

A story in every step

B Sivakumar | TNN | Updated: Dec 27, 2018, 09:39 IST



Dancer Bala Devi Chandrashekar's production is themed on Thanjavur's Brihadeeswara temple

Besides offering an eclectic variety of music and dance presentations, Margazhi is also the time to remember and celebrate our rich history and heritage. And that's what artists are doing by roping in themes from 'Mahakavi' Bharatiyar to the grandeur of Thanjavur's Brihadeeswara temple.

Dancer Bala Devi Chandrashekar, who has put together a show on the

celebrated temple, says it took her four years. "After I decided to have the r as the theme, I called on Tamil scholars based in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts to learn about Chola history. I also spent time reading books on the subject," says the dancer.

Titled 'Brihadeeswara - form to formless', the production takes the audience on a journey into the mind of a Devaradiyaal (Devadas). Based on the guidance of scholar

T N Ramachandran, historian Kodavayil Balasubramanian and musicologist B M Sundaram, it celebrates the spiritual experiences of the Devaradiyaal at the Brihadeeswara temple," says Bala Devi.

The production, which plays out in four acts, celebrates the Devaradiyaal's beauty and architectural mastery of the temple while tracing her day-to-day life that oscillates between the spectacular form of the temple and the enlightened awareness of the Lord as the cosmic dancer. "It weaves together the physical, metaphysical, lyrical and spiritual significance of the magnificent structure," says Bala Devi, who will be showcasing the dance in four sabhas.

V Balagurunathan, an alumnus of Kalakshetra, has choreographed his production with Bharatiyar's songs as its underlying theme. Titled 'Vizhi Chudare', the show is centered on the master poet's messages on women's empowerment. "The showcase will speak about how women play numerous roles in society. This was an important aspect of Bharathi's fight for their empowerment," says Balagurunathan.

The programme will offer a new perspective to modern-day feminism through Bharatiyar's words. "The highlight will be the live singing and the way dancers render the master poet's songs to emphasise the power of his verses on 'penniyam' (feminism)," he said.

"Theme-based Bharatanatyam caught up a few years ago when Kalakshetra used Ramayana as their theme. Padma Subrahmanyam too created the trend with her shows themed on Krishna, says Krishna Gana Sabha secretary Y Prabhu. "People are interested in listening to stories when they are presented as a theme in a dance production," he adds.