

Pure bliss

MUSIC Vintage Ulhas Kashalkar sang his heart out at the Trailokyam festival.

KULDEEP KUMAR

Of all the Hindustani classical musicians who performed at Trailokyam, the three-day music and dance festival organised by Kuchipudi dancer-couple Raja-Radha Reddy at the Kamani auditorium, it was Ulhas Kashalkar who soared to the Olympian heights and mesmerised the audience with his mature musicianship and dazzling virtuosity.

On the second day of the festival that began last Saturday, Ulhas Kashalkar opened his recital with a riveting vilambit Khayal in raga Yaman and went on to prove what a consummate artiste can do to such a common raga. He demonstrated the now largely forgotten art of what is known as "sthayi bharna" or establishing the refrain of the composition. Ulhas's vilambit in ek taal was a little faster than the slow tempo one usually encounters in such recitals. Though his voice gave him a little trouble initially, very soon his notes were gleaming like pure pearls. His bol-alap, bol-taans, gamak taans and chhoot taans coupled with ever new combinations of notes gave rise to such an intense creative tension that discerning listeners were literally chewing their nails. The aesthetic use of gamak in bol-alap and bol-taans in vilambit bada khayal "Kabe sakhi kaise kariye bhariye jin aise laalan ke" was particularly satisfying and so were the playful layakari, long taans delivered with lightning speed and amazing curvature, and complex and attractive ways of arriving at the sam.

Complex taans

Ulhas Kashalkar followed up the bada khayal with a tarana composed by Nemat Khan 'Sadarang's son Bhupat Khan 'Manrang'. His tarana was noteworthy only for its deployment of some bewilderingly complex taans but could not satiate those who had feasted on the content-rich taranas of the maestros of yore such as Nisar Husain Khan of the Rampur-Sahaswan gharana. After Yaman, Ulhas took up a complex raga Nayaki Kanhda and sang a drut khayal "Mukh rang dar-dar gayo ma". This raga is a special favourite of the Jaipur-Atrauli singers but he suffused it with his own individuality and offered a distinctly different version which was equally, if not more, satisfying.

Though the audience clamoured for a bhajan, he concluded his recital with a Khamaj thumri "Sakhi ri hansiya ba-jae Shyam" set to addha teen taal. While discerning listeners had their hearts' fill with Ulhas's excellent sing-



RIVETING CONCERT *Ulhas Kashalkar* PHOTO: V. GANESAN

ing, it must be said that he too has joined the ranks of those musicians who feel shy of announcing the names of the ragas that they are going to perform. As has earlier been commented in this column, this shows a certain indifference bordering on disrespect towards the lay listeners who take the trouble of attending concerts of classical music.

Promising

Young Vinay Mishra has in a short span of time made a name for himself as a promising harmonium player. He rose to the occasion and impressed with his understanding of the art of understated accompaniment. Senior tabla player Suresh Talwalkar was as usual very good. Ulhas Kashalkar's students Ojesh Pratap Singh and Aditya Sharma gave him vocal support while accompanying him on tanpura.

Shujat Khan played alap, jod and jhala followed by a sweet gat in Carnatic raga Kirwani on the sitar on the opening day of the festival. As is his vogue, he sang while playing a few sweet dhuns. Sriram Parasuram and Anuradha Sriram sang a duet, alternating between Hindustani and Carnatic styles, on the concluding day. The experiment left much to be desired as the duo could not do justice to either. The festival also featured Kuchipudi dance recital by Raja Reddy and Radha Reddy and their students, Bharatanatyam recital by Sandhya Purecha and her disciples and Kathak recital by Aditi Mangaldas and her pupils. True to its name, Trailokyam succeeded in fusing the diverse worlds of music, dance and literature into a single creative universe.