



# SRUTI

The India Music and Dance Society  
Presents

## Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana 2009

on Saturday, March 21, 2009



*at the Hindu Temple of Delaware*  
*760 Yorklyn Road, Hockessin, DE 19707*

Admission\* : \$10 per individual & \$20 per family of four

Please register online at [www.sruti.org](http://www.sruti.org)  
For phone registration please call Seetha Ayyalasomayajula at 609 - 716 - 7620.

\* Includes one lunch coupon for individuals and up to four lunch coupons per family. Additional lunch coupons will be available for purchase (\$5 per coupon).

## PROGRAM

08:00 AM	Puja
08:15 AM	Group Renditions : Utsava Sampradaya Kritis & Pancharatna Kritis
10:15 AM	Individual Participations—1 <sup>st</sup> session
02:30 PM	Concert of the day— Vocal Concert by Nisha Rajagopal and Party
05:00 PM	Individual Participations—2 <sup>nd</sup> session



**Nisha Rajagopal** commenced her musical training with her mother, Smt. Vasundhra Rajagopal while residing in Toronto, Canada. The family later moved to Chennai and Nisha continued her tutelage with Shri T.R. Subramanyam and late Shri Calcutta Krishnamurti. She is currently training with Shri P.S. Narayanaswamy, Smt. Suguna Varadachari and Dr.V.V. Srivatsa. Nisha has performed in major sabhas in India and completed two short tours of US and Canada and performed at the Cleveland aradhana in 2003 and 2004. She performed in the UK in June/ July 2008. She has won numerous awards and titles including Yuva Kala Bharathi and Swarna Venkatesa Dikshitar award in December 2007. Nisha holds a B.S degree in Electronics and Communications Engineering from University of Madras. She is an “A” grade artist of All India Radio.

**Mysore K. Srikanth** is a senior disciple of Vidwan Shri H.K. Narasimha Murthy of Mysore. He started learning the violin at a very young age and has undergone rigorous training for more than eighteen years. Srikanth has been giving performances from the age of 15. He has gained rich experience by accompanying top artists like Shri R. K. Srikantan, Dr. M. Balamurali Krishna, Shri T. N. Seshagopalan and others. Srikanth, a graded artist of AIR & Doordarshan, performs regularly for All India Radio, Doordarshan, and other T.V Channels. He has been conferred with the title ‘Kala Praveena’ in Feb 2002 at Bangalore. In 2004, he was honored with the prestigious award for talented young musicians - ‘Ananya Yuva Puraskara’ by the organization ‘Ananya’ of Bangalore.

**Trivandrum.V. Balaji** had his initial training under late Shri B. Doraiswamy, Shri K Krishna Iyengar and Trivandrum Shri.R.Vaidyanathan and later had his tutelage under Padmasri Palghat R. Raghu. He has won numerous awards from prestigious organizations and sabhas like Krishna Gana Sabha, Music Academy and All India Radio to name a few. He has accompanied leading artists like Dr. N. Ramani, Shri T.V.Sankaranarayanan, Shri O.S.Thiagarajan and many others. He is an “A” grade artist of All India Radio, Chennai.

## Directions to the Hindu Temple of Delaware

### **From New Jersey and 295 south:**

1. Take 141 north.
2. Drive about 5 miles and take 48 west (left turn). Continue on 48.
3. Route 48 merges with 41 and becomes 41 North.
4. Continue and make a right onto Yorklyn road (Exxon gas station is on your right).
5. Make a right into the Temple campus, before old Wilmington road Traffic light.

### **From Philadelphia and I-95 North:**

1. Take Route 141 North.
2. Drive till route 48 and make a left onto 48 west.
3. Continue on 48. Route 48 merges with 41 and becomes 41 north.
4. Continue and make a right onto Yorklyn road (Exxon gas station on your right).
5. Make a right into the Temple campus, before old Wilmington road Traffic light

### **From Exton/Downingtown/West Chester and 202 south:**

- Take route 1 south.  
Take route 41 south and make a left onto Yorklyn road (Wawa is on your right).  
Make a right into the Temple campus, before old Wilmington road Traffic light.

### **From Baltimore and I-95 south:**

- Take route 141 North.  
Drive till route 48 and make a left onto 48 west.  
Continue on 48. Route 48 merges with 41 and becomes 41 north.  
Continue and make a right onto Yorklyn road (Exxon gas station on your right).  
Make a right into the Temple campus, before old Wilmington road Traffic light.



# SRUTI NOTES

A Publication of SRUTI

## SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society

web: [www.sruti.org](http://www.sruti.org); e-mail: [sruti@sruti.org](mailto:sruti@sruti.org)

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### President's Note

Dear members of the Sruti family,

In 2009, we begin the 23rd year of nurturing Indian classical music and dance in the Philadelphia region. As I look back at old issues of Sruti Notes and read the letters from past presidents of Sruti, I cannot but feel very honored to be part of this organization. We have grown from small beginnings to an organization that is valued highly by all Indian performing artistes and also the local arts community. In addition, we can be justifiably proud of operating in a very democratic fashion and transitioning smoothly to a new board every year.

