

[Back](#)

Brilliant choreography

'Sacred Geometry' travelled all the way from California to Chennai for the Hamsadwani NRI festival, with the spirit intact, even though recast in a new mould with an all-new crew. The dancers comprised G. Narendra, Renjith Babu, Neewin Hershall, T. B. Unnikrishnan, Deepa Narayanan, and Anusha Natarajan from Chennai, K. Murali Mohan, Kirti Ramgopal, and Padmini Upadhy from Bangalore, besides Lakshmi Iyengar, from North America, who together as an inspired group, converted brilliant choreography into a masterpiece. The remarkable adaptability of these dancers, whether in the traditional groove or in an alien contemporary milieu, is a recent phenomenon, most welcome, for it heralds the advent of an artist not bound by conventional boundaries, and bodes well for the future of dance in a holistic way.

The exploration of geometry through the structured vocabulary of Bharatanatyam was a challenge for Malathi Iyengar, the creator of this work. She fashioned a plethora of shapes through configurations in talams, mandalas, and dancer formations, multi-layered and multi-dimensional, fused to create the linear or curvi-linear effect. The traditional repertoire was not forgotten; they were in fact the vehicles of expression, the Alarippu in Ata talam, the mallari in Sankeerna Tripura talam and the Nalinakanti thillana in Adi talam formed an important chunk of the programme.

Well-researched and aesthetically finished 'Navagraha' was the highlight of the exposition that added an element of spirituality to the otherwise abstract presentation.

The detailing of each of the nine planets, each graha having its own rhythmic cycle expounded in jathi form, its colour, the mudra of the deity, the direction it is to face, the Navagraha sloka, were brought together in a flurry of colour and exuberant nritta that required precision and coordination.

Even the periodic movement of the planets as depicted in our horoscopes was not left out creating circles in motion within their existing square formation. Credit goes to the choreographer's vivid imagination that translated a potentially profound idea into something so straightforward and enjoyable, for even a layman to follow.

The music composition by Rajkumar Bharathi and Gurumurthy was a rich, composite structure, with melody in the form of Bharathi's voice enriched by Malathi Iyengar's well-modulated shollus, and the percussive grandeur of the morsing, ghatam, mridangam, edakkai and tavil.

The concept of the triangle in 'Trikona' set in Saraswathi ragam, Adi talam was an innovative attempt, with three girls attached to one other by means of a long waistband, having to perform complicated nritta patterns including the nattadavus, all at breakneck speed while keeping the tautness of the cloth a constant.

Another enchanting item was the closing folk number that was a whirl of frenzied movement, a sort of breaking-free-of-all-shackles approach, where the spirit of the group was truly unbelievable.

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