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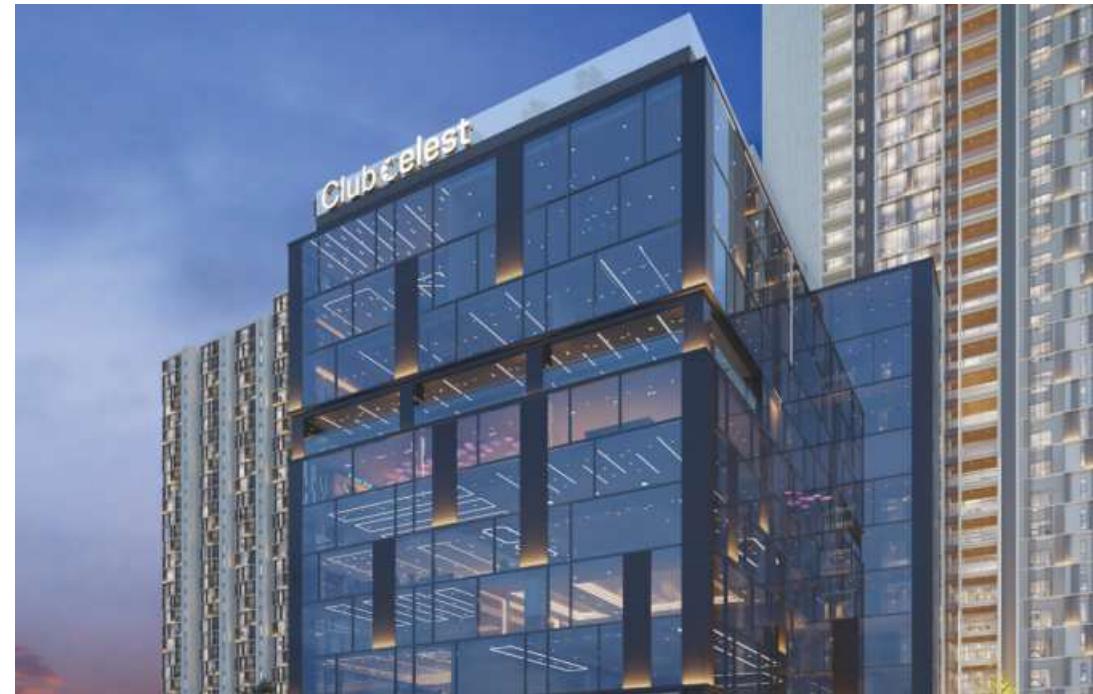
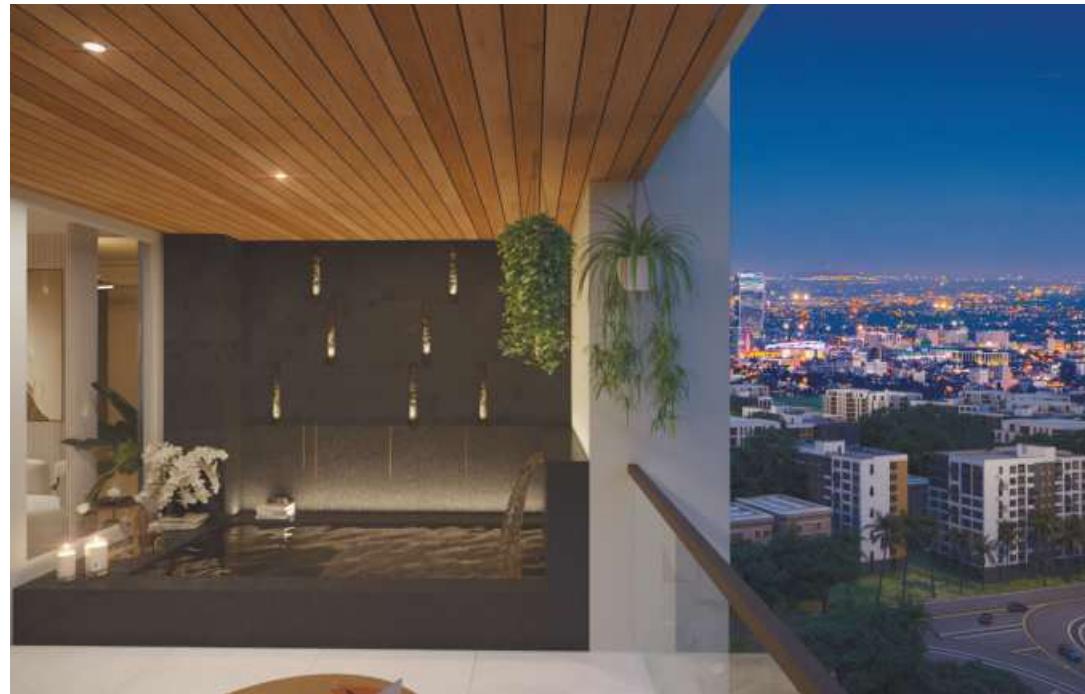
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THE HINDU

The sound of tradition
Nagaswaram occupied centre stage at a recent festival in Chennai p2

For the cause of dhrupad
A concert series highlights the nuances of the ancient Indian musical form p3



AN ACTOR FOR ALL SEASONS

UAA celebrated the milestone years of three iconic Sivaji Ganesan films p4



Sriram V.

In Carnatic music, Tyagaraja the great devotee of Rama enjoys exalted status. But in Tyagaraja's view, it was Bhadrachalam Ramadas who was much superior. There are at least three direct references to the latter in Tyagaraja's compositions and in addition, there are numerous songs that have entire phrases and themes that seem to have been inspired by Ramadas. Like several other pre-Trinity composers, Ramadas' music is lost almost in entirety, and only some lyrics are available. But what remains gives us a glimpse of his virtuosity. And there is Bhadrachalam itself, by the Godavari, with its temple to Rama standing testimony to the devotion of Ramadas.

