

Youth to the fore at the Music Academy

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Music

The music season at the Madras Music Academy was inaugurated on 15 December 2018. I spent most of my days attending concerts at the Academy and occasionally listened to a few concerts at other venues as well. It was an enriching experience to attend several well laid-out concerts with in-depth raga alapana, rare kriti, complex pallavis, and lilting tailenders.

Sangeetha Swaminathan, senior disciple of Sudha Ragunathan, presented a rarely heard Dikshitar kriti, *Palayamam Parameswari* in Tarangini. Her raga exposition was imaginatively structured to showcase the distinct identity of Tarangini through vakra prayogas, thus avoiding likely ambiguity with Charukesi. Sangeetha sang a breezy *Kamalacharane*—a composition of GNB in the rare raga Amritabehag, followed by an elaborate Todi before the kriti *Kaddanu variki*. She then went on to execute the ragam-tanam-pallavi in three ragas—Mohanam, Abheri and Amritavarshini—in three nadais. The raga alapanas were concise with the choicest of phrases and the seamless gliding between the ragas revealed her competence. The pallavi was in chatusra Ata tala employing the three nadais—chatusra and tisra nadais for the laghu and khanda nadai for drutam, which was later converted to Roopaka tala. It was a tightrope walk for Sangeetha, which she executed with admirable manodharma and precision. She concluded the concert with *Unmai arinthavar unnai kanippar*, a composition of Subramania Bharati tuned in Sumanesaranjani by Tanjavur S. Kalyanaraman. R. Raghul (violin), Kumbakonam Swaminathan (mridangam) and Madipakkam Radhakrishnan (khanjira) embellished the concert.

Bharat Sundar, supported by M.A. Sundaresan (violin), Umayalpuram Sivaraman (mridangam) and Giridhar Udupa (ghatam), presented rich fare. If the exposition of the audava raga Suddha Saveri for *Darini telusukonti* underscored his hard work and manodharma, the niraval at *Ajanmam peddalu tama mahilo nee japame mukti margamanukona* and the long bouts of swaras that followed revealed his erudition and laya expertise. Very rarely do musicians present this raga with so much depth and imagination. His Kannada alapana—with swaras at a tricky place—for the kriti *Sree Matrubhootam* was laudable. The ragam-tanam-pallavi in Shanmukhapriya was set to misra Chapu tala. M.A. Sundaresan, played many intricate phrases in the Parur style; while his bowing was at times embellishing, it was some times intrusive. Umayalpuram Sivaraman lifted the concert to a different level with his deft strokes, variety of sollus, understanding and anticipation. Giridhar Udupa showed his mettle in the opportunities he had. This concert won the prize for best vocal concert in the senior male category. At Mylapore Fine Arts Club (13 December), despite the aural assault on the percussion by Patri Sathish Kumar (mridangam) and B. Shree Sundarkumar (khanjira), Bharat Sundar presented a stunning concert with *Brochevarevarura* (Khamas) as the main piece. His imagination came to the fore in an expansive alapana of Khamas.



Bharat K. Sundar

HEMAMALINI S.

Baby Sreeram, impressed a packed hall with her vidwat. The works of the late Puducode Krishnamurthy are not often heard on the concert platform. She presented one of his compositions, *Vara varana vadanam* in Pantuvarali with raga and swaram embellishments. Following a charming *Entanivina* in the less sung raga Oormika, she took the audience on a sojourn of Sankarabharanam. She explored the majesty and depth of this raga for the Tyagaraja masterpiece *Enduku peddalavale* with niraval at 'veda sastra', followed by vyavahara laden swaras. The ragam-tanam-pallavi in Todi set to a complex misra nadai Adi tala was executed with elan. It featured niraval and swaram in several ragas like Saramati, Neetimati, Bhanumati, Ranjani and Khamas culminating in a complex korvai. Baby sings at a low pitch, but her concerts are noteworthy for her laya intricacies and eye for aesthetics. Padma Shankar's exposition of Sankarabharanam and Todi had depth and style. Mannarkoil Balaji enhanced the concert significantly with his virtuosity and imaginative nadais.