

# friday Review

THE HINDU

**Chandralekha Memorial events**Dancers from Kerala presented different styles and imaginative pieces **p2****Golden chariot rolls out**Spotlight on Kanchipuram's ancient Sri Ekambareswarar temple **p3****A DANCE PRODUCTION HIGH ON LAYA**The enduring appeal of Guru Karaikudi Mani's rhythm compositions **p4****Shilpa Anandraj**

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**W**hile the world sees the grace and beauty in a dance recital, I involuntarily spot muscle fatigue, and any possible strain on the dancer's spine, knees and ankles," said Prashanth Nagaraj, an orthopaedic arthroplasty surgeon, who led a recent workshop on 'Biomechanics of Dance and Dancers' Bone Health'.

Organised by Anaadya Performing Arts, founded by Bengaluru-based Kathak dancer Arpita Banerjee, the workshop was held at Dhurri Studio. The two-and-a-half-hour interactive session had participants volunteering to demonstrate dance movements and postures that were then scientifically analysed by Dr. Prashanth and Dr. Bhavana M.B., pediatric physiotherapist and clinical researcher.

"Pain is often ignored by dancers. We don't understand the difference between good and bad pain, especially when we start dancing as children. I suffered a knee dislocation during a rehearsal in 2010. My guru Nandini Mehta referred me to Dr. Prashanth, who treated me with isometric exercises," shared Arpita. The injury reshaped her relationship with dance, and led her to advocate a more informed approach to movement.

Dr. Prashanth, whose work acts as a bridge between clinical science and movement, also highlighted how dancers "push their bodies to achieve grace while retaining their posture and risking injury".

The orthopedic surgeon took to this study as his mother Vimala Nagaraj learnt Bharatanatyam. "It helped me understand the physical demands and technique of classical dance."

The workshop also dealt with systemic issues such as flat feet that dancers often overlook. Dr. Bhavana said: "The harder you tap your feet, the stronger the impact on your legs, hips and spine. Flat feet can leave the dancer with foot problems or chronic ankle pain."

Arpita added: "Some dancers are born with flat feet and continue to dance without pain. However, prolonged practice without awareness, improper support or lack of muscle strength can aggravate underlying issues. What is worrying is not the anatomy, but the ignorance – the tendency to dismiss discomfort as routine strain."

Kathak doesn't cause arthritis or health issues, said Arpita. "It follows a scientific progression – slow footwork, gradual speed, hand movements, then chakkars. This allows the body to acclimatise the muscles and joints. The breath aligns naturally." However, an injury is not the end. "It means you listen to your body and restart."

Dr. Bhavana demonstrated physiotherapy and resistance exercises and correctional postures that would strengthen dancers' muscles.

Bharatanatyam's araimandi

Understanding body mechanics is emerging as a crucial tool for dancers and will change the way they train, perform and heal from injuries



## The anatomy of grace

posture was discussed too, and the alignment of toes, ankles and knees of a volunteer were analysed.

Speaking of the science behind dance, Dr. Prashanth said: "Bharatanatyam is more postural, Kathak is more into neuromuscular control, which is what we see during the chakkars. The problem arises when the science behind the movement is ignored. We need to understand that."

Though Odissi dancers were not present at the workshop, we reached out to Bengaluru-based Madhulita Mohapatra, a student of Gangadhar Pradhan. According to her, the most common injuries in Odissi dancers were knee strain, ankle stiffness, lower back fatigue and occasional muscle pulls. "These usually occur with overuse, insufficient warm-up, wrong alignment or fatigue. Personally, injury teaches humility –

it reminds us to respect the body," she said. The basic stances in Odissi – Chowka and Tribhangi – are not harmful when taught and practiced correctly. "Problems arise when dancers collapse into their knees, lock their joints, rush movements, or rehearse without sufficient strength and preparation," Madhulita said.

Rest is an important aspect of this too. "If you have a dance programme tomorrow, divide training over a week. The bones and muscles need time to relax and recuperate," explained Dr. Prashanth.

Madhulita cited the examples of veteran gurus Kelucharan Mohapatra and Pt. Birju Maharaj, who danced even at an advanced age. "They respected technique, alignment, rhythm and moderation, and nurtured their dance with strong fundamentals and a solid foundation." She referenced 'The

Odissi Dance Path Finder', a book by Odissi Research Centre, Bhubaneswar. "It offers illustrations of postures, stances, hand gestures, body positions and transitions."

Talking about irreversible injuries that led to amputation, Dr. Prashanth mentioned the cases of dancers Sudha Chandran, Amy Purdy and Evan Ruggiero, who dance with prosthetic limbs. "Their cases are studied across the globe by surgeons, because they overcame challenges using biomechanics."

