

## **AICA Dance Festival - Madurai - 24th June 2018 - A Report:**

### **PRIYALASYA - REPORT SECTION**

#### **AICA DANCE FESTIVAL - Madurai**

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Report: Murugashankari L

AICA DANCE FESTIVAL 2018, an initiative of Kalai Koodam Academy of Performing Arts Trust, was conceived to popularise the Indian Classical dance forms among the people of Madurai. This is a part of a larger programme called Appreciation of Indian Classical Arts (AICA), started by Kalai Koodam Academy of Performing Arts Trust in mid 2017.

Here an attempt is made to develop an interest in and understanding about the Classical dance forms among the students in schools and colleges. So far AICA has been conducted in 11 Educational institutions in South Tamil Nadu, a few of which are government aided schools.

In general, the students from these schools and colleges, do not get to witness the performances of accomplished artistes, and hence there is a growing disconnect between them and our traditional art forms. Through AICA's lecture demonstrations we have reached out to more than 4600 students so far and have received an overwhelming response from them.

AICA Dance festival 2018 that happened on June 24th 2018, showcased four classical dance forms, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Sattriya and Odissi, performed by accomplished artistes, chosen purely on merit, on the same day, on the same stage for the first time in Madurai.



The first performance for the evening was **Kathak** by **Garima Arya** from Delhi. Garima is a disciple of Pt. Birju Maharaj, Vidushi Saswathi Sen and Pt. Deepak Maharaj. Clad in a beautiful pink costume, Garima not only looked ravishing but also performed with a vibrance and energy that set an exciting beginning to the evening's performances. She commenced with a song in praise of Lord Ardhanareeswara (Rag Hansadhvani, Tal Rupak). In the second song, she beautifully portrayed Radha enjoying the Spring season with her friends, awaiting Krishna's arrival to play holi with him. She concluded with a beautiful Tarana in Rag Yaman. Garima's brisk footwork for various intricate rhythm patterns and swift chakkars that were executed with precision and complete control, kept the spectators spellbound.



Next on Stage was the **Odissi** presentation by **Atrayee Dutta** from Kolkatta, who performed Nata Pasare (Rag Kumancha, Tal Ektaal) and Naba Durga (Rag Bhairav, Tal Jyoti). Atrayee, though just twenty four years old, performed with a maturity, confidence and stage presence of a seasoned performer.

Many in the audience were witnessing an Odissi recital for the very first time and were completely enamoured by the beauty of the dance form, and the way in which it was competently showcased by the artiste. Atrayee mesmerised the audience with her representation of the nine forms of Durga, in Naba Durga, and brought out the Raudra Rasa effectively, while relating the destruction of the demons Shumba, Nishumba and Mahishasura by Goddess Durga through her dance. Atrayee is a student of Guru Muralidhar Majhi and is currently under the tutelage of Guru Suhag Nalini Das and Guru Sarat Kumar Das.



**Meenakshi Medhi**, originally from Guwahati, now residing in Delhi, a student of Late Adhyapak Jibanjit Dutta and Adhyapak Haricharan Bhuyan Borbayan displayed complete mastery over all aspects of her dance form, both Nritta and Abhinaya. Her performance depicting the 'Prakriti', comprised of Sali Naas by Mahapurush Madhavdev (Tal Suta Tal, Thukoni Tal) in the beginning followed by slokabinaya for 'Sarata Sashanka kara' (Rag

Sareng). The finale of her performance depicting the destruction of Putana and Bakasura was flawlessly executed, with effortlessly graceful movements and outstanding abhinaya. Sattriya was probably presented for the first time in Madurai by Kalai Koodam Academy of performing Arts Trust. The 600 people gathered in the auditorium (it was packed!!) were certainly watching Sattriya dance for the very first time and were thoroughly captivated by Meenakshi. Her composure, confidence and effortless way of transforming from one character to another were the highlights of her performance.



**Ashrita Keshav-Preetham**, **Kuchipudi** danseuse from Chennai, is a disciple of Guru Kishore Mosalikanti. She presented the Tarangam 'Shiva Shiva Bhava Bhava'

(Ragamalika, Adi), choreographed by her Guru. Ashrita's visual appeal on the stage is brilliant. The spectators were awe-struck with the beautiful way in which she balanced herself with her feet placed on the rims of the brass plate and danced with élan and grace. The Jathis that were performed on the brass plate were well appreciated and applauded by the Madurai audience. Her abhinaya depicting the descent of Ganga and Lord Shiva calming her by letting her flow through his matted locks was presented in a crisp and understandable manner. A combination of talent, allure, hard work and good looks, Ashrita kept the viewers completely hooked till the very end.

Thanks to the amazing support from sponsors, friends and others in Madurai, AICA Dance festival received a stupendous response on its very first year. The auditorium was jam-packed for the three hour duration of the program and the support from the press and media has made the event a splendid success. The aim was to conduct a festival where the artistes not only get exposure, publicity, hospitality, media coverage, a packed auditorium but also a decent remuneration as a mark of respect for their art. It is indeed fortunate that AICA Dance festival 2018 has achieved its aim on its very first year with everyone's support. The performers were also conferred the Kalai Kalanjiyam Award from Kalai Koodam Academy of Performing Arts Trust.

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\* Photos Courtesy: Vvk Photography