively handled the sancharis for the line 'Sami inthakopamu' – be it shredding of the

flowers that he had so lovingly plucked to make a garland or throwing the sandalwood paste asunder. The visualisation of the panchabhootas was also done with finesse. The jathis were interestingly constructed – there were moments of restraint marked by sculpturesque poses followed by fast-paced theeramanams.

In the concluding piece, the dancer elaborated Shiva Panchakshara stotram 'Nagendra Haraya'. Each line was explained through relevant gestures. Though the performance was based on bhakti, a variety of emotions would have made for a better impact. Sukanya Ravinder conducted the recital with flourish. Kaushik Champakesan on

► **Remembering a guru** Shanmugha Sundaram. PHOTO: B.JOTHI RAMALINGAM

vocals, Venkata Subramaniam on the mridangam and Soumya Ramesh on the veena provided competent support. Lights were by Venkatesh and choreography was by Chitra Visweswaran.



Creative avatar

Sixty dancers from five different dance schools came together to depict the 11 facets of Shiva

► **Eclectic mix** From 'Ekadsha Rudram'. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



V.V. Ramani

'Ekadsha Rudram', a dance drama detailing the 11 Rudras, the embodiment of Mahadeva, conceptualised, produced and directed by Poornima Gururaja was recently presented by dancers Gopika Varma and Leena Sreebadra.

The programme, featuring 60 dancers from five different dance schools, was packed with varied dance and music styles, LED visuals (Vinod Gowda) and vibrant colours.

The varied facets of Shiva and a few stories related to him were woven into the narrative, rendered by a sutradhar. The

LED screen in the background was designed to flow with the ideas being expressed. Especially impressive was the creation of a chariot's image using the significant elements being ideated. However, this sometimes interrupted the performance.

The chakkars of Kathak style were used with dramatic impact to show Shiva dancing with a life-sized puppet of Dakshayani. The multiple images of Shiva-Shakti, the contemporary movement vocabulary for Kala Bhairavashtakam and the depiction of Bhadrakali were some sequences where the power of theatre was dominant.

The effort put in by the

dancers was evident, but the continuous buzz of activity on stage was too much to take in. The costumes and their colour palette was an eclectic mix – what was needed was a cohesive aesthetic designed with care.

The dancers were drawn from Kalasindhu Academy (Bharatanatyam), Articulate Dance Studio (Kathak), Dasyam (Mohiniyattam), Shivapriya (Kuchipudi) and Samudra Natam (Contemporary style).

Ekadasha Rudra kritis of Shankaranarayana Iyer, combined with shlokas from the Rig Veda, made up the music. Besides this, Praveen D Rao had compiled individual music scores for each group.



Krishna meets Alex

You have heard T.M. Krishna speak at different fora on humanitarian problems, social ills and political issues. You would have read his books on Carnatic music and articles on diverse subjects. And, of course, you have heard his pitch-perfect voice convey gently the emotions in the songs by ancient and modern composers.

Alexander Babu is an ace stand-up comedian who never fails to draw a full house. He is also a musician and an actor. Alex, as he is popularly known, loves to look at the world through the lens of humour and encourages people to not take life too seriously.

So when the two meet for a conversation, it will unravel some unknown facets of their interesting personalities. This intimate and fun-filled session will be held for an invited audience at The Hindu office on March 11 at 4 p.m.

The conversation will be uploaded for public viewing on The Hindu Fridays YouTube channel.



Blend of styles Taufiq Qureshi and Bickram Ghosh. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sound experiment

Taufiq Qureshi and Bickram Ghosh combine the tabla and the djembe in their new album RamTa

Neha Kirpal

It's not every day that the tabla and the djembe combine to produce an album. That's exactly what percussionists Bickram Ghosh and Taufiq Qureshi did recently with RamTa, their latest collection of work. Produced by Eternal Sounds, the collaboration brings together the two artistes' distinct musical styles.

