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Music Review

Harmony Reigns at Rangoli Festival of Indian Music and Dance

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Images of community and harmony dominated the second Rangoli Festival of Indian Music and Dance program Sunday at the Cal State Northridge Performing Arts Center, part of the ongoing World Festival of Sacred Music.

The first half consisted of the premiere of Malathi Iyengar's 50-minute dance suite, "Sacred Geometry." The second was a potpourri of pieces by various choreographers representing a mix of world dance traditions.

"Sacred Geometry" started intriguingly with two couples embodying divergent relationships and states of energy.

One couple was symmetrical, parallel and balanced (K. Murali Mohan and Shyamala Moorthy). The other was increasingly tense, dramatic--human in need and sympathy (Ronald Burton and Sandra Chatterjee).

How and why the two sets of dancers combined, much less evolved through solos, trios and groupings was not altogether clear, despite notes in the program citing philosophical and spiritual concepts regarding geometric shapes and the creation of diversity out of unity.

What was clear, however, was some arresting dancing by these dancers and others, including C. Renjith Babu and Neewin Hershall.

The most impressive was a section called "Navagraha," in which a serene Hershall represented the sun attracting nine orbiting planets in a series of distinctive solos. As above, so below: the Epilogue revealed the same human harmony in a village laborers' circle dance.

Part 2 of the program also ended in a harmonious communal dance, "Djembe," by Nzingha Camara's dynamic Ballet Kouman Kele West African Dance and Drum Ensemble. Everyone here both belonged to a group but also emerged to dance a very individualized solo.

The second half also included too brief solos by American tapper, clogger and Irish and French-Canadian step-dancer Gary Larsen; a kathak solo by Mohan; an Indian village work dance, and an interpretive medieval tapestry and sculpture solo by Linda Gold.