



SRUTI NOTES

A Publication of SRUTI - The India Music & Dance Society

www.sruti.org E-mail: srutipihila@gmail.com

Volume 14, Issue 2, August 2011

Board of Directors

President

Uma Prabhakar

President-Elect

Raji Venkatesan

Treasurer

Usha Balasubramaniam

Secretary

Ravi Pillutla

Directors

Ramaa Nathan

Gayathri Rao

Ramana Kanumalla

Raghunandan Parthasarathy

Sunanda Gandham

Committees

Resources & Development

Ramaa Nathan (Chair)

Usha Balasubramanian

Rajee Padmanabhan

Raghunandan Parthasarathy

Viji Swaminathan

Publications & Outreach

Gayathri Rao (Chair)

Sundari Balakrishnan

Prabhakar Chitrapu

Sunanda Gandham

Rungun Nathan

Lakshmi Radhakrishnan

Mani Subramaniam

Kiranavali Vidyasankar

Raman Visweswaran

Marketing and Publicity

Ramana Kanumalla (Chair)

Raji Venkatesan

Ravi Pillutla

Raghunandan Parthasarathy

Niranjan Raman

Anwasha Dutta

*Celebrating 25 years of excellence in
Indian Classical Music and Dance
in the Delaware Valley*



President's Note

Dear Sruti Members,

I hope you all are enjoying a great summer with your family! The SRUTI Board of Directors is working as hard as ever through the summer months to make sure that the programming for the Fall season is executed flawlessly and, in addition is also planning out events for 2012. There is so much to communicate to you all since the last Spring Newsletter in March 2011!

The 2011 Sruti season has been a phenomenal success so far, starting out with a two-day Thyagaraja Aradhana celebrations and followed by several music and dance concerts featuring well known artists from India including, Priya sisters, Dr.M. Balamurali Krishna, Chitravina Ravi Kiran, TM Krishna and, TN Seshagopalan; local artists such as Toronto Brothers, Kiranavali Vidyasankar, Viji Rao, Ramaa Ramesh and Sonali Skandan and troupe, and several upcoming local talent both in dance and music.

Apart from the caliber and fame of artists we have presented so far, an important feature defining the success of our spring concerts is the overwhelming support and encouragement that we have received from all of you, our members! Your unflinching generous monetary contributions by becoming silver jubilee sponsors, attendance in large numbers at all our events and other support whether it is to help promote events, prepare a meal for the artists, host artists or help on the day of the concerts, have all been key in making the hard work and efforts of the Board members worth every while and we express our sincere thank you to each and every one of you for the support. This is definitely a community we enjoy serving and sincerely hope that we will continue to see the same level of enthusiasm and encouragement from all of you as we move ahead to present our Fall programs. Do send us your feedback and we look forward to hearing from you on what you think went well and what we can do better.

Our majestic line up of concerts this year while truly noteworthy, comes at a big price and budget and could not have been accomplished had we not received generous grants from various funding agencies in Philadelphia. Our Resources committee, led by Ramaa Nathan, has done an outstanding job this year in helping us secure the much needed funding from three major organizations including, The Philadelphia Music Project (PMP), Presser Foundation and Sam Fels Foundation in the amounts of \$54450, \$9000 and \$3000 respectively. I am proud to share some of the inputs we received from PMP with regard to our grant application this year as part of the routine feedback session we have with the Director and other members of PMP. SRUTI is regarded as a very unique and special organization and is considered as a privilege to work with. We were applauded by the grant

(Continued from page 1)

reviewers for our superb grantsmanship, curatorial expertise, high caliber artist selection, quality of workshops and lec/dem presentations and excellent choice of venues!

The strong attendance that we have seen at every single concert this year is the result of the directed and enhanced marketing and promotional efforts that our Marketing and Publicity Committee, led by Ramana Kanumalla, has put together. Their untiring and enthusiastic efforts in promoting our events through attractive posters and flyers especially designed for the occasion, distributing flyers and evites, and making presentations at various venues downtown and at Indian events have paid off richly and enabled us to break even and even enjoy marginal net incomes at every single concert so far. We are confident that we will continue this trend in the second half of the year as well and we will be able to tuck away some revenues for the next year's programs and beyond!

The highlights of the Publication and Outreach Committee, chaired by Gayathri Rao is conspicuous in the two extremely high quality publications that were released earlier this year namely, The Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir in March 2011 and the May 2011 Memorial Day Souvenir, 'Great Composers of India'. Well designed program notes that you pick up at concerts is carefully prepared to enhance your concert experience at each and every event. The publications team is now working on a few other new fun initiatives this year in addition to maintaining an updated website to help you navigate and keep you abreast of our upcoming events. We know you will enjoy the new surprises that have been planned for the Fall of 2011!!

As always, our SRUTI Youth Group led by Anil Chitrapu and Harsha Kanumalla and advised by Sunanda Gandham, continue to make outstanding contributions to Sruti. Their interview videos certainly have a more professional flair to them and have reached a whole new level. The high quality of the interviews and the videos attest to the caliber, hard work and dedication of our youngsters. The Youth group has also continued to help us in the execution of our concerts in various ways.

