



SRUTI NOTES

SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society

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FROM THE LIBRARY COMMITTEE

Dear members,

The August issue of Sruti Notes is here and we hope that you find it interesting as a recap of what you enjoyed in the previous months. Besides the usual president's letter we have included a summary of a business activity that started a few months ago; we hope to see it end amicably in the near future. In the meanwhile we will keep the members posted as to what is going on and its progress as and when we have something to report.

The August Notes has the reviews of all the music programs we had since our last publication. It has the last of teacher-student impressions also. We are delighted that we have been able to get an advertisement in this issue and we welcome this opportunity to be of service to the cultural activities of the community besides being able to defray some of our publication expenses.

We are trying to get technical articles for inclusion in the Sruti Notes depending upon the availability of space and we really encourage members to send what they feel will benefit the other readers. We also want to take this opportunity to invite articles to be included in the annual Sruti Ranjani, 2004. The target date for receiving the articles is the 25th of September. Please send them as attachments by e-mail to me. Pictures are welcome but, please, check with us first.

Thank you.

Sarada
Chair, Library Committee

Note to contributors

Sruti publications can only get better with active participation from the readers. Hence, we would like to emphasize that your contributions are very welcome. However, in order to avoid any misunderstandings, and to protect the rights of our beloved organization, we would like to list a few guidelines. Your articles are extremely important to us and we hope these simple guidelines will not scare away any of you potential contributors! As always, your feedback is welcome.

- ♦ Please note that submission of an article to this and other Sruti publications automatically implies that you are permitting Sruti to publish (and re-publish) the article in this and other publications, in the form of print, web, or any other medium.
- ♦ Your submissions will also be edited for typography, length, grammar, and clarity of content. If you have serious concerns about this, please request that you need to review the edited article before publication.
- ♦ All submitted material will be attributed to the author by name, unless withholding of the name is requested explicitly.
- ♦ The submissions need to be timely (five days before the scheduled date of publication) for inclusion in the newsletter.

Editor

From the President's Desk

Dear Sruti Friends:

I hope you are all having a safe and enjoyable summer!

As you know, we have completed a busy and successful spring season of concerts and events. They consisted of 1) Thyagaraja Aradhana, 2) Hindusthani Concert of Ustad Shujaat Khan (Sitar) & Pandit Debashish Bhattacharya (Slide Guitar), 3) Carnatic Vocal Concert by Vijaya Siva, 4) Flute Workshop & Mini-Concert by Dr. N. Ramani, 5) a Carnatic Violin Concert by Smt. A. Kanyakumari and 6) Tabla and Sitar Concert by Shafaatullah Khan. That averages to more than 1 concert a month! We hope you attended and enjoyed the events. We look forward to continuing support and patronage.

We have an equally attractive and busy Fall season in the works. Our first event will be a Carnatic Vocal Concert by Sanjay Subrahmanian on 11 September, whose details are provided in the accompanying flyer. Please make every effort to attend and bring your family and friends along. There is nothing that is more satisfying for the organizers and performers than to see a big audience.

This will be followed by a South Indian dance production called Gajamukha, by Dr. Jayanthi Raman and troupe. With dancers and musicians from India and USA, this is a major event for us, which we are cosponsoring with Drexel University on October 9. The next event will be a unique Carnatic Rhythm Ensemble Concert led by legendary Padma Bhushan Umayalpuram Sivaraman on October 30. The next event will be our annual Sruti Day, providing a forum for showcasing our local talent in music and dance. We are tentatively targeting Nov 20 for this event. We plan to cap the year with a rare event in which our local music teacher/musician Sri T.N. Bala will present with his students his own composition set called Muruga Rathnakaram. Written in Tamil, these are musically related to Saint Thyagaraja's Ghana Raga Pancharathnas and will especially appeal to our Tamil speaking friends. This event will combine a General Body meeting, which will also serve as our "mid term review" by you!

The Resource Committee, the Library Committee and the Technical Committee have been diligently working away and providing us with, among other things, funds, publications and CD recordings respectively. The By-Laws Ad-Hoc committee is progressing with its assignment and is expected to submit their report to the BoD in September time frame. Our sincere thanks to all of them.

I look forward to seeing you all at the upcoming Sruti events!

With warm regards and thanks,

Prabhakar Chitrapu, President.

Shafaatullah Khan on Sitar and Tabla: A Review

Kalpana Patankar

On July 11th Shafaatullah Khan delighted the audience with a scintillating tabla solo and a sitar concert at the International House, Philadelphia. Shafaatji delivered an elegant and inspired performance embellished by the melodious sarangi accompaniment of Pandit Ramesh Mishra. *Peshkar* – ancient compositions and improvisations in slow *teentaal* (16 beat rhythm cycle) were executed with precision. Shafaatji has been well indoctrinated in this art by his teacher Ustad Ibrahim Khansaheb. The pace steadily picked up. In *madhya laya* listeners were further entranced by intricate patterns ending with *chakradar tihais* (patterns of three played three times in succession) which were accurate to the millisecond. The legacy of Rampur, Farrakhabad, and other Gharanas of tabla masters were enthusiastically presented by Shafaatji's deft fingers. This section was interspersed by many pieces which were simultaneously recited and played at a fast clip! The fast beat had four beat rhythms with dramatic off and on beat improvisations ending with a thunderous climax! He was accompanied on tanpura by his students Devi and Anjani.

