

MUSIC SEASON 2017

Supply exceeds demand

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For the last few seasons I stayed anchored at the Music Academy for the annual music season. This year I decided to do the sabha hopping that many rasikas experience during the season. I attended about 50 plus concerts across seven venues including the Music Academy.

There were some very good concerts, some good, and a few not so good. But some parts of a concert linger in your mind long after the season is over and I share a few of them here. The Varali raga alapana of Sandeep Narayan at Narada Gana

Ranjani-Gayatri

HEMAMALINI S.

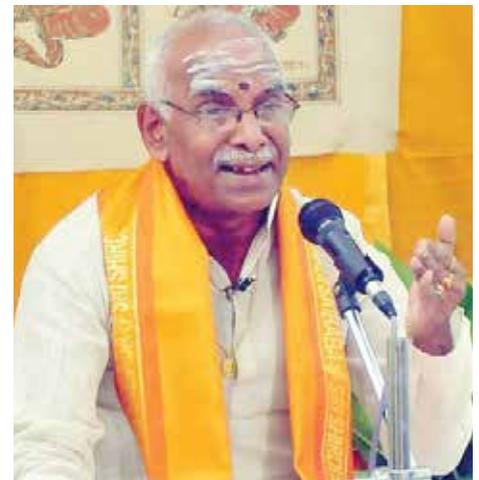


Sabha, the ragam-tanam-pallavi in Dwijavanti by Malladi Brothers at Mylapore Fine Arts, the tri-raga ragam-tanam-pallavi in Sree, Neelambari and Bindumalini by Ranjani-Gayatri at Brahma Gana Sabha and a long and detailed raga alapana in Kedaragaula by Sanjay Subrahmanyam at Brahma Gana Sabha on 1 January 2018. Four-hour concerts can allow the performer to dig deep and come out with gems. This Kedaragaula sounded even more beautiful in the mid-morning—the raga assumed a different hue from when you listened to it in the evening, though I know the concept of morning and evening ragas is alien to Carnatic music.

Some singers were adventurous in picking ragas like Vachaspati and Varamu not usually chosen for ragam-tanam-pallavi and pulled it off very nicely. I also got to hear some ragas not often heard these days in the kutcheri circuit, for example, Balahamsa, Phalamanjari and Takka. They sounded so beautiful that I wondered why these ragas were not taken up more frequently for singing. Also it may be just a coincidence but I heard *Paramatmudu* in the vivadi raga Vagadeeswari in several concerts, while Kambhoji seemed to be the flavour of the season.

Sometimes, in these days of fast paced, aggressive (often abrasive) singing, you look for an escape. My expectations were fulfilled in the concerts of veterans R. Vedavalli and Malladi Suribabu. They represent completely different schools and their music is filled with so much saukhyam. And the

Malladi Suribabu



Vishal Sapuram





R. Vedavalli

best part was that they were singing to packed halls. I was happy that I was not among a few isolated ones who still yearn for the old school of music.

While we may lament the diminishing number of opportunities for instrumentalists, it was heartening to see some youngsters take to instrument-playing and do well for themselves. Ramana Balachandhran (veena) and Vishal Sapuram (chitraveena), were really exciting to watch this season. And J.A. Jayanth and J.B. Sruthi Sagar—both flautists—have been around for several seasons and are still young.

The bright spots in the season were some good and interesting lecdems. One such was “*Purpose and validity of so called minor ragas*” by Pantula Rama. Another was “The apt and creative art of mridangam playing for Dikshitar kritis” by Arun Prakash. And there were a few other good ones from Sriram Parasuram and R.K. Shriram



Arun Prakash

Kumar who seem to have carved a niche for themselves going by the sizeable audience they command for their sessions. The only problem I see with these lecdems is the duration. The topics chosen are so vast in scope it is difficult to do justice in the time allotted.

Enough has been said and discussed about the poor attendance for many concerts. The supply simply is too much in the season and I sincerely hope that market forces and economics will cut the number of sabhas/venues to a viable size and result in improved attendance and augment rasikas’ listening experience by good acoustics and infrastructure.

Chennai was affected by floods and cyclone Varda during the last two music seasons. As if to offset that, the weather stayed very pleasant this time.

(The author is a rasika)