The composer's life and lyrics were the subject of detailed study by the late M.S. Rajajee, an IAS officer, who retired as Chief Secretary, Andhra Pradesh. He, along with DVN Gopalakrishna, Head, Department of Telugu, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Hyderabad, brought out a critical edition titled *Spiritual Heritage of Bhakta Ramadas* (1999, Department of Endowments, Government of Hyderabad). This publication is of great use for those who do not know Telugu.

That a temple for Rama existed at Bhadrachalam before Ramadas is not disputed. In fact, in his song 'Barayya manage rangayya', Purandaradasa sings of Parama Pavitra Rama Bhadrachaladhisa. And so it must have been a place of pilgrimage even in the 15th and 16th centuries. But a hundred years later, the temple was gone, and the idols buried in the sands. This was when Pokala Damakka, a devotee is said to have unearthed them, following a dream. She approached Kancherla Gopanna, the then tehsildar of Palawancha for help in building a temple. He promised to do so, and that marked his transformation into Bhadrachala Ramadas.

Born in the early 17th century to Linganna Mantri and Kamamba, Gopanna belonged to the aristocratic Kancherla family, whose members held prominent positions in the court of the Sultans of Golconda. A kinsman, Podala Lingappa features prominently in East India Company records as the Naik of Poonamallee. But more important were his cousins/brothers-in-law - Akkanna and Madanna - who were ministers and confidantes of the last Sultan of Golconda, Abul Hasan Tana Shah, who ruled from 1672 to 1686. Thanks to these two brothers, Gopanna became the tehsildar of Palawancha.

Ode to a poet's abode

Revisiting Bhadrachalam, a town on the banks of the Godavari, where Ramadas lived and created lyrical gems



Lyrical gems

- Sree Rama Namame - *Atana*
- Paluke Bangaramayena - *Anandabhairavi*
- Sree Ramula Divyanama - *Saveri*
- Tarakantramu - *Dhanyasi*
- Hari Hari Rama - *Kanada*
- Paahi Rama Prabho - *Madhyamavati*
- Enta Mahanubhavudu *Sankarabharanam*
- Nanu Brovamani Cheppave - *Kalyani*

Gopanna began constructing the temple with his personal funds. However, when he ran out of money, he began diverting the state revenues to the project. Abul Hasan was a liberal ruler but even he could not countenance misappropriation. So Gopanna was arrested. He remained in the prison at Golconda for 12 long

years. During this time, he sang his heart out to Rama. Legend has it that at the end of the ordeal, Rama and Lakshmana themselves settled the debts and Gopanna was a free man. As Ramadas he spent his remaining years in Bhadrachalam.

His life acquired a lot of colour at the hands of Harikatha performers, who took stories from the lives of Bhakti poets such as Tukaram, the Nayanmars and Purandaradasa and made them part of the legend of Ramadas. In reality, his later years are unrecorded. What we do know is that Aurangzeb invaded Golconda in 1686 and took Abul Hasan prisoner. Madanna was killed by the public in the confusion that followed. The fate of Akkanna is unknown. Abul Hasan was treated well by Aurangzeb though he was denied personal freedom. Both captor and captive lie buried within a kilometre of each other at Khuldabad, near Aurangabad. Abul Hasan is now venerated as a saint.

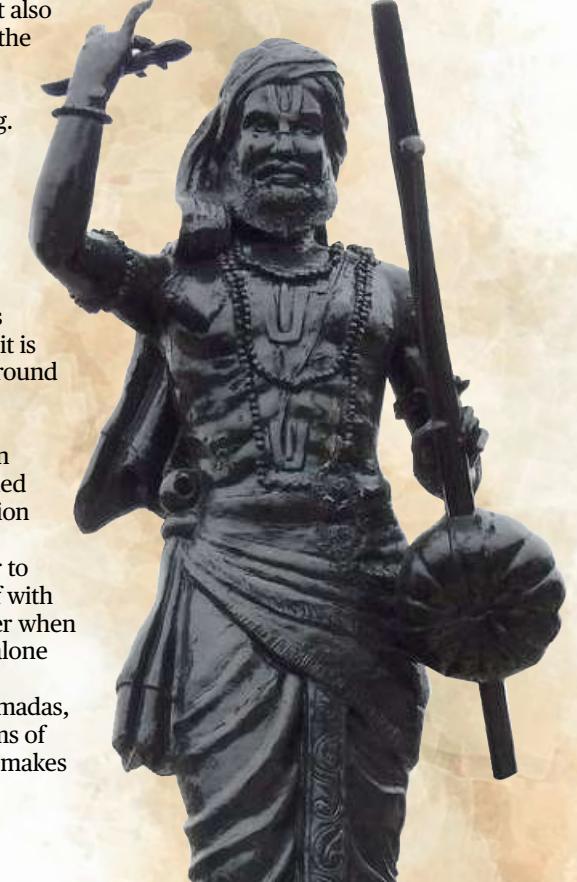
The compositions of Ramadas though set to various tunes shine forth in their lyrical beauty. There

are a few songs describing Bhadrachalam and the way the town grew under his watchful guidance. But what stand out are the pieces that throw light on the devotee's easy approach to Rama. There is a composition that gives a list of the jewels that the composer made for the various deities and the expense he incurred. It also mentions the name of the currency as Varahan, which lends historical significance to the song. But what is of interest is the question he asks Rama - Did your father Dasaratha give you all this or was it your father-in-law Janaka? Whose father's property do you think it is that you are dancing around wearing?

It is believed that Ramadas' incarceration ended when he appealed to Sita in the composition 'Nanu brovamani cheppave'. He asks her to intercede on his behalf with Rama and even tells her when to do it - when she is alone with him in bed.

When it came to Ramadas, Rama accepted all forms of devotion. That is what makes the composer special.