Bharatanatyam dancer Shijith Nambiar suffered serious injuries in a road accident in 2013, and suffered extensive damage to his knee, including ligament injuries and multiple fractures. Doctors predicted a recovery period of six to seven months – Shijith returned to the

**The science behind movement** (Clockwise from left) Shijith Nambiar; Madhulita Mohapatra and her ensemble; and Arpita Banerjee. PHOTOS: THE HINDU ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



For centuries, Indian classical dance traditions have nurtured not just performers, but also resilient bodies. Yet today, conversations around dance injuries are becoming frequent. It is because something essential has been diluted along the way.

SHIJITH NAMBIAR



stage in four months! "It meant rigorous physiotherapy, weight training and strengthening," said the dancer, who was treated in Coimbatore by orthopaedic surgeon Dr. David Rajan along with Dr. Kannabiran Bhojan, who documented his rehabilitation and recovery.

"For centuries, Indian classical dance traditions have nurtured not just performers, but also resilient bodies. Yet today, conversations around dance injuries are becoming frequent. It is because something essential has been diluted along the way," said Shijith, who trained at Kalakshetra in Chennai. "Injury prevention was built into the training. Classical dance is backed by science. Historically, Bharatanatyam training incorporated elements comparable to kalari, yoga and Ayurveda – systems that condition the body alongside artistic training. Similar models still exist in Kerala's Kalamandalam, where Kathakali artists undergo uzhichal, meyi uzhichal and meyi sadhagam as part of their weekly routine. That is why, despite them wearing heavy costumes and sitting in one posture for long, they still don't suffer injuries. It is because their bodies are prepared."

Dr. Kannabiran, co-founder of Yashoda Physiotherapy-Fasciokinetics and Faciapraxis, Coimbatore, lists the most common dance injuries as big toe inflammation and fracture of the small toe. "These are common in children who dance. The snapping hip is seen in senior dancers. Then we also have triple cartilage injuries, a result of high kicks. It is best that dancers get a basic screening done to check bone alignment, flat feet, knock knee syndrome, tight hips and so on, so they know their limits and where to draw the line." He also said that 80 per cent of dance injuries do not require surgery, and can be treated with physiotherapy. "Dancers have high pain tolerance and tend to dance through pain. Every dancer needs to be educated that this is not good," said Dr. Kannabiran.

**CULTURE BRIEFS****A musical tribute**

The Music Academy has organised a concert by Sandeep Narayan today, 6 p.m. at the TTK Auditorium. He will be accompanied by B. Ananthakrishnan (violin), S.J. Arjun Ganesh (mridangam) and S. Sunil Kumar (kanjira). The programme has been organised under the endowment instituted in memory of Vijaya Srinivasan, a musician and an ardent rasika.

**Transcending boundaries**

'Maya' - a transdisciplinary performance that focusses on identity, ancestry and the feminine creative force will be staged on January 25 (11 a.m.) at Spaces, Besant Nagar. The event begins at 10.15 a.m. with the recitation of Lalitha Sahasranamam.

Drawing from classical dance styles and Carnatic music, the production is infused with contemporary sensibilities. Choreographed and curated by Vijay Palaparty, the work

reimagines maya not as an illusion, but as a lived condition shaped by presence and awareness.

'Maya' also draws inspiration from the musical legacy of vidwan Madurai N. Krishnan and the choreographic legacies of Sudharani Ragupathy and K. Uma Rama Rao.

The creative team includes Vijay (dance and movement), Ramya Kapadia (music) and Shanthi Chandrasekhar (visual art). 'Maya' is presented and produced by Spilling Ink (Washington, DC), a multi-arts organisation founded by Vijay, who leads projects that link dance, music, visual art, and literature.

**Ashwini Bhide to perform in Chennai**

The National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), in association with Citi India, marks the 15th year of the Citi-NCPA Aadi Anant series with a special concert celebrating the timeless legacy of Indian classical music. Titled 'From Here to Eternity: Festival of Indian

Music', the event will be held on January 24, 6.30 p.m. at The Music Academy. The evening will feature a Hindustani vocal recital by the Jaipur-Atrauli gharana exponent Ashwini Bhide Deshpande. Upholding the spirit of the guru-sishya parampara, Ashwini will be joined by her disciples Rutuja Lad and Sharayu Date on the vocals. They will be accompanied by Vyasmurti Katti on the harmonium and Yati Bhagwat on the tabla. Ashwini will present a rich repertoire at this milestone edition, which continues Aadi Anant's effort in introducing classical music in its purest form to younger audiences.