What a treat this was for an audience that had already seen an excellent documentary on the tabla by Ustad Zakir Hussain.

This concert was like a double header with shifting emphasis! After intermission, Shafaatji displayed his mastery on the sitar. For a performer to have the ability to deliver both at this level is unique as most exponents of classical Indian music focus on one instrument. He executes a *gayaki* or vocal style of sitar playing. He is the eighth generation torch bearer of India's illustrious dynasty of sitarists. He was instructed in highly disciplined fashion from very young age by his father, Ustad Imrat Khan. Raga Khamaj was introduced in the slow movement of *alaap*. Moving on to *jod*, Shafaatji elaborated fluid *meend* and *gamak* techniques with left hand while the right hand played fast rhythmic patterns using the main and *chikari* strings. Being a light and romantic Raga, he chose to play it in a happy playful mood with lot of delicate *krintans* that brought light overtones. A medium speed composition in *teentaal* was followed by a faster paced piece composed by his grandfather Ustad Enayat Khan. Fast *taans* were played –some with long slides from octave to octave, others with *meend* and *gamak*. The final phase was *jhala* in ultra fast or *ati drut* pace which ended with a masterful climax. Amit Das accompanied him on tabla, along with Ambika and Priyanka on the tanpura. After the standing ovation, I heard a comment made by a connoisseur of guitar who was sitting behind me: "Is he the Jimmi Hendrix of Sitar?"

I do know that he is a dedicated musician who devotes his time perfecting his art and believes in passing it on to many students. We are fortunate to have him reside in the Delaware Valley when he is not performing around the world in other respected venues.

The opinions expressed by the contributors of articles and reviews are published in a spirit of openness of communication and freedom of expression. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Sruti's Board or its members.

Classical Music in USA: Teacher Perspectives

A series continued from the previous issue

T. N. Bala

Carnatic music has been my pastime and hobby all my working years which turned into a passion since my retirement. During the past thirty-four years, I had the privilege of teaching music to a host of students, young and old, men and women, adults and children, mostly in this country. For several years I used to travel every weekend to many places in the east coast for music sessions with my student groups as well as individuals.

My passion has its deep root in my belief that there is music in every one of us. It is like a seed buried in us waiting to bloom if one could dig it out and nurture it. The time it takes to bloom depends on how deep the seed is buried. I also believe that music is one source available to every human being to experience absolute peace of mind and tranquility. This experience is sometimes intellectual, other times emotional. While the science and grammar of music may appeal to the intellectual, the enjoyment of music is emotional as it is universal. It is in this emotional appeal, I believe, absolute music thrives. If I was an instrument in transmitting this emotional appeal to my students, adults or children, I rest contented having earned their respect.

This brings us to the role a teacher can play in encouraging the appreciation of our carnatic music system. If you ask me, the first prerequisite of a teacher is to have been himself or herself a serious student. It teaches such a teacher the value of patience, perseverance and compassion. I shall never forget how my teacher had to put up with my inadequacies and forgave me many times to win his love and respect. Let us not lose sight that the greatest reward and satisfaction a teacher gets is the love and respect from one's students.

The next requisite is the awareness that one ceases to be a teacher if he or she stops listening to or learning from his or her students. It is a two-way channel of communication which reinforces understanding of each other's limitations. This may seem contrary to the traditional belief that the student is at the receiving end and has no say in the matter. On the contrary, my experience is the more a teacher gives the more the love and respect he receives from his disciples. The attribute of a good teacher, as I see it, is not necessarily to be a strict disciplinarian but to be a compassionate and understanding companion to the student.

The third and the last requisite of an understanding teacher is to be constantly updated and keep an open mind to receive new knowledge and discard obsolete values. Being a student myself, I claim no expertise to advise any one in this area except to reiterate that the above-mentioned requisites be respected and adhered to. I acknowledge it is quite a challenge to undertake the task of teaching a very complex and complicated system of music to children growing in a different cultural environment with little or no exposure to the tradition or musical sound or experience. Teachers embarking on this arduous assignment to keep con-

nected to the roots of our culture are to be applauded for their dedication.

Back home when I was in India recently, I had an opportunity to briefly teach some students, especially young ones. The problems of accent, intonation, musical expression, mannerisms, gestures were not so acute as I find in young students here in US. It is understandable. Teachers as well as listeners get used to the inadequacies of our children with respect to the above values in our music. The teacher develops a kind of acceptance to whatever is possible without sacrificing the spirit and semantics of our musical system.