April 17 is Ramanavami



Dedicated to his watchful guidance. But what stand out are the pieces that throw light on the devotee's easy approach to Rama. There is a composition that



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A breath of fresh air

Tradition met imagination at the nagaswaram festival



N.C. Srinivasaraghavan

Veteran nadaswaram player Vyasarapadi G. Kothandaraman presented a sublime recital along with his disciples, Tirupati B. Kesanna and Chittoor R. Devarajulu, at the Music Academy's debut nadaswaram festival. A thorough stickler for tradition, Kothandaraman is uncompromising in his approach to practicing and performing the instrument.

Briskly beginning the recital with Tyagaraja's 'Janaki ramana' in Shuddha Seemanthini, the trio presented some swift swaras at 'Rakta nalina'. Throughout the recital, Kothandaraman's disciples complemented him, leading to perfect coordination among the three instrumentalists. This was followed by Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar's 'Saraguna paalimpa' in Kedaragowla. Every sangati carried the stamp of the instrument in highlighting prayogas using long-winded phrases with impeccable sruti shuddham. 'Paraloka bhayamu' in Mandari was rendered next. The

alapana that preceded the kriti stood out for its clarity.

Begada, a raga that is traditionally favoured by nadaswaram artistes, was chosen for an elaborate alapana. A rare kriti by Papanasam Sivan 'Bhuvaneswari padam ninaindu' was played. This proved to be engaging for the audience as many kept guessing what the kriti could be. The main song of the evening was 'Janani ninuvin' in Ritigowla that had an appealing swarakalpa section.

One of the best parts of the recital was the faceoff between Tirupungur T.G. Muthukumaraswamy and Adyar D. Senthil Kumar, the thavil vidwans. In a thani that lasted more than 20 minutes, the two artistes truly demonstrated the potential of the underrated instrument by thoroughly charming rasikas with their competitive playing. The recital ended with 'Enna thavam seidhanai' in Kapi.

Well-balanced

Balanced, sincere and traditional are the words that come to mind when describing Bangalore S.P.

Palanivel and Prabhavathi Palanivel's duo nadaswaram performance. The couple, who are based out of Bengaluru have won several awards and are A-graded AIR artistes. They were accompanied by Velliamakkam V.M. Ganapathi and Bikkampatti B.R. Venkatesh on the thavil.

Beginning their recital with a pleasant Hamsadhwani ('Varanamukhava'), they demonstrated the uniqueness of the retta-nadaswaram arrangement in the final kalpanaswara section, taking turns at every avartana.

The duo next presented Tyagaraja's 'Nadopasana', prefacing it with a brief Begada alapana. The raga shines when played on the nadaswaram. So this was a good choice to gain the attention of rasikas as the recital progressed. Another kriti that the audience instantly recognised was Purandaradasa's 'Narayana ninna' in Suddha Dhanyasi. Given the fact that instrumental music performances do not draw a big audience as vocal concerts do, it was appreciable that the performers chose familiar pieces. The only rarely heard piece they

played was 'Vandeham shive' by Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar set in Kathanakuthuhalam.

The main raga of the evening was Shanmukhapriya, a raga that was earlier preferred mostly by the nadaswaram artiste community and was not much heard in Carnatic concerts. The alapana by the couple was expansive. The strength of the nadaswaram lies in free-flowing alapanas that do not necessarily progress in a sthayi-wise manner. The duo demonstrated their ability to present the raga with eloquence, redolent of tradition.

The main kriti chosen was 'Parvati nayakane', composed by Papanasam Sivan, with some power-packed kalpanaswaras at the pallavi line. The tani avartanam by Ganapathi and B.R. Venkatesh, though short, was energetic. The concert ended with a thillana in Dwijavanti.

Perfect coordination (Top)

Vyasapadi G. Kothandaraman with Tirupati B. Kesanna and Chittoor R. Devarajulu. (Above) Bangalore Palanivel and Prabhavathi. PHOTOS: M. SRINATH

Festival special

Mudhra conducts its annual Chithirai music festival, spread over five Sundays, from April 14 to May 12. The concerts by senior and young musicians will be recorded live and streamed on



Paalamtv during weekends. This year's edition will have artistes rendering only Tamil compositions. The line-up begins with Dr. S. Sunder's vocal concert on April 14. He will be accompanied by J.B. Keerthana (vocal support), Karaikal Venkatasubramanian (violin), Mannarkoil Balaji (mridangam) and A.S. Krishnan (morsing). Concerts to take place on other days are:

April 21: Prarthana Sai Narasimhan with Sherthalai Sivakumar, K. Arun Prakash and Sai Subramaniam.

April 28: Dr. Kashyap Mahesh, V.V. Srinivasa Rao, K.R. Ganesh and Madipakkam Murali.

May 5: Varalakshmi Anandkumar, Melakkaveri Thiagarajan, Neyveli Skandasubramaniam and G. Ganapathy.

May 11: Madurai N. Sivaganesh, V.L. Kumar, Shertalai Ananthakrishnan and M. Gururaj.

May 12: Gayathri Girish, M. Vijay, Kumbakonam Swaminathan and Adambakkam Shankar.

Madhuradhwani platforms both established and up-and-coming musicians during its Tamil New Year music festival, to be held from April 14 to

18, at Arkay Convention Centre,

Mylapore. The series begins with P. Vikram's vocal concert, April 14, 4.30 p.m. followed by that of Vidya Kalyanaraman

at 6.30 p.m. Day two will feature Anirudh Subramanian (4.30 p.m.) and Sriranjani Santhanagopalan (6.30 p.m.).

Preeti Sethuraman (4.30 p.m.) and T.V.S. Mahadevan (6.30 p.m.) will perform on April 16. Madhuvanthi Vijayaganesh and Sumedha Vijayaganesh's vocal duet will take place on April 17 followed by that of Archana and Aarthi (6.30 p.m.).

The vocal concerts by Pranathi Ganapuram (4.30 p.m.) and Navaneeth Krishnan (6.30 p.m.) on April 18 will complete the line-up.