Diverse expressions (Clockwise from left) An ensemble led by veteran guru Pasumarthi Rattiah Sarma; Kavya Harish; Rajashree Warrier; Usha Nangiar; and Vinita Nedungadi. PHOTOS: UMESH KUMAR & THULASI KAKKAT



Rupa Srikanth

**T**he theme of the 19th Chandrakala Memorial was 'Dancers from Kerala.' The performances included Kuchipudi, Yakshagana, Mohiniyattam, Bharatanatyam and Koodiyattam.

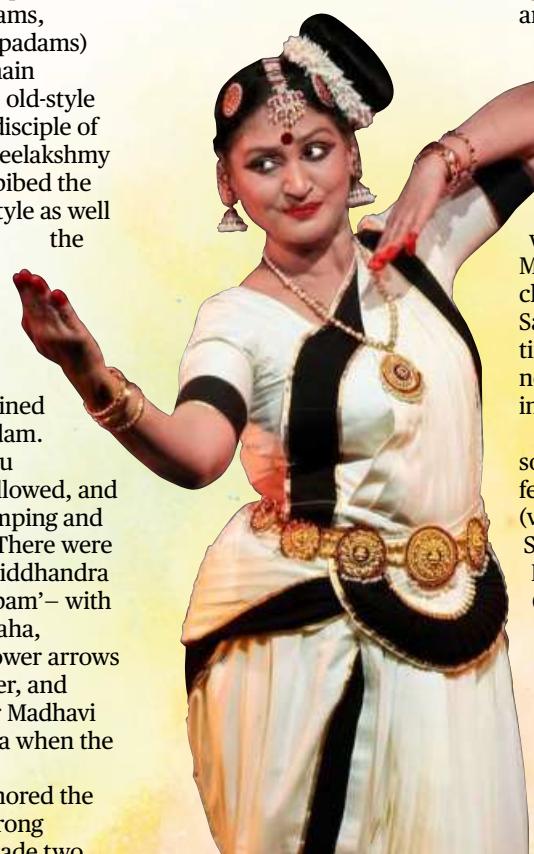
**Pasumarthi Rattiah Sarma and Kavya Harish** presented Kuchipudi. Yakshagana. Guru Rattiah Sarma, 85, was born into the tradition and remains one of the last bastions of the original dance theatre-art. The pieces were from the old repertoire and included kalapams, sabdams, daruvus (padams) and thillanas, the main attraction being the old-style Kuchipudi. Kavya, disciple of gurus Sarma and Sreelakshmy Govardhan, has imbibed the rustic spirit of the style as well as the buoyancy of the steps. Her timing, acting and vocals were excellent.

The brisk pace and quick-changing nadais were maintained all through the sabdam. The 'Hiranyakashipu' Pravesha daruvu followed, and featured strong stamping and striking posturing. There were two daruvus from Siddhendra Yogi's 'Bhama Kalapam' – with Sathyabhama in viraha, suffering Cupid's flower arrows as others ridicule her, and dictating a letter for Madhavi to be sent to Krishna when the time was right.

Guru Sarma anchored the programme with strong nattuvangam. He made two

# In Chandra's arena

Dancers brought alive Chandrakala's creative spirit with inspired performances at the 19th Memorial festival held at Spaces



appearances with the cymbals around his neck, continuing the nattuvangam. You could see his comfort with the stage and his agility, especially in the 'Lekha' episode, where he sat on the floor with Sathyabhama to write the letter. When Madhavi is tasked with checking the signs, Guru Sarma replied wittily, 'The time is right for the letter, but not for Kuchipudi Yakshagana in Chennai!'

The expert orchestra of the soul-stirring programme featured Murali Sangeeth (vocals), Kalamandalam Sreerang (mridangam) and Hariprasad Subramaniam (flute).

**Vinita Nedungadi**, a senior disciple of Kerala Kalamandalam Kshemavathy, has introduced a new aspect into the graceful vilambita kala movements of Mohiniyattam. A slower pace gives time to delve



deeper into the movement, and the music is more drawn out, emphasising melody rather than rhythm. There was some good Sopana and Carnatic music as well – Sundar Das (vocals) and Suresh Ambadi (violin).

The mukhachalam in ragamalika, Panchari talam, composed by Kavalam Narayana Panicker, was a lasya nritta piece, and offered the joy of experiencing gentle music and movement. The slow, full arcs and the deep torso bends ending in a slow

dhi dhi thai were poetic.

'Parthasarathy varnam'

composed by Kottakkal Madhu

from the ancient Kili Paattu

brought out the dancer's

mature abhinaya.

The varnam in Sahana, Adi, composed by Kottakkal Madhu from the Malayalam

translation of Tagore's

Gitanjali, presented a nayika

awaiting her love. For the most part, she is in viraha until she

finally realises that everything

in Nature reminds her of him,

and thus she feels his presence.