At the same time, in India, I had the occasion to meet with music teachers as well who were curious to know about my students and how they par with their students. Though I did not want to minimize the problems of music teachers in native environment, there were some advantages for them, despite many similarities in their approach. Students in US, particularly, children, encounter some unique handicaps which need to be addressed specifically by the teacher. It is understandable in that each child or young student has many demands to confirm during their formative learning years living in a far off land. It is a demand that does not exist back home. Besides, back home, the cultural living togetherness promotes native artistic values in a child, for that matter, even in adults. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to simulate such an environment in a foreign land. This is not to deny that, may be, one in ten may have an inherent gift or innate talent to master any art, whatever be the environmental conditioning. But, by and large, it is a task that the teacher has to focus on by devising ways and means to simulate the conducive climate to the student to appreciate and learn.

As for the traditional basic learning of notes or swaras, followed by progressive exercises leading up to more advanced rendition of different scales of melodies etc, those lessons and exercises by themselves do not necessarily create an appreciation or an appeal to a learner. Real interest does not sink in unless and until it is followed by a feeling of some accomplishment on the part of the learner. There is a built-in monotony at the initial stages which the learner has to overcome. It is the teacher who has to make it happen and to make it interesting and challenging. The teacher has to remember that overly engaging in unrealistic expectation would only breed in frustration and fatigue. Besides it will discourage the enthusiasm of the recipient.

Speaking for myself as a teacher in a foreign land, I sometimes end up having to teach carnatic music to children, and adults as well, who are geared by a mere drive or passion to learn the music with little or no cultural background. By a score of eight in a scale of one to ten, their zeal and curiosity

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in most cases surpass their ear or talent for music. Merely a musical scale of seven notes corresponding to seven basic notes in a keyboard instrument like harmonium seems to be the only basis for their understanding and appreciation of a musical system otherwise so profound in its import and appeal.

On such occasions, I do undertake the task of taking the uninitiated through a thorny path of unfamiliar territory towards a land of pleasant green pasture. For many the appeal ends with the keyboard representation of a melody. For some the appeal extends further into more subtle ramifications like gamakas, anuswaras, vivadhi swaras of melodies. Only a few transcend the limitation imposed by the finite musical note. Those are the few who have had the cultural background and familiarity of our musical sound. I believe that cultural background can be brought about by creating simulated environmental changes, even in a class room. There are those who believe that no matter how long and how much of effort one might take to learn a new system, if there was no cultural and environmental conditioning, atleast simulated, the result is usually superficial. Yet there are those who swear that intense study and total preoccupation would eventually cover up for the deficiency. Whatever it may be, I find that appreciation of our music grows very gradually, particularly, in children if they are encouraged to attend, listen and participate in musical events, local or abroad.

In my experience, I am amazed to find that a methodical “repetition” or, a better word “japam”, of lessons on a regular basis brings out the best in every student. I usually seek a promise from the student to spare at least half hour of practice thrice a week. I also tell my students that their best-rendered musical piece is the one that they had listened to and practiced the maximum number of times.

You should see the glee in their eyes once they are appreciated and recognized for their genuine effort to be at their best. As a teacher, nothing gives me more fulfillment than to hear my student say “I love your teaching, Mama.”

Violin concert by Kanyakumari and Embar Kannan: A Review

S. Sankaran

The concert began well with a Varnam in Natakuranji, followed by a kriti on Lord Ganesha in a traditional way. The third kriti 'Sri Viswanantham' (requested by a member before the concert) set the stage for the rest of the concert. (In a recording of this composition done in 1977 by M.L.Vasanthakumari accompanied by Kanyakumari, its duration was 11 minutes). However, in this concert it was embellished by sangathis added by the artists, and lasted 15 minutes. The artists' virtuosity was evident in the rendering.

The next composition (Dinamani Vamsa) was probably the major work in the concert. It was done with a detailed imaginative Alapana, followed by excellent rendering with creative niraval and karpana swaras. The 2 compositions of Thyagaraja which followed were a pleasant surprise, because we rarely hear them

these days. They were 'Raraama intithaka' in Asaveri and 'Yeti Yochanalu' in Kiranavali.

Syama Sathri's masterpiece - Swarajathi in Bhairavi - was faithfully rendered with excellence. However, here was a chance to let Embar Kannan play a greater role. I mean that the swara part and sahithya could have been played *alternately* by the main artist and Embar Kannan. But this was not done. After a few other pieces, the krithi 'Raghunatha Nannu' by Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar in the rare raga *SwaraRanjani* was briskly rendered. This is one of those ragas considered to be derived from Natabhairavi or from Karaharapriya depending on the singer (or scholar). *Salaga Bhairavi* is another such example.

