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DANCE

Distinctly traditional



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POISE AND GRACE Divya Devaguptapu at the event
| Photo Credit: Inni Singh

Keeping in tune with conventions, Divya Devaguptapu's Bharatanatyam recital was worth watching because of the touch of originality the dancer infused in it

If Divya Devaguptapu's recent Bharatanatyam recital is anything to go by, traditional repertoire is here to stay. This senior dancer, based in the US made the customary 'margam' worth a watch by lending it a tinge of originality with her own choreography. The alarippu for instance, titled 'Sannidhi' (sanctum), led the margam (path) from the outer precincts of the temple to the inner sanctorum – a sojourn of the devotee through dance. The idea and its execution through apt mudras and

footwork patterns, all the same adjoining to the alarippu movement in a structural manner was a real piece of art.

The varnam in Thodi, a Swati Tirunal's composition in Sanskrit "Daani Samajendra Gamana..." was also not the run-of-the-mill. The dancer adopting

the swaying gait of the elephant (gaja gamana), emulating a solo ball game, the buzzing and whirling of the bee over the flower, were remarkable instances of her artistry. The simplistic teermanam somehow was no match compared to the lofty lyric and complex nritta (footwork). Since the content was about the nayika (heroine) falling in love with the handsome Lord Ananta Padmanabha of Thiruvananthapuram, Divya's depiction of the couched idol of the deity that is visible to the devotees only in parts through three main doors of the sanctum was picture perfect. Through the first door she showed the head and chest of the Lord reclining on the serpent, while the middle door exposes the deity's midriff with Lord Brahma risen on the stalk of a lotus and the third doorway reveals the blessed feet where she does the padabhivandan. The jati pattern to swar sahitya in the penultimate verse was striking.

Facial mime

The Swadheenapatika came to life in her abhinaya for Kshetravya padam in Telugu which the artiste portrays through a letter to her husband who is on a long sojourn elsewhere. The mukhabhinaya (facial mime) expressed it all-the reminiscing of romantic times together, the eager wait, the loyal emotional bond, etc came through with clarity and subtlety.

The tillana in lilting Khamas raga was a crisp visual treat in pure dance where Divya's movements and postures were markedly linear, slant and circular, at times only footwork sans hasthabhinaya (gesticulations/mudra) making for an aesthetic statement. The Annamacharya keertana "Maya Mohamu..." a philosophical lyric that throws up the dichotomy at every stage and aspect of life was a lovely way to wrap up the recital. This performance could have well turned out to be a perfect presentation but for the recorded orchestra where the vocalist lost clarity with the words of the song becoming undecipherable and the percussionist who went on hammering his mridangam rather than playing it with elan. New Delhi's India Habitat played host to the performance.

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