The mridangist (Kallekulangara Unnikrishnan) was unobtrusive yet responsive. So was the narrator and nattuvangam artiste Anjitha Nambisan. Vinita finished her recital with a piece on Ardhanareeshwara.

**Bharatanatyam dancer Rajashree Warrier** seems to follow her own distinct approach. There was a predominance of abhinaya in her presentation of excerpts from Andal's Vaaranam Aayiram followed by the violin maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman's Charukesi varnam, 'Innum en manam' in Adi tala.

With a preference for the tripathaka mudra, Rajashree's nritta is all about straight lines. She is quietly mature and never steps out of character in the abhinaya.

Following the varnam, she presented two compositions from Advaita philosopher and saint Sadasiva Brahmendral – 'Manasa sancharare' (Sama, Adi) and 'Pibare rama rasam'. She made them mini-solo.

dance dramas by inserting Kuchela's story from the point of view of his long-suffering wife in the first and Ahalya in the latter. Both displayed sensitivity and finesse.

Her orchestra was superb – Uduppi S. Srinath (vocals), RLV Hemanth Lakshman (nattuvangam), Kalamandalam Sreerang (mridangam) and Hariprasad Subramaniam (flute). The low-key nattuvangam in the non-nritta parts helped the music remain enjoyable.

**Usha Nangiar's 'Ahalya'** brought the curtains down on this memorial for Chandrakala. Usha is a well-known Koodiyattam artiste – she has the distinction of being trained under the legendary Ammanur Madhava Chakyar and performing along with him. Her research into old attaprakarams brought to light female characterisations that had been lost over time. Usha is one of the best traditionalists and is an innovator too.

The almost-two hour 'Ahalya', taken from the Adhyatma Ramayana, was a painstaking account of Ahalya's life after her marriage to Sage Gautama.

Usha's nuanced acting prowess and facial expressions shone in the performance. Her quiet pathos as the condemned Ahalya brought tears to the eyes.

The percussive support – Kalamandalam Rajeev and Kalamandalam Vijay on the mizhavu, Kalarilayam Unnikrishnan on the edakka and Athira on the thalam – heightened the appeal.

## The cosmic hero

**Shruti Umaiyaal** presented the many facets of Shiva in her thematic recital

Sridhya

**S**hruti Umaiyaal, student of Meenakshi Chitharanjan, presented a thematic solo 'Rudra', under the auspices of Bharat Kalachar.

Commencing with 'Sankara sri giri nadaprabho', a composition by Swati Tirunal in raga Hamsanandi, Shruti established the theme through energetic, clear movements.

As the recital progressed, one got to witness a string of pieces, each showcasing the lord of dance through different perspectives – the lovelorn nayika, the angry mother and the dedicated devotee.

The highlight of the evening was the pada varnam 'Yenneramum avari ninaithaenadi', a composition by Pandanallur Srinivasa Pillai in Chakravaham. Here, the viraha nayika was depicted with depth. The choreography and compering by Meenakshi Chitharanjan that clearly delineated the sthayi bhava made the experience enjoyable.

This was followed by a traditional padam, a ninda stuti in Kalyani, 'Yethai kandu nee ichai kondaiyadi magale'. On seeing her daughter's intense love for Shiva, the mother calls him a madman, and asks her daughter what she found in him, a mendicant who lives in the cemetery. The nayika quotes Thirugnanasambandar's lines 'Kadhalagi kasindu', reiterating



her boundless devotion to Shiva.

The recital concluded with K.N. Dandayudhapani Pillai's thillana in raga Hindolam, seeking Nataraja's grace.

The orchestra – Meenakshi Chitharanjan (nattuvangam), Gomathi Nayagam (vocals), Sakthivel Muruganandam (mridangam) and Karaikal Venkata Subramanian (violin) – was an asset to the performance.

PHOTO BY VEERAKAN RAJ



**Sowjanya Suresh's Ramarasanubhavam** showcased transformative encounters from the *Ramayana*

## An epic encounter

**Manasa Vijayakshme C**

**S**owjanya Suresh's solo thematic presentation 'Ramarasanubhavam', choreographed by Urmila Satyanarayanan (Sowjanya's guru) traced a sequence of transformative encounters from the Ramayana, drawing from Arunachala Kavirayar's 'Rama Natakam' and verses from the 'Kamba Ramayanam'. Structured around seven characters – Ahalya, Sita, Parasurama, Guha, Jatayu, Hanuman and Ravana – the presentation examined how contact with Rama reshaped lives through grace, humility, devotion,

and, at times, offered redemption through death.

The recital, held at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, opened with Ahalya, whose long penance as a stone ends when Rama's touch restores her to life, marking not merely release from a curse but an inner spiritual awakening.

This was followed by Sita's episode, centered on the moment of recognition, where her first sight of Rama rekindles an eternal bond that transcends earthly love and sets the course for their shared journey.

