

DANCE Neelima Raju's Kuchipudi solo wowed.

. RAMALINGA SASTRY



PRETTY POSE Neelima Raj performing Kuchipudi solo at Kalabharati. PHOTO: C.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

A religious offering with passion, the Kuchipudi solo by K. Neelima Raju (doing MS in cancer-related genetics in the United States) at Kalabharathi for Visakha Music and Dance Academy last Monday was a panoramic projection of the graceful grandeur of the spectacle designed in the choreography. Her guru Vempati China Satyam choreographed a number of items, which in different combinations could conform to the norms of a traditional format for solo performances.

From the word go starting with obeisance to Narthana Ganapathi set in *Bhoopalam*, Neelima actualised the *Virohathkhanthitha* as it gets revealed in an *Ashtapadhi* of *Jayadev* set in *Ragamalika*, the joyous dance symbolising the omniformity of Lord Chidambareswara, the *Khanditha Nayika* as depicted in the

Kshetranya Padam, *Indendu* set in *Surati* and as a dauntless character as it gets unveiled in Dharmapuri Subbaraya Ayyar's *Javali*, *Parulannamaata* set in *Kapi* till the end of the first half, danced her way into the hearts of the audience. Enchantingly, the effort seemed to be a successful exploration of the ideal of making the dance assume an exquisite form of visual music.

Then for a change, and to provide enough time for dress change, sprightly young children Sudha and Sulakshana, students of the local branch of Kuchipudi Art Academy of Vempati at Madras, presented *Koluvaitiva Ranga Sai*, an excerpt from the ballet choreographed and directed for the Academy by its founder. Leaving an impression as if the picturesque sculptures on the temple walls came alive, fluid on the stage, the youngsters held an excellent promise.

The second half comprised empathetic visualisation of the episodes of *Viswamitra Yaga Rakshana*, *Sita Kalyanam*, *Aranyavaasam* including *Sitapaharanam* and *Ravana Vadha*. Then, followed a similar process of visualising all the childhood pranks of Lord Krishna. Neelima was a visual treat. Executing intricate *swara* and *jathi* patterns ending in *Teermanams* knit in complex mathematical matrices, balancing her feet on the edges of a brass plate towards the end in particular, she appeared like charmingly articulating intimate romance with uncanny precision on *laya*.

Nattuvangam by N. V. N. Bhanu with support on mridangam by G. Venkata Rao, vocals by B. Varahalu, violin by A. Satyavishal and flute by T. Atchutha Rao constituted the scintillating back-drop of music.