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Where artistry and abhinaya scored

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Shridhar and Anuradha performing at the Narada Gana Sabha Hall. Photo: K. V. Srinivasan

The Bharatham Kathai Kathaiyaam threw up some riveting performances and interpretations.

The six-day festival Bharatham Kathai Kathaiyaam organised by Natyarangam Trust and Narada Gana Sabha at the Narada Gana Sabha hall opened with senior dancers **Shridhar** and **Anuradha** presenting a kaleidoscope of emotions for an extract from Pudumai

Pithan's short story 'Sangu Devanin Dharmam' and a bhakti-charged performance for Thirumangai Alwar .

Anuradha as the old lady and Shridhar as both the jeweller and the wayfarer did some suave miming that brought out a salubrious mix of humour, expectation and an undercurrent of menace. The riveting performance had several aspects such as the dancer's adherence to the emoting grammar of Bharatnatyam, worthy orchestral support and apt choice of ragas that added depth.

Anuradha's expressive eyes that mirrored both anxiety and astonishment were a perfect foil to Shridhar's swagger and aggressive stance in the piece. Subtle touches in aharya such as the knotted shawl and the neck amulet, specialised beats on the percussion and flute and the articulation of 'Sangudevan,' were pointers to the meticulous composing. 'Sangudevan' as a short story was a dramatic package: one only wished for some nritta that is the pure dance aspect to sharpen the tale.

This was a fact taken care of at the outset in the Alwar's tale as robust theermanams proclaimed the Alwar's kingly nature. Anuradha and Shridhar's skilled artistry in denoting the Lord's affectionate touch and the thief's abject repentance enlivened the episode. The king who is enamoured of the dancing girl and later attains divine revelation was an involved narration, where the pasuram 'Vadinen Vadi' recreated the aura of the legend. Vocal music by Balasubramaniam Sharma gave the requisite support.