

An Enjoyable Evening with Rithvik Raja

Carnatic Vocal Concert (June 2, 2018)

A Review by Dinakar Subramanian

It was a pleasant afternoon at the Tohickon middle school in Montgomery County where we all eagerly awaited Rithvik Raja's concert for Sruti. The first thing that struck the audience was the configuration of the artists on stage. Instead of the usual vocalist in the middle, the violinist and the mridangist facing each other sitting perpendicular to the main artist, we had a semi-circular arrangement of the artists as if they were a bunch of friends ready to entertain. Rithvik is clearly taking a page from his guru T. M. Krishna in this regard. On stage with him were Rajeev Mukundan on the violin, Praveen Sparsh on the mridangam and Anirudh Atreya on the kanjira.

The concert started with the Thyagaraja vibhakti kriti in Gowlai - tyAgarAja pAlayAsu mAm - which lent a calm start to the concert. Rithvik embellished the kriti with kalpanaswarams at the samashtri charanam line - sri guruguha pUjita. For the rasika, it was obvious after this kriti that the four of them were out to deliver a solid performance while having fun in the process.



L-R: Parveen Sparsh, Rithvik Raja, Rajeev Mukundan, Anirudh Athreya

After a quick alapana in Kamboji, Rithvik sang the eternal favorite mA jAnakI of Thyagaraja. The joint output from both Rithvik and Rajeev was nothing short of pure enjoyment for the audience. The Kamboji was half an hour of good music with the kalpanaswarams giving us flashes of Madurai Mani Iyer's scintillating swarams from yesteryear.

A very mellow alapana in Anandabhairavi followed with an unusual start to the classic piece by Shyama Sastry - O jagadamba nannu. Rithvik started the kriti at the anu pallavi - I jagati. A very melodious neraval at varasita giri (the svara sAhityam) right after the first caranam sustained the calming kriti. I do wish that he sang all the caranams to showcase the grandeur of this masterpiece.

Swathi Tirunal's bOgIndra sAyinam in Kuntalavarali added a brisk phase to the concert after the Anandabhairavi and Rithvik presented a nice variation of the kriti where he sang the caranam in a vilamba kalam before singing it in the durita kalam.

An elaborate raga alapana in Purvikalyani that transitioned into Khamas, then Bhairavi and Neelambari gave an indication that a unique RTP was in store. The ragam and tanam portion were a treat with Rajiv adding his creativity to make it a very pleasant experience.

Rithvik then launched into a unique chatur-raga pallavi with the pallavi - paarthadhum manam mayanginaen paavayai (பார்த்ததும் மனம் மயங்கினனன் பாவவய) (I got infatuated the moment I had a first glimpse of the damsel) with two more variations - paarthadhum manam mayanginaen pillayai (பார்த்ததும் மனம் மயங்கினனன் பிள்வளவய) (I felt filial love the moment I had a first glimpse of the child); paarthadhum manam mayanginanen annayai (பார்த்ததும் மனம்

மயங்கினனன் அன்வனவய) (I felt parental love the moment I had a first glimpse my mother). The last word of the pallavi gave rise to different emotions and Rithvik conveyed that very poignantly using Neelambari when singing the pallavi with the love for the child. Praveen and Anirudh executed a fine tani between the two of them to wrap a very cleverly conceived and delivered pallavi.

sAramaina mAtalentO cAlu cAlu rA, a lilting javali by Swati Tirunal in bEhAg was rendered beautifully notified us that the tukkadas have started. karpagamE kaDaikkaN pArAi - Papanasam Sivan's composition in Madhyamavati on the deity in Mylapore followed and the concert concluded with the mangaLam in saurashtram.

A very enjoyable concert with a terrific rapport between the artists all of which provided a synergistic performance.

Dinakar Subramanian is an ex-President of Sruti and is part of the current Sruti Board of Directors. He has been teaching and performing carnatic music over many years.