Next came Parasurama's confrontation with Rama, unfolding as a turning point

from arrogance to humility, as the warrior-sage recognises Rama's divinity and retreats in repentance.

The narrative then moved to Guha, whose meeting with Rama highlighted devotion stripped of hierarchy, where simple love and surrender elevate the tribal boatman to the status of a brother.

Jatayu's sacrifice followed, forming one of the recital's emotional peaks, portraying how devotion expressed through selfless action attains liberation through Rama's grace.

Hanuman's encounter came next, moving from inquiry to surrender and showing the transformation

of strength into service as he embraces his role as Rama's devoted helper.

The concluding episode with Ravana explored redemption, suggesting that even defiance and downfall can culminate in liberation.

Each episode was marked by clear narrative intent, giving the thematic arc coherence and emotional continuity. Across these portrayals, Sowjanya demonstrated a striking ability to shift swiftly between layered emotional states, often transitioning between multiple inner registers within a single character. Her facial expressions were precise and

immediate, lending clarity to narrative progression, while her posture remained assured. In the Guha episode, a brief tribal-dance movement added texture to the portrayal, marking a clear shift in movement quality. The Jatayu segment stood out visually, with expansive vishwaroopam combined with focussed lighting to arrest audience attention.

A notable aspect of the recital was the thoughtful use of costume additions to delineate character. Without full costume changes, Sowjanya altered her appearance through selective draping: a subdued golden-toned costume for Ahalya, a red pallu drape and side small fans for Sita, a cross-worn kavi cloth suggesting Guha's tribal identity, and a dark grey-black stole around the neck for Hanuman. These subtle visual cues enhanced character differentiation while keeping the focus firmly on abhinaya.

Music composition for the production was by Swamimalai S.K. Suresh while Keerthi Kumar did the lighting design. The orchestra for the evening comprised G. Srikanth on vocals, Saikripa Prasanna on the nattuvangam, G.V. Guru Bharadwaj on the mridangam, T.V. Sukanya on the flute and B. Muthukumar on the violin.

Ramarasanubhavam emerged as a disciplined presentation that balanced narrative clarity with inward reflection, relying on controlled expression and observation rather than overt spectacle.

# Seamless dialogue

Vignesh Ishwar and the accompanying team led by Umayalpuram Sivaraman highlighted the significance of musical camaraderie

#### Deepa Ganesh

**V**ignesh Ishwar's offering at Maarga was one of the most memorable experiences of the December 2025 Music Season.

Vignesh's voice glides effortlessly at the lofty D shruti, enriched by a sensitive and mature Carnatic aesthetic and an expansive repertoire. The concert was elevated by the accompaniment – mridangam maestro Umayalpuram Sivaraman, Sayee Rakshith on the violin and B.S. Purushottam on the kanjira.

In the 250th birth anniversary year of Muthuswami Dikshitar,

most musicians have featured his compositions prominently in their concerts. Vignesh opened his recital with 'Sri nathadi guruguho' in Mayamalavagowla, embellishing it with an imaginative and well-crafted niraval. Sayee's returns were marked by sensitivity and restraint. The veteran mridangist's playing stood out for its tonal quality – its naada echoing through the new Ramakrishna Mission TAG Auditorium in T Nagar.

'Sogasuga mridanga talamu' in Sriranjani followed in a brisk tempo, the mridangam accompaniment creating a sense of spaciousness despite the pace. At one point, the veteran asked Vignesh to sing 'Marubalka' – he

delivered it with striking beauty. Vignesh's niraval, particularly in the madhya sthayi, revealed his musical intellect. The swarakalpana that followed was equally impressive, with Sayee Rakshith's violin weaving meaningful and well-structured patterns even at breakneck speed, matching the vocalist phrase for phrase with remarkable assurance.

Clearly moved by Sivaraman's musicianship, Vignesh paused to remark, "At 90, he is playing the way he did 50 years ago." Sivaraman, in turn, responded with grace, observing, "It takes a musician of Vignesh's calibre to sing like this."

Vignesh's rendition of 'Vadanyeshwara' in

Devagandhari was followed by the Kamboji alapana, with both Vignesh and Sayee at their imaginative best. 'Sri subrahmanyaya namaste' emerged as a fitting centrepiece marked by weighty phrases that perfectly matched the gravitas of the raga. The niraval at the familiar line 'Vasavaadi sakala deva' was developed with a steady structural sense.

Sivaraman's dynamic choice of sollus, closely mirroring the musical flow, and his engaging interactions with the violin during the climactic swara passages – often extending beyond the vocalist's korvai, as is his wont – heightened the concert's appeal. The tani avartanam commenced with a brief opening round that focussed on gradually building tempo.

