From the Editors

It gives us great pleasure to introduce ourselves as the newly formed Library Committee for the years 1998 and 1999. We make our debut with the introduction of SRUTI NOTES. This newsletter is in response to a strong need (expressed by several members at a special meeting in October of last year) for establishing a medium for regular communication between the organizing committees, members and other supporters. Published quarterly, this publication will keep you informed of current events of SRUTI and the rest of the world of Classical Music and Dance. In addition, it will also feature reviews of recent SRUTI concerts, articles relevant to Classical Music and Dance, a youth section, community news and updates from sister organizations in the area.

Upholding the tradition, we will continue to publish Sruti Ranjani, which will remain our major publication for original articles, concert reviews, etc.

Critical to this new venture is the participation of our readers. We would like SRUTI NOTES to be a forum for feedback and discussion relating to music and dance from our readers (readers can post questions and answers). Music and dance enthusiasts amongst you are also urged to join the pool of contributors and enhance our journalistic strength.

We hope to have a regular youth section managed by young volunteers under the guidance of the Library Committee. This section will contain articles, quizzes, puzzles, cryptoquotes etc., for youth. We urge the parents to encourage their children to participate.

Besides the enthusiastic efforts of the volunteers, SRUTI NOTES also needs financial support to cover the cost of publication and distribution. We request entrepreneurs among you to use this forum to advertise and promote your business ventures. In this regard, we are introducing ‘Sponsor a song or raga’. The reader can, for a nominal contribution, sponsor his or her favorite song or raga; SRUTI NOTES will publish the text, music and the English translation of the song or an in-depth analysis of the raga by one of our volunteers. To sponsor or volunteer, please call a member of the Library Committee.

We also invite SRUTI members to share the news of important achievements and milestones (births, weddings, graduations, awards, arangetrams, etc.) in their lives with the SRUTI community.

We hope that this publication will meet with your expectations and we look forward to an exciting tenure with SRUTI.

From the Editors
- From the President’s Desk
- Report from Resource Committee
- Review of Kadri Gopalnath’s concert
- Review of T.N. Krishnan’s concert
- Interview with Kadri Gopalnath
- Classical Dances of India

Review of Prithvi Mohan’s concert
- Report of Dance performance by Natya students
- Bharat Rama for MS
- Tidbits - web sites and cryptoquote
- Natraj: Lord of Dance
- Community News
- List of SRUTI tapes

M.S. Subbulakshmi awarded Bharat Ratna.
see article on page 5
From the President’s Desk

Dear SRUTI Supporters,

A very happy new year to you and your families. On November 23, 1997 the membership of SRUTI at its general body meeting elected a new managing committee (now known as the Board of Directors) for a two year term starting January 1998. On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to thank the membership for giving us this opportunity and sincerely hope that we will be able to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization.

We would like to extend our deepest appreciation for the outgoing managing committee for a tremendous effort put forth during the past two years. All of us who have been closely associated with SRUTI will always remember their efforts in presenting the various programs especially the tenth anniversary program. Their ability in obtaining grants and funding from different organizations have helped SRUTI become financially the strongest ever since its inception.

Since taking office, the Board of Directors has met on more than one occasion already and made some progress which I would like to share with you. We have nominated the two main committees, namely the Resource Committee and the Library Committee. The members of the Library Committee are Uma Prabhakar (Chairperson), Mani Subramaniam, Viji Swaminathan and Rama Gundurao. The members of the Resource Committee are Dinakar Subramanian, P. Swaminathan, Ramana Kanumalla, Usha Balasubramaniam and Prabhakar Chitrapsu, with the last two being members as per Sruti by-laws. We would like to sincerely thank these members for volunteering to give their services to the organization. We are presently in the process of selecting the Technical committee. If you or anyone you know is interested in serving on the committee, please let us know.

Finally, we have also initiated the process of finalizing the concert events for this year. We are starting the year as usual with the Thyagaraja Aradhana on February 28th. We hope to have an impressive line up of programs which will include among others N. Ramani, Lalgudi G.J.R. Krishnan, Shoba Sharma and Ravi Kiran. We look forward to your continued support and attendance at the concerts and also hope that you will introduce SRUTI to your friends.

For the Board of Directors, SRUTI Sudhakar Rao

A new feature that we are introducing is a Sruti Newsletter, to be brought out quarterly by the Library Committee. Perhaps the most important function, as envisioned by the Board of Directors, is to provide a regular communication medium. While it gives the Board of Directors and other committees an opportunity to communicate to you the happenings in the organization, perhaps even more importantly, it gives the members a platform to communicate back to us what you think. Whether it is complimentary or critical, we strongly urge and sincerely hope that you will use this means to improve our collective performance.

