

U. Srinivas and U. Rajesh
Carnatic Mandolin Concert (May 6, 2006)
A review by P. Swaminathan

On May 6, 2006 SRUTI presented a mandolin duet featuring maestro U. Srinivas and his brother U. Rajesh. They were accompanied by Muruga Bhupathy on the mridangam and S.V. Ramani on the ghatam. The concert was performed in two parts. In the first part, Srinivas presented a brief lecture demonstration using his mandolin. He elaborated the different kinds of mandolins, acoustic as well as electric. He described how he started to play as a child on the acoustic mandolin made of wood; later switched to electric mandolin which needs a power amplifier to produce audible music. He emphasized the versatility of mandolin in producing micro tones and the much needed gamaka for carnatic music. He compared the tonal quality of music produced by mandolin to that of the human voice. He skillfully demonstrated this aspect by playing different intricate ragas like bhairavi, sankarabharanam and todi on the mandolin as well as singing. Even though Srinivas profusely apologized for not being able to sing as good as he could play the mandolin, it was an enlightening experience. Kudos to Srinivas for a good demonstration.

During the second part of the program, Srinivas along with his brother Rajesh gave a traditional carnatic music concert. He began his performance with a crisp rendering of Lalgudi Jayaraman's varnam in *nalinakanthi*, followed by a detailed rendering of Dikshitar's 'Sidhivinayakam' in *shanmukapriya* (*camaram according to Dikshitar's classification*). He went on to play 'endaro mahanubhavulu' in *sri* raga followed by Ranjanamala (garland of different *ranjanis*) and Sri Rama Padama in *amrithavahini*. The main piece of the concert was Thyagaraja's krithi 'chakkani rajamargamu' in *kharaharapriya*. Srinivas elaborated the raga very well and rendered the krithi in detail. The rest of the concert was filled with short pieces like 'raghuvamsa sudha' in *kathanakuthuhalam*, Subramanya Bharathy's 'Thaye yasodha' in *todi*, 'Krishna nee begane' in *yamuna kalyani*, 'chinnanchiru kiliye' etc. An important missing item was the *ragam thanam and pallavi (RTP for short)*.

My overall impression on the second half of the concert was that it lacked the punch and vigor which is usually present in Srinivas's performances. Srinivas gave his first concert for SRUTI in 1990 while I was the president. I vividly remember then his remarkable rendering of Thyagaraja's krithi 'nannu palimpa' in *mohanam* (in *gayaki* style popularized by maestro Mali where one can follow the *sahithya* clearly while listening to the instrument). I did not get the same feeling during the recent concert. Here and there I could still feel the brilliance of Srinivas during the rendering of *karaharapriya*.

Both Bhupathy and Ramani gave good support for the smooth flow of the concert.