Sivaraman continually shaped and expanded the rhythmic architecture, his signature three-gati korvai marking the point at which the tani ascended to an altogether different plane. The shorter exchanges between Sivaraman and Purushottam leading up to the finale were especially engaging.

The post-tani session included 'Sapasya kousalya' and 'Parulanna mata'. Both pieces were rendered with distinction.

This was a concert that seamlessly wove vidwat, imagination, and shared musical empathy.



Restrainted approach Adithya Narayanan. PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

## Soulful Sahana

Adithya Narayanan delineated the raga's contour through sustained phrases

#### Aishwarya Raghunathan

**A**t its core, this concert was a thoughtful exploration of raga and rasa. S. Adithya Narayanan emphasised rakti and bhava with restraint, avoiding excessive ornamentation. Sruthi Sarathy (violin) complemented his approach with precision, while percussionists Kishore Ramesh (mridangam) and K.R. Sivaramakrishnan (kanjira) maintained attentive and balanced support. The quartet demonstrated strong artistic alignment.

The afternoon concert, at Krishna Gana Sabha, began with the Behag varnam 'Vanajaksha', a gentle prelude that created a pleasant atmosphere. Tyagaraja's Ritigowla kriti 'Raga ratna malika' came next. The niraval at 'Bhagavatho' was supported by Kishore's expressive mridangam. The kalpanaswaras carried this synergy forward, Sruthi's violin aligning well too.

The Sahana alapana delineated the raga's contour with assurance, through sustained phrases. The deliberately-placed notes drew the audience into a reflective mood. On

the violin, Sruthi sustained the effect with clear, understated playing, while preserving her interpretation.

Papanasam Sivan's 'Senthil vellaiya', a vilambita kala kriti, retained this meditative mode. Its gait was supported by percussion that employed space as strategically as sound.

The transition into 'Marubalka' (Sriranjani) occurred after a brief stage-side conversation. The tanam in Kalyani introduced a noticeable shift, prompting an introspective response that rasikas recognised. The ragaswarupam appeared subtly, with the raga's emotional core conveyed more through pauses than through the phrases themselves. Tyagaraja's 'Etavunara' followed. At 'Sri karunaka tyaga', the niraval acquired briga-brightness without compromising contour.

The tani avartanam was brisk to the point of feeling compressed. Though the korvais were undeniably complex, the segment seemed to sit adjacent to the concert, adding little to the interpretive momentum that existed until then.

The concert closed on a sprightly note with Patnam Subramania Iyer's Khamas thillana.

## Sacred wheel

The golden chariot of Sri Ekambareswarar temple will have its first run on January 25



The chariot was formally handed over to the Hindu Religious and Endowment Department in a grand ceremony on December 6. Pujas were performed at the Orikkai Manimantapam, the temple of Mahaswami. After being flagged off by the Sankaracharya, the chariot was taken to the Ekambareswarar temple.

On January 25, at 7 p.m., the idols of Sri Ekambaranathar and Kamakshi will be placed inside the decorated chariot and taken out in a procession.

Foremost among the numerous Siva temples, which dot Kanchipuram, Sri Ekambareswarar temple is a magnificent edifice, with numerous sculptures adorning the pillars and shrines for several deities. The moolasthanam glitters in new radiance as the deities and the ceiling have been covered in silver.

Incidentally, the temple is also the abode of Nilathunda Perumal, one of the 108 Vaishnava Divya Desams.

Chariot Trust, spearheaded by Mahalakshmi Subramanian, completed the task. The beautiful chariot is said to be the tallest of its kind in Asia. Expert craftsmen who work on wood, brass and gold plating, came together to create it.

#### Geetha Venkataraman

**E**kambresa nayike, sive sri kamakshi – Muthuswami Dikshitar invokes the presiding deities of Sri Ekambareswarar temple in Kanchipuram in this kriti. The temple, which stands for Earth (prithvi), one of the five elements of Nature – was consecrated on December 8. The 13-tier rajagopuram glows with a fresh coat of paint and the kalasams glint in the sun.

As a culmination of the mahakumbhabhishekam events, the golden chariot dedicated on December 6, 2025, will have its first run on January 25, Ratha Sapthami, in the presence of Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswati and Sri Satya Chandrasekharendra Saraswati.

The project, initiated by Sri Jayendra Saraswati, encountered setbacks before it was revived by Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswati. The Sri Ekambaranathar Golden

## CULTURE BRIEFS

### Dedicated to a stalwart



B.R. Srinivas on the mridangam and Madipakkam Murali on the ghatam. Organised as part of the 58th aradhana of Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar, the concert will be held at 6.30 p.m.

