

Less might have been more

T.M.Krishna made an impact in parts. Would better scheduling have helped? TVS didn't

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A singer who wants to give free, expansive rein to manodharma sangitam has a problem with the commonly followed 2-1/2 hours, madhyamakala dominant kutcheri format. Especially if he takes up a grand raga like Khambodi followed by a substantial kriti as T.M.Krishna did. This led to some shifts in the schedule — a quickie in full-throated, swara-sprayed 'Amba paradavate' (Rudrapriya) instead of a leisurely Ahiri in 'Mayamma.' The RTP had to be dropped as Krishna did not opt for a fast forwarded version.

So what did the listener get in Krishna's concert? An initial 'Sri-nathadi' in tranquil Mayamalavagowli, retaining the spirit of the reverent wonder which informs the sahitya, in prayogas alternating between fast and slow. Krishna's kalpanaswaras from lower nishada to upper panchama balanced arohana and avarohana in firm but gentle phrases, ending quietly, leaving mridangam (Karaiikkudi R. Mami) and ghatam (V. Suresh) to round off with sound effects. The violin (Mysore Manjunath) played similar music, but with less bhava, more virtuosity.

This contrast became more obvious in Purvikalyani, where Krishna moved from ikaram and ukaram to decibel-controlled akaram in the higher gandhara, the raga spiralling into fine-tuned, taut resonance. The singer tried to lose himself in alapana and kriti ('Tillai Chidambaram'). The violin's skills-driven stylistics on the other hand, drew attention to its brilliance of tone and technique.

Khambodi was an expedition on full sail, noting, examining, rediscovering, relishing every moment of



STRICT ADHERENCE: T. V. Sankaranarayanan (left) and T.M.Krishna. PHOTOS: V. GANESAN

the unhurried journey, with long karvai halts between the briga-ricocheting, gamaka-swelling currents, classicist to the core, but not excluding a folk touch or two. And yet, despite the exquisite sangatis and ragabhava, the maturity in refusing to allow loudness in vision as well as volume, the alapana seemed too far-flung to create a sense of completeness and contentment. In impact the parts exceeded the whole. Would less have been more?

Full marks for choosing the old favourite 'Marimarinnne' (bringing memories of the Alathur Brothers) and singing it without concession to fast food taste buds. Sangatis were sung twice, retaining old fashioned prayogas. The niraval launched on the word 'Karuna' did not forget this bhava. Expansive sangatis flowed on, as did the swaras, greening the melody, magnificently banked by mridan-

gam and ghatam, which also supplied a lovely arudi.

The tani continued the rhythm blitz, long, loud and grand, the ghatam valiantly rising to the occasion. The viruttam provided the calm after the percussion-and-applause squall, in Sahana, Varali and Hamir glides. Like the Khambodi, the recital too was greater in its parts rather than proportionate as a whole.

One of the few artistes of the old school today with an identifiable style, **T.V.Sankaranarayanan's** recital did not deviate from sampradaya music. Assisted by notable sidemen Mysore M. Nagaraj (violin), K.V.Prasad (mridangam), Bangalore N. Amrit (kanjira), TVS began his utsaha sangitam with a tribute to Vinayaka in Hamsadhvani, trailed by an effortless gush of swaras testifying to his penchant for and skill in this manodharma idiom.

This was perfect terrain for percussion kaleidoscope as it proved once again with the sarvalagana odukkai-korvai-akaram-frilled sara downpour appended to 'Brovarama' (Bahudari), which everything except sweetness. Here could percussion work variety in the relentless race of sound speed? They tried.

Gowri Ramnahari ('Varalakshmi namostute') and Vachaspati ('Ejjagaganani') proved the singer's finitive grip over raga format with a thoughtful kriti selection with a single odd note or out-of-place was allowed to peep into the alapana. Nor did the voice try to be anything other than full-throated.

The violin began melodiously enough, and with a rich, even though timbre. Some phrases were memorable, especially when it ended in caress and whisper. But