The last Annual General body meeting (Sruti Day) was held on Dec 14, 2008 at the Valley Forge Middle School. We have already sent out an email notification to all of you, with details of the new Sruti board for 2009. We will be starting the programming year, as always, with Tyagaraja Aradhana, on Mar 21, at the Delaware Mahalakshmi Temple auditorium. The online registration page for individual participants is already up on our website ([www.sruti.org](http://www.sruti.org)). In the interest of maintaining our high standards of presentation, I also request members of the groups who sing the Utsava Sampradaya Kritis and Pancharatna Kritis to attend weekly group rehearsals that are already underway. Please contact me ([president@sruti.org](mailto:president@sruti.org)) if you need more information about rehearsals.

One of the highlights of the 2008 Sruti Day was the report from the by-laws committee, which presented a draft of the amended by-laws. This document incorporates all the changes proposed and adopted during the last few years at general body meetings. We will soon make the updated document available for review by all Sruti members (watch out for an announcement in the next issue of Sruti Notes). I encourage you to submit your valuable feedback on its provisions and turn up in large numbers at the next Sruti Day in December 2009, when we will formally debate and adopt the by-laws to govern ourselves.

We have an excellent line-up of music concerts and dance performances for the year. In the spring season, we will be featuring three very unique programs. Read all about them in the section on our artistes in this issue of Sruti Notes. The performances for June 2009 and later in the year are currently getting finalized. Sruti's reputation is such that we are sought after by many visiting artistes from India and their tour sponsors in the USA. Unfortunately, unless we hold a concert every weekend, we cannot feature all of the artistes who would like to perform for Sruti and whom we would like to present under our banner! Apart from the performing artistes, Sruti exists for and because of you, the member. Please renew your memberships for the year as soon as possible and do seriously consider upgrading your membership status to a Core Annual Supporter of Sruti. There are numerous benefits that come with it. In addition, I would encourage each one of you to spread the word about Sruti to all your friends and acquaintances. Please attend concerts regularly and get others whom you know to attend and to become members of Sruti. In the long run, we will be able to maintain our organizational health only by sustaining and widening Sruti's membership base. Our strength lies in our numbers and in our commitment to the Indian classical performing arts. Each one of us has a role to play in ensuring that Sruti continues as a vibrant star in the international culture of the Philadelphia region for many decades to come.

On behalf of the Sruti board of directors,  
Vidyasankar Sundaresan  
President



## From the Publications and Outreach Committee....

Dear friends,

We welcome the *Sruti* member community to a new year of programming. The publications committee hopes to keep the member community updated through a combination of newsletters, annual souvenirs and regular updates of the website ([Sruti.org](http://Sruti.org)).

The first event of the season is the Thyagaraja Aradhana to be held on March 21st. We are looking for articles and graphics for the Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir. Please forward to Sundari Balakrishnan ([balusundari@yahoo.com](mailto:balusundari@yahoo.com)) by March 7, 2009.

We are all part of a community that thrives on the arts and in the exchange of ideas and information on the various aspects of the arts. We would like to hear from you, the members of this community. Please consider writing for the newsletters and the annual publication *Sruti Ranjani*. We request the music and dance teachers in the area to encourage their students to participate in this endeavor. In addition, we request our members to point us to happenings in the world of the performing arts- here in the Greater Philadelphia Region or in India so that such news items can be shared with our readers.

The spring season features some unusual concerts- a study in contrast between a young vocalist and an octogenarian vocalist with the "golden voice", an all women instrument ensemble and a Mohiniyattam dance program. Today a number of online resources are available to enhance our familiarity with the personalities of the artists and we hope that the introduction to the artists included in this newsletter will be useful to our readers.

We look forward to your continued attendance at *Sruti's* programs. The enthusiastic presence of the *Sruti* family members is what sustains our organization and contributes to an ongoing discussion and debate.

We are looking for persons who would be interested in helping maintain the *Sruti* website. Some knowledge of HTML will be useful. If you are interested, please send an email to [webmaster@sruti.org](mailto:webmaster@sruti.org).

Sincerely,  
Sundari Balakrishnan ([balusundari@yahoo.com](mailto:balusundari@yahoo.com))  
Jeya Sankaran ([sankaranj@aetna.com](mailto:sankaranj@aetna.com))  
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Raman Visweswaran ([ramanvv@hotmail.com](mailto:ramanvv@hotmail.com))

## Honors and Awards

Renowned Hindustani classical vocalist Pandit Bhimsen Joshi was presented with the **Bharat Ratna**, the country's highest civilian award, at his residence in Pune, Maharashtra. Pt. Bhimsen Joshi is the sixth person from the field of art and culture to get the Bharat Ratna award after Satyajit Ray, M S Subbulakshmi, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Lata Mangeshkar and Ustad Bismillah Khan. He is the second vocalist to get the highest civilian award after M S Subbulakshmi in 1998.



