

Meeting of worlds & music

Leena Mudbidri | TNN

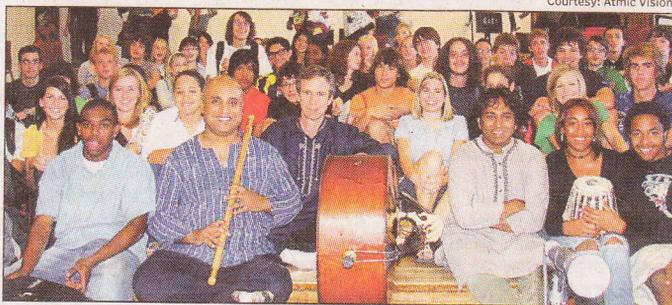
When music maestros Muthu Kumar, Paul Erhard and Annada Prasanna Pattanaik saw their kindergarten audience, they wondered if they were in the right place.

This was a small town school in St Louis Valley, Colorado, to conduct a workshop on music. They didn't quite know what to expect from the tiny tots, till they began to wield their magic with melody and rhythm. The combi-

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nation of tabla, double bass and flute cast a spell over the children, drawing them to the nuances of Indo-Western music that has raised the trio — Atmic Vision — to a higher level.

Atmic Vision's tryst with American schoolkids began in 2004 when Paul Erhard, professor of double bass at the University of Colorado, met Muthu and Butto (as Pattanaik is popularly known) in Bangalore. "I was experimenting with Indian music and felt my musical journey would be complete with more musicians," says Paul. He invited



Atmic Vision at one of its classes in the US

Muthu, a tabla exponent who has trained under Ustad Allah Rakha, Ustad Zakir Hussain and Pandit Yogesh Shamsi, to join him. Butto, a student of Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia, chipped in with the flute.

Their first album *Expanding Horizons* prompted S Vaughn, member of the Metropolitan Opera in New York to say: "This is only the beginning of an even more profound capacity to touch audiences with a pureness of joy I no longer thought possible."

The trio's humility shows when they impart their musical knowledge. "Schoolkids are never unresponsive," says Muthu. "After each workshop, kids impatiently want to try the instruments."

There is, of course, a method to their music. "Our concert has three parts — ragas by Butto, Paul talks about fusion music while I play the tabla and ask kids to clap along," explains Muthu. Then, they move on to bhajans.

Just back from a 40-day whirlwind tour of Chicago, Colorado, Las Vegas and Paris, where Atmic Vision performed at 40 concerts, held 50 workshops in schools and colleges and addressed 7,000 children, Muthu, Paul and Butto are looking forward to their performances on a world stage next year. Till then, they are content in their role as cultural ambassadors, bridging the divide with their ethno-music rhythm in all its purity.

toiblreporter@timesroup.com