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Those who attended the Composers' Day function organized by MACA- Music last Sunday (Feb 27) enjoyed a veritable feast to their ears in the form of a splendid concert by Ashwin and Rohin Iyer, our dear Toronto duo, exposing the beauty and intricacies of Dhikshithar's krithis, which was followed by the rendering of both Dhikshithar's Shyama Shastri's compositions by other singers in the audience. The accompanying artistes for the Iyer brothers were Anand Srinivasan on the violin, Arun Ramakrishnan on the mridhagam and Karthik Venkataraman on theganjira. Here is a brief account of what we heard that day:

True to the style of their Guru Sri S.R.Janakiraman, Ashwin and Rohin started their concert with the short shabdham, "guruguha anugraha", composed by Dr. V. Ragavan in praise of Dhikshithar in kAmbOdhi ragam. This starting piece sung in thAra sthAyi alerted the audience to the powerful renderings to follow from the young singers. The next song was "svEtha gaNapathim" in rAgachUdAmaNi composed by Dhikshithar as an invocation to the GaNEsa deity in the ThanjAvoor temple. rAgachUdAmaNi is a janyarAgam of the 32nd mELakarthA, rAgavardhini and was sung by the Iyer brothers in the shAdava-shAdava style (arOhanam: s m g m p p n s; avarOhanam: s nd p m r s). in addition to the built-in cittaswaram, the singers did a short kalpanA swaram.

A beautiful chavukka varNam in Surutti rAgam composed by Subbarama Dhikshithar (author of the Sangeetha Sampradhaya Pradharshini music treatise whose 100th year of publication is being celebrated this year) was taken up next and was delivered with dexterity by the duo. It also reflected adequately the devotion of Subbarama Dhikshithar towards Muthuswami Dhikshithar in whose honour the song was composed. A particular note may be made of the many words in the sAhithyam that contained the `ni' sound of the pleasing kaishika nishAdham of this rAgam.

The next piece was one of Dhikshithar composed in praise of Lord ThyAgarAja of ThiruvArUr in sAlaka bhairavi rAgam. It was followed by a fairly elaborate and very enjoyable aApanai of nAttak kurinji by Ashwin. For his part, Anand embellished the rAgam further on the violin. This was a prelude to one of the navagraha krithis by Dhikshithar `budham AshrayAmi', set to misra jampa thALam, in praise of the Bhudha graham. The neraval and swara prasthAram at `budha janair vEdhitham' in the anupallavi were delectable.

This set the stage for the percussionists to show their expertise in the thani Avardhanam part that followed. Both Arun and Karthik entertained the audience with imaginative individual kOrvais as well as with their good synchronization.



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மாநாடு கலைக் கலாநாயகர் சங்கம்

After the thani Avarthanam, a brisk composition of Dhikshithar, 'guruguha tharangini' in cathurangiNi rAgam was rendered by the singers. The song hails Devi as the commander of the ratha, gaja, thuraga and padha (chathuranga) army. With its misra chApu beat and a madhyama kAlam part in the middle, the song went galloping like a horse! Chathurangini is a derivative of chitrAmbari, the 66th mElam, with 's m g m p d ni s' and 's n p m g r s' in ArOhanam and avarOhanam, respectively (Like ragacUdAmAni, this rAgam is also sung with other variations in the ArO/avarOhanams).

Next, Rohin presented an exquisite AIAnai delineating kAsirAmakriya, a vakra sampoorNa janya rAgam of the 51st mElam, kAmavardhini (panthuvarALi), with s g r g m p d n s in ArOhanam, and s n d p m g r s in avarOhanam. (It is interesting to note on the side that the four known songs in this apoorva rAgam are all composed by Dhikshithars, two by Muthuswamy-, one by Subbarama- and one by ambi Dhikshithar!). The song, Sri sundhara rAjam bhajEham in viLamba kAlam brought out the beauty of the sAhithyam written by Dhikshithar in praise of the perumAl deity in azhagar kOvil, a village near Madhurai. The neraval at the charaNam phrase 'sOma sUrya nEthram' and the subsequent swarap prasthArAm alternating between the two brothers and the violinists were simply superb! The next song on Lord Subrahmanya, 'purahara nandhana' in hamir kalyANi, formed a fitting concluding piece for the great performance by the Iyer brothers.

A short speech thanking the Iyer brothers, the accompanying artistes and the organizers was then made by Prof. Pasupathy, who also touched upon the connection among the three great composers and how each of them was influenced by the other. The contributions of Subbarama Dhikshithar were also recalled by Dr. Pasupathy. Individual singing of both Dhikshithar's and ShyAmA shAsthi's krithis was then carried out by nine singers in the audience:

pAhi mAm pArvathi - mOhanam - by Shruthi Javali madhurApuri vihAriNi - bilahari- by Nandhini Srinivasan sadhA chalEswaram - bhUpALam - Harsha Viswanathan marivEla - Anandha bhairavi - by Srinidhi Sridharan srl kamalAmbikAyAm - sahAnA - by Harish Ganapathy srl kamalAmbikE - ghantAravam - by Visali Rajaraman, Jaya Pasupathy, & Sulochana Krishnamurthy sari evvaramma- bhairavi- by Vasumathi Nagarajan srl sathyanArAyaNam - shubha panthuvarAli- by Sandhya Srivatsava mAmava mInAkshi - varALi- by Ananthanarayanan

On the whole, this function can be ranked among some of the best Composers' day celebrations we have had in the Toronto area over the years. I join others in adding my personal thanks and admiration to the organizers of this memorable event. (By V.S. Ananthanarayanan)