The Ragam, Thanam, Pallavi was in two ragas Kapi and *Hamsavinodhini*. Kanyakumari later told me that a simple way to look at the second Raga is 'Sankaraparanam without the Panchamam'. I guess that is how she plays it (but there are other interpretations). Here again I was disappointed that the Alapanas for both the ragas were rendered by Kanyakumari herself. The pallavi was brief. Choosing a single raga would have been better perhaps. The last part of the concert was made up of light songs and bhajans in familiar ragas. It ended with 2 well-known compositions by Purandaradasa in Sindhubhairavi & Madyamavathi.

On the whole the concert was pleasant, with a balance of kritis from the Musical Trinity, PurandaraDasa and other composers. But I did not find any 'Peak experience' in it. However the significant deficiency was that it was not a Violin Duo with players of equal ability. Embar Kannan was just playing the 'second fiddle' most of the time. The concert by Violinists Ramesh & Kumaresh was also somewhat like this. But the present one was better. The Violin concert by Manjunath & Nagaraj was better than both of these.

Vijay Shiva Concert: A Review

Rasikan

Serene, elevating, absorbing are some of the attributes that come to mind in describing the concert that Vijaya Shiva gave for SRUTI on April 8, 2004 at St. Mary's hall of Villanova University. The choice of rakti ragams, the weightiness of kritis in them, the depth of presentations were all typical of the D.K.P/D.K.J school of music. The Begada, Yamuna Kalyani and Todi of that day would remain in my memory for a long time. Vijay was accompanied by R.K. Sriramkumar on the violin and J. Vaidyanathan on the mridangam.

The brisk *Deva Deva* of Swati Tirunal in Mayamalavagowla, Rupakam followed by the sedate *Mapala* (Asaveri, Adi, Thyagaraja) set the tone for the rest of the concert. After a brief alapana in Begada, Vijay presented a kriti of Syama sastry *Kamakshi*. For some reasons, this lyrical gem is not often heard on the concert circuits. After a delectable Reetigowla, *Chera ravademira* (Tyagaraja, Adi) came the *piece de resistance* of the concert, the majestic *Jambu pathe* (Yamuna Kalyani, Rupakam) a masterpiece by Dikshitar. The kriti is

one of his Pancha linga kritis extolling the manifestations of Siva among the five natural elements, in this case Appu (water), and is in praise of the deity in Tiruvanaikaval near Trichy in Tamil Nadu. The biographers of Dikshitar point out that he had visited Varanasi in his youth where he was exposed to the dhrupad style of North Indian music. The stately gait of that style is much in evidence in this kriti. I thought Vijay poured his heart and soul into the rendition. The audience felt so fully absorbed in it, it would have been nice if Vijay had paused for a few seconds at the conclusion of the kriti. Instead he sallied forth into a fast paced *Ika naina na* (Pushpalatika, Adi, Tirupathy Narayanaswamy). The change of pace was a little abrupt, I thought.

The main piece of the day was *Sri Krishnam bhaja* (Todi, Adi, Dikshitar). Vijay did full justice to the ragam, kriti, neraval and crisp swaraprastarams followed by the *thani* by J. Vaidyanathan.

After all the high octane music up to this point when Vijay started Khamas on a somewhat light note, I was sure he was beginning the last phase of the concert with some tukkadas. Sriramkumar for his part raised some chuckles by playing the opening bars of *Sujana jeevana*. Imagine my surprise when Vijay continued elaborating the ragam following it with a short thanam. The pallavi in Chapu talam was perfunctory. There was no attempt for laya vinyasam or (the obligatory) ragamalikai swarams. I really felt let down at that point. But Vijay was following a growing modern trend. Gone are the days when RTP would find the pride of place in a concert and musicians would present a major ragam with elaborate rhythm variations. During the past few years, I have heard RTP in such light weight ragams like Huseni, Desh, Bindumalini which do not give much scope for elaboration with the result that this segment seems to end before it starts!

To his credit, Vijay presented some delectable post pallavi pieces including a Tamil piece of Harikesanallu Muthiah Bhagavathar (*Aandavan darisanam*, Jonpuri), a Purandara dasa composition *Vittala* in Desh, another Tamil piece by Mayuram Viswanatha Sastry in Sindhu bhairavi and a Tirupukazh in Madhyamavathy.

It seemed to me that Sriramkumar was having a slightly off day. He is usually very dependable, but that day uncharacteristically there were a few slippages in his playing. A word about JV's accompaniment. He seems to possess an innate understanding of Vijay's music and anticipates him nicely. That is understandable, since he is the son of D.K. Jayaraman under whom Vijay studied. He is also Vijay's brother-in-law.

All in all it was a very enjoyable concert with the Yamuna Kalyani being outstanding.

