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## Local News

### Melbourne reverberates with VISHWA!



MELBOURNE, 13 AUG. FIMDV celebrated India's 70th Independence Day with one of Melbourne's most well attended program I have witnessed in recent times, titled VISHWA -- the title coined as an acronym for --Videshi ( foreigner) and Swadeshi ( Citizen).

It was heartening to see a wide cross section of nationalities including Mr Alex Pertout, Former Head of Improvisational Studies from University of Melbourne, all

age groups --grandparents, parents and particularly young children ( sitting in the front rows and absorbing with rapt attention!) The women resplendent with bright colour sarees were complemented by their partners in equally captivating Kurtas!

Vishwa began with a Welcome speech by its President Dr Mrs Rama Rao. Mr Vasan Srinivasan, Trustee, invited the Guests of Honour Cr Jim Grivokostopoulos and Multicultural Commissioner C S Srinivasan. They spoke about the contribution to Australian Society by Indian Immigrants and the rich tapestry of art forms they bring along with them.

Sridhar Chari and his students from Laya Vidhya Centre commenced the musical segment with a Mallari on flute and percussion Instruments-- Mrdangam, Ghatam and Kanjira. (Mallari (mallAri) is played as the first musical item on Nadaswaram ( a double reed wind instrument) during temple festivals before the temple deity is taken out in procession).

"Vishwa Vittala" gave a spirited start to the Vocal Music section. Presented by Shobha Sekhar and Jayshree Ramachandran (both Vice Presidents of FIMDV), the two Abhangs in praise of deity 'Vittala' who reigns supreme in this world "Vishwa' brought to the fore the invigorating beauty of 13th century poet Saint Dhyaneswar and 16th century poet Saint Tukaram.

Abhangs are exuberant expressions of the communication experience and as one kid appropriately came up to me and said--'Happy songs' to alleviate the travails of a traveller in yesteryears.

The vocalists' presentations were rejuvenated by Violinist Murali Kumar, Sridhar Chari( Mrdangam) and Pandurang Torvi (Tabla) This was followed by 'EK SUR' --a garland of patriotic catchy numbers in a string of Ragas and languages by Rama Rao and Uthra Vijayaraghavan-Secretary.

Ablly supported by the percussionists of the day (Sridhar and Pandurang)and young Keyboard artists Sandeepan Pushparaj and Ravi Kumar. Rama and Uthra regaled audience with their warm stage presence.

The Instrument Ensemble --PravAha - demonstrated the coming together of different styles of music ( South Indian Karnatic, North Indian Hindustani and Western Saxophone), different Instruments and sounds. Pravaha which means "flow" aptly described the music as it streamed from one Instrument to the other.

Ramnath Iyer on Veena played Raag Kalyani, followed by Nicholas Buff on Saxophone ( Raag Yaman), Gopinath Iyer on Veena, Saby Bhattacharya on Sarod, Murali Kumar on Violin, followed by Radhey Shyam Gupta on Sitar. Sridhar and Pandurang on percussion supported in their respective Karnatic and Hindustani styles.

The sound emanating had to be judiciously balanced by Charles Walker as the different Instruments have volumes and sounds that are very distinctive. The energetic and culminating "Tihai" or Theermanams were well appreciated by the audience. Kudos to Ramnath (who co-ordinated) and his team for working together to present this 'Swara Pallavi' The Intermission was spiced up by food from Biryani Mahal and a precursor to an equally spicy Dance Segment.

Jhansi Ki Rani is the story of a brave Indian warrior Queen from Jhansi ( North Western India) . Tara Rajkumar (Trustee) Directed the Dance Drama. Enticingly coordinated by Ushanthini Sripathmanathan ( Secretary) and Meghala Bhatt, the story was brought to life by Narrator and researcher Soundarrajan Iyer.

This again was an amalgam of different Dance styles which highlighted the oft repeated cliché --Unity in Diversity. Ushanthini and students of Natyalaya in well designed costumes portrayed the opening scenes of the legendary tale 'Jhansi Ki Rani- Lakshmi Bai , her expertise in sword fighting and leadership qualities to gear up an army in spite of adverse conditions and pressure tactics by British In colonial India!

Presented in Bharat Natyam style, Ushanthini set the stage for the story to unfold. Mohini Bordawekar made a convincing presentation in Kathak Style. Her chakkars were well timed and flawless. The term Kathak is rooted in the Vedic term Katha (Sanskrit: Katha) which means "story, conversation, traditional tale".

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Shyama Sasidharan radiated with beauty and poise as she danced in Kuchipudi style. Her mudhras were crisp and she portrayed the fierce Jhansi ki rani appropriately.

Nithiya Gopu, one of the best dancers Tara has mentored, played her part in Mohini Attam style. The flowing movements as well as the Kalaripayattu, a martial art, which originated as a style in Kerala, appropriately narrated Queen Lakshmi Bai's conquests. The dancers came together in the final episode where the great warrior's prowess, unfortunately proved to be no match for the British might in arms and numbers.

The finale Vande Mataram – I Bow to you my motherland - again by all leading dancers in their respective classical styles was a fitting tribute on Independence Day.

'Jhansi Ki Rani', effectively sent a strong message of Women empowerment and a motivation for Women to stand up for themselves if faced with repression and/or suppression. The National Anthems of Australia and India aroused the auditorium with power and patriotism! Harmonious indeed!

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