UPCOMING EVENTS—MARK your calendars

3/15/2008  Thyagaraja Aradhana
Vocal Concert by Abhishek Raghuram and Party
4/5/2008  Sikkil Gurucharan - Vocal
4/26/2008  Jayanthi Kumaresh - Instrumental (Veena)
5/10/2008  M. S. Sheela—Vocal
9/6/2008  Sanjay Subramaniam - Vocal
9/20/2008  Jaya Jaya Devi - Dance
10/11/2008  Ranjani/Gayathri - Vocal
11/1/2008  Mysore Nagaraj/Manjunath - Instrumental (Violin)
money in every concert were it not for the continuing assistance from excellent and supportive organiza-
tions such as the Philadelphia Music Project. Thirdly, the operating costs including the artist fees and
auditorium rentals continue to increase dramatically, an uncontrollable fact we just have to contend
with.

None of the above problems are insurmountable (and are in fact, shared by most nonprofit member or-
ganizations), but I do believe that we need to be fully cognizant of them in order to arrive at solutions.
The present BOD is decidedly well positioned to do so; I believe that we have an excellent team of dedi-
cated and enthusiastic volunteers: S. Vidyasanker, Venkat Kilambi, Sridhar Santhanam, Ramaa Nathan,
Revathi Sivakumar, Vijaya Viswanathan, Srinivs Pothukuchi and Seetha Ayyalasomayajulu. In addi-
tion, we are ably assisted by the various committees; in particular, V. V. Raman and Rangun Nathan
deserve special mention for their exemplary work with the website and the audio respectively.

The BOD and the Resource Committee (along with Uma Prabhakar, who has officially handed over the
position to Ramana Nathan, but continues to help) have already met to brainstorm solutions to some of
the issues mentioned above. We will continue the $500 Patron membership and discounted vouchers
for music students (through their teachers). In addition, we are exploring additional funding sources
such as corporations.

As an American organization we need to carry out more outreach activities to attract mainstream audi-
cences. One of the elements of outreach is education; in this vein, we intend to have an educational com-
ponent to some of our concerts this year, where a knowledgeable member of the community or the art-
ists themselves will spend an hour or so after the concert to explain abstruse aspects of the concert they
have just heard. This will be an optional event, and could also help to attract and retain ethnic Indians
who are not regular attendees.

In terms of programming we will kick off as usual with Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana, and follow up with
some excellent concerts and dance performances. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find a list of
them; the web site will always reflect current information. In the event of inclement weather please try
to check the web site before coming to the concert.

I would also like to thank the previous Board and Ramana Kanumalla (the previous President), for a fine
job last year that is very difficult to surpass; I myself certainly cannot hope to match Ramana’s energy!

Also, Uma Prabhakar has decided to step down as the Chair of the Resource Committee after many
years of devoted and competent service; she was able to help secure much needed funds from the grant-
giving organizations and deserves our gratitude. Thanks, Uma, but know that we will continue to rely on
you!

Finally, Sruti is a member organization and can only exist and prosper with your attendance and sup-
port. Please try to come to all the concerts and get your friends as well. And, do become a Patron Mem-
ber.

With best wishes,
C. Nataraj

Core Annual Supporter Pass — An Appeal

Dear Sruti Members:

The board has been busy finalizing the Spring and Fall 2008 calendar of music and dance programs.
We have an exciting calendar of concerts, both vocal and instrumental. In addition, we will have a
dance ballet “Jaya Jaya Devi” that has received very good acclaim in past performances. We are also
planning educational postscripts to select concerts, and workshops and chamber music events as well.

Kuchipudi Dance and Malladi brothers - Concert Review by VidyaShankar Sundaresan

SRUTI's programs in the second half of 2007 saw a predominance of duet performances of Carnatic
music by male vocalists: Carnatica brothers, Hyderabads and Malladi brothers. The concluding