Workshop on Carnatic music: A Review

P. Swaminathan

On May 10, 2004, SRUTI, India Music and Dance Society, presented a lecture demonstration cum workshop on Carnatic music featuring Maestro Ramani on flute. C. S. Anuroop and P. K. Swaminathan supported him on the violin on the mridangam. This lecture demonstration and workshop was the third in the series, which SRUTI has arranged so far. The first workshop was held in 1999 featuring Ravi Kiran, and the second one was held in 2003 featuring Geetha Bennett and Tiruchy Sankaran.

This particular lecture demonstration/workshop is different from the previous ones in two respects – first, it was short in duration, and second it was very enlightening and impressive. The fact none other than maestro Ramani hosted it is memorable. The workshop started with a good presentation of the origin of Carnatic music in south India. The following is summary of the various topics discussed in the workshop.

Ramani narrated the important contributions by early composers like Purandaradasa who laid the foundation for teaching classical music in a systematic form. There were quite a few composers in Tamil like Uthukadu Venkata Kavi, Gopalakrishna Bharathy who contributed significantly to the growth of classical music. With the advent of the TRINITY (Shyama Sastry, Saint Thyagaraja and the intellectual Muthuswamy Dikshitar) during the nineteenth century, Carnatic music underwent revolutionary change in its form and appeal to people.

Flute has played a crucial role since the beginning in the development of Carnatic music. Since mythological times, flute has been used as a musical instrument. There are several stories describing Lord Krishna mesmerizing gopikas as well as cowherds with his enchanting *venu-gana*. Again during the renaissance, Nayanmars, devotees of Lord Siva, used celestial music to spread the message of their Lord among the masses; especially one of the Nayanmars known as Anaya was known for his dexterity in playing flute. He was born in the Yadava (like Lord Krishna) community. He was entrusted with the job of looking after and rearing of the herds of cattle that belonged to the temple. Legend goes that through his divine music on flute he cast a spell, as it were, on all sentient beings. With the grace of Lord Siva he was elevated to the rank of a Nayanar. Ancient Tamil literature, for example Silapathiharam, contains detailed reports on the use of flute in dance and music concerts. The Tamil kings were great patrons of musicians. Flute made out of bamboo is indigenous to India. However, flute made of different materials (other than bamboo) have been popular in the west since medieval times. The tonal quality of the flute made out of bamboo is more suitable to perform for Carnatic music compared to the flute made out of metals like brass, silver and gold. Flute music has been popular among the native Indians of the North American continent.

The pioneering work of Saraba Sastrigal, descendent of Thyagaraja's shishya parampara, is responsible for introducing the bamboo flute to Carnatic music as we experience it today. Saraba Sastrigal was a genius and a gifted performer. During his short span of life between 1872 and 1904, he systematized the techniques of performing Carnatic music on the flute. He held the field of Carnatic music sedulously following the established tradition. After Saraba Sastrigal, it was Palladam Sanjeeva Rao who continued the tradition on performing flute recital. He was the brilliant student of Saraba Sastrigal. He used a nine-holed flute (one blowing hole and eight fingering holes). There was no flautist to challenge him until the genius T. R. Mahalingam appeared in the scene in 1933.

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Mali, as he was popularly known, is among the greatest musical legend India has ever produced. A born wizard, musical genius, his ascent to the top was so quick and dynamic that his seniors were left in bewilderment. Palladam Sanjeeva Rao's mature and soft play on flute was no match to the enchanting and dynamic performance of Mali. In no time, Mali took the world of music with him and left Sanjeeva Rao to posterity. He brought a revolution in Carnatic flute playing, by pioneering the method of cross fingering that gave greater versatility to the flute. He is credited with evolving gayaki style, close to vocal rendition that took care of sahithya and bhava conveyed in the lyrics. He gave a new meaning to performing flute with his soulful music. He only had few disciples during his short span of life; the foremost among them is N. Ramani. Dr. N. Ramani is the accomplished flautist carrying the tradition of Mali today. In order to strictly follow Mali's gayaki style of rendering, the students are required to undergo rigorous training in vocal music before embarking on to playing flute.

Flute is a versatile musical instrument. It is constructed to play in the *Harikambodhi* scale (Each note played with only holes fully closed OR fully open). In general, flutes are made with *adhara shadja* of 1.5 OR 2 *kattai* (C major OR D minor scale). One can change the scale by about ½ *kattai* by changing the blowing technique. Higher and lower octaves can be played by choosing flutes of different sizes. Flutes are available in a wide range of lengths and diameter. Thus the pitch of the sound produced by the flute can be controlled effectively by changing the size of the flute as well as adjusting the blowing through the flute. An accomplished flautist can produce a symphony of music dynamically by judicious combination of his blowing techniques as well choice of the flute during the concert. Most of the traditional flautists performing Carnatic music stick to no more than two flutes of different lengths (a popular size introduced by Mali and a longer one to produce music rich in base). However, recent stars like Shashank use several flutes of different lengths to achieve a range of almost 4-5 octaves and produce different moods during the concert. The **TRINITY** of musical instruments (the combination of the three V(enu), V(iolin), V(eena)) is a dynamic combination for bringing out the intricacies of Carnatic music.

