

Music all the way

Year after year, Kalasagaram is gaining distinction and yet facing a watershed in the choice of artistes for its annual festival. In reality it is true of every organisation, for, the countable few (artistes) reap the harvest with iniquitous claims and yet lace their performances with repetitive and routine recitals. The audience in turn, squares up with the regular and routine for lack of any alternative.

The 38th Annual Festival of Kalasagaram conducted last week, had again the usual squad with TVS, Sanjay, Sudha, Priya Sisters, and OST. Kalasagaram also chose the occasion to honour O.S. Thyagarajan with the title, *Kalasagara* and the dancer Rajeswari Sainath with the title, *Nrithya Kalasagara*.

The inaugural programme was a vocal recital by O.S. Thyagarajan (OST). Embar Kannan accompanied him on the violin, Karaikkudi Mani on the mridangam and N. Amrit on the kanjira.

As always on such occasions, considerable time was lost with speeches and presentations and the concert was reduced to just a little beyond two hours.

Clarity, lucidity, originality

OST is a much-admired artiste, but it is difficult to say why. His music has not got the sparkle of popular singers, beauty of style or mastery of technique. Basically it is distinguished by great clarity and lucidity of structure. Ideas are well moulded and cannot be effaced easily and it is a manner of unification that matters.

He fulfils great and difficult tasks with all the classiness and charm without the slightest strain or uncertainty. He avoids exaggeration and passion, but appeals to the mature mind by understatement and restraint; it is seldom romantically excited in form, but he knows how to express intense feeling in its own quietly classical way. His presentation is ascetically simple, aesthetically perfect, and architecturally unique.

Here is originality without extravagance, strength without brutality and a dramatic portrayal of impulse, emotion and mood without disfigurement by any strained intensity.

FEST The 38th Annual Festival of Kalasagaram was resplendent with invigorating recitals.

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RECITALS GALORE (From left) Chandra Bhanu, O.S. Thyagarajan, and Sudha Raghunathan.

OST's strong point is his immaculate *sruti gnanam* a feature, which contributes a major component to the success of a concert. His experience and the repertoire are yet another factors where he has unlimited choice with time and mood to design his concert. The selection was pragmatic, intelligent and aesthetic, each chosen for a specific facet to be projected.

The simple *varnam* in the *raga sri* immediately built up the tempo. *Birnavara* in *kalyani* set to *adi talam*, *thisra nadai* was exhilarating and the rhythmic module highlighted. The contrasting *raga darbar* had a short essay of the *alapana* and the *kriti*, *munduvenuka* of Thyagaraja conveyed the emotional aspect. The rare song *entativinuvintura* of Pallavi Seshaiyer in the uncommon *raga urmika* (a derivative of *simhendramadhyamam*) shook the audience with a unique delight. A crisp *alapana* of *sriranjani* showed the way to *marubalka*.

In terms of scholarship, his

swarakalpana for the song and the *kuraippu* exercise at the difficult and tricky *eduppu* (commencing point) was outstanding. OST takes particular care to see that all the musical essentials are projected in right proportion but does not exaggerate any.

The elaborate *raga alapana* of *kamboji*, was exhaustive and ecstatic. Although the *kriti*, *evaramata* was short in presentation, the *neraval* and *swarakalpana* proved to be stimulating. The concert was concluded with some lighter items and a *thillana*. If OST had only included an item in *misra chapu thalam*, the concert would have been complete in every aspect. Embar Kannan one of the leading violin accompanists came out with a challenging counterpart and plentifully added to the melodies of OST, each excelling the other.

Matchless maestro

It is a matchless enjoyment to listen to the mridangam of the maestro, Karaikkudi Mani. He is



composition of Shyamasastri, *nannubrovumu lalitha*, in the raga *lalitha*. It was exceedingly emotional.

The raga *sahana* was delineated well and the uncommon *krithi*, *vaidehi thavapada bhaktim* was fascinating. Although the *mudra* of Thyagaraja is there it is doubtful if it is his. *Ni alladu edayya gati* in *chalanata*, of *kotiswaraiyer*, was yet another touching picture. The *alapana* of *todi* was appealing although it could certainly have been better. The *krithi*, *koluvamaragatha*, the accompanying *neraval* and *swarakalpana* were just customary.

The RTP calls for comments. It was a *ragamalika pallavi* consisting of *kalavathi*, *kirvani*, and *kalyani*. The name *gowri* was also mentioned in the lyric but for lack of the raga *lakshnana*, it should be presumed as a part of the lyric and not significant of the raga.

The *pallavi* was set to *khanda-jati thripata thalam*, *khanda nadai* consisting of 45 pulses per

cycle. It was a marathon work out, which needed incredible concentration; it was more academic than melodious.

Raghavendra Rao was at a low key on his violin, while, Skanda Subramanyam on the mridangam and Raman on the morsing made merry on their instruments.

Budding singer

Chandra Banu's vocal concert last week under the aegis of Kalasagaram confirmed that there is no dearth of performing artists in the discipline of Carnatic music. The only thing found wanting was the will of the organisers to project them.

Chandra Banu has been putting in her best effort to prove herself as an excellent performing artiste. Endowed with a delicate voice, with a nasal twang, she has a confident approach to her performances. While the talent is there in good measure, what she perhaps needs is experience and appropriate guidance.

In this context, it is necessary for any artiste to motivate himself or herself to excel in areas like *alapana*, *neraval* and *swarakalpana*. Chandra Banu would do well to redesign the *alapana*, since it sounds pedestrian.

The desire to indulge in richly rehearsed long *koruvais* in *swarakalpana* is yet another weakness in many of the contemporary artistes, not to mention Chandra Banu – a practice which is deprecating and artistically hollow.

Her concert had some pleasing items, although the sequence could have been more judicious. She started well with the popular *varnam* in the raga *Sri Raghunayaka* in *Hamsadwani* was the right choice thereafter. The *chitta swaras* that were woven in the *krithi* was juvenile and redundant. *Ramabirama* in *Darbar* was well presented but had some howlers in the lyric. Again the *chitta swaras* in the song was superfluous.

Aparadhamula in *lathangi* and *Shankari Nive* in *Begada* left the boredom of *Anthara Gandhara* oft repeating and the contrast between items was not visible. An intervening *Sadharana Gandra* item could induce colour to the sequence. It did come all right in the next item *Dasarathi* in *Todi*, but the time lag was telling.

The concert concluded with some impressive items like, *Vin-arada Na Manvi* in *Kedragowla* and *Akhilandeswari* in *Dwijavanti*. One can easily identify the style of her guru Sesahchari in her singing.

Nevertheless, Chandra Banu should make efforts to add her own individuality at this level of her performance.

Peri Thyagaraju accompanied her on the violin and Burra Sri-ram on the mridangam. Peri Thyagaraju, the disciple of his father Srirmasmurthy, is one of the promising violinists of the younger generation and his contribution for the concert was creditable.

Young Sriram on the mridangam was confident and at ease. His *thirmanam* in the *thani* was imaginative and splendid. All in all, the concert was well received by the large audience and proved an encouraging facet to the artistes.