

Inclusive initiative

Pt. Jasraj's disciple, Lalitha Sharma's aim is to take music to the underprivileged

LALITHAA KRISHNAN

Swaraangan, a school for Hindustani classical music in Chennai, founded by Lalitha Sharma, a senior disciple of Pt. Jasraj, celebrated its fifth anniversary with a programme at the Arkay Convention Centre.

Trained in and adept at both the Carnatic and Hindustani streams, Lalitha's expertise is highlighted by her emphasis on clear diction and clarity of notes.

Having learnt from gurus Padma Narasimhan and V.R. Krishnan, Lalitha obtained her Diploma in Music from the Government Music College, Chennai, and holds a B.A in Music from the University of Madras.

Developing an interest in Hindustani classical, Lalitha came under the tutelage of eminent vocalist, Pt. Jasraj and with his guidance, was concert-ready as an accomplished exponent of the Mewati gharana. She has performed extensively at prestigious venues and arts festivals in India and abroad, conducted workshops and lec-dems and is the recipient of several prizes and accolades.

Among the institution's aims and objectives are outreach programmes to take music to underprivileged children to unlock their potential and adopting a teaching methodology that follows the traditional guru-sishya parampara system to inculcate a sense of deep appreciation for the aesthetic nuances of music.

An Invocation on Lord Ganesha was followed by the Mewati gharana's signature lakshan geet in Yaman. Delivering the keynote address, chief guest, Adwan G.S. Mani reminisced about events that led to his fascination for Hindustani music. He urged students to value the privilege of learning from a guru and to devote time for daily practice.

Involved rendition

Students of Swaraangan presented a group rendition of raag Behag. Beginning with solfege, the well-balanced vo-

cals had alternating male and female voices blending harmoniously in the bhajan "Jai Ram" invested with emotive appeal. Tuned in raag Jaiwanti Todi, the bhajan 'Krishna Krishna Bolo' was sung with much involvement by Uina, Mridula and Visham. Long-time disciple Anasuya Subhaiah opened her solo segment with a tranquil 'Ram Simar Ram' in Hamsadhwant. Voice opened up in the ensuing composition 'Bhaaje Bhaaje Damaru' (raag Gunkali) with poignant touches at the rendezvous with the tara saptak rishabh.

A working professional employed in the U.S, yet determined to pursue his passion for vocal music, Madhur Ranjan Mohaan was introduced as a dedicated student.

His neat presentation of Purya Dhanastee reflected earnestness and a committed approach, dwelling on the plaintive dhaivat and the 'ga-dha' link in 'Doond Na Jaa' (vilambit, ek taal) and 'Shyam Murari' (drut, teen tal). Tara saptak passages, taans and sargams carried power and punch. The abhang 'Majhe Maher Pandhari' (Yaman) injected a shot of energy, culminating in the 'Vithal' refrain.

Following a speech by Vasudha Prakash, educationist and trustee of Swaraangan, guru Lalitha Sharma embarked on a recital. The lyrics 'Anantha Hari Narayana' bore a meditative alap forward into the bandish 'Dekh Dekh Bat'Thori' in raag Marwa.

Taans at the line 'Dhyan Gyan' were invested with solidity and heft. An exposition of raag Shudh Bhairavi and the concluding bhajan 'Niranjani Narayani' in raag Bhairavi also left their impact on rapt listeners.

Complementing the group's efforts were Pt. Srikrishnan (harmonium) and Pt. Sainath Bhure (tabla), while Pt. Rajendra Nakod (tabla) accompanied the soloists. Nalini Ramanan ably compered the evening's events. The palpable sense of warmth and camaraderie that comes from students learning together and being mutually supportive permeated the gathering of friends, rasikas and well-wishers.