Bickram and Taufiq are like-minded in their approach to rhythm, have performed together for three decades, and share a good camaraderie off stage too. When they finally decided to collaborate, the idea was to fuse the rich tradition of their legacy with their percussion instruments.

It was Bickram who first "popped the question" last year, and the duo set a date right away. Taufiq went to

Kolkata, where they started recording in Bickram's studio. "When we met in the studio, there was no structured method. We just spontaneously decided on a time signature and a tempo," says Taufiq, son of the legendary Ustad Alla Rakha and the younger brother of Ustad Zakir Hussain. One of the first pieces they did was using the breath, voice and body percussion. They then used it to create layer after layer of rhythmic ideas.

One of the standout tracks from the album is 'Thumak Live', named so by Bickram. A live interaction between two percussionists who love and respect each other's work, the track happened when both musicians simply set up their instruments at an audio-visual studio and started playing live once the camera started rolling. "The track just has us playing and improvising," shares Bickram. The compositional

structure is very organic and instinctive, almost like in a live concert.

'Grooving Fives' is an interesting delineation of the number five. "It doesn't have a regular rhythm, rather a funky structure," says Bickram. Another live track, 'Matta', is a challenging duet in the rhythmic cycle of nine beats. "We use a lot of vocal and body percussion," adds Taufiq. For instance, 'Dum (A Capella)' has them bringing in a lot of elements of sounds that have been created using their voice and body. They explore the traditional classical as well as other styles of playing in their solo playing.

"Most of the things we did in the album are spontaneous improvisations," says Taufiq. Along the way, there were many surprise elements too, like when Taufiq plays the jal tarang. Further, while doing another track, 'The Mystic Tribe', Bickram sings a part in a very high octave. "While doing 'Grooving Fives', there was a section where Bickram added some low duff parts, and I had to do a low conga to match. I borrowed the conga from a student of mine to complement what he played," recalls Taufiq.

The duo plans to take RamTa to various cities in India, in multiple forums such as college festivals, public concerts and corporate shows. "We want to share this rhythmic message with as many people as possible," says Bickram.

Role reversal



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Srikanth Natarajan, a Bharatanatyam and Bhagavata Mela artiste, who is renowned for playing the heroine in various Bhagavata Mela dance dramas, feels it is extremely challenging to portray women such as the assertive queen Chandramathi, the gentle Sita, the daring Rukmini and the intelligent Savithri. I even once portrayed a pregnant Devaki. "The costume, make-up and mannerisms, to some extent, help me metamorphosise into these characters, but it's the emotional transformation that matters more. Observation and internalisation are crucial because in Bhagavata Mela you portray a character, not for a few minutes but for hours together, as plays often last the whole night. For over four decades I have been playing female roles, and it has helped me gain a deeper perspective of a woman's life."

Kuchipudi dancer Avijit Das likes to look at art beyond the gender divide. "Though I hail from a male-oriented dance drama tradition, in my solo performances I usually don't choose nayika-centric pieces. Art is about self-expression and need not be associated with masculinity or femininity. We need to look beyond gendered movement and just have dancing bodies."

Any discussion about men in dance would be incomplete without a mention of trailblazing American modern dancer and choreographer Ted Shawn. He had taken it up as a mission to establish dance "as a legitimate medium for the creative male artiste". In 1930, Ted Shawn, launched the popular Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and created a new dance order with his all-male troupe. He also changed the image of the male dancer as the epitome of masculinity. Conditioned by social and

cultural stereotypes, dancers do tend to present gender in their movements. But this mostly happens when they are in front of an audience. On a personal level, dancing, to a performer, is an intimate experience and gender could be a non-issue.

Says noted Yakshagana artiste Radhakrishna Urala, who specialises in female roles: "Men always played the role of women in Yakshagana (a theatrical art form popular in coastal Karnataka). It is a hugely challenging task. You have to get the body language right to ensure audience involvement."

Sometimes, this could become a disadvantage too. "Some audience members try to come too close, or yank at the sari, despite knowing that a man is playing the part. I then wonder how hard it must be for women to deal with such things," says Radhakrishna.