The revered dance duo Shantha and V.P. Dhananjayan are the recipients of the **Padma Bhushan** award for art, 2009. Kalakshetra alumni and senior disciples of the legendary Rukmini Devi Arundale, the Dhananjayans have been dancing and teaching for over 50 years. In addition, they will be receiving the Nritya Rathnakara award instituted by the Bhairavi Fine Arts Society and Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana Committee in April 2009. Smt Shanta and Sri Dhananjayan are no strangers to the greater Delaware valley as this area has hosted them on multiple occasions. Students of their school Bharatakalanjali continue the teaching of their style of Bharatanatyam all over the United States.



Aruna Sairam, the very popular Carnatic music vocalist is the recipient of the **Padma Shri** award for art, 2009. Aruna Sairam has been featured in North America concert venues and is very familiar to the *Sruti* audience. Having received her initial training from her mother Smt Rajalakshmi Sethuraman, Aruna Sairam was a student of the legendary Smt. T. Brinda.



The well known Kathakali exponent Vadakke Manalath Govindan Nair popularly known as Kalamandalam Gopi is the recipient of the **Padma Shri** award for art, 2009. He is an illustrious alumnus of Kalamandalam, the preeminent school for Kathakali in Kerala. Himself a teacher at Kalamandalam, he excelled in performing the major Kathakali roles of Bhima, Arjuna, Nala.

The prestigious **Sangeet Natak Akademi** awards for 2008 were announced on January 12, 2009. Among the puraskar awardees in the field of Carnatic music are Puranam Purushottama Sastry (vocal), B. Sasikumar (violin), Mannargudi A. Easwaran (mridangam). Among the puraskar awardees in the field of Dance are Saroja Vaidyanathan (Bharatanatyam), Kalamandalam Kuttan (Kathakali), Ramani Ranjan Jena (Odissi,

*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.*

Vasanta Lakshmi & Narasimhachari (Kuchipudi -Joint Award),  
Kalamandalam Leelamma (Mohiniattam).

## Sanjay Subramaniam Concert Review

By P. Swaminathan

SRUTI presented a fine music concert by Sanjay Subramaniam as the first concert of the fall series 2008. He was accompanied by Nagai Muralidharan on the violin and Neyveli Venkatesh on the mridangam. This concert was different from his other concerts where he presented mostly compositions of Tamil seers, saints other than those of the musical “trinity” (not familiar to the general audience) which might have disappointed some sections of SRUTI patrons.

He started the concert with the navaraga varnam “Valachi Vachi..” by Kothavasal Venkatarama Iyer. This varnam is sometimes referred to as composed by Pattnam Subramanya Iyer because of the mudra; however based on the stylometric analysis many stalwarts have concluded that it was actually composed by Kothavasal Venkatarama Iyer who was also the teacher of Pattnam Subramanya Iyer for a brief period. Sanjay then performed a well-paced “Rama Ika Nannu..” (*sahana* - rupakam –Patnam Subramanya Iyer) with kalpanaswaras that were very spontaneous. In the next alapana Sanjay kept the audience guessing initially. Once into the nucleus of *gowrimanohari*, full justice was done with a mixture of long karvais and briga-oriented phrases. A composed Muralidhar (violin) complemented with a well-etched reply. Sanjay chose a composition “Brova Samayamide ...” (*gowrimanohari* - adi - Garbapuri Vasar (Karur Chinna Devudu)). This was followed by a rendering in *kambodhi*. Another classic composition of Muthu Thandavar “Arumarundu Thirumarundu..” in the raga *kambodhi* was beautifully rendered by Sanjay punctuated with his fascinating body language. He rendered a detailed niraval on the phrase “konrai thuvai aninda marundu” and concluded with kalpanaswaras demonstrating his manodharma and creativity. After a brisk rendering of a composition by Sivananda Yogi “Yenna Punniyam ...” in *huseni*, a sparkling sketch of *bowli* was succeeded by Swati Tirunal's “Parvathi Nayaka”. Sanjay's elaboration was very progressive; he traversed to the upper octaves quite fast, unfolding myriad phrases of the raga and building a tempo among listeners. Nagai Muralidhar gave an excellent support to this emotional rendering. Following a well rendered thani by Venkatesh, Sanjay rendered the familiar Thyagaraja's composition “Manasuloni...” in *hindolam* before the RTP. His ragam-tanam-pallavi presentation in the raga *behag*, set to tisra tripata tala, was well executed with a good degree of creativity, clarity and laya control, indicating his musical ingenuity. Nagai Muralidhar (violin) and Neyveli Venkatesh (mridangam) provided good support and in particular Muralidhar's delineation of ragas *kanada*, *varali* and *begada* had a good degree of fluency of expression. Sanjay concluded the concert after rendering several short pieces in *behag*, *sudha dhanyasi*, *khamas*, *kurunji* and *sindhu bhairavi*.