Ranjani Govind

The Chamrajpet Sri Ramaseva Mandali Ramanavami Celebrations Trust will be honouring 100 musicians from Karnataka to mark the birth centenary of its founder SV Narayana Swamy Rao, during the 32-day music festival, on till May 10. There will be 64 concerts in the evening at the specially erected 40,000 sq. ft. *pandal* at the Fort High School grounds, with discourses in the morning, including *Satyatma Tirtharu* (April 29 to May 3).

"The *pandal* premises is home to me and my son Abhijith till mid-May," says S.N. Varadaraj, a vocalist and mechanical engineer, whose passion for music helped him continue the Mandali's Ramothsava after the demise of his father in 2000. "As we are celebrating 50 years of renaming Mysore State as Karnataka, all the participating musicians have been asked to choose *Dasa Sahitya* as the main piece of their performances," says Varadaraj.

Though the Mandali's commitment is towards showcasing local talent, artistes from other states are also invited. Legends such as T.N. Rajaratnam Pillai, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, Kadri Gopalnath, K.J. Yesudas, M.S. Subbulakshmi, M.L. Vasanthakumari, M. Balamuralikrishna and Begum Parveen Sultana have performed at the Ramothsava.



Defining tunes

For the last 85 years, Bengaluru's Sree Ramanavami Music Festival has been a significant part of the city's cultural calendar

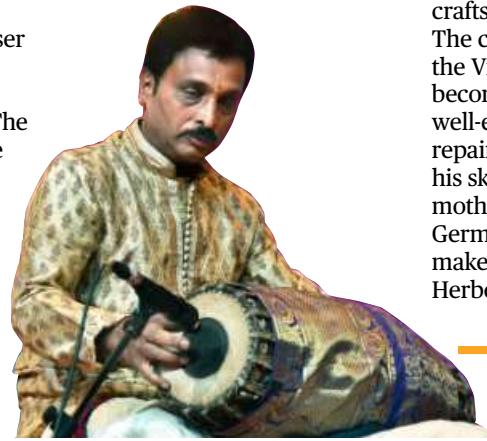
The festival had a modest beginning. In 1939, SVN launched an exclusive music event for Ramanavami with ₹10 in his kitty. Within the first 10 years, the Mandali had stalwarts such as T. Chowdiah, Alathur Brothers, Madurai Mani Iyer, T.R. Mahalingam and Chengai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar participating, before the venue for concerts moved to the Bangalore City Institute Compound in the early 1950s. The Fort High School Grounds of the Education Department has been hosting the festival since 1967.

In this edition one can look forward to unusual shows

with a classical touch from Bengaluru-based artistes such as Sivasri Skandaprasad, a popular face on social media platforms; Harish Sivaramakrishnan of Agam; and three-time Grammy winning composer Ricky Kej.

The festival will also feature 13 duo concerts. The prominent names include vocalist Bangalore S. Shankar and son Ramani Shankar, Sandeep Narayan and Jayateerth Mevundi, violinist H.K. Venkatram and shehnai player Ashwani Shankar, P. Umnikrishnan with daughter Uttara; and the Bangalore Brothers.

Among the many awards to be presented this year, the Ramagana Kalacharya will be given to mridangist Bangalore V. Praveen, son of veteran



For programme details and tickets visit www.ramanavami.org

The Northern link

Thamarakkad Govindan's singing of slow-paced Dhikshitar kritis was reminiscent of dhrupad

Sreevalsans Thiyyadi

The gravitas of Muthuswami Dikshitar's compositions got its deserving focus when Thamarakkad Govindan Namboothiri best employed his solemn approach to his vocal concert. Three unhurried kritis of the iconic composer were unveiled with textbook precision at Naada Inbam, as part of the Andal and V. Ananathanarayanan memorial series, reinforcing Carnatic music's historical links with dhrupad.

Dikshitar had spent seven years of his youth in north India, camping chiefly in Kashi and imbibing the essence of Hindustani classical. The meditative quality of dhrupad caught his fancy, prompting him to pen slow-paced Carnatic kritis of structural splendour and spiritual value. These features come naturally to a research-oriented artiste such as Govindan, much like his late mentor Mavelikara Prabhakara Varma.

Govindan sang dissimilar ragas. None of the tala for the kriti was repeated. The melodies at the opening and end were lighter vis-à-vis Kalyani as the centrepiece. Featuring niraval and tani avartanam, the 'Kamalambam' package in the middle spanned a little over half of the 145-minute performance, with immaculate support from R. Raghu (violin) and K. Arunprakash (mridangam). While the violinist stuck to the sobriety of his guru M. Chandrasekaran, the percussionist contained his role to a measured minimum, akin to the pakhawaj in dhrupad.

Govindan began with Hindolam, which is rarely a kutcheri opener. The 12-minute alapana progressed largely with plain notes zigzagging upwards. The middle ranges covered the core of the janyaraga, though a pithier voice would have added to its character. Raghu's solo response made up for that bit; he

didn't go overboard either. 'Neerajakshi kamakshi' unfolded elegantly with the facade phrases bearing the prescribed cling-on quality. Into the last line of the charanam, the straight passages around 'Sauri virinchi' sparked with Arunprakash's string of sweet taps.

Sprightly Kalyani

The main suite, interestingly, warmed up comparatively quickly – maybe because Kalyani is innately sprightly. The alapana phrases were short, though its middle part did generate long-drawn notes. There were no frills attached, yet it never sounded like Yaman, the Hindustani equivalent of the 65th Melakarta. The violin toed a suitable line.

Raghul was at ease even while being contemplative. Restraint was the key word, and so the top notes bore no shrill.

'Kamalambam' treaded gently along predictable paths. It was almost an extension of the alapana. At the start of the charanam, where 'Sarvaasha paripuraka' sounds closer to Yamunakalyani, Govindan's sudden plunges resulted in several dramatic moments. They only displayed his strong adherence to the coaching manual. Niraval arrived seamlessly, initiating a grand build-up around 'Nirvana nijasukha'. The waraprastara carried enough strength. The tani avartanam in two-kalai Adi was crisp.