The dance program was a short and enjoyable presentation of the Devi Bhagavatam legend of Goddess
Durgas's slaying of Mahishasura. The dancers on stage included not only a visiting troupe from India, but
also dancers from our own community, including Sunanda Gandham, Swapna Dhanwada and Anita Ki-
lambi. The story moved in quick episodic fashion, encapsulating the well-known legend of Mahishas-
ura, beginning with his rise to supreme power and culminating in his end at the hands of the Mother
Goddess. Hindu mythology deliberately challenges conventional norms of time and birth. In this in-
stance, the Goddess is portrayed as being born through the combined powers of all the deva-s, but is at
the same time the source of the individual powers of each deva. This was brought out fairly well in the
dance movements and the accompanying dialog. This reviewer did feel that the dance program could
have been benefited much by live music. While recorded music ends up being a necessary limitation of
such dance presentations outside India, an element of live dynamism invariably gets lost in the process.
The sound and light requirements for the dance were handled admirably well by SRUTI's team of vol-
unteers, including some of the youngest members of our community.

After a short interval, the audience reassembled for a vocal concert by the Malladi Brothers, accompa-
nied by Embar Kannan on the violin and Neyveli Narayanan on the Mridangam. Sreeram Prasad and
Ravikumar come from the Andhra Pradesh based school of Dr. Sriapda Pinkapani, being disciples of
Sri Nedunuri Krishnamurthy, and Malladi Suri Babu, their father. The Malladi Brothers seem to have
developed a good working relationship on stage, with each brother yielding room to and reinforcing the
other's strengths when performing together. In most cases, Ravikumar, the younger brother, rendered
the bulk of the creative Raga Alapana expositions, while the elder brother, Sreeram Prasad, took the
lead in Neraval and Swara kalyana. Beginning with the Ata Tala Varnam in Kamada (Nara nammitt),
their concert featured a mix of rare and popular kritis of Annamacharya, Tyagaraja, Syama Sastri and
Muttuswami Dikshitar. Vade Venkatadri in Vasanta was briskly rendered, while Bhakti Bhiksha in
Sankarabharanam and Na mordal in Devagandhuri struck a more reposeful pace. The main pieces in the
repertoire for the evening were Ninnu vina (Parvikalyani), E nati (Bhairavi) and a Ragam Tanam
Pulavai in Nataskaranji. These were interspersed with and followed by shorter compositions, Manavalya
(Nalunukanti), Adam Chidambarambe (Bhageh), Kandarpa Janaka (Kalaveti) and Jagadoddhara (Kafi).
They concluded the concert with the popular Swati Tirunal bhajan, Visveswara darsana
(Sindhubhairavi) and Bhadrachala Ramadas's Mangalam, Ramachandraya (Kurinji).

Overall, it was a wholesome evening of traditional Carnatic music, sung with youthful enthusiasm and
verve. The stamp of the Nedunuri style was evident throughout the concert, while there were also
glimpses of an influence of the late Sri Voleti Venkateswaraulu, who was their father’s guru. Embar
Kannan on the violin and Neyveli Narayanan on the Mridangam provided solid support. In particular,
Kannan's Alapana in Bhairavi was of a high order and Narayanan's Tuni Avaranam sparked it. It was
a good finale to the year for SRUTI's concert programs.
Gayathri Venkataraghavan: Concert Review by Dinakar Subramaniam

It was a beautiful fall day in the area (October 7, 2007) when Sruti presented a vocal concert by Smt. Gayathri Venkataraghavan at the Calvary Vision Center in Blue Bell. I had listened to her Navarathri Kritis CD earlier where I was impressed with her mellifluous voice. I was looking forward to the concert for another reason too. I had heard a great deal about the violinist Akkarai Subhalakshmi and what a promising young artist she was. So, it was with great expectation that I attended the concert.

Gayathri started the concert with a Bahurudi varnam composed by her guru Shri A. Sundaresa Iyer. The tempo and veer with which the varnam was rendered provided a good indication on how the rest of the concert was to be. After this varnam, Gayathri sang the Srinarayani composition by Papanasam Sivan - Gajavadana Karuna Sadana. She then eagerly jumped into a Kalyani Ragam that was embellished with crisp brigas. After a very melolious alapani from Akkarai Subhalakshmi, Gayathri sang the Dikshithar kriti - Bhajaeye Chitta - a song composed on the deity Balambika of Vaitheeswaran koil in Tamil Nadu. The neraval was done at the Devi Shakti Bijodbhava in the charanam culminating with the madhyama kala lines - Bhava Raga ThaLa mohini. There was a wonderful rapport between the Gayathri, Subhalakshmi and Manoj Siva that made you feel at home and even closer to the music.