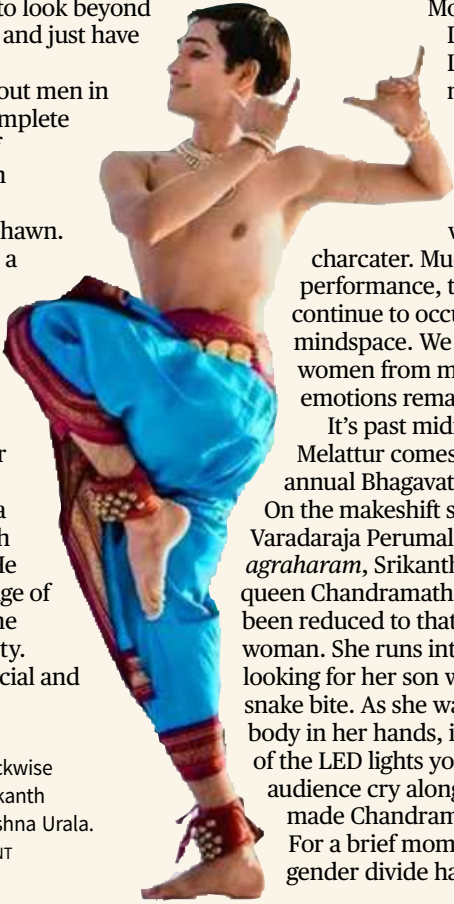
When he got to play the character of Puttamathe in Champa Shetty's Kannada play Akku, he drew from memories of his grandmother. When he reprised the role in the film Ammachi Emba Nenapu, nobody could believe it was a man playing the role, until he came out to meet the audience after the end-credits rolled.

Says Kathakali artiste Kottakkal C M Unnikrishnan, "I have played

Mohini, Damayanti, Lalitha and a few more, and each time I go up on stage it requires deep engagement with the

charcater. Much after the performance, they often continue to occupy my mindspace. We may be playing women from mythology but the emotions remain the same."

It's past midnight when Melattur comes alive during the annual Bhagavata Mela utsavam. On the makeshift stage facing the Varadaraja Perumal temple in the agharam, Srikanth appears as queen Chandramathi, whose life has been reduced to that of an ordinary woman. She runs into the forest looking for her son who has died of a snake bite. As she wails holding his body in her hands, in the reflection of the LED lights you see the audience cry along. Srikanth had made Chandramathi his own. For a brief moment in time, the gender divide had been blurred.



Ideas and identity (Clockwise from right) Avijit Das; Srikanth Natarajan and Radhakrishna Urala. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CALENDAR



Contemporary dance festival

March Dance, a festival of contemporary performance, is back in Chennai. Conceived and curated by Basement 21, in partnership with the Goethe Institut, Chennai, and the Alliance Française of Madras, the festival will be held from March 10 to 23 at two venues — Alliance Française and the Goethe Institut.

Here's the week's schedule: **March 10, 6.30 p.m.:**

'Poetic and Sonic structures in Turtle Dreams' a talk on how to interpret the sound-image relationship based on a viewing of work by Meredith Monk, followed by the Brandenburg Concerto No.3 in G Major by Saburo Teshigawara and Ursonate by Kurt Schwitters.

March 12, 6.30 p.m.: 'Body and History, a dynamic relation', excerpts from Heisenam Kanhailal's PERET, followed by a lecture by Prof. Anuradha Kapur.

March 12-14, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.: 'Taleem, Training for practicing performers', a workshop to be conducted by Deepak Sivaswamy. For more details, please visit https://www.instagram.com/21_basement/



Celebrating women in arts

Carnatic vocalist Sriranjani Tapasya Santhanagopalan has curated a fundraiser as a tribute to women in arts. Titled 'Mavericks – Go Forth and Conquer', it will be held on March 8, 10.30 a.m. at Madras Literary Society. The event begins with a concert dedicated to women composers. It features Sriranjani, violinist Deepika Venkatraman, percussionist Charu Hariharan, and dancer Jyothsna Akhilan.