In conclusion came Manirangu, another derivative. After an alapana with more cuts than curves, 'Mamava pattabhiramajaya' in Mishra Chapu, inversely, had a fair share of slides – and ups too. The four minutes of swaras were delicate and patterned. Overall, the concert was like a yogic test for sustained concentration.

Meditative Thamarakkad Govindan accompanied by K. Arunprakash on the mridangam and R. Raghu on the violin. PHOTO COURTESY: NAADA INBAM



Musical offering Violinists Lalgudi G.J.R. Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi. (Below) Bangalore V. Praveen. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

percussionist M.L. Veerabhadraiah. "Praveen, one of the prominent disciples of Palghat Mani Iyer, was a favourite of SVN. He chose him to accompany M.S. Subbulakshmi when Praveen was just eight years old," recalls Varadaraj.

The awards are based on an artiste's connect with the audience and his/her ability to take the art across the globe.

The SVN Rao Global Music Award will be conferred upon Lalgudi G.J.R. Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi. Varadaraj says, "They are the torchbearers of the illustrious Lalgudi parampara."

One of their initiatives, Violin Wise, saw them fly down American musician and violin-maker James Wimmer to conduct regular workshops and impart the intricate art of violin craftsmanship and repair. The collaboration resulted in the Violin Wise team becoming skilled and well-equipped to make and repair violins. Wimmer owes his skill to his jazz pianist mother and his training in Germany under master violin makers Wolfgang Uebel and Herbert Rainer Knobel.

For programme details and tickets visit www.ramanavami.org



Slow and steady

Festivals like Dhrupad Vaibhav are the need of the hour to uphold the classicism of the form

Manjari Sinha

Dhrupad, the pristine musical form of Hindustani classical music, is derived from the ancient chhand-prabandh gayan. Dhrupad offered a compositional structure to the abstract raag. Swami Haridas and Tansen and later Raja Mansingh Tomar of Gwalior popularised it in the 15th and 16th centuries. The musical form retained this exalted position till about the mid-19th century before khayal singing, with all its embellishments, took precedence under royal patronage.

Despite a decline in its popularity, dhrupad continues to hold its position as the epitome of classicism. Institutions such as the Dhrupad Kendra in Bhopal revived its wide appeal and established its contemporary relevance. Apart from training young enthusiasts, it organised dhrupad festivals. With gurus such as Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar and Zia Fariduddin Dagar, the Dhrupad Kendra was run by Bharat Bhavan under the insightful guidance of Ashok Vajpeyi, who now looks after the Raza Foundation.

Dhrupad Vaibhav, a festival celebrating the unhurried and immersive style of this form, is organised by the Raza Foundation. The third edition of

this festival was held recently in Delhi in collaboration with India International Centre and Naad-Chakra Trust of Pt. Nirmalya De. The audience, who were referred to as 'chatur sujan' (wise and clever) by Ashok Vajpeyi were there on both days.

Nuanced rendition

The festival opened with a rudra veena recital, without which an ode to dhrupad can never be complete. It was also a tribute to Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar, a exponent of the instrument. The artiste of the evening was Carsten Vicke from Germany. A senior disciple of Asad Ali Khan, who belongs to the Khandar bani of dhrupad. Carsten displayed the nuances of the bani right from his aalap-jod-jhala, which had melodic phrasings and raag elaboration with complete rhythmic patterns. Pt. Mohan Shyam Sharma accompanied on the pakhawaj and Sujanya Arvindan on the tanpura.

Carsten began with the rare raag Adbhut Kalyan. 'Adbhut' means extraordinary or exceptional, and it was an exceptional raag without both the madhyam and pancham swaras, the two main pillars to hold any musical scale. Omitting these two main swaras implied sweeping through the whole octave in one slow leap. Carsten's meends and gamakas were sure and secure in a rigorously conceived alaap, jod, jhala, and a dhrupad rendition



set to Chautaal. He also played a dhamar in Hindol, which is a raag of the spring season. "It's a lifetime's work to study and play this instrument," said Carsten.

Kaber Kar, a senior disciple of Ustad Rahim Fahimuddin Dagar, was the second artiste of the inaugural evening. She opened her vocal dhrupad recital with Jaijwanti. Her well-trained disciple Nisha Pal provided vocal support while Pt. Mohan Shyam Sharma was on the pakhawaj.

The introductory alaap created the melodious aura of the raag before Kaberi presented a dhrupad in Chautaal. Next came a dhamar in Shankara. Finding her subtle understandings lost in pakhawaj's sound, she politely said, "Mohan ji is playing with me after two decades, and this sangat develops by sitting

together and conversing with each other." She continued, "I think the swar should be seen with closed eyes, and then presented with reverence."

Since it was the month of Falgun and Holi, Kaberi also presented her guru's dhamar composition 'Hori khelungi saanware ka sang' in raag Bahar, before concluding with her own composition in Sooltaal.

On the second day, Ashok Vajpeyi recalled anecdotes about Bade Ustad and his inimitable music. The evening opened with a surbahar concert by Saurabhbrata Chakraborty.

Opening with raag Yaman, Saurabhbrata played detailed alaap-jod-jhala and a dhrupad composition in Dhamar taal, accompanied on the pakhawaj by Shubhasheesh Pathak and Dipanvita Sharma on the tanpura.

Yaman, one of the most melodious evening raags, was played with great elan. Saurabhbrata concluded with a Sooltaal composition in raag Basant, apt for the Spring season.

The festival opened with a rudra veena recital, an instrument that defines dhrupad's inherent qualities

Surbahar exponent Saurabhbrata Chakraborty with Shubhasheesh Pathak on the pakhawaj and Dipanvita Sharma on the tanpura

Perfect choice of songs
The festival concluded with the concert of Pt. Premkumar Mallick, the 12th generation dhrupad vocalist from Darbhanga gharana.

