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Published: November 12, 2015 10:28 IST | Updated: November 12, 2015 10:28 IST Thiruvananthapuram, November 12, 2015

Beats of tradition

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Charles Ma at Dharani Kalotsav



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Divya Devaguptapu at Dharani Kalotsav



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Gayatri Sriram at Dharani Kalotsav



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Cherthala Ranganatha Sharma and Kottakkal Madhu Photo: Special Arrangement

Music and dance performances by up-and-coming artistes were the hallmark of the Dharani Kalotsav in Kochi.

Dharani Kalotsav in Kochi showcased talented dancers of the new age and some sublime music.

Gayatri Sriram

She started her programme on the first day with a piece dedicated to the Sun. Although the dancer had immense stage presence, there were a few rhythmic lapses in the pure dance segments. 'Sringaralola Muraleedhara' in ragamalika was based on 'bhakti sringara'. She enacted episodes depicting Kuchela's story, Geetopadesha and Krishna's birth. However, the choreography lacked imagination. Many of the drawbacks were compensated for by an able orchestra. The 'Swadheenabhadrika nayika' Radha asks Krishna to adorn her with jewellery and sandal paste in the ashtapadi 'Kuruyadunandana'. But the dancer did not stick to the sentiments in the lyrics.

Soumya Bose

The dancer performed Odissi in the 'Young Talent' slot. His recital included Mangalacharan, Pallavi and 'Ardhanareeshwara'.

Charles Ma

He was another dancer who performed in the same slot. Charles' recital was remarkable as he portrayed a virahotkhandita nayika in a varnam - 'Nee intha maayam', which addresses Lord Krishna.

His expressions were in sync with the emotions and masculine grace was ever present through the performance. Leaps and jumps in the jathis were lithe and graceful. The dancer incorporated Natesha Kowtham in between the verses in 'Bho Shambo' in raga Revathi.

Divya Devaguptapu

On the second day, Divya presented 'Sannidhi' in the alaripu format in which she highlighted the timelessness of temple architecture. The carvings, stone work and figurines came live in the huge spaces that the dancer covered with ease. 'Amba gowri girikanye', the Arabhi varnam of Irayimman Thampi in tisra triputa, was marked by splendid choreography. The dancer maintained equanimity in sustaining energy levels and movements.

The ettugada swaras that she performed were bang on and won applause every time. The adavus blended remarkably in perfect unison. The sancharis, namely incineration of Kama and marriage of Parvati, were performed with clarity. Sreedev Ragagopalan charmed with his amazing vocal range and tunes soaked with melody.

In 'Namanadu vantiti', a Kshejnar padam in Kalyani raga, the dancer portrayed a Sweeya nayika who feel her lover's presence even though he is not there, as she goes about her daily chores.

Cherthala Ranganatha Sharma and Kottakkal Madhu

A music jugalbandi of Carnatic musician Cherthala Ranganatha Sharma and Kathakali musician Kottakkal Madhu was perhaps the most awaited programme of the festival. Both Carnatic music and Kathakali buffs thronged filled the venue for the rare musical feat. As Madhu rendered 'Samyamakonnorudyanam', a padam in Pantuvarali from 'Nalacharitham Onaam Divasam', Sharma charmed with korvai swaras for the Swati Tirunal kriti 'Paripalaya saraseeruha'. The aural experience was heightened by a 'full-bench' orchestra with seasoned artistes such as Balakrishna Kamath on the mridangam, Idappally Ajith on the violin and Vazhapilly Krishnakumar on the ghatam. Kalamandalam Vishnu gave commendable vocal support to Madhu in padams such as 'Ajitha Hare' in Sreeraga, which is the epitome of bhakti in Kathakali music.

As the musicians had to balance the presentation and content of their respective music styles, improvisation or manodharma had to be toned down, especially in the Carnatic music segments, and the emotional quotient dominated the recital.

Todi raga received a brief expanse from Sharma who sang the Dikshitar kriti 'Sreekrishnam bhaja manasa sathatham.' Madhu took up the niraval of 'Pakashasanadi vinutha charam' in the Kathakali music style from where Sharma left it.

The sound of Kerala's percussion instruments, such as those of the chenda, edakka, and maddalam, merged in harmony with the beats of the mridangam and ghatam in a grand taniavarthanam. Sadanam Ramakrishnan (chenda), Kalamandalam Hari (maddalam) and Tripunithura Hari (edakka) gave able and consistent accompaniment.

The festival was organised by Dharani Society.

Printable version | Mar 2, 2016 12:23:58 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/music/music-and-dance-performances-at-dharani-kalotsav/article7868831.ece>

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