

Bhava Rasa: A captivating performance

- Radhika Subra

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On December 2, 2007 the rasikas in New Jersey were treated to a noteworthy Bharata Nrityam performance by Bala Devi Chandrashekar (senior disciple of Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam) followed with a performance by her disciples.

The guest of honor for the evening, Cleveland Sundaram stated that, "Bala's guru Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam's scholastic research facilitated a clear understanding that our dance styles are ancient and dynamic - in that it is steeped in history, and has been handed down from time immemorial and is constantly evolving."

Highlighting some aspects of the performance, he observed that, "Bala's skill for abhinaya was evident in the invocatory piece Sri Shyamaladhandakam interlaced with a unique number in Nalinakanthi, comparing Swara sthanas and Nrita sthanas, Gamakas in music and Rechakas in dance. In the Sukhalasyam piece, Bala's execution of Nritya was immaculate and assertive in rhythm bringing out the synchronization of music and movement in dance. In the Angaharas, Bala executed carefully woven intricate moves depicting the beauty of the temple sculptures with grace and beauty."



The highlight of Bala's performance was "Sabhapathiku." Her technique was well internalized, and the flow of the sanchari for the anupallavi line "Kripa Nidhi Ivarai Pola" portrayed masterful interpretation of the Lord's compassion coming to the rescue of the true devotee. In the song "Chinnachiru pennpole," Bala's narrative description equating the Goddesses eyes to a beautiful lotus petal, the fish, the deer etc., was engaging, bringing alive the little Goddess Durga in all her glory.

Bala's portrayal of the divine dance of Lord Krishna with the Gopis in the raasa padam "Muddhukrishna," brought out the exquisite beauty of Krishna. The Nritya part was seamlessly integrated into Abhinaya to the extent that the undercurrent of Nritya only enhanced the Abhinaya. Bala concluded her recital with the song "Kurai Ondrum Illai" visualizing the everlasting grace of Lord Venkateshwara of Tirupati. The involvement of the dancer and the melody made it a visual treat.

The performance of the students was also very well received. In her teaching methodology, Bala has trained and connected all the basics in a Natya Shastric approach which was very evident from the students' performance, reiterating the fact, that the teaching process at Shree Padma Nrityam Academy of Performing Arts, enables the student to have a strong foundation in dance.