The renowned son and disciple of Pt. Vidur Mallick, Premkumar is equally at ease with khayal, thumri, dhadra and bhajan. A Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee, he is also an author and a professor of music at Allahabad University.

He offered the choicest gems from his treasure trove, especially dhamars in different raags. A style allied to dhrupad, dhamar compositions are mostly in Braj bhasha, and sung in Dhamar taal of 14 beats time cycle.

Preceeded by a detailed alaap in Puriya, a late evening raag, the first dhamar went as 'Aaj rasa been lie, kar duff-mridanga sab gwal baal', where the elaboration in the lower octave was striking. Describing the Holi festival, the second dhamar came in Khamaj, 'Aaj khelat moson hori'. The raag continued in the third one - 'Braj mein dhoom machyo hai' and also the fourth, 'Lal mose khel na hori'. Instead of continuing the same raag, Premkumar could have brought in variety by singing dhamars in raags such as Kafi, Pilu and Sindura.

Pt. Premkumar Mallick concluded with the dhamar 'Aai basani bahar' in Shankara, a Veer rasa raag, motivated by the combative pakhawaj of Gaurav Shankar Upadhyaya.

On a celebratory note

A series of special programmes will be held across the city for Ramanavami.

The Music Academy presents a two-day event on April 16 and 17, 6 p.m. at Kasturi Srinivasan Hall. Concert on day one, organised under the endowment of B. Dayananda Rao in memory of his wife B. Subhadra, will have the students of Advanced School of Carnatic Music rendering compositions by Bhadrachala Ramadas. V. Nandhika (violin) and M. Sarvajit Krishna (mridangam) are the accompanists. The programme on day two features G. Ravikiran. The event is organised under the endowment instituted by Madhavi Rajagopalan in memory of R. Seethamal.

At Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, Mylapore, a three-day series will be held beginning with Malladi Brothers' vocal concert on April 15 at 6.30 p.m. Udayalur

Kalyanaraman's 'Sita kalyanam' on April 16, 6.30 p.m. Dr. Sudha Seshayyan's talk 'Ramaran Dharma Sindhanai' on April 17 at 5.30 p.m., followed by Ragavan Manian's vocal and instrumental presentation at 7 p.m.

Sri Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha's celebrations will conclude on April 20. The special event features Srimad Ramayanam upanyasam by Nagai Mukundan from today till April 20, 6.30 p.m., and an award function on April 17 at 6.15 p.m. Thangam Meganathan, chairperson, Rajalakshmi Institutions, will be the chief guest and will present the 'Pravachana Sudha Van'i title to Nagai Mukundan.

Sarvani Sangeetha Sabha Trust celebrates the occasion with A. Kanyakumari's violin kucheri on April 14, 6 p.m., at Pappi Chetty Raghaviah Chetty's Charities Hall, Pondy Bazaar, KV.

Prasad (mridangam) and Anirudh Atreya (kanjira) are the accompanists.

Sri Thiagaraja Sangeetha Vidwath Samajam, Mylapore, inaugurates Tyagaraja Jayanti and Ramanavami from April 17 to 21. The 'Sangeetha Seva Nirata' title will be given to vocalists Charumathi Ramachandran and P. Purnachandar, violinist M.R. Gopinath, mridangist Thanjavur S. Subramanian and kanjira artiste Krishnapuram K.V.R.S. Mani. This will be followed by Purnachandar's concert at 7 p.m. Artistes to perform on other days include Prameela Gurumurthy's Nowka Charitram (April 18); Gayathri Venkatraghavan (April 19); Mambalam Sisters (April 20) and U.P. Raju and U.P. Nagamani (mandolin, April 21).

Honour for artistes

As part of its 49th anniversary celebrations, Kartik Fine Arts will present the Lifetime Achievement Award and Awards of Excellence to musicians, and release the souvenir on April 14, 5.30 p.m. at Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, Mylapore. N. Murali, president, The Music Academy, will be the chief guest for the evening. He will present the awards and release the souvenir. The evening also includes Udayalur Kalyanaraman's namasankirtanam at 7 p.m. The following is the list of artistes who will receive the Lifetime Achievement award: Sembaran Koil S.R.G. Rajanna; Rukmini Ramani, Malathy Thothadri and Vatsala Rajagopal.

The recipients of Kartik Awards of Excellence are: Mysore V. Srikanth; Madipakkam Murali; Mylai S. Rajendran, Nithyakalyani Vaidyanathan, K. Vivekshankar and D. Mallikraj.

Ramanavami fest

Sri Rama Bhajani Mandiram, Kaettavampalayam, Tiruvannamalai district, presents a 10-day series from April 17 to 27. Established in 1907, the Mandiram has been conducting a 10-day Ramanavami utsavam mahotsavam for the past 117 years. This year's line-up includes Veda parayanam, laksharchanai, discourses, music samaradhanai and divyanaama bhajans. It will conclude with Anjaney utsavam.

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Stage to screen From *Paar Magale Paar*; *Pareetchaiku Neramachu* film advertisement; and YGM in UAA's *Pareetchaiku Neramachu*. PHOTOS COURTESY: UAA



'The Sivaji I knew'

At a special show, actor Y.Gee. Mahendra recalled how the thespian shaped his approach to the craft

Suganthy Krishnamachari

United Amateur Artistes (UAA), has the distinction of providing story ideas for three Sivaji films – *Paar Magale Paar*, *Gauravam* and *Pareetchaiku Neramachu*. The first film celebrates 60 years of its release while the second and third films complete 50 years and 40 years respectively.

UAA's *Petralthan Pillaya*, written by Patti made it to the screen as *Paar Magale Paar* in 1963. Imagine school-going Y.G. Mahendra's feelings, when he was told that he could not reprise his stage role for the film as it was to have a girl instead of a boy. Luckily Cho landed the role of Mechanic Madasamy, which he had played on stage.

