

The master's touch

"Art brings hearts together. Bharatanatyam is the simplest art form. Take your body language and put it in an artistic way; it becomes Bharatanatyam. In this sense every one of us is a dancer," said V P Dhananjayan.

Later, the master Sri V P Dhananjayan's entire performance stood a testimonial to his words.

The occasion was the staging of Bhakti Margam (The Path of Devotion), a dance recital by his group Bharata Kalanjali at the Everest Theatre, Seymour Theatre Centre in Sydney on Oct 24.

The Dhanjanyans (V P Dhananjayan

and Shanta Dhananjayan)

form a celebrated dance couple from India. They have been performing Bharatanatyam for a number of years, improvised the art form, trained many students and also bagged the Padma Bhushana Award recently from the President of India.

Classical dance lovers of the community had the rare chance of viewing them in a live performance.

Two items – Nandanaar Charitam and Radha Madhavam became the centre point

of the show. The former depicted the story of Nandanaar, a poor untouchable a devotee of Lord Shiva. His life ambition was to go and see the great idol in Chidambaram and offer his prayers. He could only go if his landlord permitted him. The landlord agreed, on the condition that Nandanaar till forty acres of land and harvest the crops the same night. As can be guessed the Lord came to Nandanaar's rescue. It was Dhananjayan in the role of Nandanaar. The music – Thillai Ambara started and began one of the great abhinayas on stage – effortless, natural and appealing. He portrayed brilliantly the feelings of despair,

disappointment, surprise and fulfillment. The acting was of such style that it transcended all music. It appeared as if he could bring out all the emotions behind the story without the aid of music – vocal or instrumental. Sometimes

the violin background was enough; no words were required. The pathetic appeal behind Oru tharu naam poyivaru, Harahara Jagadheesha, Arul puri Paramesha, VarugadAmo ayya, was remarkable. The finale after Nandanaar merged with Lord Shiva was a fitting one, with the chorus



Bhakti Margam



Thanks to Gayatri Krishna Murthy and Aruna Parthiban, the performance was organised by Natyanjali Australia which is a not-for-profit organisation incorporated in Sydney, NSW with the primary objective of promoting Indian classical and folk dancing in Australia. It seeks to support, promote and nurture the local talent in Australia and offer young

students a forum to develop their interests. This will be done through ongoing programs comprising of performances by well-known overseas artistes, workshops and lecture demonstrations. It aims to provide a platform for young dancers to showcase their creative endeavours. For more details visit www.natyanjalialustralia.org

dancing to Kanaka Sahai thirunatanam.

The other number Radha Madhavam was a feast, where the couple performed to selections from Jayadeva's Gita Govinda. Radha waits for her lover Krishna who arrives very late. She thinks that he has gone to the other Gopikas and is enjoying their company instead. She does not want to receive him: Yahi Madhava, Yahi Keshava. Expectation, anxiety and anger on the part of Radha were brought out capably by Shanta while the playboy Krishna's role was taken up the master, Dhananjayan. While the drama played out, the proponents did not appear to be Radha and Krishna at all; this episode became that of any couple anywhere in the world - yours and mine. It was very clever handling by the master; his

master's touch was evident. The stubborn girl and the mischievous husband pacifying her with Priye charusheele rendered in pleasing ragas, heightened the effect. The wink of the eye that the master gave as the couple happily exited the stage, showed that it is a human drama after all!

The other items in the recital were handled by the disciples of the couple – Divya Shiva Sundar, Seetha Sasidharan, Lavanya Raghuraman and Gopukiran Sadasivan, each of them being a professional dancer. Nrittaswaraavali had the four performing an abstract dance to the tune in Mohana raga Sa Ri Sa Da Pa Ga Ri Sa Da Ri Ga. Many picturesque poses and pleasing combinations were the highlights here. In some sense it was all knit around

Male and Female attraction, union etc. The male stood and the female danced around him or vice versa. The female did its best to attract the male.

Rama Nataka keertanai enacted Ramayana and Mahabharata in brisk movements to the eternal composition En pallee kondirayya. The Krishna-Kalinga episode was enjoyable. Nrittaangaharam (Thillana) was marked by excellent coordination amongst the dancers.

A live orchestra from India performed for the dancers. N Sasidharan's majestic voice filled the auditorium. His voice heightened the experience at many of the key situations. K P Ramesh Babu provided the Mridnaga support and Kalairasan Ramanathan, the violin support.

Sydney Srinivas