Concert Reviews

Kadri Gopalnath & Kanyakumari - A synergistic combination

Review by S. Sankaran

The last formal Sruti concert of the year 1997 was a long and resounding one, with Kadri on the Saxophone, ably accompanied by experienced artists Kanyakumari on the Violin and Guruvayur Durai on the Mridangam. Kanyakumari, on this occasion used a special base violin which blended well with the Saxophone. It was almost indistinguishable from the Saxophone at times.

Gopalnath warmed up quickly with the brisk rendering of the unique, well-known Navaraga Varnam of Patnam Subramania Iyer and the less known Thyagaraja kriti Abheeshta Varada in Hamsadwani on Lord Ganesha. (It has been a mystery to me why so many kritis on Ganesha are in Hamsadwani.)

The concert then entered a calm phase with the rendering of Syama Sastri's Swarajathi in Bhairavi, which was rendered more like a Jugalbandhi at the suggestion of the main artist. The mood became even more serene when he started playing the alapana of the raga Nasiakabhooshani, leaving it to the audience to guess that unusual raga. This made the audience listen more intently.
The alapana on the Saxophone sounded choppy at times, but Kanyakumari’s follow-up was smooth and it heightened the feeling. This was followed by a profound rendering of the rare ‘Thyagaraja’ kriti Maravairi Ramani which showed his versatility and mastery of that loud woodwind instrument, which requires some energy and expertise to produce the kind of variations he did. At one point in the charanam, he held his breath and sustained one note for 22 seconds, which - in terms of the familiar Adi Talam in medium tempo -would span more than 4 Avardhanams (or Thala cycles). (Incidentally this piece does not contain Thyagaraja’s name in it. Scholars doubt if it was written by him.)

He then switched to fast tempo and played the vibrant kriti Raghuvamsa Sudha of Patnam Subramania Iyer, which seemed to go very well with his instrument. This was followed by the Thyagaraja kriti Rama nee samaana mevaru, which he played with feeling, but almost like an interlude without alapana or much of other embellishments. (It seems someone had requested him to sing Karaharapiyya with the hope that he would do so in a grand & elaborate manner.) This was followed by an Intermission.

The main and most impressive work of the evening was the Ragam, Thanam & Pallavi in Kapi. The alapana on the Saxophone covering the range of two octaves in a detailed and systematic way was probably the best part of the whole concert. This, and Kanyakumari’s rendering of it on the Violin drew a strong and well-deserved applause from the audience. The alternation of Saxophone and Violin in the Thanam part was very elegant.

In the rendering of the pallavi, the initial part in the raga Kapi was brief and without any ‘Niraval’, as is often the case these days. In the Ragamalika part, as Gopalnath announced, he and the violinist played swaras in different ragas, thus presenting the audience with more ragas -a pleasant surprise in my opinion. The pallavi concluded with an impressive swara sequence back in the main raga Kapi. This was followed by a thundering Mridangam solo by Guruvayur Durai.

In the next piece Govinda by Purandara Dasa, the listener was at once intrigued by the rare raga Jana-Samodhini and drowned in the devotional mood. This was followed by the familiar lilting melody ‘Krishna Nee Begane’ in Yamuna Kalyani.

The last part of the concert included more devotional songs by Purandara Dasa and KanakaDasa, a brisk Thillana by Swathi Thirunal and the enchanting snake-charmer’s music or ‘Magudi’.

Though this concert was not "Classicism at its best", there was not a single dull moment. It included a variety of musical forms, tempo and moods. The two mature artists Gopalnath and Kanyakumari blended well and made the evening a very pleasant one for all. The deviation from the traditional concept of the ‘accompanist’ was a welcome change. I played the recordings of his last concert in this area more than 10 years ago (May 24, 1987). There was a world of difference, and his music has evolved a lot. Besides the accompanists then were not as experienced as this time. In fact the violinist then was a Professor of Physics by profession.

The concert concluded peacefully with the rendering of ‘Bhagyada Lakshmi’ by Purandara Dasa in the raga Madhyamavathi.

Sankaran is a music enthusiast and a strong supporter of SRUTI.

T. N. Krishnan’s violin concert
Review by Meena Pennathur

The reminiscences and relishes of life’s happiness have a way of lingering with one long after they are past. One such event for me was T. N. Krishnan’s violin concert arranged by SRUTI on October 1997. He was ably accompanied by his daughter Viji Krishnan on the violin, Harikumar on the mridangam and Vaikom Gopalakrishnan on the ghatam. Right from the start (with the Viriboni ata thala varnam) the concert had a unique character to it. This, in spite of the fact that not a single piece that he played was new to me. The ragas in the concert were also by no means out of the ordinary. But I felt as if I were a first time listener.