Typically in a Carnatic music concert, in addition to the main artist like the flautist, there are other accompaniments on violin, mridangam and sometimes Ghatam. In general the performing artists may meet for the first time during the concert. However, once they start performing their main language of communication is music. All the improvisation and artistic demonstration are always extempore and each one understands the other's lead and ready to accompany what is to come from the other. This is something very unique to Carnatic music concert. This is possible only with rigorous training following the accepted traditional methods and discipline.

India has produced several percussion instruments among which Mridangam and Tabla stand out prominently for their versatility in producing rich harmonic tones. Even though these instruments come under the category of stretched membrane percussion instruments, these are very different from a simple drum, which can only produce normal modes of vibrations – not harmonic tones. The resonating drum of the mridangam is made from a

Jackfruit tree. It takes the shape of two truncated hollow cones placed together end-to-end with narrow ends outwards.. The right drumhead is constructed of three layers of cowhide and goat-skins stretched and mounted on a circular hoop. In the final construction, central circular portions of the top two layers of the skins are carved out leaving only inner layer for vibration. The carved out central portion of the drumhead is filled with a black patch made of iron oxide mixed with charcoal, cooked rice and gum.. This is the heart of the mridangam, which is responsible for its tonal. The left drumhead is constructed very similar to the right drumhead except that it does not have the central black patch. It is slightly bigger in diameter than the right drumhead. The drumheads are firmly attached to the circular hoops by inter-laced straps of leather. While playing the left drumhead, it is loaded in the center with piece of dough (usually paste of cream of wheat) to bring the pitch down to a desired value.. With this unique construction the mridangam is capable of producing sustained harmonic tones that can be superimposed. These superposition are very similar in nature to the superposition of the harmonic vibrations of the stringed instruments.

A trained mridangist can produce rich harmonic sound and follow effortlessly a vocalist as well as an instrumentalist. The mridangist improvise using a combination of strokes (known as syllables or *Sollu Kattu*). The dexterity of the mridangist depends on the structure as well as the permutation of these *Sollu Kattu* (includes different *Nadais*) used in accompanying the performing artist. These syllables are similar to the *kalpana swaras* used in raga improvisation. Usually, at the conclusion of the main piece of the concert (whether it is a vocal or instrumental performance), the mridangists perform a solo (also known as *Thani Avarthanam*) demonstration of their creative abilities. In addition, the Thani aims to provide the listener with a glimpse of the numerous rhythmic possibilities existing in a particular *Taalam*. The *Thani*, although being essentially an extemporaneous presentation normally conforms to a certain pattern of evolution and also includes different kinds of pre-composed components such as *Corvei(s)*, *Teerumanam(s)*, *Mohra* etc. It is also customary to explore one or more *Nadais* different from the *Nadai* of the main piece (or *Kriti*). In addition, the skilled mridangists will attempt to play the different components of the *Thani* such that each ending falls exactly at the *Eduppu*. Playing in a different *Nadai* makes this more interesting. The main artiste has to be alert towards the end of the Thani so that he picks up the *Kriti* at the right time and brings the main piece to a spectacular end. The *Thani* is usually brought to an end by playing *Pharans*, *Mohra*, and the 'main' *Corvei* in that order, which is usually enough hint for the main artiste to get ready. The mridangam artiste at this juncture usually ends with an elaborate *Teerumanam*.

Ramani emphasized that, to become an accomplished performer, the students should have dedication and discipline, and repeated practice. There is nothing that can substitute rigorous practice. All the accomplished performing artists in Carnatic music attained their fame by discipline, handwork and practice. He also appreciated the hard work put in by the parents in providing the facilities to their in learning Carnatic music. Anuroop, demonstrated the different techniques of accompanying vocalists and instrumentalists during *ragam*, *thanam* and *pallavi*. Overall it was a very enlightening experience.

Sruti Ranjani Book

Letter to Sruti Members from Sruti Board of Directors

Dear SRUTI Members,

The Board of Directors (BoD) of SRUTI would like to share with you some recent events regarding the book titled, "Sruti Ranjani, Essays on Indian Classical Music and Dance - edited by Viji Swaminathan". The book is a publication of SRUTI and is printed by Xlibris Corp. It contains a collection of 28 articles by 30 internationally acclaimed authorities in various aspects of Indian Classical Music and Dance. The book states that the copyrights of the articles in the book belong to SRUTI, except those of Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ms. Anoushka Shankar, Mr. Trichy Sankaran and Ms. Ramaa Bharadvaj, the copyrights of whose articles are retained by the respective authors, per their prior requests.

