

discussed. Movement like SPICMACAY bringing the classical arts to young generation was referred to. Also the need for audience for classical arts against the various popular arts distracting audiences was discussed. A stimulating thought provoking session. If time permits and resources are available, both V Sriram's talk and the panel discussions need to be published as a part of its serious activity, which Samarpana has undertaken.

Amrita Lahiri's Chitra based upon Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's dance drama Chitrangada in a solo dance form in Kuchipudi style was the last presentation. Amrita had selected certain songs, with musical interludes to adapt the play to a solo format. This work of Tagore continues to resonate with contemporary sensibilities, placing the woman on par with man, empowering her with dignity. As a daughter of King of Manipur, Chitrangada was brought up learning the art of warfare. When she meets Arjuna, she instantly falls in love with him, but he rejects her because of her manly ways. Chitrangada prays to Kamadeva to turn her into a beautiful woman. Romance between Arjuna and Chitrangada blossoms, but when villagers hark her to save them, Chitrangada transforms herself to her former real warrior self and presents herself as she is to Arjuna. She tells him to accept her as she is if their love is true.



Amrita Lahiri

Amrita has selected songs carefully keeping the original music composed by Gurudev himself, with music score by young talented composer Kuldip Pai. The lyrics of Gurudev have an eternal universal appeal. Like a vaggeyakar, his songs with exquisite music have been a part of shared tradition, a legacy which crosses narrow linguistic borders and touches the hearts of the rasikas. Amrita also selected English passages written by Tagore to link up the various episodes, which helped the narrative for those not familiar with Bengali songs. The lighting by Murugan, in particular when Chitrangada is transformed into a beautiful woman was imaginative and the audience gave a round of applause spontaneously.

Amrita has received training in Kuchipudi under Vempati Chinna Satyam's disciple Anuradha Nehru. She further studied under Swapnasundari and at present continues to take intensive training under Kishore Mosalikanti. She has also trained in Bharatanatyam under Leela Samson. With an attractive stage presence, young and sprightly Amrita succeeds in highlighting the Vempati bani admirably with quicksilver movements and elegant postures. She strives to imbibe the spirit of the dance form that challenges her to rise to great artistic heights. With command over technique, Amrita has carved a niche for herself as a brilliant Kuchipudi exponent. Her interpretation of Chitrangada in a solo narrative form was further embellished with brevity and selection of appropriate verses which had a natural flow along with both Bengali and English prose passages. The tillana with 'Esho Shyamalo sundaro' in Desh raga concluded her solo rendering.

The three day festival has now become an important landmark in the cultural calendar of Singapore. The concept of bringing a variety of cultural expressions involving Singapore's multiracial community with a broad vision would surely find enthusiastic response. It is an auspicious beginning and one looks forward to Samarpana's succeeding editions gaining further strength.



Dr. Sunil Kothari is a dance historian, scholar, author and a renowned dance critic. He is Vice President of World Dance Alliance Asia Pacific India chapter, based in New Delhi. He is honored by the President of India with Padma Shri, Sangeet Natak Akademi award and Senior Critic Award from Dance Critics Association, NYC. He is a regular contributor to www.narthaki.com, the roving critic for monthly magazine Sruti and is a contributing editor of Nartanam for the past 12 years.

Comments



Dr. Sunil Kothari reports the discussion about 'Dilution of classical arts' in Narthaki- and proceeds further to mention the conclusion, "It was agreed upon that classical arts need not be diluted"... the intrigue is furthered by the next sentence, "if so, they do not remain classical and are out of the present discourse" and lastly ends with a sentence "classicism does