

It rained thumris and taans

HINDUSTANI Shehnai maestro Pandit Krishna Ram Choudhary and sitar player Irshad Khan played with effortless ease at the C

GOWRI RAMNARAYAN

Prakriti Foundation's Deutsche Bank Gharana Music Festival (March 23-25, Museum Theatre) offered a rare opportunity to hear shehnai live, by an exemplar of the Banares school, who refused to deviate even a fraction from the tradition handed down to him.

It was obvious that for Pandit Krishna Ram Choudhary, accompanied by Hemant Raj Choudhary, music is a natural part of life, not a stage show. (The artist asked for houselights to see the audience, though he played always with his eyes closed!)

The veteran did not indulge in explosions of sound and fury, or mannerisms to please modern trends.

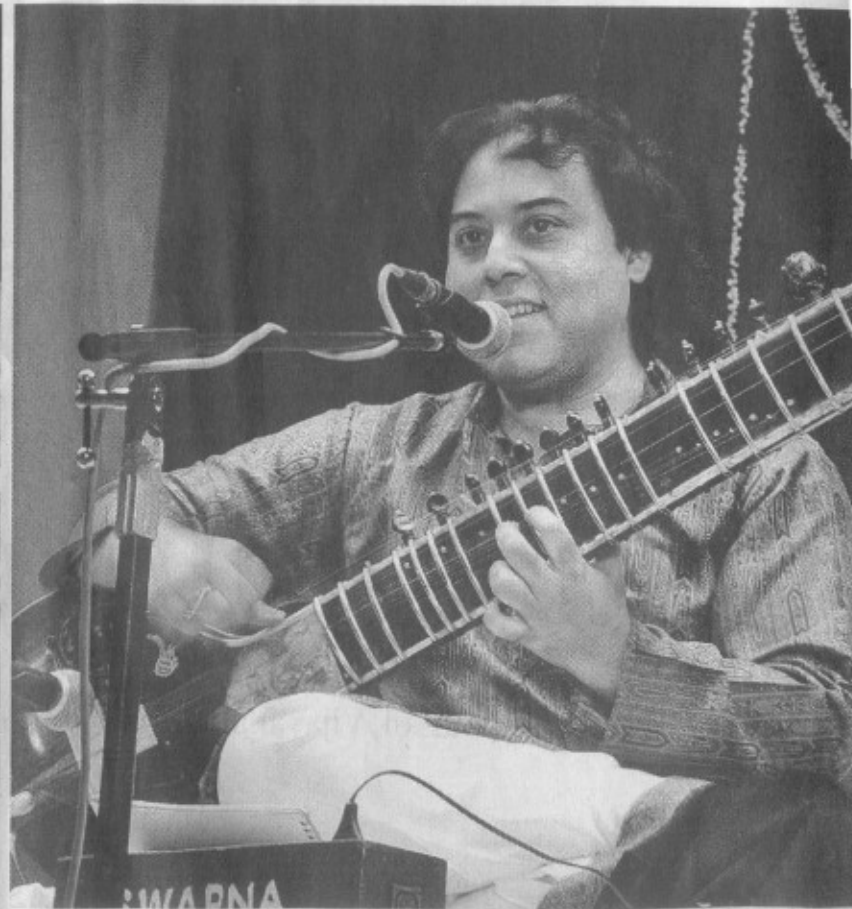
The tihaayis, when they came, were part of the flow. Each piece ended with gentle taperings, innocent of applause-stimulating gimmicks. There were two-drum tablas by Sumitram Dohkar and dukkad by Pyarelal, but no percussion interlude.

Choudhary began with Purya Dhanashri in a short alaap outline, followed by compositions in slow ek taal, pushing up tempos in teen taal.

The vilambit progressed stage by stage, with no other thought than dwelling on each note, curve, phrase and gamak, in perfect sruti. The blowing and fingering techniques were so honed as to seem effortless.

The Behag thumri made ripples on the river, and meandered into other ragini streams.

The Purvi dhun had its wnl lilt and glints. The Bhairavi



MELODIC NOTES: Pandit Krishna Ram Choudhary and Hemant Choudhary and (right) Ustad Irshad Khan. PHOTO: S. S. KUMAR

sanwariya' spot-lit the many specialities of the eastern thumri stylistics. The music was wholesome, and was over before it could satiate.

Outstanding sitar recital

What a pity that in this reputedly music-loving city, so few lucky listeners came to the outstanding sitar recital of Irshad Khan! The young

dislike for glitter. His strings proved his thirst for pure gold. He did not underestimate the intelligence or the taste of his listeners.

Irshad Khan did not have to say that he belonged to a glorious gharana (Ettawa-Imdad Khani), his uncle was the fabled Vilayat Khan, father was Imrat Khan, or that he counted famed vocalists

His sitar recalled them with humility and flair.

Opening Yamankalyan was compact, but revealed singular mellifluousness and equally singular taiyyari. The alaap made every note glow with anuswaras even in simple dha-ni-re, ni-re-ga or just ni-ga. No overload anywhere, not even with the astonishing gamakas of his gharana

the string, the musician brought off a glide of myriad notes. You did wish for a slower-paced vilambit to infuse more dynamism into the drut build up.

After the throbbing pulse of jod, the gat plunged into Rupak taal cycles with Rudranarayan Kalyani on the tabla. Their team spirit was notable. The tabla highlight-

launched his own rhythm passages the sitar played no repetitive track but continued with softer music.

Variety, a highlight

Such variety! Swara clusters propelled in different rhythms, a different note emphasised in repeating the same phrase, a meend here, a

hard stroke, a tinkling c a sudden contour, an expected tihaayi.

The suddha mad came in spare, tanta flashes, gone before it felt. There were vocal e in high speed taans.

Desh came next in a (composed by grandf Inayat Khan), followed