He eased into Ravichandrika (Niravadi sukhada) and as I was observing the audience I could not help smiling, for even the children were rhythmically moving their heads. Durmarghachara in Ranjani was melodious. The alapana in Bilahari (mainly played by Viji) was superlative. I was told (and later on I verified it to be true) that her fingering and bowing employed the best of both the eastern and western techniques. Varanarada in Vijayasi, Manayvala in Nalinakanti and Samajavargamana in Hindolam, common pieces as they are, were superb.

RTP was in Kambodi and father and daughter did full justice to the raga. One of the outstanding songs of the evening was Raghuvamsasutha in Kadakuthuhalam (what a fitting name to the raga). They also played Sri Venkata Girisam in Surati, Chandrasekhar in Sindhubairavi and concluded the concert with mangalam.

The 2 pieces I enjoyed most were Eppo varavaro in Jonpuri and the ragamalika English note. For days to follow I had flash backs of Madurai Mani Iyer’s concerts with T.N. Krishnan’s accompaniment. People pass away but their music stays with us for ever. I thank T.N. Krishnan and his daughter for keeping music and musician alive in our memory.

Meena Pennathur is interested in social work and music. She has served on earlier SRUTI committees.

Youths to the fore
An Interview with
Sri Kadri Gopalnath
By Sumanth Swaminathan

In November of 1997, I had the privilege of speaking with the famous saxophone artiste Sri Kadri Gopalnath when he was our guest before his performance for SRUTI. As a beginner learning to play Carnatic Music on the Saxophone, I very much wanted to learn more about his initial experience trying to master the alien instrument. I asked him some questions about his life and career, which he answered very candidly. I found him to be a very friendly, forthright, modest and charming person.

Q- Who or what influenced you to start playing the saxophone?

A- I had visited the Mysore palace and seen a number of instruments there. I had to do something after my education and took an interest in the saxophone. I later purchased one for myself in Hyderabad for Rs.165.

Q - Did you have a mentor while learning to play saxophone?

A - I learned to play on my own with my vocal music blended because during that time nobody ever played the saxophone.

Q - Since the saxophone was not a popular instrument during that time, how did the public react to your playing it?

A - When I first started learning, my father said, "do not play this instrument." I said that I liked to play the instrument. After playing for others, people began to love my music. With time, they only liked my instrument more and more.

Q - Currently, do you have any students?

A - I teach at a school in Mangalore for vocal and instrumental training.

The school is called Kalaniketana and there are several teachers for all different areas of learning.

Q - Is your saxophone different from saxophones in the west? Have you modified it in any way to suit Indian Classical Music?

A - I have pounded leather-type materials into the six main finger plates of the saxophone. This allows a gliding type sound when going from note to note in order to play the gamaka.

Q - Of the four main types of saxophones, how many do you know how to play? Of those, which one do you prefer to play?

A - I know how to play the soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones. I prefer to play the alto in concert simply because its range of notes is perfectly suited for Indian classical music and I am able to sit down and play it in concert comfortably.

Q - Do you travel a lot when giving your concerts?

A - I do travel on a regular basis. I have been traveling a lot more than normal more recently.

Q - When was your first public performance?

A - I used to play at weddings, Sattryanarayana pujas, etc. People were very impressed by my playing. My first major performance was in 1972 for the Chembai Memorial Trust.

Q - Is there a particular ragam that is more difficult to play than others?

A - All ragams come with practice. However, I would think that Bhairavi is the toughest ragam I have come across because of the Ni and Da.

Q - What advice would you give to a beginner like myself?

A - I think that the only way to get better and better is by constant practice. It can be frustrating many times dealing with an unusual instrument in Indian Classical music. But all things come with dedication and practice.

Sumanth is a 14 year old, ninth grader. He learns Carnatic music, vocal and saxophone, from Sri T.N. Bala.

Classical Dances of India
by Anita Seth

Bharata Natyam is an ancient classical dance of India. Rukmini Devi revived dance while it was almost extinct. She started learning in her 30's. She also started Kalakshetra (dance and music school). Many dancers have been influenced by her.

Today many artists are dancing Bharata Natyam and many different classical styles all over the world. Some of these styles are, Kathak, Kathakali, Odissi Kuchipudi etc.

Kathakali is a very interesting dance style. The dancers paint their faces to match the character they are representing. It is usually done as a dance drama. Usually they do the Ramayana, Mahabharata and many other different stories like that.