In the middle of May 2004, Mr. V.P. Dhananjayan (one of the authors) sent an email to Viji Swaminathan (Editor of Sruti Ranjani and President of SRUTI during 2002-2003) with copy to Prabhakar Chitrapu (current Sruti President), stating a number of concerns and opinions regarding Sruti Ranjani. He named as signatories Ms. Anita Ratnam, Ms. Chitra Visweswaran, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ms. Anoushka Shankar, Ms. Vidya Shankar and Ms. Mrinalini Sarabhai, who are all authors of articles in the book. [During subsequent communications, Ms. Mrinalini Sarabhai & Ms. Vidya Shankar mentioned that they were either unaware of or did not want to be part of the issues raised in the email.] Henceforth, we shall refer to these authors as 'concerned authors'.

The essential points of the email were that the concerned authors:

- 1) were only told that the articles were going to be included in a SRUTI 15th year celebration souvenir, and for limited local distribution. They were not made aware that their articles were going to be published in a copyrighted, priced book bearing an ISBN and be marketed internationally.
- 2) thought that "the rules and regulations of Book Publication and copyright norms" were violated,
- 3) questioned the "credentials" of Viji Swaminathan to be an "Editor" of their articles, and
- 4) did not see why they could not "prefer a law suit" seeking compensations for damages caused by publishing their articles.

Clearly, the BoD was quite appalled at the contents and the tone of the email. Immediately, an emergency BoD meeting was convened, to which Viji was also invited. It was agreed unanimously that:

- a) a thorough examination of the precise status of the issue was needed. Viji was requested to present all documentation related to this souvenir, including emails, to the BoD,
- b) since copyright violation and a potential law suit were in question, it was decided to withdraw the book from circulation until the matter was resolved. Accordingly, the publisher was contacted and requested to suspend sales. At the same time, SRUTI also stopped selling copies of the books from its inventory and removed the book details from its web site.

The documents presented by Viji were analyzed by the BoD to assess the validity of the concerns expressed by the "concerned authors". Advice was also sought to clarify SRUTI's legal exposure in this matter. Thanks to P.B. Nandakumar, member of Resource Committee, and the non-profit status of SRUTI, we were able to obtain free legal (pro bono) help from an attorney in California.

Following the review of the documents and consultations with the attorney, the following became apparent to the BoD: 1) There was a lack of documentation (emails, minutes etc.) on how the 15th anniversary Sruti Ranjani souvenir transformed to a copyrighted book, bearing an ISBN and being marketed internationally. 2) SRUTI did not have any documentation whereby the authors explicitly assigned the copyrights to it, other than the four authors listed earlier. 3) Although the copyright "ownership" was not clearly documented, there were no copyright "violations", because the articles were obtained with the full knowledge of the authors. In fact, the articles were given to SRUTI explicitly for the purpose of publication. 4) There was no explicit communication from SRUTI to the authors regarding the royalties.

Subsequently, we communicated with the "concerned authors" by email (and phone in some cases) and explained the above points. These communications and conversations were conducted in a respectful and cordial manner. They have indeed led to a common understanding of how to resolve the matter.

First of all, SRUTI explained and apologized for the lack of complete, continuous and thorough communications regarding the evolution of Sruti Ranjani. On the copyright front, the basic agreement is for SRUTI to return the copyrights back to the "concerned authors" and make the necessary changes to the book. The royalties are not a concern at all.

To make the above agreement uniform, the BoD will be writing to all the remaining authors of articles in Sruti Ranjani to sign documents saying that while SRUTI would return the copyrights to the individual authors, SRUTI would have the permission to

publish their works in this and future editions of the book. We are also checking out the cost of making the appropriate changes to the book. As soon as these are done, we hope the matter would be brought to a closure and we could bring the book back into circulation.

Difficult as the above issues are, much less well defined are the issues of 'credentials of the Editor', and prominence accorded to SRUTI in the book. (The latter point was raised during emails and conversations with the "concerned authors"). The BoD feels that it is not in a position to determine the credentials of Viji to be an 'Editor'. However, the Board is deliberating the other point and exploring ways to improve Sruti's prominence in the book with manageable cost impact.

We sincerely hope that this communication has clarified the issues to all of you. Please realize that the only channels of communication from the BoD to the membership are the quarterly Sruti Notes during the year and the General Body Meeting at the end of the year (or two years in some cases). Since the Sruti Ranjani problems surfaced in mid-May, this is the first chance to communicate with you as a group. Even during the intervening time, a few members approached us regarding this matter, and the BoD communicated to them the relevant information in good faith and in a transparent manner.

A personal note to our membership. We would like to emphasize that the BoD is very open and accessible to all of you. If you would like clarifications on any Sruti related matter, kindly contact any of us on the Board. Please do not fall prey to unfounded rumors. That hurts everyone.

With best regards & thanks to your continuing support,
Sruti Board of Directors.



