

Riveting rhythms

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elaborately choreographed Seshadri Iyengar's performance Photo: Murali Kumar K.

Review Nitya Nritya 2011 brought together diverse facets of the eternal favourite — dance

Nitya Nritya 2011, a festival of Indian classical dances, was conducted recently in Bangalore by Nupura, headed by senior Bharatanatya exponent and guru Lalitha Srinivasan.

The first performance was by Seshadri Iyengar, who commenced with a brief but sparkling pushpanjali set to Andolika raga and adi thala. The focal point of the recital was Lalgudi Jayaraman's adi thala varna in Charukeshi, "Innum Yen Manam". The exacting and elaborately choreographed piece, suffused with devotion to Lord Krishna, was laced with an innocently familiar and supplicatory tone, underscored by impressive variety in footwork, and fluidity and clarity of movement.

Penchant for speed

“Govardhana Giridhara” in Hindola was followed by a thillana in Madhuvanathi, packed with a remarkable sequence of rhythms, reiterating the artiste's exceptional choreographic ability, unflagging stamina and penchant for speed.

The evening continued with a Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi ‘Jugalbandi’ by Anuradha Vikrant and Shama Krishna. Clad in identical costumes, the duo opened with a captivating invocatory piece incorporating similar choreography executed with perfect synchronisation. Anuradha's solo interpretation, in the Bharatanatyam idiom, of “Mahadeva Siva Shambho” in Revathi raga and adi thala and Shama's later exposition of Sandhya Tandava in Kuchipudi style were replete with riveting rhythms and striking poses. The artistes came together in the intervening item, the charming “Lakshmi Parvathi Samvada”, depicting each of the goddesses teasing and taunting the other about the attributes and activities of her husband.

The similarities and differences in the two styles were once again highlighted in the concluding “Baro Krishnaya”. Both performances of the day were augmented by exemplary live orchestral support.

Sujata Mahopatra's Odissi recital on the third and final day of the festival began with the traditional Mangalacharan. The sinuous grace of the genre and the supreme command of the dancer over its intricacies were made amply evident in the ensuing pallavi, set to Hamsadhvani raga. Complex rhythms unfolded effortlessly and with increasing intensity as the item progressed, and the sheer joy of dancing was explicit in the artiste's demeanour. The following exposition of selected episodes from the Ramayana, beginning with the sojourn of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana at Panchavati and the appearance of the golden deer, and leading up to Jatayu Moksha, was marked by superb abhinaya with the dancer switching roles with consummate ease, bringing to a close a performance that was an ideal amalgam of technical expertise and histrionic skills, accentuated by an outstanding orchestra.

The concluding presentation of the festival was “Gowdara Malli”, choreographed by Lalitha Srinivasan and performed by the students of Nupura. Based on the celebrated work of Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, the dance drama traced the evolution of a young village girl into a responsible, respected and confident woman, set against a rural backdrop.

The success of the performance lay in the introduction of elements of folk dance and music, appropriate costumes, sound effects such as the chirping of birds, and the use of a temple silhouette, a doorway and the cut out of a tree as props, which conjured up a rustic atmosphere suffused with the quaint pleasures and occasional tribulations of village life.

“Gowdara Malli” brought the curtains down on the Nitya Nritya dance fiesta, which also included a Bharatanatyam duet by Gayathri and V.N. Balagurunathan, a solo by Kirti Ramgopal, a Kathak presentation by Kadamb Dance Academy, and a seminar on ‘Dance: from Auditorium to Open Space’.

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