Sanjay Subramaniam is a gifted musician with a style that is hitched to the depths of Carnatic music. Musical excellence in his case is a happy integration of voice, sangita and sahitya embellished with his body language. He is very imaginative in presenting RTP's in ragas which are usually not tried by other experts in the field like his RTP in *behag* in this concert. The artistic input that went into his *behag* alapana proved that for a creative artiste

even the most common raga can be made livelier than ever before. The emphasis on quality of music was the striking feature of Sanjay Subramaniam's concert.

If Sanjay's concert was great a lion's share of the credit should be attributed to the excellent accompaniment by Nagai Muralidhar on the violin and Venkatesh on mridangam.

## In the News

MSSTribute.org, a site dedicated to the life and times of M.S.Subbulakshmi was launched on December 13th 2008 in Chennai. Kamakshi Mallikarjun has provided a moving eyewitness report of the event in this edition of SRUTI Notes.

GNB Centenary Celebrations: A year long celebration marking the birth Centenary of G.N. Balasubramaniam, affectionately known as GNB was inaugurated in Chennai on January 6, 2009. Monthly concerts and lectures are in the works organized by the GNB Centenary Committee.

Prakrithi Foundation, Chennai has announced that it is organizing a “Festival of Sacred Music” in Tiruvaiyaru. The foundation hopes to make this an annual event. This year the festival will be held over the course of three days, February 28th to March 1st.

## SRUTI Community News

Shoba Narayanan, daughter of Vasantha and P Narayanan, a freshman at the Boston Conservatory received the Council of Indian Organizations “Outstanding Young Achiever Award”. She was recognized for her achievements in the performing arts and in propagating Indian and Western classical music and dance. The award was presented by Consul General Ambassador Prabhu Dayal in the presence of dignitaries and guests at the Annual India Day celebration held on February 7th, 2009.

## An introduction to Sruti concert artists- Spring Season 2009

### Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana 2009

Nisha Rajagopal, a young vocalist from Chennai, is the featured artist on Sruti's Annual Thyagaraja Aradhana day. Nisha grew up in Canada. She commenced her music training with her mother Vasundhara-a musician in her own right. Subsequently the family moved to Chennai to pursue their passion for music. Nisha continued her tutelage under masters in the field- Shri T. R. Subramanyam, Shri Calcutta Krishnamurti. She currently trains with Shri P.S. Narayanaswamy and Smt. Suguna Varadachari. Nisha is an engineer by profession. She sustains her music career in parallel. She just completed a very full 2008/2009 "season" with over ten concerts at major sabhas. Sruti looks forward to presenting this young artist. Please visit her website to listen to some audio clips:

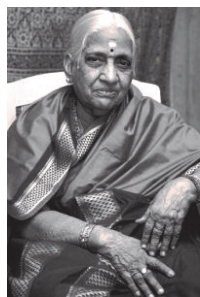
<http://www.nishaprajagopal.com>.



### Violin-Venu- Veena

The second concert of the spring season features an all women instrument ensemble. Led by Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi (violin), daughter and disciple of the violin maestro Sri Lalgudi G. Jayaraman the ensemble includes Sikkil Mala Chandrasekhar (flute) in the tradition of her gurus Padma Shri and Sangita Kalanidhi Sikkil Kunjumani and Neela and Jayashree Jairaj (Veena) from the Shishya Parampara of Nadajyoti Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar. They are accompanied Rajna Swaminathan, disciple of Mridangam Maestro Sri Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman, a rising star in the field of Carnatic percussion and Bhagyalakshmi Muralikrishna disciple of her father Karnataka Kalashree 'Gaana Kala Bhushana' Vidwan Shri L. Bhimachar a great exponent of morching. The violin veena venu as ensemble of instruments was popularised by the legendary Lalgudi Jayaraman in the 60's.

### Parassala Ponnammal



Sruti is very pleased to present the octogenarian musician and distinguished teacher Parassala Ponnammal for the very first time in this area. Smt Parassala Ponnammal has been performing for the past 70 years. She has not been heard a lot outside of Kerala since her duties, first as a teacher and later as the Principal of the Music Academy in Thiruvananthapuram restricted her movements out of the area. As a young girl who had just won a music competition, her natural grace was recognized by Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar. As a consequence she ended up in the Music Academy first as student- Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer was one of her teachers, later as Teacher and Principal. In 2006 she was accorded a rare honor- Aswati Thirunal Rama Varma invited her to be the first woman musician to perform in the famed Navaratri Mandapam. The following are links to articles that provide insight into the life and times of Smt Parassala Ponnammal.

