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SEVEN ESSENCE SHOWCASED THE MUSICAL ESSENCE OF SEVEN ARTISTS WHILE SHIVAPRIYA WAS A VISUAL DEPICTION IN BHARATANATYAM OF SHIVA AND SHAKTI. A REVIEW BY MANJARI SINHA

Music has been defined in our musical treatise as a confluence of vocal, instrumental and dance ~ "Geetam Vadyam tatha Nrityam/ Trayam Sangeetam uchhyate". In this sense Seven Essence, was a musical evening that presented music in its entirety at the Stein auditorium of Habitat Centre last week. It showcased the musical essence of seven artistes representing all three components of music with vocal by Suheb Khan, Rupak Kulkarni on Flute, Murad Ali on Sarangi, Fateh Ali on Sitar, Akram Khan on Tabla and the Kathak exponent Mahua Shankar with Padhant by Nupur Shankar, who also efficiently anchored the show.

The evening opened with the sonorous strains of raga Shyam Kalyana, played as a Jugalbandi or duet on Sarangi and Sitar by Murad Ali and Fateh Ali the gifted sons and disciples of Ustad Ghulam Sabir Khan of Moradabad Gharana, accompanied on Tabla by Akram Khan, the son of Ustad Hashmat Ali Khan of Ajrada Gharana. Incidentally, both the senior Ustads were also felicitated on this occasion for their contribution to the field of music.

Murad Ali and Fateh Ali, both sharing the same wavelength complementing each other, presented an ideal Jugalbandi in their rendition of the melodious evening raga Shyam Kalyan with a detailed Aalap-Jod followed by a Vilambit or slow composition in Teentala, a Madhyalaya composition in Drut Ekatala and a fast composition set to Drut Teentala, climaxing into Jhaala; with appropriate interventions on percussions by Ustad Akram Khan who

equally matched the speedy Jhaala on Tabla.

Mahua Shankar, the gifted disciple of Pt Birju Maharaj took the stage thereafter, opening with the incocatory Meera Bhajan "Mharo pranaam...". Keeping in mind the concept of Seven Essence, she chose Roopak-Tala of seven-beat cycle and presented Thaata, Aamad Tode, Tukde and a variety of Ginti Ki tihaais, off beat Tihaais and the crisp foot work with the reciprocal Tabla support of Akram Khan. Murad and Fateh offered different flavours in the accompanying Lehera, which started with Yaman for the invocation and switched over to Jhinjhoti in Roopak-tala with alternating "Sam" on Shadja and Pancham, which broke the monotony of the conventional Lehera one is used to.

For her Abhinaya piece Mahua presented a Sufiana Qalam of Amir Khusroo "Eri sakhi mere piya ghar aaye..." adorned with the sensuous touches of Sarangi and Sitar and the lilting gait of Tabla. She concluded with some familiar pieces of her Guru in Teentala, Sawal Jawab with Tabla and 21 'chakkars' (pirouettes), where Akram Khan's brilliant Tabla added glitter.

Rupak Kulkarni, the talented disciple of Pt Hari Prasad Chaurasia, played a detailed Aalap in raga Megh, followed by a composition in Jhap-tala of 10 beats cycle. He also played raga Maru Bihag, before all the artistes came together along with the dancer and concluded the evening with a Tarana, based on Raag Jog set to Ektaal, taking their solo turns to reach the crescendo.

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Shivapriya was a Bharatanatyam evening presented by Kala Samridhi at the Epicenter, Gurgaon. Conceived and performed by Rashika Oberoi, a senior disciple of Guru Saroja Vaidyanathan, Shivapriya was about Shiva and his beloved Shakti, a concept visualised at five levels ~ the idea, the incarnation, the co-existence, the separation and ultimately attaining peace or Moksha to become one with the absolute.

Rashika thoughtfully incorporated the Bharatanatyam Margam to translate the idea into a riveting performance, opening with Argala Stotram, composed in Ragam Revathi ending with Swara-pallavi in Ragam Valachi. The Kalyansundaran Pillai Varnam in Ragam Kamboji depicted the incarnation through the story of Kartikeya, the son of Shiva-Parvati with the wisdom and strength of his divine parents, where Rashika was at ease with the technique and Abhinaya both.

Ardhanareeshwara Ashtakam by Shankaracharya was used to depict the "co-existence" and the Daksha Yajna Prasang for "separation", taking the recital to "Moksha" with a Tillana composed in raga Shiva-Ranjani, where the journey aspires for a final release of emotion to find peace and tranquility, concluding with Mangalam "Rupam dehi, Jayam dehi, Yasho dehi, Dwisho jahi" Rashika was supported by an excellent orchestra with her renowned Guru herself on Nattuvangam, Rajgopalan for vocal accompaniment, Tanjavur Kesavan on Mridangam and Rajat Prasanna on Flute.