**Shri Ariyakkudi Music Foundation** and Muthamizh Peravai, in association with SciArt Services, will feature the following concerts on the eve of the 58th remembrance day of Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar. The evening begins with a thematic dance production 'Rama Namam Krishna Namam' by the students of Nandhini Suresh at 4.15 p.m. This will be followed by N. Manikandan's nagaswaram recital at 5.30 p.m.; and Anahita-Apoorva's vocal concert at 6.15 p.m. The line-up concludes with the Bharatanatyam performance by T. Hema Meenakshi, student of Urmila Satyanarayanan, at 7.30 p.m.

Sri Ariyakkudi, K.V. Narayanaswamy Memorial Trust will feature a vocal concert by D. Raghavachari (of Hyderabad brothers duo) today at Arkay Convention Centre, Mylapore. The senior vocalist will be accompanied by Mysore Srikanth on the violin,

Murali on the ghatam. Organised as part of the 58th aradhana of Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar, the concert will be held at 6.30 p.m.

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**Hindustani Music Recital**  
\*A celebration of Guru-Shishya tradition \*

**Ashwini Bhide Deshpande (khayal)**  
with Rutuja Lad and Sharayu Date (vocal support)  
Accompanied by Vyasmurti Katti (harmonium) and Yati Bhagwat (tabla)

Jan 24, 2026 | 6:30 pm  
Madras Music Academy, Chennai

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**CMYK**



PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI

## Of stillness and energy

**Swetha Prachande's mature approach was evident in both nritta and abhinaya**

Rupa Srikanth

**T**he invocation to Devi with verses from *Soundarya Lahari* (ragamalika, talamalika, Rajkumar Bharati), not only made for a brisk opening in Shweta Prachande's Bharatanatyam recital, but also showcased what one can do to also enhance the aural experience.

To the background of Nattai, a jathi phrase was recited, followed by a chant 'Om kriem sreem Siva priyave...', and again sollus... 'Roopam dehi jayam'

'dehi' (Argala stotram refrain) was chanted in between verses in ragamalika.

The vast stage of The Music Academy lets dancers come up with non-araimandi and space-covering movements, but there is a concern this might become a trend. However, Shweta maintained a good balance between araimandi and such steps. Her flexibility, energy and timing shone.

The bhakti-sringara ragamalika padavarnam by the Thanjavur Quartet addressed to Tanjapuri Brihadeeswara, 'Sami ninne', had the nayika convincing him why it is

difficult to hug him, because of the Ganga on his head and the serpents wrapped around him.

Shweta has matured as a dancer. Good stamina helped her keep up the vigour while a quiet abhinaya ensured ideas were conveyed with clarity.

Shweta took up 'Kanthimati thaye', where the devotees treat the goddess as a child. The dancer, even while engaging with the child, constantly held the child mudras.

She finished with a vibrant Sruthi Laya piece inspired by Karaikudi Mani's ensemble composition in Bahudari, Adi, turned into a vocal composition by her singer-husband Rithvik Raja.

Shweta lived up to the high-energy performance, ending with a beautiful ode to Devi and Muthuswami Dikshitar – the nottuswaram 'Vande meenakshi' in Sankarabharanam.

The backbone of the recital was her orchestra – Jayashree Ramanathan (nattuvangam), Deepu Karunakaran (vocal), P.K. Siva Prasad (mridangam), Easwar Ramakrishnan (violin) and Hariprasad Subramanian (flute). Keerthi Kumar did the light design.

V.V. Ramani

**K**eerthana Ravi, a disciple of Padmima Ramachandran and Rama Vaidyanathan, began her performance for the Iyal, Isai, Nataka vizha of Narada Gana Sabha with Muthuswami Dikshitar's 'Jambupathe' in Yamuna Kalyani – not a common choice for a dance recital. Seeking a path to true bliss, this song is filled with varied descriptions, and the dancer portrayed them through interesting sancharis.

This was followed by Swati Tirunal's 'Pannagendra sayana'. This interesting Ashtaragamalika composition begins with raga Sankarabharanam and travels through other ragas, ending with Bhoopalam. The song describes Padmanabha's reclining form and his radiant personality and the nayika's yearning for him. Keerthana conveyed these through appropriate gestures and movements.

The final tillana in Miyan ki Malhar, composed by Karthik Hebbar, was a delightful piece, exploring the beauty and the sensory experiences of rain.

Keerthana needs to plan her repertoire, keeping in mind the time frame. It is difficult to

maintain the momentum when one starts the recital with a Chowka Kala Dikshitar kriti in the afternoon slot. Also, a little more *azhutham* in Karthik's rendition of the kriti would have enhanced the impact.

Kalliswaran Pillai on the nattuvangam, Harsha Samaga on the mridangam and Vivek Krishna on the flute lent fine support.

