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Friday Review Chennai and Tamil Nadu

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Of grace and decorum

PHOTO: R. Ragu



Maki Fukuda.

Clad in a white costume, and sporting a single braid adorned with white flowers, the dancer at R. K. Swamy auditorium presented a picture of grace and decorum. Her dancing spoke of authenticity, hard work and devotion to tradition. What was unusual was that the dancer, Maki Fukuda, hails from Osaka, Japan. Maki Fukuda's dignified dancing proved how true love for Bharatanatyam transcends barriers of distance, culture and language. She has been learning for the past 20 years from Prof. C. V. Chandrasekhar. She also propagates Bharatanatyam at her dance school, Amrita Dance Company, at Osaka.

Maki began with the theme of adoration to Lord Rama, followed by alarippu. The verses from Tulsidas were followed by the khanda alarippu which provided a brisk note to the recital. 'Gaayiye Ganapati' in Kalavati which followed, had short sollukattus with swara passages. Maki's firm adavus and footwork did full justice to the choreography.

Highlight of recital

The varnam — the navaragamaalika tana varnam, 'Valachi Vachi'— had been chosen with care. Theeramanams which synched with the sahitya and swaram in size and tenor, complete adavu patterns and a sensitive depiction by the dancer made this the highlight of the recital.

Prof. Chandrasekhar's sonorous rendering of the theermanams was echoed by Maki in her energetic yet controlled nritta. The thaihath thai hi adavu was done perfectly with the heels raised completely. The dancer's undiluted standards in nritta was emphasised by chief guest Adyar Lakshman who noted that 'the perfect araimandi is the speciality of Prof. Chandrasekhar's students! Their nritta is uncompromisingly perfect.' The dancer proved her abilities in delivering the right touch of emotion also.

'Why this indifference?' was the idea conveyed with both devotion and agony. The flow of abhinaya in the varnam was smooth and of special note was the cameo of Rama's wedding to Sita, adding polish. Prof. Chandrasekhar's melodious singing bestowed shimmering hues to the varnam with ragas such as Sankarabharanam, Kambodi and Mohanam.

Surprisingly, the next item, a Jayadeva Ashtapadi, turned out to be a lukewarm affair. Even given the tight reins of the choreography, Maki could still have conveyed the sringara inherent in the situation of raslila in 'Hariha' instead of dishing out a one-dimensional smiling depiction.

'Nee Uraipai,' a Tamil ragamalika song, was performed with total empathy. Maki was able to establish the scenario where Rama sends Hanuman as his messenger.

The thillana in Paras, another Kalakshetra classic, was performed in its unabridged version.

It was quite refreshing to see the many meyyadavus (the body sway) done with relish by the dancer.

Guru Chandrasekhar's excellent singing and nattuvangam had full support from Adyar Balu on the mridangam, Muthukumar on the flute and Padmanabhan playing the violin. Janaki's skilled oratory highlighted the special occasion behind the dance — a tribute to the late dancer Rajesh, organised by father Adyar Balu.

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