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Winsome twosome

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The Hindu REMARKABLE FINESSE: Lalgudi Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi . Photo: K.V. Srinivasan

As the New Year dawned on January 1, a large and loyal audience assembled at the Mylapore Fine Arts Club early in the morning to hear a violin recital by Lalgudi Krishnan and his sister Vijayalakshmi. Krishnan had been performing in the same venue on every New Year day morning for 30 years in a row till 2006 in the company of his father and guru Lalgudi Jayaraman, and Vijayalakshmi had eventually joined them to form a trio.

Ever since the legendary maestro gave up performing in public a few years ago, his children have continued this traditional New Year Day concert established by him at the prestigious Sabha. It's a true measure of their excellence that this annual event continues to attract such a large number of hard-core rasikas towards the end of the music season in the winter, and actually casts a spell on them, just as their father's performances used to do!

The concert under review, which lasted three hours, began with a lovely Varnam titled 'Innum Taamadam Eno?' in the raga Hamir-Kalyani – composed by Lalgudi Jayaraman quite recently, and performed in the concert hall for the first time on this occasion - and ended with his more familiar thillana in Dwijavanti.

Pure classicism and brilliant colours were the keynotes of this memorable performance. An ultra-classical element was provided by Tyagaraja's songs "Bhajanaseya-raada" and "Hecharikaga" in the rather plain-sounding ragas Atana and Yadukula-Khambodi, while extremely colourful views were projected by several other numbers. Vijayalakshmi's alapana of Suratti, preceding Dikshitar's "Sri Venkata Girisa," had remarkable finesse.

Twin highlights

The concert had twin highlights, each of them being quite unique. In Dikshitar's kriti, "Kamalaambaam Bhajare" in Kalyani, the niraval was unconventionally taken up with the phrase 'Nitya-kalayaaneem' -- which, figuring in the top octave, projected a breathtaking and unprecedented view of the over-familiar raga from a most unusual line of vision.

The other equally fascinating highlight was a ragam-tanam-pallavi in three ragas (Saama, Shanmukhapriya and Anandabhairavi), composed by Lalgudi Jayaraman long ago and not performed often. Like a wonderful trapeze act, it was technically intricate and visually beautiful at the same time.

The percussion accompaniment provided by veteran Tiruchi Sankaran on the mridangam and S.V. Suresh on the ghatam was super-sensitive, flowing fluently and enriching the melodious sound of the winsome violins.