After this kriti that energized the audience, Gayathri launched into an alapana in Reethigowlai followed by a composition of Mysore Sadashiva Rao called Nannubrochutaku. Sadashiva Rao belongs to the shishya parampara of Sri Thyagaraja. Before commencing the main piece in Thodi, Gayathri concluded the first hour of her concert with the brisk Thyagaraja composition in Janaranjani - Vidajalatthura.

She then began an elaborate Thodi ragam which was solidly rendered with classical phrases. Subhalakshmi displayed her manodharma very well in her rendering of the alapani too. Gayathri then sang the Shyama Sastri kriti - Emani Migula in praise of Panchanadeeswara and Dharmasamvardhini of the Panchanada (Tiruvayyaru) Kshetra. She sang neraval using the charanam phrase - PanchanadaKaveri Teeramuna. Akkarai Subhalakshmi was a spirited foil in the ensuing kalpanaswara. Manoj Siva rounded out the almost hour-long rendition with a well-balanced tanAvarthanam.

Gayathri then gave us a quick ManavyalakincharA in NalinKanthi before starting on the Ragam Thatham Pallavi in Gowermanohari. Both Gayathri and Subhalakshmi displayed her virtuosity in the ragam and the thanam. The pallavi was in Tiara Jampa Thalai in Kanda nadai - Guruvai AruLvAi Ghana, Pazhani VaLar KandhA Nee (Guruvai). The RTP had the customary sprinkling of extra ragams such as HamsanAdham, Bilahari and KAnada. All in all, it was not a very spectacular RTP but satisfying.

In the tukkada portion of the concert, Gayathri sang a Tamil composition in Kanada before singing a very lilting Purandaradasa Kriti in Kapoorvadi - Yadava Ni Ba, Yadukula Nandaa. This was followed by Gopalkrishna Bharati's VaruvarO varam taruvarO in Ragam sAmrA. The other tukkadas included a Periaudwarp Pasuram - Madi Ondru followed by a Kavadi Chindu and a very lyrically driven Thillana composed by Oothukkudu Venkata Subbayer in Surutti. Rounding out with a Bhajan in Desh, Gayathri, Subhalakshmi and Manoj Siva provided us with a very enjoyable concert that evening.

As you know all these performances are becoming very expensive. For several years now, Sruti has been very fortunate to receive grants from the Philadelphia Music Program and Dance Advance organizations. Both these grants are funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Without the financial support from funding organizations, we almost certainly could not have presented the programs we did. For two years in a row now, we have not been successful in obtaining a grant from Dance Advance, which will begin to affect our programming. It is also important to note that this BOD (as practically every BOD before us) is exercising strict fiscal responsibility, where practically every dollar raised goes towards programing. As described in my letter elsewhere in the newsletter, if we relied only on ticket sales, the results would be disastrous in terms of the number of programs and quality. We probably could organize mostly house concerts and just one or two world-class artists!

A primary factor that positively influences the granting organizations is the sustained member commitment, contributions and event attendance. To continue to grow the Indian classical performing arts base, and to bring even more exciting programs that interest the Sruti audience, we need to improve the funding and attendance at these programs. To this end, we intend to continue to increase the core annual support and funding base from among our own members that can generously support the organization. The Core Annual Support membership, that we established last year will continue this year at $100.

The benefits include:
• Premium seat passes to all events including premium presentations (e.g., dance ballets) for you, your spouse and children.
• Recordings (CD's) of all concerts presented during the year where available.
• A tax deductibility of $250.
• Recognition in select Sruti publications and events.
• A warm and rewarding feeling for being one of the strongest supporters of an organization that we all hold dear.

I encourage all of you to extend the level of support you have provided to SRUTI, by signing on to become a Core Annual Supporter of the organization.

Best wishes to you and your family; we will see you at the Thyagaraja Aradhana on March 15 2008 and at all the year’s Sruti events. Thank you very much for your time and your continued support.

C. Nataraj
President, Board of Directors

Please mail your annual core supporter checks payable to Sruti, Attn: Venkat Kilambi – Treasurer, 3055 Higley Road, Aubudon, PA 19403-1836.