<http://www.hindu.com/fr/2006/09/22/stories/2006092200730300.htm>

<http://www.hindu.com/fr/2008/02/29/stories/2008022950460300.htm>

### Mohiniyattam dance program

The Center for Mohiniyattam, led by Bharati Shivaji and Vijayalakshmi and accompanied by the Center's most accomplished dancers, will present The Dance of the Enchantress,



showcasing some of their unique repertoire. Mohiniyattam, the rare classical dance form of Kerala in Southern India is known for its exquisite beauty and is considered the most graceful among Indian classical dance traditions. The widely acclaimed mother-daughter duo are considered the leading exponents of Mohiniyattam today and are credited with rejuvenating this art form through innovative and path-breaking choreographies. The Center for Mohiniyattam has performed at some of the most prestigious venues around the globe including the Lincoln Center, the Bolshoi Theatre and the Edinburgh International Festival. Links

[www.bharatishivaji.com](http://www.bharatishivaji.com)

[www.vijayalakshmi.net](http://www.vijayalakshmi.net)

## A Tribute to MS - Dec 13th, 2008, at the Music Academy Chennai

By Kamakshi Mallikarjun

As I walked into the Music Academy Chennai, around 2:30 pm on Dec 13<sup>th</sup> 2008, the first thing that caught my eye was the row of photos of Sangita Kalanidhis adorning the wall and the picture of MS, the first woman to achieve that honor. Yes, it was indeed the most appropriate venue for the function scheduled for later that evening, the launch in Chennai of the book **MS & Radha: Saga of Steadfast Devotion** written by my cousin Gowri Ramnarayan (Smt Anandhi Ramachandran's daughter) as well as the website <http://MSSTribute.org>.

My cousin Shrinivasan (Smt Radha Vishwanathan's son) had arranged the function with meticulous care. He was already at the venue directing the stage decorations. There was a Mandapam like backdrop, with a lighted kolam pattern on its pillars, already in place and they were in the process of mounting a hauntingly beautiful picture of MS smiling. It was a picture taken by the photographer Yoga who was also responsible for the audiovisual logistics for the function. As Shrinivasan was trying to help conjure up enough chairs for the honored guests who were going to be seated on stage, I started to work with the audio/visual folks to get the screen captures of the MS website pages projected on the 2 huge screens and to ensure

(Continued overleaf)



that they were clear. It was both nerve racking and a bit farcical at the same time. If things got projected, it was not happening in color. If it was showing up in color on their monitor, it was not showing on the projection screens. And the various connections seemed so finicky and tenuous that if anything moved, things would get awry. Thankfully, after repeated tries, things were in place for the launch of the website.

As I waited for the function to begin, I was completely overwhelmed by the surfeit of memories flooding my mind, the melody filled evenings at this very same venue. So many special memories of Ammupatti - my grand aunt MS ... listening to her beautiful concerts at the Music Academy; so many lovely dance programs including those of Smt Vyjayanthimala, one of the honored guests of the evening. And as the hall started filling up, the encounters with the audience were nostalgic as well; so many friends and relatives that I haven't seen in years. And most of all, just looking at the smiling picture of MS on stage, an aching feeling of loss.

The function began with the lighting of the Kuthivilakku by all the honored guests and an invocation by Navaneet Venkatesan, a disciple of Smt Radha Viswanathan followed by Shrinivasan's poignant introductory remarks. He talked about the indomitable spirit of his mother Radha who continues to have such a positive attitude despite decades of debilitating illnesses. He has been the prime mover behind the creation of the book **MS & Radha** as well as the website to fulfill his mother's desire to pay tribute to the memory of MS.

Once the first copy of the book **MS & Radha: Saga of Steadfast Devotion** was received by Shri N Murali, (President of the Music Academy), it was also given to all the honored guests on the stage: Chief Guest Governor Shri Surjit Singh Barnala, Smt Vyjayanthimala, Shri M S Swaminathan, Shri Cho Ramaswamy, Shri T K Murthy. It was neat to see all of them immediately flip thru the pages of the book!

Gowri Ramnarayan in her author's address shared MS's memories of her very first concert at the Music Academy that occurred when she was just 17 years old. MS was asked to fill in for an ailing Ariyakudi and she was filled with trepidation when she saw the musical giants sitting before her in the audience. As Gowri has written in **MS & Radha** "The big guns were all up there front - Tiger Varadachariar, Muthiah Bhagavathar, laya maestro Mudicondan Venkatrama Iyer, Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer, redoubtable musicologist T L Venkatrama Iyer, organizers T V Subba Rao and Kasturi Srinivasan of the Hindu. ... Mother Shanmugavadivu began to play the tambura. As soon as Kunjamma heard the strings, her strength returned. She prayed to the gods and began. ... So fine was the alapana that Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar got up from the fourth row, rushed forward and cried out, 'What a voice! A gift from the gods'. Veena vidwan Samasiva Iyer said affectionately 'Child, you carry the veena in your throat'". Gowri also shared the reasons for writing this book. As she has indicated in the Afterword in the book "Radha Akka's unexpected illness pitch forked me into playing a more active role in offering vocal support to MS. Those 16 years of joining MS on practices and performances, and traveling with her on many concert tours, gave me a completely different perspective of the cou-

ple. On the long train journeys in the 1980s and 90s, she was relaxed and happy. Those were the times when she talked about her life. Sadasivam too recalled many things about his youth. This book could not have been written without those experiences."

