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The delicate sound of thunder



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS Dulsori Photo: S.R. Raghunathan



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS Ha Yong Bu Photo: S.R. Raghunathan



Flavours from Korea, Pakistan



Coimbatore Fest sways to music



In 'Wild Beats', Ha Yong Bu and Dulsori crossed cultural barriers to create an easy rapport with the audience

The distant rumble of drums heralded lilted rain on lush fields. Strident gongs signalled the clash of battle swords in faraway lands. And a lissome flautist's trills painted a peaceful pasture. Ha Yong Bu and Dulsori on day six of *The Hindu* Friday Review November Fest wrote out an imaginative and diverse essay on the sounds of the universe, built on the rhythmically-even patterns of Korean percussion.

The musicians made a dramatic entry from among the audience with low-slung janggu (double-headed drums) and brassy gongs (kkwaenggari). Dressed in rich costumes, with hats from which long ribbons flowed and a huge plumed feather-duster (bu-po) bounced, the musicians delighted in playing and moving their heads sharply to form snaking ribbon patterns in the air. The bu-po kept time, transforming from blossoming flower to an enraged lion's mane, with its wearer all the time clanging on the gong with vigour and virtuosity.

Dulsori, meaning heartbeat of the land, is a traditional Korean arts organisation which since 1984, has told stories drawn from the ancient heart of Korea through energetic percussion, enchanting vocals and dynamic choreography. Transcending cultural barriers, their focus has been to spread 'shinmyung' — a passion and love for life — to every member of the audience.

Ha Yong Bu, recognised as a national treasure in his home country, hails from a family of Mogabi, the head of a group of entertainers whose skills have been handed down generations. His unfettered and flowing dance movements are a throwback to his grandfather's dance traditions. At The Music Academy, Ha's dance portrayed meditation and movement, his twirls of war and peace, and his gestures of harvest and hardship. Dressed in white, Ha resembled a graceful crane stretching out to fly across time and space.

Zithers and transverse flutes served the melody as the drummers with their bobbing heads and swaying torsos beat out the rhythm of life on the buk (drum). Every kind of drum roll was played with quick changing cadences and shifting dynamics, from the distant rumble of thunder and the

sudden rush of rain to a freight train chugging through the countryside and a gut-wrenching decibel that sank to a deep, breathy resonance.

The drummers delighted the charged audience with their obvious pleasure at performing. They flourished their drumsticks in movements that comprised elaborate pieces of choreography in themselves. The bu-po wearer long having shed his feathered hat now did an impromptu Cossack dance, all the while hammering his janggu. The women drummers displayed their own style of acrobatics with affable high spirit.

Shamanistic chants and graceful melodies interspersed the concert with classical songs drawn from traditional Korean music.

Accompanied by the zither, the vocalist in her rich gravelly voice sung out the 'Thousand Hands Sutra', even using a Korean version of the scat to play out this enchanting hymn to life. A zither (gayageum) solo followed, with music so dreamy that it could only mean crossing 'Moon River'.

In the years since its formation, Dulsori has been checking off all the right boxes — tapping into emotions, explosive lighting, melody lines that whiz through the percussion and performances that are a seamless blend of tradition and modernity. At the 'Wild Beats' concert they added three more — music that calmed the mind, charged the body and freed the soul.