

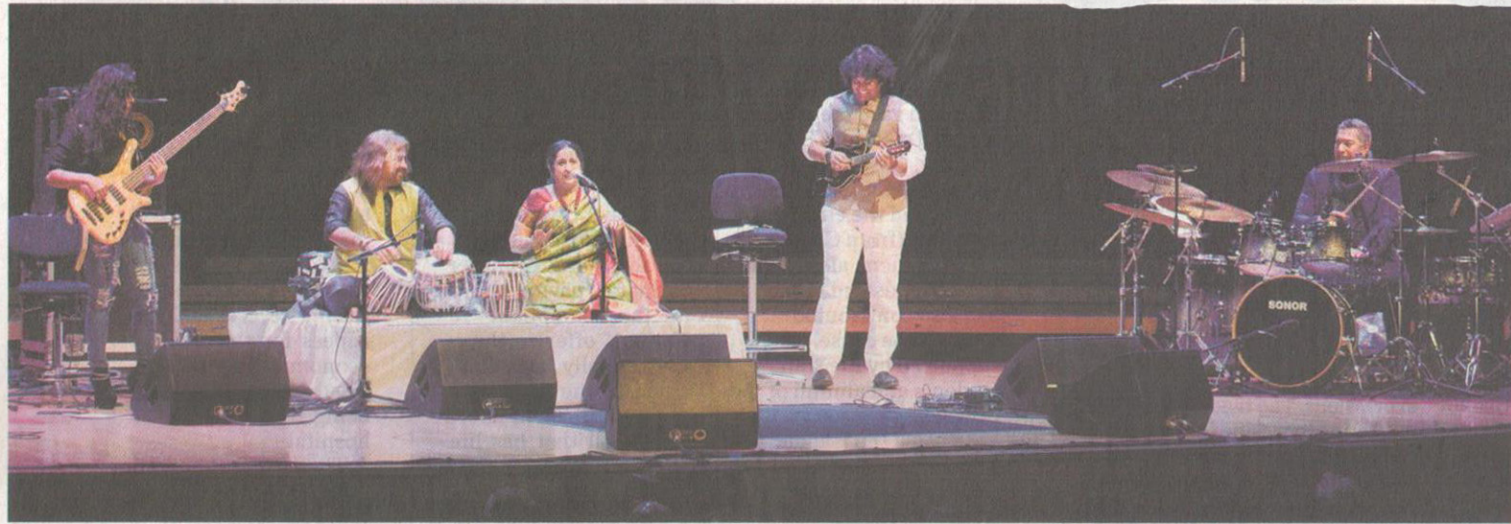
Voice and instrument merge seamlessly

‘MANDolin and Beyond,’ a U. Shrinivas tribute concert held in Singapore recently, pushed musical boundaries further

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The concert was not just a tribute to U. Shrinivas’ mastery over strings but his efforts to create a music world without borders and a genre that speaks the global language. Organised by Arte Compass and Agrocrop in association with the Srinivas Institute of World Music (SIOWM), ‘MANDolin and Beyond’ was about brilliant acoustics, seating, lighting and of course, an eclectic ensemble. As guests walked in, the Hall of Esplanade in Singapore echoed with a soothing ‘Raghupathi Raghava Rajaram’ on the mandolin.

The show began on a sombre note with the playing of a video of a specially-composed song by music director Devi Shree Prasad in memory of his *anna* and guru U. Shrinivas. The lyrics were based on *saptaswaras*. Following this, two students A. Sheethal and R. Balaji of SIOWM, played a piece on mandolin composed by Shrinivas. They were accompanied by Ong Yi Ting, a girl, who is also the first recipient of Mandolin U Shrinivas Award for International Young Talent (includes a cash award of S\$500 and one week stay to attend master class at SIOWM, sponsored by Agrocrop



▲ (from left) Mohini Dey, Vijay Ghate, Aruna Sairam, U. Rajesh and Ranjit Barot. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

International). The three were in perfect harmony!

The main show featured top-notch musicians Ranjit Barot on the drums, Mandolin U. Rajesh and young bass guitarist Mohini Dey, who presented a composition from Shrinivas’ album ‘Hidden Trails.’ They were soon joined by Carnatic vocalist Aruna Sairam, tabla artist Vijay Ghate and Stephen Devassy on the keyboard for an extraordinary

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musical experience.

Rajesh’s inspired playing helped the audience connect with mandolin’s emotive notes. Barot’s high-energy percussion act showed his mastery over rhythm while Mohini’s effortless strumming showcased her innate talent.

Aruna Sairam rendered a beautiful medley. The first part of the medley comprised the Meenakshi Stotram of Adi Sankaracharya ‘Shabdha Brahma Mayi’ and the second part was an Italian song with the same melody base. It was a fusion performance that blended Carnatic, Hindustani and western classical styles. Her singing of the stotram in



Celebrating the legacy of Padmashri U. Shrinivas

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the Carnatic style with a hint of Hindustani was fascinating. And then her western opera-type singing of the Italian song came as a huge surprise. It suited her voice timbre well. She was ably supported by Stephen Devassy and Mohini. After a few stanzas of the Italian song, Aruna returned to the pallavi with ‘Shabda Brahma Mayi,’ which sent the audience into raptures.

What followed was a piece from an album jointly done by Ranjit Barot and U.

Shrinivas. It saw some wonderful exchange of swaras and beats, simultaneously performed by Barot. And then the young Mohini joined him. Aruna too pitched in with an elaborate *alaap*. Another medley by Barot and Aruna followed. Once again, Mohini lent good support. It was then time for the *thani avarthanam*, wherein Stephen displayed his prowess over the keys in different tempos while Vijay gave a peek into his

rigorous classical training with a spectrum of bols.

After the instrumental session, Aruna rendered the slokam ‘Sarvamangala Mangalye’ as a slow *viruttam* and then the *krithi* ‘Mamavathu Saraswathi’ in *Hindolam*. The entire band helped her in conveying the beauty of these pieces.

The concert was a mix of frenzied and calm moments. It saw some inspired individual performances and a seamless synthesis of skills. As the concert drew to a close with a piece where all the artists came together, one felt there couldn’t have been a better way to remember the mandolin maestro.