

SAM RAO

Milpitas CA

The community based organization Sangeet Dhvani hosted on popular demand, a concert with "Raga Khamaj" on Sunday, May 1st, at the Milpitas Library Auditorium. Sangeet Dhvani has held a series of concerts with local artists who present One raga as a theme- featuring Indian Classical styles- Hindustani and Carnatic and followup with popular movie songs based on the same raga.

The choice of the evening was Raga Khamaj is one of the most popular ragas in the Indian Classical music and is traditionally played and performed in the second part of the night. The Raaga is suited to light classical compositions although popular in a variety of full Classical compositions- many attribute this to the "romantic" character of the Raag and

Melodious Raga Khamaj featured in Sangeet Dhvani Concert

hence many compositions and renditions are seen in several languages like Hindi, Marathi, Bengali- where Music composer and lyricists have utilized to produce many popular and evergreen compositions

The program started with an invocation of favorite prayer song of Mahatma Gandhi "Vaishnava Janato Tene Kahiye" by Shubhasree Chaki and her students. Shubhasree learnt Hindustani classical vocal music since age 9 trained under the tutelage of well known Vocalists- Late Pandit Pimpal Khare and Dr. Veena Sahasrabudhe of Pune. Shubhasree also sang one of the semi classical pieces in Raga Khamaj, composed by the famous Bengali Poet - Kazi Nazrul Islam.

The concert also featured Mrs. Lakshmi



Vocalist Lakshmi Kulkarni and accompanists Surinder Mann on Tabla and Narendra Joshi on Harmonium

Kulkarni, an eminent vocalist hailing from Dharwar, Karnataka, who gave the lead presentation of the Raga Khamaj. Mrs Kulkarni is an "A" Grade TV and All India Radio Artist, Dharwar She was very accompanied by Ustad Surinder Mann on Tabla and Narendra Joshi on Harmonium and with a large extended family present, the audience was enthralled with their performance.

Explaining the nuances of Khamaj, Lakshmi explained that this is a "janaka" or parent raga, comprising of two Nishads and the rest are shudh swaras. The "Vadi" or the most emphasized swar in this raag is Gandhar. The "Samvadi" or the second most important swar in this raag is Nishad and this raag belongs to "Shadava Sampoorna jaati" and is an "evening raga" which means that it is to be sung in the evening hours. She presented a "thumri" in taal "deepchandi" and a "chota khayal" in teen taal.

The Carnatic version of Raga Khamaj is known as "Hari-kambhoji" and the lead song was performed by Sowmya Subramanian, an experienced vocalist who has been performing in several concerts organized by the Bay Area music organizations over the last 15 years. While explaining the distinctive features of this Raga in the Carnatic music system she mentioned that Harikamboji is a Sampoorna Raga or the one that has all the 7 notes and which also allows Graha Bedham (Tonic shift) It was considered as the scale for ancient Tamil language called PanN and principally used in singing at the temples.. Sowmya rendered some famous pieces of the great Thyagaraja of Trinity namely "Rama Nannu Brovara" with Rupakam taal

Ananya Ashok, a senior student of well known Veena teacher, Srikant Chary, who played a few melodious pieces of the Raga Harikamboji, on her Veena was well received by the audience, Both Sowmya and Ananya were accompanied ably on Mridungam by Vignesh Venkataraman and a Violinist Aravind Seshadri. Their performances were highly applauded by the audience.

Bay area raised Ms Tina Mann gave a splendid performance of a Semi Classical Thumri in "Khamaj" supported by Ustad Surinder Mann on Tabla and Satish Gadagkar on Violin.

The movie songs based on Raga Khamaj were rendered superbly by Sandhya Gayathri "O Sajana Barakha Bahar Aayi" (Parakh), Raju Chithambaram sang "Kuch To Log Kahenge" (Amar Prem), Nikita Parikh sang Lata's famous song "Piya Tose Naina Laage Re" (Guide) and Raju Narayanan and Sudha Shastri selected a duet "Tere mere Milan ki Ye Raina" (Abhiman) and Raju also sang a solo "Kahin Door Jab Din Dhal Jaye (Anand).

The grand finale, was with Ustad Surinder Mann on sitar and Satish Gadagkar on violin playing a Jugalbandi on Sitar and Tabla, with a few selected popular Classical compositions as well as famous Nazrul's compositions, one of which was made popular by sung by Manna Dey. "The performance was par excellence: said audience members led by Pradeep Joshi, Honorary Director, Sangeet Dhvani and the event was emceed by Ms Varsha Damle

