



A KATHAK CONCERT BY MAHUA SHANKAR AND BHARATNATYAM ARANGETRAM OF ANUPAMA IYER WERE THE HIGH POINTS OF A CULTURAL WEEK IN THE CAPITAL. A REVIEW BY MANJARI SINHA

The India International Centre (IIC) presented an evening of captivating Kathak by Mahua Shankar, the gifted disciple of the legendary Kathak Guru Pt Birju Maharaj last week at the IIC auditorium. Rhythmic compositions, together with Bhava or the expressional numbers, comprised the rich repertoire of the dynamic danseuse, who mesmerised the audience with her exceptional talent and grace. The added attraction of this memorable evening was the exceptional orchestra to enhance the dazzling dance with Ustad Akram Khan, the ace artiste of Ajrada Gharana on Tabala and the melodious instrumentalists of Moradabad Gharana, the much sought after brothers Murad Ali and Fateh Ali on Sarangi and Sitar respectively. There was Soheb Ali for vocal support and Nupur Shankar for "Padhant" or reciting the Bols.

The sonorous strains of Sarangi and Sitar created the magical "mahaul" (ambience) of the popular evening raga Yaman for the opening invocatory "Vandana", composed in this raga, where Mahua appeared on stage as the compassionate "Devi" before Akram Khan's brilliant Uthaan paved the path for her "Upaj", the impromptu improvisation of the rhythmic variations of crisp foot-work. This was followed by the delicate and graceful "Thaat" and the contrasting forceful impact of Uthaan and Ladi before she went on to present the Paran-Aamad "Dhatak thunga...". Tode, Tukre, Chakkardars, Prameli

and so on.

Mahua then presented the difficult rhythmic cycle of 11 beats, where the Sarangi and Sitar switched over to a musical refrain or "Lehera", composed in raga Shankara, significant for communicating the "Veer Rasa" of the vibrant dance. Inspired by the enthusiastic Tabala Sangati of Ustad Akram Khan, Mahua presented the choicest items like "Shikari", the hunter, and the Triangle in *Ginti Ki Tihai*, depicting a triangle by reducing the Matras in sequence of 7,6,5,4,3,2 coming back to Sam that's 1 and many more precious gems, ending with 21 chakkars or pirouettes.

The dancer chose a "Chaity", composed by Ramdas for her expressional number, where the Sitar and Sarangi enhanced her emotional "Bhaava Abhinaya" with the melodious touches of raga Pahaadi and the concluding "Laggi" on Tabala, with her impressive foot-work. Mahua reached the climax, showcasing the exquisite gems in Teen-tala like "Achaanak" and *Tihayi* with three different Pallas. She also presented some rare "Gat-Bhavas" on request. It was a delight to see Mahua as an independent soloist totally on her own, adding subtle innovations while keeping up with the tenets of this classical dance style.

Kalakriti Arts Foundation presented the Bharatnatyam Arangetram of Anupama Iyer, the talented disciple of Guru Priya Venkatra-

man, at Gurgaon's Epicenter auditorium on Sunday. Priya is a well-known exponent of Bharatnatyam but that she is such a capable teacher as well, came as a pleasant surprise to many of her admirers. A full-fledged performance by young Anupama with perfect "Angashuddhi" and understanding of the complicated rhythm and grammar proved Priya to be a hard task master.

Anupama opened her Bharatnatyam recital with a Mallari in ragam Gambhira Nattai, followed by Allaripu in Tisra Ekam. This was followed by the main "Varnam", a composition of Lalgudi Jayraman in ragam Charukeshi, where Anupama displayed her command on rhythm and expression both. During the next three numbers "Jagadodharana..." in Carnatic Kaapi, "Shankar Shrigiri..." in ragam Hamsanandi and the Hindi Bhajan "Bhajman Ram charan sukhdaayi..." Anupama depicted three different Bhavas and Rasas like the Vatsalya, Veera and Bhakti respectively with equal ease. The Tandava pose of Nataraja in "Shankar Shrigiri..." was especially remarkable where the dancer held and sustained it firmly without wavering a bit. The "Kadanaku tuhalam" Tillana composed by Dr Balamurali Krishna brought Anupama's debut solo performance to its climax.

She was ably accompanied by her Guru Priya Venkatraman on Nattuvangam, Tanjavur Kesavan on Mridangam, vocal by Satish Venkatesh, VSK Chakrapani on Violin and Rajat Prasanna on Flute.