Shri N Murali highlighted how the "history of the Music Academy was intertwined with MS" and how the "hall had reverberated" with her divine music. The association of MS with Music Academy indeed goes back a long way. An article in the Hindu "Nehru and the Music Academy" describes that after Prime Minister Nehru laid the foundation for the Music Academy building on Oct 5, 1955, MS performed in aid of the Academy's building fund. Pt Nehru who stayed thru the entire concert repeated his famous quote "Who am I, a mere Prime Minister, to say anything about a queen, a queen of songs?".

Shri Cho Ramaswamy commented that he was surprised to see photos in the book where MS was not smiling. That he had never seen her without a lovely smile. He joked that the only reason he was qualified to grace this occasion was because he had been fortunate to know both Sadasivam Mama and MS. He said it is good that books are being written about MS because many years from now, people may find it difficult to believe that such extraordinary souls existed! He also humorously said that both of them earned just to give it all away for various charitable causes.

Smt Vyjayanthimala Bali talked about how MS used to call her Pappa and tell everyone proudly "Do you know that Pappa can sing very well too. Come on sing a song, Pappa". She said she used to feel so nervous singing in front of MS but MS was so encouraging. She also shared memories of how MS told her that she should dance the Dhanasri Tillana of Svati Tirunaal and taught it to her and asked Radha to notate it for her. Smt Vyjayanthimala Bali then talked about the magnificent reception MS and Sadasivam mama held in honor of her wedding to Dr Bali and also that they first made them exchange garlands, saying that they had missed the wedding. She said she remembers how magnificent the feast was as well !

Shri T K Murthy, who is in his eighties, had been a long time mridangam accompanist for MS. He talked about how the accompanists on the violin changed thru the years but he was a constant! He said that it was amazing to see with what precision MS used to keep the beat when he played all kinds of intricate *nadais* and patterns for the tani avartanam, and how she used to appreciate and anticipate the mathematical nuances.

Then Shri M S Swaminathan, launched the website - MSSTribute.org and said it was apt that the website was being launched at the Music Academy which is taking steps to move into the digital realm with the opening of the Music Academy TAG Digital Listening Archives. He said it is very fitting for a website to be created honoring this great musician. After the function, he was gracious in complementing the layout of the website. As the different screen captures of the web pages

(Continued overleaf)

appeared on the flat screen monitor on stage and up came a beautiful photo of MS and Smt Vyjayanthimala seated next to each other in an auditorium, there was a delighted smile of surprise on Smt Vyjayanthimala's face!

My cousin Shrinivasan had asked me to speak on the occasion about the website. I spoke briefly about how the website is intended as a homage to MS Amma to not only enable the family of MS Amma's *rasikas* to share their memories and artifacts but also enable future generations to learn about this legendary artiste. The website has been created with the help of multiple generations of family and friends. It is a digital collection of tributes, anecdotes, rare photos, speeches, original brochures and a blog. I welcomed everyone to join an interactive odyssey tracing the evolution of a legend: the progression of the shy girl from Madurai to Sangita Kalanidhi and Bharat Ratna while at the time remaining the unassuming, affectionate and ever loving MS Amma, Kunjamma and AmmuPatti.

My favorite part of the function was the honoring of three special people - Smt Narayani Mahadevan (Chinnani mami) currently in her nineties, who shared a close friendship of over 60 years with MS (she was unfortunately not able to attend in person, because she was still recovering from a recent illness); the late Kadayannallur Venkatraman who composed the lilting music for so many MS masterpieces including *Kurai Onrum Illai*, and Bhavayami Gopala balam; his daughter was honored on his behalf and finally Smt Visalam, MS's other right hand; Visalam who was MS's personal aide for several decades and who looked after MS till the very end.

The address by the Chief Guest, Governor Shri Surjit Singh Barnala, followed. In his speech, he said "Dr.M.S. the all time Empress of the world of music had created a special respect for herself in the field of Carnatic music. Her music had a universal appeal. She was very sound in her knowledge of music; she was intelligent par excellence and the all pervading aura of bhakthi in her music swayed one and all. Her mother was her guru. She sang many Shabads from Guru Granth Sahib also and gave me two cassettes in 1990 when I was Governor here earlier. ...This coffee table book is a masterpiece. It touches one's heart at all points of time. This book is different and mentions interesting incidents and anecdotes. It dwells on the early life of Dr.M.S., and about Sadasivam, her mother, brother, daughters and their family. It is something special. It houses many lively and rare photos taken on different occasions. I am sure that this book will adorn every house."