## An unusual start

**Keerthana Ravi began her performance with 'Jambupathe', an uncommon choice for dance recital**



# Rhythm reigned supreme

Rajeswari Sainath's presented choreographic pieces based on unique laya compositions



Themed on tala Rajeswari Sainath and her students presented 'Viswa Kala Pradarshana' PHOTO: R. RAVINDRAN

### Manasa Vijaylakshme C

**V**iswa Kala Pradarshana, presented at Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Mylapore, was an Indo-Australian collaborative production that brought together Australian jazz, Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam. Conceptualised by Rajeswari Sainath and Vyshnavie Natya Centre, the evening was shaped as a reflection on unity, equality and shared humanity, drawing from the idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: the world as one family.

The stage arrangement mirrored this spirit. Musicians were placed on both the right and left sides of the stage, forming a wide musical frame, while the dancers occupied the centre. This arrangement allowed music and

movement to engage constantly.

The opening piece, 'Vasantha Pravaham', Guru Karaikudi Mani's landmark composition created in 1985 for the Sruthi Laya ensemble, set the tone for the evening. Set in Bahudari and Ranjani and structured across multiple talas, the work surged with rhythmic vitality. The choreography responded with clarity, allowing Bharatanatyam's lines and footwork to flow through changing laya patterns.

'Ananda', composed by Suresh Vaidyanathan in Charukesi, offered a softer, introspective contrast. It unfolded through measured movements. A contemporary rhythmic flavour emerged in 'Dance of a new grandmom', another composition by Suresh Vaidyanathan, using konnaikol entirely as its lyrical base in

Sankarabharanam. The work transformed spoken rhythm into playful, grounded movement.

The jazz presence became more pronounced in 'Pentacle', composed by Adrian S. Western percussion and jazz phrasing introduced a different rhythmic language, which the dancers navigated with ease while retaining Bharatanatyam's core grammar.

A strong rhythmic statement followed in 'Thani', choreographed to the complex laya patterns of Guru Karaikudi Mani, featuring Tiruvalapputur Kaliyamurthy. Here, robust percussion met choreographic patterns, with movement shaped to reflect groove as much as structure.

Through the entire production, rhythm reigned supreme highlighting how

laya compositions can heighten the impact.

The evening concluded with 'New Peace', a rare Sanskrit composition affirming the principle of Sri Satya Sai 'Manava Seva is Madhava Seva,' with the line 'Lokha hittham mama karaneeyam' forming its emotional core.

The dancers of the evening included Rajeswari Sainath, Geetha Gavvala, Sangeetha Gavvala, Meenakshi Murali, Kirthi Shree, Gayathri Yennuni and Nishika Madireddy, while the musicians included B.V. Raghavendra Rao (electric violin), U.P. Raju (mandolin), Adrian Sheriff (shakuhachi and percussion), Tony Hicks (saxophone, clarinet and flutes), Suresh Vaidyanathan (ghatam and percussion) and Nagai Narayanan (mridangam). Together they shaped the concept



### Manasa Vijaylakshme C

**S**rekala Bharath and Thejas School of Performing Arts presented 'Uthama Deivangal', a thoughtfully-curated thematic production focussed on Santoshi Mata, Shirdi Sai Baba and Swami Ayyappa, at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore. The presentation employed music, movement and visual imagery to evoke a spiritual ethos. Srekala anchored the

## Timeless stories

**Srekala Bharath's 'Uthama Deivangal' laid accent on bhakti**

production as the narrator, providing clarity and continuity.

The presentation opened with an invocatory piece on Ganesh and moved on to depict Santoshi Mata as a little girl and as a goddess clad in a golden saree, sporting long hair and a

decorative headpiece who grants her devotees' wishes.

The Shirdi Sai Baba segment began with an introduction by a group of dancers showing him as someone who dispels darkness. The segment included some jathis too. This section concluded with a



### CALENDAR

#### Drama series

As part of its 36th festival of music, dance and drama, Hamsadhwan is presenting a series of plays from today to January 31, 6.45 p.m., at Youth Hostel, Adyar. Organised as part of veteran actor R.S. Manohar's birth centenary celebration, the following plays will be staged during the period: Today: ThRee Entertain presents *Kalavu Neekiya Padalam*, written by Sreevathson.

**Tomorrow:** Excerpts from 'Thiruvatasam' by music director Dakshin and team followed by Muzhikku's *Kapidhwaja*.

**January 25:** Komal Theatres presents Sivasankari's six short stories, dramatised and directed by Dharini Komal.

**January 26, 6.35 p.m.:** United Visuals' *Sangeetha Mumoorthigal*.

**January 30:** PMG Mayurapriya Creations' *Ennedi Penne*.

**January 31:** UAA's *Lights On*.