

Review

Getting back to dance

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February 6, 2013

Manju Warriar is a name familiar to most of the Malayalees, maybe not as a dancer but as a cine actor. She came into the limelight during her school days winning the 'Kalathilakam' title twice in two consecutive Kerala State Youth Festivals. Later she became a notable film actor and was rarely seen performing classical dance. Now, she is trying to make a comeback as a dancer and she already presented Kuchipudi on a few stages around the state, last one being the Nishagandhi Festival 2013 in Thiruvananthapuram.

Her Kuchipudi performance at the Nishagandhi Festival started with a traditional invocation item titled '*Brahmanjali*' composed by Guru Vempati Chinna Satyam, set in Ragamalika and in aadi talam. Swati Thirunal's "*Chaliye Kunjanamo*" composed in Brindavana Saranga and aadi talam followed. The dance was choreographed by her guru Geetha Padmakumar, who is a disciple of Vempati Chinna Satyam. In this padam, she portrayed a young heroine, who describes the beauty of Yamuna and invites Sri Krishna to the banks of the river. At times the heroine becomes playful with Krishna and then she feels affectionate love towards him. Manju Warriar's presentation of the nayika was delightful, laced with artful expressions all along.



She concluded her performance with "*Durge, Durge*," a composition praising the goddess Durga, set in Revati and in aadi talam. Geetha Padmakumar's choreography provided enough chances for the dancer to portray the different shades or *bhavams* of Devi Durga and Manju made the best use of these opportunities.

Manju Warriar looked attractive in her white costume with *kasavu* lining and with her mesmerizing smile. Even though the overall performance was impressive and well received by the audience, it had its own shortcomings as well. At times, Manju had a tendency to lip-sync with the vocalist here and there which looked a bit awkward. Among the supporting artistes, Charudath on mridangam was impressive, precisely following the movements of the dancer. The vocal by Bijeesh Krishna went feeble for the most part, making it less effective. Jathis rendered by Geetha Padmakumar lacked energy. The other accompaniments included Suresh Namboothiri on violin, Murali Narayanan on flute and Muralikrishna on veena. However, the presence of all these instruments didn't contribute much to the performance. Maybe it is better not to have too many accompaniments, if there is no purpose to be served.

Hareesh N Nampoothiri is a visual design consultant by profession and a lover of classical art forms. Being an ardent follower of Kathakali, he conceptualized and directed a documentary on Kathakali titled 'Thouryathrikam', which introduces the nuances of Kathakali to the common man. Writing and photography are his other passions.

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