Kathak is a completely different dance style. It is most of the time done by one to three dancers. It mostly tells stories about Krishna, and Jayadeva's Ashtapadis. Their footwork is also very intricate. It is so intricate that out of all the bells on a shalanga they can make one bell sound.

Kuchipudi is another dance style much like Bharata Natyam. There are also other forms of classical dances. Anita is a 11-year old sixth grader. She is a student of the Natya School of Dance.
Mini Concert by Prithvi Mohan

Review by Rasikan

Imagine a youngster lad all of 12 years sitting confidently on a carpet all ready to give a concert; on his left another young man, although a senior, playing the violin and on the right a teen ager delicately nursing a mridangam. You have the picture of the mini concert arranged by SRUTI as part of the General body/Election meeting on 23 November at Paxon Hollow Middle School. The concert featured Prithvi Mohan accompanied by K.S. Mani on the violin and Gautam Sriman (a student at the University of Maryland) on the mridangam. Due to the length of the general body meeting proceedings, the concert started late. But that did not seem to have had much of an effect on young Prithvi Mohan who lives with his parents in the DC area. Prithvi takes lessons from D.K. Nagarajan, a brother of the legendary D.K. Pattammal. Prithvi started off with the Purandara Dasa kriti Gajavadana beduve in Kedaram (many sing this kriti in Hamsadwani also). After a crisp Seethamma (Vasantha, Thyagaraja), Prithvi settled down to an elaborate Kambhoji. Kambhoji is a quintessential Carnatic music ragam of great beauty and grandeur. Prithvi sang the ragam with great assurance followed by the Gopala Krishna Bharathy kriti Thiruvadi charanam. I felt that the choice of this kriti, despite its beauty was not appropriate for a youngster of Prithvi’s age, because of the lyrics which express despondency at the repeated cycle of birth and death and attendant sorrow. Prithvi included a short neralav and swaraprastaram before yielding the stage to the other youngster for a delectable tani on the mridangam. Prithvi included a javali Cheli nenatul sakhinchane which only amused me, because of the lyrics where a nayaki describes the pangs of her sorrow at the separation with the nayaka. K.S. Mani (who has played in many SRUTI concerts) did not let the difference in age interfere with giving very good support to Prithvi. I am sure Prithvi appreciated Mani accompanying him and it also reflects on Mani’s broad mindedness.

In an effort to encourage budding artists in this area, SRUTI arranged Prithvi Mohan’s music concert and a subsequent dance performance (see below) by students of Natya to mark its General body meeting last year.

Rasikan is a strong supporter of SRUTI and a frequent contributor to SRUTI publications.

Bharat Ratna for M.S. Subbulakshmi

Renowned classical vocalist M.S. Subbulakshmi has been chosen for the nation’s highest civilian award Bharat Ratna. A legend in her lifetime, M.S. Subbulakshmi, who has enthralled audiences throughout the world, is well known for her rendition of carnatic classical music, bringing unparalleled glory to the realm of fine arts.

In her characteristic humble reaction to the announcement, the 82-year-old Sangeeta Kalanidhi said she was "grateful to the president for conferring upon me the highest honour of our land, which I accept in all humility". Popularly known as MS, she is adept at playing the veena too and has rendered bhajans, particularly those of Meera, attaining renown both at home and abroad.

She has performed at almost all the leading festivals the world over, including the well known Edinburgh festival in Scotland as also at the United Nations in 1966. Among the honours conferred on her abroad, was the Ramon Magsaysay award. At home, she had earlier been awarded the 'Padma Bhushan' and 'Padma Vibhushan.'

Much has been written about MS and much can be written about her. In a future issue of the publication we hope to publish an in-depth article on the great artist.

Dance Performance

Report by Uma Prabhakar

Students of the Natya School of Bharatanatyam gave a delightful dance performance at the Paxon Hollow Middle School auditorium, following the SRUTI general body meeting held on November 23, 1997. The participants were Vani Siva, Samhita Udupa, Shilpa Narayan, Swati Bala, Anusha Bala, Shuba Bhat and Anita Seth. The evening’s performance began with Mallari (in Gambhir Nattai, Eka Talam), an invocatory piece. The next item was a Shabdam, Aayar cheriyar in ragamalika set to misrachapu talam. Following this was a solo by Vani Siva who performed a Varnam, Rupamu chuci (Todi, Adi Talam), dedicated to Lord Shiva. The program ended with a lively Thillana in Hindolam, adi talam and the traditional Mangalam. Vocal support was provided by Praba Subramaniam and Sumati Sarangan. Shoba Sharma, the Guru, provided the nattuvangam. Other musical accompaniments included Prakash Rao on mridangam, Bhavani Prakash Rao on flute and K.S. Mani on violin.