This will be followed by a panel discussion on women in the arts. Moderated by Akhila Krishnamurthy, it features voice coach and sound engineer Anjana Rajagopalan, dancer Apoorva Jayaraman and violinist Shreya Devnath.

Namasankirtanam festival

Sri Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha, in association with Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Vidya Mandir, Rajakilpakkam, and Integrated Enterprises, conducts a 10-day namasankirtanam festival from today at Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi Mahaswami Auditorium.

Sriram Vaidyanathan (MD & CEO., Integrated) will present the 'Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Nama Sudha Vani' award to Adambakkam V. Ramachandran on the occasion. The award also carries a gold medal and a purse, instituted by Vijaykumar Reddy and Dr. Preetha Reddy.

Bhagavatas from different Bhajan mandalis will be performing at the festival. Rendition of Thodaya Mangalam, Abhang, guru keertana, Ashtapadi and Sampradaya Divyanama Sankirtanam will form part of the festival, which concludes which concludes on March 16 with Anjaneya utsavam. Unchavritti and Radha Kalyanam will also be performed on the last day.

Garuda sevai and discourse

• Sri Anantha Padmanabha Swamy Temple, Gandhi Nagar, Adyar, is conducting the 31st brahmotsavam till March 15. Garuda Sevai will be held on March 9 at 9 a.m.

• Sarvani Sangeetha Sabha Trust in association with Sringeri Bharthi Vidyashram is conducting a discourse on 'Vishnu Sahasra Nama Saara Vaibhavam' by Samavedam Shanmukha Sarma from today till March 9 (6.30 p.m.) at Sringeri Bharthi Vidyashram, T.Nagar.

Solo recital

Bharata Kalanjali presents Natarpanam, a solo Bharatanatyam performance by Amirdavarshini S, on March 9, 6 p.m. Venue: SPASTN, TEACH Auditorium, Taramani.

Talent showcase

Narada Gana Sabha, as part of Nadasangamam's talent promotion concert series, will feature the following events on March 12 at its mini hall. 5.30 p.m.: Aadithya Dev (vocal) and 7 p.m.: Srivathsava (flute).

Vocal concerts

The Music Academy will feature the following performances as part of the HCL concert series.

Today, 6 p.m., at the Kasturi Srinivasan Hall: S. Swarathmika (vocal) with Pantula Vennela (violin) and A. Rohith (mridangam).

March 10, 6.30 p.m., at the TTK Auditorium: Vidushi Ashwini Bhide Deshpande (Hindustani). She will be accompanied by Ratuja Lad (vocal support), Yati Bhagwat (tabla) and Ravindra Katoti (Harmonium).



You do not have to be religious to connect with the sacred. If you agree, you've probably had the chance to listen to deeply-felt music under an open sky. The Sacred Spirit Festival held recently at venues in and around the picturesque Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, offered a chance to experience this. A variety of instruments (made of reed, wood, string) and the human voice created synergies between remote parts of the world.

The music was new and ancient, modern and traditional, sung solo or in groups, in languages known and unknown. And, it spoke of the themes of connection, mentorship and dedication. More than perfection, the music spoke of immersive engagement.

While Mohd Aman Khan heralded the day with khayals set in raags such as Desi Todi and Ahir Bhairav, musicians from the Meghwal, Manganiyar and Langa communities wowed the audiences with their soulful repertoire steeped in religious motifs different from their own religious roots. Anwar Khan, Talab Khan and others, who performed on the last morning of the festival, demonstrated the power of music to be free of boundaries.

The Chaar Yaar Ensemble led by Madan Gopal Singh strung together medleys – meditative and merry – taking listeners to meet Bulleh Shah, Bertolt Brecht, Kabir and Rumi, all in one afternoon. The audience was happy to co-travel. The voices of Kelam and Dariya from Barmer rang out sweet and clear. S. Swaminathan's



Symphony on the *sand*

The annual Sacred Spirit Festival held at Mehrangarh Fort showed how music can help people rise above divides



veena recital was vibrant and fast paced, with the tani avartanam adding a sparkle.