Sruti Members in the News

Upcoming Performances by Members

This year Sruti is proud to announce that our local talent will be represented at the Cleveland Aradhana festival. Revathi Subramony, an accomplished All India Radio rated vocalist will be performing at the Cleveland Aradhana festival this year. Please be certain to attend her concert if you are in Cleveland for the Aradhana. Revathi’s concert is scheduled for Thursday, March 27 at 1pm.

Revathi started learning vocal Carnatic music at an early age from Dr. Neela Ramgopal and was trained in the classical style of the Late Sri. T.K. Rangachari. She has won prizes from institutions like the Mu

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Ashraya Ananthanarayanan a 7 year old received the title of "Child Ambassador" from PFA, India for her community involvement and social service at this tender age. She did also do a few fund raisers for PFA through her carnatic Violin and Vocal performances.

Reviews

High Octane Music - Hyderabad Brothers Concert

Review by Rasikan

Hyderabad Brothers (Raghavachary, Seshachary) are veteran musicians well known for their adherence to classicism in their concerts. Some high energy renderings and able accompaniments by S. Varadarajan (vocal) and K.S. Prasad (mridangam) culminated in a very enjoyable SRUTI concert on September 15, '07. From the well known (nava) ragamalika varanam (Valsaichi suchi) there was nary a dull moment right up to the mangalam. The alapanas especially for Sankarabharanam and Shanmukhapriya were brilliant.

After the varnam, the brothers rendered Vatapi Ganagthim the ever popular Hamsadwani kriti of Dikshitar. Perhaps since the day was Ganesh Chaturthi they followed with another kriti on Ganesha, Pranamam in Saveri. Subramanyam in Shannmukhapriya was the next piece. This pallavi of this kriti has some nice rhythm oriented phrases and it was interesting to hear the interplay between the Brothers and Prasad.

The Brothers announced that the last two pieces are the compositions of Sri Bharati Tirtha, the head of Sringeri Mutt. Both the kritis were unfamiliar to the writer. Apparently they were only partially familiar to the Brothers also, since they whipped out some notes and were singing out of them. [More later about this modern habit of looking at a book or paper while rendering kritis.]

A feature of the concert was that the Brothers prefaced each kriti with an alapana, even for relatively minor ragams like Bahudari (Brova barama, Thyagaraja) and Kalavathy (Ennadu joothano, Thyagaja).

Many people associate pathos with the ragam Mukhari (e.g. Enraikku Siva kripai - Neelakanta Sivan). Minor ragams like Bahudari (Brova barama, Thyagaraja) and Kalavathy (Ennadu joothano, Thyagaja) have some nice rhythm oriented phrases and it was interesting to hear the interplay between the Brothers and Prasad.

The piece de resistance of the evening was Sankaraabharanam. Seshachary rendered a very elaborate alapana punctured by some nice reponses from Varadarajan elucidating the characteristic adhi (there) and anta (that's it) from the former. The alapana from Varadarajan, however, was rather sedate. Since it was nearly two hours into the concert, I expected thanam, pallavi. Instead the Brothers rendered the Thyagaraja masterpiece, Enduku peddalavala with regulation neral, swarams, at Veda sastra (start of charanam) and the thani.

Again, since it was almost two and half hours into the concert, I thought the Brothers would start the lighter pieces. However, they found the time and energy to present a short but crisp RTP in Keeravani.

The post pallavi segment consisted of two lilting javalis (Meragadu, in Atana and Ithathi in Kalyani.). The concert concluded with a Annamacharya keeritana (Garudagnamana in Hindolam) followed by the mangalam.

All in all a very satisfying concert.

p.s. It seems to be a growing tendency among the current day Carnatic music singers to refer to a book or notes while rendering some kritis/songs. A few do so surreptitiously hiding them behind the sruti box, while others make it more blatant. I have a problem with this. It seems to me that the musician has not practiced the kritis well enough before the concert. When I go to concerts by professionals I expect that the musicians know what they are going to present having well learnt the pieces and giving their personal touches to them. However, singing (reading) from books/notes clearly indicates that they have not learnt the pieces well enough. If they had only partially learnt the kritis, why is there a need to present them? And it looks very unprofessional to present half-baked ideas. An occasional lapse of memory is understandable, but not whole pieces.