Classical Music in USA: Student Perspectives

A series continued from the previous issue

Anjani Chitrapu
(interviewed by Latha Nataraj)

I have been learning Bharatanaatyam for seven years and Sitar for about three years. I am also getting trained in Western classical music on the violin. My mom got me interested in Bharatanaatyam. Learning the Sitar was also motivation from my mom's Sitar lessons. I intend to continue learning both for a long time. I usually leave it up to my teachers to decide what they want to teach me. But I think my teachers will be supportive of me if I asked them to teach me something.

I enjoy both Bharatanaatyam and Sitar very much but, practising is hard. I spend about thirty minutes, four days a week practising each of these. I enjoy sitar concerts very much. I

like to watch Bharatanaatyam performed in groups. Also, I enjoy the intricate parts of a solo recital. Indian music is very different from Western music and I enjoy different aspects in different types of music. I like the group sounds of the western orchestra.

Regarding performing on stage, I am usually nervous before getting up there, but once I'm on it and start performing, I am fine. Also, I enjoy watching my friends perform on stage. I really like watching and listening to what they know.

I am very comfortable in an Indian setting. It is our culture and only natural that I would want to do something from our society and culture. I am very proud of it. Also, we have a traditional atmosphere at home and it is not very different from what I see at Indian events.

My advice to students: Practice regularly & do it only if you truly enjoy it.

And, encouragement from the teachers is always very helpful.

Anjani Chitrapu is in 10th grade and goes to Wissahickon High School.

Anil Chitrapu
(interviewed by Latha Nataraj)

I have been learning the mridangam for about three years and Indian Carnatic vocal music for about five years. My dad and mom motivated me to learn music. They like to sing and also encouraged me very much. I started learning the Mridangam as my friend, Harsha wanted to. I enjoy both these activities very much. I practise for about thirty to sixty minutes four times a week. I usually let my teachers decide what they teach me. I am very proud of myself for learning all this because nobody but some of my Indian friends can do such things.

I enjoy being on stage. Sometimes, seeing so many people in the audience makes me nervous but once I start performing, I am fine. I like going to concerts, though I sometimes feel they're too long. Now I can identify some raagas at concerts. I like Indian music more than western music because with all the musical raagas and many taaLas, we have so much variety.

I love the Indian atmosphere. In fact I feel more comfortable with Indian music and food. The best part of going to my teacher's house to learn music is the after-class where my teacher serves me some good Indian food.

My advice to students: Do it only if you're having fun. That's all that matters. My teachers are great just the way they are. In fact, they are a little strict and I like that.

Anil Chitrapu is in 6th grade and goes to Wissahickon Middle School.

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Upcoming Sruti Events
www.sruti.org

Carnatic Vocal Concert by Sanjay Subrahmanian
11 September, Montgomery County Comm. College.

Gajamukha— Grand South Indian Dance Production in
Bharatha Natyam, Kuchipudi, Mohini Attam,
Folk & Contemporary dance styles by
Dr. Jayanthi Raman & Troupe
October 9, Mandell Theater, Drexel University.
See www.gajamukha.org

Padma Bhushan Umayalpuram Sivaraman & Rhythm Ensemble
October 30, International House, Philadelphia.

Sruti Day
Showcase of Local Talent in Indian Classical Music and Dance
(late November)

**Murugarathnakaram by Sri T.N. Bala & Students &
Sruti General Body Meeting (early December)**

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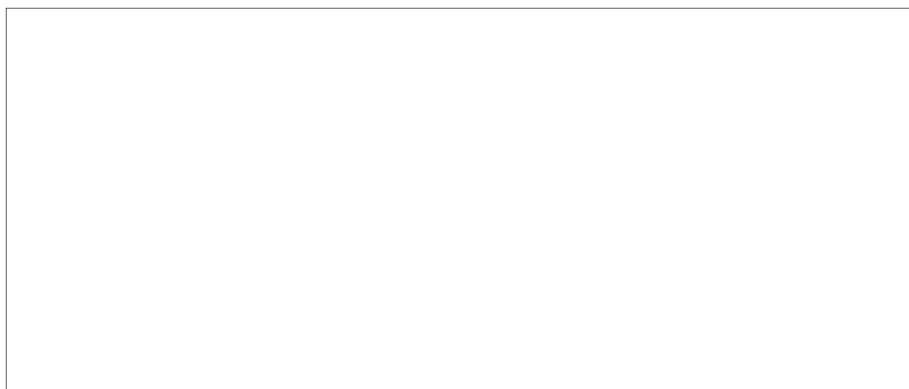
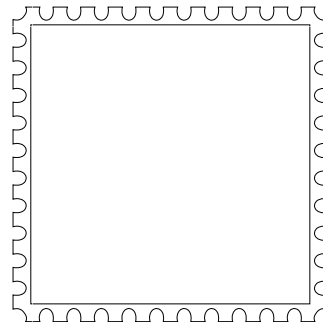
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