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Ode to joy



The Hindu

KEYS AND CHORDS: A the concert. Photo: K. Pichumani

A piano recital by students of the KM Music Conservatory was all soul

No coattails. No bow-ties. No tucked-in elbows or straight backs. A silk veshti and a silk shirt? Yes. Sherwanis, achkans? Yes. Inclined bodies postured over the piano creating an intense physical intimacy with the instrument? Yes. Classics of Masters played with new-age panache by boys and girls from small-town India with big-city dreams? Oh, yes!

The piano recital by students of Surojeet Chatterji, trained at the prestigious Moscow conservatory and now part of the piano department of the KM Music Conservatory, was not just an hour of good music, but a lesson on how to stir your imagination and lend the piano your soul. For every one of the 12 students who performed, the recital was a journey of uninhibited expression, one that began less than a year ago.

Mari Sakthi P. began the evening with Mozart's 'Arioso', a tempestuous piece in which he made every note count with a buoyant and clear-structured style. Ashrita Uttaramani followed with Rybicki's 'Falling Asleep', slow, gentle almost a lullaby. Sudhir Kumar improvised heavily in both his pieces. In the first, Bach's 'Prelude in C', the arpeggios were played so quickly that the overtones sounded like solid chords, but the top notes in each arpeggio rang out so clearly that they created a graceful melody. The second, an aural equivalent of a Shakespearean sonnet, Beethoven's 'Für Elise', was a little rushed, but did not sacrifice the inherent beauty of this composition.

Mukund Ambrish's 'Russian Song' by Gurilev had a haunting peasant song quality to it, evoking an imagery of stark winter skies. 'Breakers On The Ocean' by Shridhar. P was an excellent rendition with a narrative sweep.

Amit Bohat played the cheery 'Waltz in A Flat Major' by Chopin and Beethoven's 'Sonatina in F'. Although his style was dramatic, it did not take away from the brisk tempos and bright timbres that marked both pieces. Asim Singh played Granados' 'Valse Sentiment' with a transparency of texture that lent emphasis to the piece with an operatic tinge.

Bach's 'Prelude in D Minor', a tough piece, followed. Jerine Joseph invested the piece with a vivid sense of the vastness of Bach's canvas by picking notes at random to paint it. Ashwat Subramanian's 'Nocturne in C Sharp Minor' (Chopin) and Purcell's 'Hornpipe' had a clean easy technique, except the dramatic chop that marked the end.

Prince Mulla's style was fiercely individualistic when he played 'Scherzo' by Webber with much gusto, beginning with a rugged sound that alternated with a light waltz melody. Altamash Ansari played Mendelssohn's 'Song Without Words' and the third movement from Beethoven's 'Pathétique Sonata'. The first was a true reflection of what the composer intended — that the piece, pleasant and evocative without the turmoil and strong passion of other composers, be interpreted by the listener. The second, a popular Beethoven piece, was played with unbridled enthusiasm and a startling ferocity deserving of the composition.

The last performer for the evening was S. Arjun, visually-challenged and a student of the conservatory since April. He played a song arranged for A.R. Rahman, the founder-director of the conservatory. With a clean weighty sound, and richness and variety of expression, Arjun played his piece with great technical perfection and zest.

The evening's music was not just a culmination of months of learning or of playing the works of the Masters with élan. It was as much an outburst of the soul as it was of the spirit behind the sound.