

Drama offset by subtlety

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There was happy chemistry between Renjith and Vijna.

As the verse from Soundarya Lahiri, 'Sive Sringaraadre' (Kalyani) depicting the moods of Parvathi *vis a vis* Siva delicately transitioned into the devotional Todi masterpiece on the goddess Kamakshi, 'Raave Himagiri kumari' (Adi, Syama Sastry), there was a quiet moment of wow. The silence on the partially lit stage of the Music Academy enhanced the musical impact of the meditative take off point as well-known musician T.V. Ramprasad emphasised bhava in the slow rendition.

The thing about live performances is that there can be an unexpected combustion when a beautiful soundscape and effervescent dancing happen together, as it did during Renjith and Vijna's Bharatanatyam performance. It is like a rocket launch that takes you into an ethereal sphere of poetic beauty, where the everyday 'earthly' issues become insignificant; it is not predictable, nor is it easily replicable.

Every aspect of this performance was delightful. The energy of the dancers, the visualisation of the jatis with the Rukmini Devi dance drama-inspired steps, the use of the diagonal in movement design, sensitive abhinaya (guided by Indira Kadambi), the composition and the firm yet controlled rendition of the jatis (K.S. Balakrishnan), the sensitive percussion during the non-rhythmic portions of the recital (K.P. Ramesh Babu) and the melodic accompaniment by Eashwar Ramakrishnan (violin) and sruti by Mani.

The nadai-beda Pushpanjali (Nagaswaravali, Adi, Balakrishnan) gave a bright start to Renjith and Vijna's performance. Renjith has an agile, sharp style of execution while Vijna's is softer and charming; they combine well. Their treatment of the swarajati was laudable, as they inserted jatis, infused speed, karvais and exploited nadai possibilities in the swaras, without once disturbing the grandeur of the piece.

If anything could beat the effect of 'Raave..', it was the javali 'Apaduruku lonathine' (Khamas, Adi, Pattabhiramayya). Renjith's mugdha nayika (young, innocent heroine) dramatisation was suggestive as she professed her innocence and blamed some mischief-maker for spoiling her reputation. She spoke of their previous meetings as casual encounters, but there was always a give-away glance or a quick hug, that suggested otherwise.

Indira's penchant for dramatisation and humour was set off by Renjith's subtlety, to make even the filmy act of both reaching for the temple bell at the same time, acceptable. Vijna's pain of separation from her beloved in 'Ninnu jooda' (Punnagavarali, triputa, Kshetrappa) was convincing.

The finale was a lively, Holi celebration in Desh (Adi, Pt. Ratanjankar), an adaptation of Professor C.V. Chandrasekhar's group choreography. There was happy energy and chemistry between the dancers, bringing a suggestion of spontaneity to the Krishna-gopi picture.

Sublime music, aesthetic lighting and good visualisation saw artistry at its best.