The function concluded with a short concert by Smt Radha Viswanathan accompanied by her grand-daughter Aishwarya Shrinivasan (vocal support), R K Shriramkumar (violin), T K Murthy (mridangam) and Anirudh Athreya (kanjira). The performance which included a number of vintage MS pieces such as *Petra Thai (viruttam)*, *Sada Saranga Nayane*, *Kurai Onrum Illai* led the audience through a journey down memory lane.

Postscript: The current content on the website MSSTribute.org is just a start. As indicated on the blog that is part of the website "The purpose of this blog is to provide a forum to share information and anecdotes about the legendary Carnatic singer and phi-

lanthropist Smt. M.S.Subbulakshmi. If you are an admirer or a friend, a person who enjoyed her music or were in some way touched by her life, we invite you to add your comments and anecdotes for others to share." I hope that SRUTI members will visit the website and share their memories as well. Please see the Tributes by Artists section where there is a beautiful article by Smt Kiranavali Vidyashankar.

## Kasim and Babu Nadaswaram Concert Review

By P. Swaminathan

SRUTI organized a unique nadaswaram concert by Kasim and Babu, grandsons of maestro Sheikh Chinna Maulana on June 6, 2008. They were accompanied by V.M. Ganapathy and V.M. Palanivel on the thavil. This is the second time SRUTI hosted a nadaswaram concert after a lapse of 20 years. The patrons of SRUTI were happy to listen to a full-fledged, quality nadaswaram concert. Both Kasim and Babu presented all facets of nadaswaram depicting its influence on the divine aspects of music and life in south India.

Kasim and Babu started their concert with a brisk rendering of the *kanada varnam* by Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar in *ata thala*. The spirited rendering of "Deva Deva Kalayamithe" in *mayamalavagowla* from the repertoire of Swati Tirunal was in keeping with its exclusive lilt. After this Kasim and Babu went on to render one of the five gems of Thyagaraja "Endaro Mahanubhavulu...." in *sri raga* before launching a pleasing alapana of *harikhambodhi*. The blowing was powerful and clear, totally sruti aligned with no intruding scratchy, squeaky sounds to spoil the melodic stream of *harikhambodhi*. The sustained karvais, a well codified structure, and the prayogas offered with calm deliberation contributed to the impressive presentation of "Dhinamani Vamsa..." of Saint Thyagaraja. "Sada Saranga Nayane.." , a classic composition of H.Y. Yoganarasimha was rendered in *ranjani* with considerable melodic flavour worthy of savoring. This was followed by ragamalika swarams in different ragas. After a brisk rendering of "Nee Vada Ne Gana..." in *saranga*, Kasim and Babu went on to render Dikshitar's "Sri Bala Gopala ..." in *bhairavi*. The colorful phrases in the development of *bhairavi* were firmly ensconced in the ethos of tradition. The sensitive modulation in the blowing, alternating between the soft and the strong, were worthy of positive assessment. The brothers concluded the concert after rendering Purandaradasa's "Jagadodharana ..." and Venkatachala Nilayam..." and a thilana by Balamuralikrishna.

The vigorous training the brothers received from their maternal grandfather, Sri Sheikh Chinna Maulana was apparent in their perfect and swift rendering of compositions in raga *kanada*, *mayamalavagowla*, *harikhambodhi* and *bhairavi* etc. Kasim and Babu are noted for both the raga alapana and kriti rendering (in *gayaki* style) especially Dhikshithar kritis which are very difficult to render properly. This is particularly so in the case of nadaswaram as it requires both power and subtle breath control in a tough instrument to start with!

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The rhythmic accompaniment on the thavil by V.M. Ganapathy and V.M. Palanivel was of a high order. To their brilliant accompaniment the brothers mesmerized the audience with their melodic renderings of various krithi's.

The nagaswaram, known as a mangala vadya or auspicious instrument, is believed to be derived from the pungi used by snake charmers; its name is literally translated as 'voice of the snake' or 'sound of the snake.' However, in terms of sheer volume and sustained tones, its sweetness and its close association with temple rituals in South India, the nagaswaram also merits the other name it is often known by, 'nadaswaram.' Nada is the word used for the Cosmic Sound. While there are three types of nagaswaram, namely the bari nayanam, the thithi nayanam and the kurun kuzhal, today only the bari is widely in use. It is quite obvious that both nadaswaram and thavil have contributed significantly to the carnatic music that we listen to in our times. Late G.N.B. and Semmagudi Srinivasa Iyer demonstrated what quantum leaps are achievable in utilizing Nadaswara Bhani in raga elaboration. Mridangam maestro Palani Subrahmanya Pillai's incredible laya advancements were derived from the traditions of his thavil expertise.

### **Ranjani and Gayathri Concert Review**

**By P. Swaminathan**

The sisters Ranjani and Gayathri were featured in the concert organized by SRUTI on October 4, 2008 held at Valley Forge Middle School. They were accompanied on the violin by H.N. Bhaskar and by Delhi Sairam on the mridangam. In the carnatic music scene duo singing has a niche of its own. It brings out the discipline and coordination arising out of intense training of the performing artists. Ranjani and Gayathri are by far the best duo singers in the carnatic music discipline today.