Interesting anecdotes

In an audio video show (organised by Abbas cultural, Roshni Fine Arts and Nadigar Thilagam fans), which celebrated the three films based on UAA's plays, there were video clippings from the films, with YGM sharing interesting

anecdotes about them. YGM drew audience's attention to the subtle nuances in Sivaji's portrayal of negative characters such as Sivalingam of *Paar Magale Paar* and barrister Rajnikanth of *Gauravam*. Pride has a corrosive effect on their interactions with people. YGM had chosen three scenes from *Paar Magale Paar*, to show how Sivaji gradually distances himself from his friend, because of the latter's poverty. Initially, Sivaji is indifferent to his friend, then he cold shoulders him, and finally rejects him brutally. YGM observed that Sivaji was large-hearted enough to keep himself in the background for those scenes which he felt belonged to other artistes, whether it was a new entrant like Cho, or seasoned actors like M.R. Radha and V.K. Ramaswamy.

Gauravam (1973) was a screen adaptation of UAA's *Kannan Vandhaan*. Both the play and film versions were written by Vietnam Veedu Sundaram, who also directed the film, which was produced by S. Rangarajan of *The Hindu*. At last with this film YGM got his chance to act



alongside Sivaji, as his driver. YGM ended up acting with Sivaji in 33 films. Sivaji played two roles in the film – the snooty barrister Rajnikanth and his docile nephew Kannan. YGM

QQ
Sivaji was large-hearted enough to keep himself in the background for those scenes which he felt belonged to other artistes

recalled that in the morning shoot, Sivaji played the role of Rajnikanth. After he had donned his make up, while he waited for his scene, even an ordinary 'good morning' would be in the condescending style of Rajnikanth. In the afternoon session, Sivaji played the role of Kannan, and now his greeting of people on the set would be in the soft, diffident tones of the character. Who else 'lives' a character the way Sivaji did, YGM wondered.

For the interval block scene,

Sivaji gave a statuesque pose like a Greek god. Vincent, the director of photography, enriched the film with his masterful lighting and framing.

For a perfect portrayal

The film version (1982) of UAA's *Pareetchaiku Neramachu* was written by Vietnam Veedu Sundaram. YGM played a dual role in the film in which Sivaji was Nadadur Narasimhachari. Mukta Srinivasan and Sivaji would go to the Triplicane Parthasarathy temple, Sivaji wrapping his head in a turban and keeping away from public gaze. Sivaji wanted to observe the demeanour of orthodox Iyengars, so that he could do his role as Narasimhachari perfectly.

During the shooting, he gave YGM invaluable tips, which helped polish his acting. He told YGM that the way he walked as Amand was not rugged enough for a rowdy, and taught him how to do it. Sivaji and YGM watched the film in Santhi theatre, and Sivaji gave YGM a meaningful glance, when the audience cheered YGM's nonchalant swagger. YGM said that other actors could put their heart and soul into a performance, but Sivaji would steal the scene with a simple gesture, like tying up his tuft.

Apart from the excellent choice of scenes for the programme, there were songs from the films, sung by Ananthu, Wow Karthik, Anusha, Janaki, Somu and Srinidhi, with orchestral support from Sriram's Geetharanjani.

Stories from the battleground

HE-ROSE, an Indo-French production, was about two warriors – Achilles and Arjuna



Girish Shrivastava

An international collaboration in culture is always seen as an intellectually high-yielding venture. Blending the best of French and Indian theatre, ENSATT Lyon of France and Adishakti Theatre of Auroville came together to present the play *HE-ROSE*, premiered recently at Alliance Française, Puducherry.

Written by Nimmery Raphael and directed by Vinay Kumar of Adishakti and assisted by Amaud Guennad of ENSATT, *HE-ROSE* depicted the tragic saga of two mythological heroes – Arjuna from Veda Vyasa's *Bhagavad Gita* and Achilles from Homer's *Iliad*. *HE-ROSE* was about two



Based on mythology From *HE-ROSE*. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

personalities from two different cultures and existing in a liminal realm between glory and tragedy.

What Achilles was to the Greeks at Troy, Arjuna was to the Pandavas at Kurukshetra. Though both were skilled warriors they were initially hesitant to join the battle. However the death of their dear ones (Achilles friend and Arjuna's son) made them wage a war of revenge. While Achilles was said to have been killed towards the end of the war by Trojan prince Paris, who shot him in the heel with an arrow, Arjuna won the battle.

The play began with thundering sounds of the drum. Wounded and dead soldiers and wailing women and children conveyed the trauma and tragedy of wars. Since it was an inter-cultural production, Arjuna was played by a French actor, and Achilles by an Indian. The portion of the play that was in English had French subtitles and vice-versa.

HE-ROSE was a shared emotional space of thought and realisation. Among the actors, Nimmery Raphael as Achilles excelled with her diction and body language. Julie Cecchini and Mathilde Brie made a lasting impression with their movement and expression. François Landureau's scenography was innovative and Vinay Kumar's direction was gripping. The play will be travelling to other cities.

IMAX VERSION INOX - LUXE CINEMAS - Chennai : 2.50 & 9.45 pm | SPI PALAZZO - THE FORUM MALL - Vadapalani : 10.50 am & 6.50 pm | BROADWAY CINEMAS - Coimbatore : 3.25 & 10.50 pm.