It is very gratifying to see many of the next generation American-Indians learning and performing the classical arts and to see the seed sown by the first generation sprouting.
CRYPTOQUOTE

Deciphering encrypted messages is a favorite word pastime among many people. Readers of Philadelphia Inquirer/Daily News may be familiar with Cryptoquote in the crossword puzzle section. A cryptoquote typically contains a quotation in which each letter of the alphabet is replaced by some other (encrypted) alphabet. The object is to figure out the original quotation. We propose to publish a similar cryptosong with each issue of Sruti notes. To whet your appetite we give below (what we think) a simple crypto_song. Hint: it is the pallavi of a very popular Thyagaraja kriti in Kalyani. In future publications, we will publish (again in our opinion) more challenging cryptosongs. We hope this will be a popular segment of SRUTI Notes and as in the case of almost all of our other segments, we invite our readers to contribute to this segment also.

CRYPTO_SONG
QLGKL VDOD VXNKDPD, UDPXQL VDQQLGKL VRAD VXNKDPD, LMPDXXKD SDOXX PDQDVD

Nataraja: Lord of Dance
Source: Brittanica

The dance executed by Shiva as king of dancers (Nataraja), the visible symbol of the rhythm of the universe, represents God’s five activities: he unfolds the universe out of the drum held in one of his right hands; he preserves it by uplifting his other right hand in abhaya-mudra; he reabsorbs it with his upper left hand, which bears a tongue of flame; his transcendental essence is hidden behind the garb of apparitions, and grace is bestowed and release made visible by the foot that is held aloft and to which the hands are made to point; and the other foot, planted on the ground, gives an abode to the tired souls struggling in samsara.

Another dance pose adopted by Shiva is the doomsday tandava, executed in his destructive Bhairava manifestation, usually with 10 arms and accompanied by Devi and demons. The related myth is that Shiva conquered a mighty elephant demon whom he forced to dance until he fell dead; then, wrapped in the blood dripping skin of his victim.

SRUTI Concert Tapes

1. Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna (Vocal) 1989 (2)
2. Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna (Vocal) & 1990 (3)
3. Dr. M. Balamurali Krishna (vocal) 1991 (3)
4. Dr. M. Balamurali Krishna (vocal) 1992 (3)
5. N. Ramani (Flute), 1989 (2)
6. N. Ramani (Flute), 1992 (2)
7. Dr. C. Chittibabu (Veena), 1994 (2)
8. U. Srinivas (Mandolin), 1990 (2)
9. U. Srinivas, 1993 (2)
10. Sudha Raghunathan (Vocal), 1992 (3)
11. Maharajapuram Santhanam & Srinivasan (Vocal), 1989 (2)
12. N. Ramani (Flute), 1992 (2)
13. N. Ramani (Flute), 1993 (2)
14. N. Ramani (Flute) & 1990 (3)
15. Ravi Kiran (Chitra Veena), 1994 (2)
16. Ravi Kiran (Chitra Veena), 1995 (2)

Community News

Purandara Jayanthi - Triveni, the Kannada Association, will celebrate the tenth annual Purandara Jayanthi on March 21, 1998 (1:30 - 7 PM) at the Hindu Temple in Berlin, NJ. The event will feature a vocal concert by Vani Satish, accompanied by Satish on the violin and Mysore Venkatesh on the Mridangam. People who would like to participate and pay tribute to the great composer may contact Bharathi Sena (609-778-0278) or Umesh Jois (609-875-8242).

Tamil Association of Greater Delaware Valley presents Couples Night on Saturday February 14, 1998 to celebrate Valentine’s day. For tickets and information, call Vasantha Narayanan 610-526-0615.

Telugu Association of Greater Delaware Valley announces the Sixth North America Telugu Cultural Competitions to be held on May 9, 1998 at Centennial High School, Warminster, PA. Competitions will be held in several age categories for plays, folk dances and light songs. For more information and entries, please call Patri Prasad at 215-672-4365.
The musical notation shown on the cover page is the scale of raga Nattai. In ascent scale it usually moves as a five-note scale - sa ga ma pa ni sa. In descent - sa ni pa ma ri sa. The ri (D#) is considered the ‘life note’ of the raga.
SRUTI MEMBERSHIP FORM

Mail check and form to
SRUTI
The India Music & Dance Society
1346 Cernan Lane
Blue Bell, PA 19422

Name: ____________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
Phone Number: ___________________ Email: ___________________

Type of membership (check box):
Regular $25 □   Life $100 □   Patron/Donor * □

* For details, please call any member of the Board of Directors.
Secondary Article Heading

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