

From Korea, with love

EVENT The audience fell in love with Gong Myoung, for its mind-boggling range of music and instruments

BOSE
FRIDAY REVIEW
November Fest
at The Grand Regency

The young musician with a walking stick enters the stage. With the air of a magician, he pulls out a flower, a drill, and a wooden block from his bag. Placing the walking stick on the block, he proceeds to drill holes through it. He slides the flower's stem into the first hole, and starts blowing a little tune on the "flute". His three colleagues join him with drums, gongs and pipes. The audience laughs and claps as they swing themselves into lively tunes.

Harmonious drama

Suddenly, the basket comes down into the audience to guide a little girl and boy to the stage. Now the team plays to the children's volume. The flower is gifted to the girl. The boy gets the flute. Little cheeks reddens and smile, as the little one blows on, stunning the audience by actually producing notes. The last sound in this hilarious drama is of the child refusing to get off, and "performing" with all his might an excellent stage right, as the father scurries up to "switch off" him.

And that is what Gong Myoung, the four-member band from Korea did - involving the audience wholly into their original work, played by an array of instruments, some of them "improvised" by group members. Naming their band after an ancient instrument, cyphered from Ibrahim, Park Seung-Won, Cho Min-Soo, Kang Sun-He, and Song Kiyoung have created a pleasant evening of sweet sounds, groovy rhythms,

and fine showmanship. Nothing was ostentatious or aggressive. Most markedly, everything was in good taste. The peckish sense of fun made the band endearing.

There was no introduction to the songs which followed one another, as the team's Solo speaker said he knew "two languages" - Korean and English, the English very short. He wouldn't go much beyond "Thank you" and "I love you". "My love" was the input from other members.

What they did do was to play melodies pure and pleasing, and rhythm simple and useful. Both were extremely simple - the tunes suggested folk, tribal melodies, one or two offered just primal music of a few notes.

Tonal diversities

The rhythms were neither complex nor chocky-chock, but offered many beautiful diversities in straightforward counts of four, three and two. The range of instruments jettisoned - from teardrums rather to huge symbols and drums. The pipes too were of many kinds - moving from shrill bubbling to deep reverberation (in an impressively long pipe that wailed down to the floor). The single guitar provided mostly percussive support while coming into its own at strategic moments. The flutes provided enchanting at all times. The melodies were often played slowly, and moved up to second speed.

The two arresting pieces had the musicians seated on the floor. Brilly to



HIGHLY IMPRESSIVE Gong Myoung PHOTO: S.R. RADHAKRISHNAN

play with sticks on large, narrow "winded", two-faced drums. Eight hands proceeded to orchestrate well-voiced beats in perfectly synchronised movements.

The second drum melody had the additional merit of being totally unexpected. And, what a striking visual it made with the musician in a crou-

ching posture, beating wooden blocks with two lit vertically held bundles of all heights! From whistles that long, they reached a subtle range punctuated by sandy, pebbly sounds from natural instruments. The sound ran in with ones and twos, in old hand claps and rhythmic patterns. These were notes too - in four or seven - burst out of this

percussive ensemble. There was flat in every sense.

The musicians entered and exited their journey through the audience, making every listener feel part of the process of music-making. The excitement, as a whole, brought a feeling of oneness with Nature and natural sounds - pleasant, soothing and re-

freshing, not only to the large number of Koreans in the hall, but also to Indians to whom this was an introduction to music from a little-known culture. The music took listeners to a walk in the woods, as the gentle slopes whose meadows rippled under a kind sun, and valleys filled in.

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