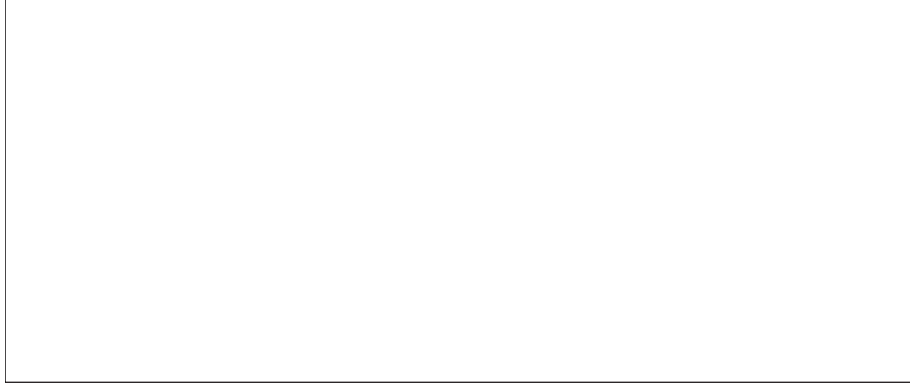
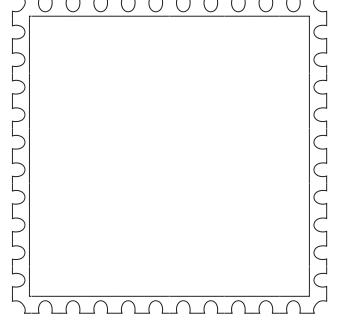
The sisters began the concert with the *kalyani* varnam in ata thala. This was followed by a vibrant rendering of Purandaradasa's master piece "Jaya Jaya.." in *nattai*. The sisters went on to render "Bhuvanidaasudane.." (*sriranjani*). Ranjani's raga alapana was embellished with a rich blend of tasteful phrases, smooth glides and inimitable upward traversals. Audience could experience the rapturous feeling to the hilt by the music of the sisters. Their recital of "Diwakara Tanujam.." (*yadukula khambodhi* – chathustra ekam – Dikshitar) unlocked the inherent beauty of the raga and the scholarly composition. This song, in praise of sanishcharan (planet saturn), is one of the navagraha krithis composed by Dikshitar, also called vara krithi. The *yadhukula khambodhi* alapana shared between the two sisters laid the foundation for Gayathri's later alapana of *todi*. Unraveling the musical charms of *todi*, their improvisation glimmered with tonal eloquence to be enjoyed with ecstatic pleasure by the audience. The depth of exposition clearly revealed the deep sensitiveness of her manodharma. Being the navarathri day, the sisters chose to sing a krithi by Syama Sastri in *todi*. If it is a *todi* kirtana of Syama Sastri, it cannot be anything but "Ninne Namminaanu.." at the hands of Ranjani- Gayatri. The elaborate alapana was beautifully nuanced, and H.N.Bhaskar's response was very melodious to listen to. The three way play of the swaraprastaram from Ranjani to Gayathri to Bhaskar on the violin kept the audience intently following along. The Tani by Delhi Sairam was masterly.

After a brisk rendering of "Thaye Thripurasundari.." in *sudha saveri*, the sisters rendered an RTP in *dharmavathi* in khanda-jathi tripata thala. Because of strong demand from the audience the sisters rendered ever pleasing "Rangapuravihara.." in *brindavanasaranga*. After rendering short pieces in *yamuna kalyani*, *hindolam*, they concluded their concert with their trade mark "Bolova Vittala .." – abhang based on the raga *bhatiyar*, composed by Sant Thukaram. The abhang added divinity to the concert; especially synchronous rendering of "Vittal Vittal.." in swift pace by Ranjani and Gayathri's invocation of "Vittala.." like a raga alapana produced ecstasy among the listeners. Ranjani- Gayatri concert revealed the blessings of refined musical impulses. Their performance was very well enhanced by the excellent accompaniments of H.N. Bhaskar and Delhi Sairam. To sum up the concert was a wonderful treat to the music lovers.



## **SRUTI**

The India Music & Dance Society  
123 Meadow View Lane,  
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## **Upcoming Sruti Events**

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 1) March 21 | Thyagaraja Aradhana (Concert by Nisha Rajagopal)   |
| 2) April 4  | "Vadya Sunada Sangam", Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi (Violin),<br>Sikkil Mala Chandrasekhar (Venu -Flute),<br>Jayashre-Jayaraj (Veena),<br>Rajana Swaminathan (Mridangam) and<br>Bhagyalakshmi Muralikrishna (Morsing) |
| 3) April 18 | Carnatic Vocal Concert by Parassala Ponnammal  |
| 4) May 3    | Mohiniyattam Performance by Padma Shri Bharati Shivaji,<br>Vijayalakshmi and group   |