

s'. Keyboardist Akhilesh Rajan says, "The thought of having it outside in a park is great, people come out so organically. It was not a ticketed crowd; they came out and just enjoyed the music and we were happy to close the act." The band played nostalgic Tamil songs of Ilaiyaraaja and Yuvan Shankar Raja.

Open air memories

Anna Nagar Tower Park saw a mix of sufism, Tamil folk dance and acappella. Karthick Manickavasagam, co-director of the Indian Choral Ensemble, was "actually thrilled to just be outside. Chennai should have more such venues, where anyone can walk in and listen to music. Active musicians and other artists set the culture of a place. Art is not complete until it reaches people," he says.

The Indian Choral ensemble played three acapella pieces, including one by Pradeep Kumar of *Kabali* fame. Paraiattam, oyalattam and marakalattam performances by Logesh Kalai Kuzhu, and KM Music Conservatory's Sufi Ensemble were some other highlights in Anna Nagar.

"We're going to put it on our Youtube channel, so if people want to catch it they can always view it there," says Shreya.

A special guest was Paul Jacob, music director, festival curator and one of the minds behind Chennai Sangamam, which brought art out in the open years ago. "This is what we need to have a lot more of, not just in this city but all over the country. There needs to be a lot more public engagement with the arts," he concludes.

Hear ye, hear ye KM Sufi Ensemble at Anna Nagar Tower Park; (below) a rapper at Jai Nagar Park

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lak Appu and Dholak John and a musical ensemble by the band Indicus Dreams, Suraj G Shankar, Akhilesh Rajan and Jaysharan.

At the percussion fusion performance by Venkat Subramaniam and Philip, the mridangam and the parai, two instruments that are poles apart in traditional conventions, came together. As parai artist Philip points out, "Classical music is usually put on a pedestal. So fusing mridangam with parai, is our effort to make the art of the parai mainstream."

What followed was the gaana concert, with Gaana Stephen's performance of 'Gumbala suthuvom' drawing in passersby.

The event concluded with the band Indicus Dream-



Gaana beneath the treetops

Mixtura Vizha, a recent arts festival in public spaces, held 12 art and music performances at four different venues across the city

•• TARUN MURALI AND SHIVANI ILLAKIYA PT

Shreya Nagarajan Singh, an arts development consultant and the mind behind SNS Arts Development Consultancy, decided to celebrate the company's fifth anniversary in a slightly different way. She hosted Mixtura Vizha, an arts festival in public spaces, with performances in different parts of Chennai, without revealing what art form will be performed in which space.

"We really wanted to break down the barriers [that people experience] when accessing arts. Taking live arts to public spaces is something that really makes a difference," says Shreya. She adds, "The idea was to introduce people to new

performances. If I told you Bharatanatyam is happening here, rap is happening somewhere else and gaana is happening in another venue, you'd naturally gravitate towards the same things you have enjoyed before. If I say each venue is going to be a mix and you don't know what's going to happen where, you'd pick the most convenient venue or the one you like. You'll find something new."

The venues were decided for their value to the city. "We wanted to do something in North Madras, which is why we chose My Ladys Garden, a beautiful and old park. The Children's Club was [used] because we wanted to make one event specifically where children perform for children," points out Shreya. The artistes made the otherwise quiet My Ladys Garden lively with their pre-performance practices. The venue saw a percussion fusion set by Venkat Subramaniam and Philip, followed by a gaana concert by Gaana Stephen, Gaana Settu, Dho-