PVR ESCAPE EXPRESS AVENUE MALL - Royapettah : 9.20, 11.15 am, 2.55, 6.40 & 10.10 pm | PALAZZO THE FORUM MALL - Vadapalani : 2.55 & 10.25 pm | SKYWALK MALL - Aminjikarai : 11.10 am, 6.30 & 10.10 pm | S2 SPECTRUM MALL - Perambur : 12.00, 2.50, 7.10 & 10.15 pm | SATHYAM CINEMA - Royapettah : 11.15 am, 3.10, 6.55 & 10.30 pm | VR MALL - Anna Nagar : 10.30 am, 2.25, 6.20 & 10.00 pm | GALADA Mall - Velachery : 2.40, 6.30 & 10.20 pm | AERO HUB : 11.40 am, 6.10 & 10.00 pm | GRAND GALADA MALL - Pallavaram : 10.50 am, 2.40 & 6.30 pm | ECR RSL MALL - Uthandi : 9.00, 11.00 am, 2.45, 6.40 & 10.25 pm | SKLS GALAXY MALL - Redhills : 3.20 & 10.20 pm | S2-THEYAGARAJA - Tiruvannamalai : 10.10 pm | THE CINEMA - Brookefield Mall - Coimbatore : 11.10 am & 6.45 pm | VELOCITY - Gandhi Nagar : 2.50, 6.40 & 10.30 pm | THE CINEMA - Providence Mall - Puducherry : 2.30 & 10.00 pm.

INOX CITY CENTRE - Mylapore : 2.45, 6.10 & 10.00 pm | LUXE CINEMAS : 10.40 am & 6.00 pm | NATIONAL CHANDRA METRO MALL - Virugambakkam : 2.35, 6.25 & 10.15 pm | THE MARINA MALL OMR : 11.20 am, 3.00, 6.20 & 10.00 pm | PROZONE MALL - Sathy Road : 11.15 am, 2.35, 6.40 & 10.00 pm | VISHAL DE MALL - Madurai : 2.20, 6.10 & 10.00 pm | RELIANCE MALL - Salem : 3.20 & 9.50 pm | SELVAM SQUARE MALL - Vellore : 3.30 & 9.45 pm.

cinépolis BSR Mall - Thoraipakkam : 11.30 am, 3.25, 6.45 & 10.25 pm | FUN REPUBLIC - Coimbatore : 12.05, 3.35, 6.50 & 10.05 pm | ANU EGA Kilpauk : 6.50 pm.

ags cinemas T Nagar : 11.50 am, 6.45 & 9.40 pm | Villivakkam : 11.20 am, 6.30 & 10.30 pm | MADURAVOY - Maduravoyal : 11.40 am, 6.50 & 10.45 pm | OMR Navalur : 11.40 am & 6.50 pm.

MATJAAL Kanattur : 11.30 am, 3.10, 7.00 & 10.40 pm | DEVI COMPLEX - M.T.Road : 11.30 am, 3.15 & 10.15 pm | RAKKI COMPLEX - Ambattur : 10.50 pm.

MURUGAN COMPLEX - Ambattur : 1.35 pm | ROHINI - Koyembedu : 4.00 & 7.15 pm | EVP - CARNIVAL CINEMAS - Chembarambakkam : 5.00 pm | THE VIJAYA PARK MULTIPLEX - Injambakkam : 6.50 pm | BROADWAY CINEMAS - Coimbatore | SRK MIRAJ CINEMAS - Coimbatore : 3.20 & 10.15 pm | ANNA - Erode : 10.00 pm | MAHARAJA - Erode : 6.15 & 10.15 pm | K.G.COMPLEX - Race Course Road : 7.10 pm | SRI SAKTHI - Tirupur : 7.30 & 10.50 pm | RADIANCE - Madurai : 10.20 pm | VETRI - Madurai : 7.25 pm | AARTHY - Dindigul : 2.20, 6.10 & 10.00 pm | GRAND CINEMAS - Hosur : 3.30 pm | SPR CINECASTLE - Salem : 10.00 pm | D-MAX - Dharampuri : 6.50 pm | SHAKTHI CINEMAS - Gudiyatham : 2.10 pm | SAKTHI CINEMAS - Tiruvannamalai : 9.45 pm | VIJAY - Vaniyambadi : 6.15 pm | LA MARRIS - Trichy : 2.40 & 10.15 pm | PERISON - Tuticorin : 4.40 pm | PSS MULTIPLEX - Thirunelveli : 10.30 pm | and other cinemas.

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CALENDAR



Soulful notes

Hamsadhwan has organised B. Vijayagopal's flute recital and Myla Karthikeyan's Nagaswaram with Vijay Natesan (mridangam) and Trichy Krishnaswami (ghatam). Date and time: April 13, 6.15 p.m.

Concert by Anahitha and Apoorva will mark the Tamil New Year's Day concert on April 14, 6.15 p.m. The sisters will be accompanied by M.R. Gopinath on the violin, Praveen Sparsh on the mridangam and Nerkunam Shankar on the kanjira. Venue: Youth Hostel, Adyar.



Dedicated to Swati Tirunal

Narada Gana Sabha will feature Shruthi S. Bhat on April 16 as part of Swati Tirunal day celebrations. She will be accompanied by Shreelakshmi S. Bhat, Adarsh Devarajan, and Shri Sainath. Time: 6.30 p.m. Venue: Sabha mini hall.

Tamil play

As part of the Tamil New Year celebrations, Narada Gana Sabha, has organised the Tamil play 'Mahan Narayana Guru' by Mali's Stage. The play, by Kudanthai Mali, will be staged on April 14, 6.45 p.m. at Sathguru Gnanananda Hall.



Debut

Rhea Vikranth, disciple of Anuradha Vikranth's Drishti Art Centre, will present her Bharatanatyam Rangapravesha (solo debut performance) on April 14, 5.30 p.m. at Chowdiah Memorial Hall.

Yoana Sarayu Ram, disciple of Urmila Sathyaranayanan, will present her Bharatanatyam arangetram on April 14, 5.45 p.m. at The Music Academy.

Bharatanatyam solo

Bharata Kalanjali presents Natyaranpanam on April 17 at TEACH Auditorium, Taramani. As part of the event, a Bharatanatyam solo performance by Minu Krithika will take place at 6 p.m. This will be followed by Muthukumar's solo at 7.15 p.m.