The other set of afternoon concerts saw the fiddle and Carnatic violin play one after the other. Violinist CS Anuroop and his disciple Puvathy Dileep kept the audience tapping their feet to ragas such as Hamsadhvani and Kathanakuthuhalam ('Gana murthe' provided a lilting contrast). Violoneuses Perrine Bourel and Mana Serrano conjured up the Southern Alps through renditions on the fiddle, morching and voice – their collaborator Mosin Kawa on the tabla lent the Rajasthani flavour.

The Khusal Trio delighted with women's songs of wisdom in Occitan. The Trio's subsequent collaboration with veteran Kamaicha players Ghewar Khan, Dara Khan and others felt unequal, however, and one wished to hear more from the seasoned folk musicians.

The early evening concerts struck an emotional appeal, with Ranjani and Gayatri's Carnatic renditions holding the audience as riveted as Naissam Jalal's genre-bending music that

reflected her reverence for Hindustani music. The latter, based on five Indian landscapes that had moved her, saw the audience lingering to interact, despite a time call from another venue packed with some more artistic treats.

The performances on the festival mainstage were marked by colourful and creative conversations. The Osei Kwame Korankye Ensemble from Ghana played and narrated the *seperawa*'s history. Juan Carmona's guitar and Gazi Khan Barna's percussion provided a backdrop for Flamenco and Kathak. The prayerful music of the Dudukner Ensemble from distant Armenia almost resonated with ragas such as *Sindhu Bhairavi* and *Punnagavarali*. Multi-instrumentalist Davide Ambrogio's Mediterranean music blended effortlessly with music by the Langa Surniya and others.

Another striking performance on the main stage was by a women's ensemble that showcased the Deba, an art of Sufi origin, once practised exclusively by men but now reserved for women. Through gentle, swaying movements and harmonised music, the women presented "songs of praise for the Prophet Muhammad, the history of his companions, and also stories of love between people", to quote Faizouna Malidi from the group. The dance inspired by "everyday gestures or from translations of the sung text", is choreographed by lead dancers, she adds. This is the troupe's second performance in India.

Besides performing regularly "in Mayotte's villages, on joyful occasions and in a spirit of communion" the group has taken its art to the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, among others.

SATHYAM | ESCAPE | INOX | DEVI | SAVANGA | CASINO | ALBERT I WOODLANDS | EGA | PVR - PALAZZO
KAMALA CINEMAS | TNAGAR AGG | S2 PERAMBUR | BHARATHI IDREAM | MAHALAXMI | KRISHNAVENI | KODNAGAR KASI
KASI TALKIES | INOX LUX | PVR GRAND - VELACHERY | PVR GALADA - PALAVARAM | PVR ICON VR MALL | REDHILLS PVR
ECR - PVR | INOX NATIONAL | INOX MARINA | S2 THIYAGARAJA | MAYAJALAI ECR - VIJAY PARK | MAMANOUR - C3
CINEMPOLIS | EVP CINEMA'S | AMBATHUR - RAKI & MULUGAN | VILUVAKKAM - AGG | GMR AOS | MADURAVAYAL - AGG
KOYAMBEDU - ROHINI | PORUR - GK | THAMBARAM - VIDHYA & MR & NATIONAL | CHORPETT - VETRI | KOLOTHUR - GANGA
PADI - SIVA SAKTHI & LAXMI BALA RADHA | GREEN | REDHILLS - RADHA MOVIE PARK | THIRUVALLUR - RAKI & ROJA & THULASI
ST THOMAS - JOTHY | PONNAMALLE - SUNDHAR & VIGNESWARA & BHAGAVATHY | CHEENGALPET - SRK & LATHA
PALAVARAM - JANATHA | THIRUNINRAVUR - VELACINEMAS | MINJUR - MANI & KK CINEMAS | MEDAVAKKAM - KUMARAN

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PARALLEL UNIVERSE PICTURES

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PRODUCTION DESIGNER VINODH C.J.
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