We hope that the Youth group will continue to be an integral part of SRUTI in the years to come and look forward to engaging more youngsters in leadership roles within this group. Please check out our calendar for the line up of the Fall events at our website, www.sruti.org which includes among several other concerts, workshops by the music practitioners of Indian classical music to explore the convergence of Carnatic and

Hindustani music during the Labor Day weekend. We look forward to seeing you all at all our Fall events and hope you will continue to have an enjoyable and satisfying experience at these concerts.

With warm regards,
Uma Prabhakar
on Behalf of the SRUTI Board of Directors

From the Publications and Outreach Committee

Dear Friends,

With Sruti's 25th anniversary celebrations well underway this issue of Sruti Notes comes to you with reviews of some of the memorable music concerts and dance performances of the spring season. We have reviews of concerts of young artists from the Thyagaraja Aradhana, concerts of Priya sisters and Viji Rao, Balamuralikrishna Ravikiran Jugalbandi and the grand spring finale concerts of Kiranavali Vidyasankar, Ramaa Ramesh, T.M. Krishna and T.N. Seshagopalan. We would like to thank all those who have provided the reviews for their time and effort.

This issue provides information about the upcoming fall concerts starting with the two day Labor Day weekend extravaganza. We have a very impressive lineup of music and dance concerts scheduled for the fall concert season. Please visit our website (www.sruti.org) and Facebook regularly for updates.

We are very encouraged by the response we received for the Commemorative Aradhana Souvenir and the Souvenir on Great Composers of India. The members of Publications Committee are getting ready with another Commemorative Souvenir to be released during the Labor Day celebrations. This souvenir will celebrate twenty five years of Sruti and the past presidents who have been involved with the organization and contributed to its growth will share their memories and experiences.

We appreciate your support and hope to see you at the fall concerts. Please contact us if you would like to contribute articles for the November issue of Sruti Notes.

Regards,
Gayathri Rao
Chairperson, Publications and Outreach Committee

Marketing Committee Report

The Marketing committee consists of Ramana Kanumalla (Chair), Anwesa Dutta, Niranjan Raman, Raghu Parthasarathy, Ravi Pillutla and Raji Venkatesan. The committee implemented innovative ideas in the Spring resulting in sold out concerts at almost each one of the events. We are thankful to your enthusiastic response to our efforts.

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.

We are continuing the Fall campaign with some new initiatives. The Labor Day weekend events will be advertised on air via WHY-FM (90.9) and WRTI-FM (90.1) Classical and Jazz Stations. There will be advertisements placed in the Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Live Arts Festival Guide and Community organization souvenirs. Further, we are collaborating with the Philadelphia Live Arts and the Fringe to introduce new audiences to the collective works happening in the Fall. For the first time, post cards would be mailed to members/subscribers from Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts and Painted Bride Arts Center. We are also going to be launching an advertisement campaign on Facebook.

Sruti's Labor Day weekend event marketing campaigns are funded by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage through the Philadelphia Music Project.

Ramana Kanumalla
Director of Marketing and Publicity

Anil Chitrapu Vocal Concert Review
by Veena Kanumalla, Priyanka Dinakar, and
Rumya Venkateswaran

Anil Chitrapu along with Siddharth Ashokkumar on violin and Harsha Kanumalla on mridangam, highlighted Sruti's Thyagaraja Aradhana with a half an hour concert. Anil started off the "mini" concert with the krithi, Ganamurte in Ganamoorti, picked up the pace with Sarasa samadana in Ragam Kapi Narayani, selected Dasharathi in Todi for his main piece, and ended with Sita Kalyana. Anil's overall stage presence was very alert yet jovial. He was able to execute various forms of *manodharma* that suited his voice well. His cleverly thought out *melkalam swarams* sounded crisp and clean with his delicate voice. The main piece embodied the essence of Thodi and his overall song choice for the evening was very appealing to the audience. His mellow voice was perfect for the soft and sweet song Sita Kalyana and ended the concert in a pleasant manner.

Siddharth Ashokkumar accompanied Anil Chitrapu on the violin. He seemed to really enjoy playing along with Anil and his dedication was clear. He has clearly practiced a lot because he did not lose *sruti* once. All great musicians would agree with that statement that along with learning and practicing, one has to listen to lots of music. Siddharth clearly listens to lots of music, as was evident in his creative phrases throughout the concert. He built up his Thodi alapana beautifully and did not falter once while putting *kalpanaswarams*. Hopefully he will keep up the good work and get more opportunities to showcase his talent.

Anil was accompanied on the mridangam by Harsha Kanumalla, an accomplished young artist well known in the Sruti community. Harsha swiftly followed the concert compositions rather well, producing sharp, creative patterns that allowed his each and every beat to be distinctly heard. It can also be noted that a turning point in Harsha's performance was his *tani avartanam*. Short and sweet, Harsha's *tani avartanam* encompassed several varying patterns of beats, at the same time captivating the audience so quickly. Harsha finally demonstrated his dexterity in playing the

mridangam as he flawlessly changed the volume of the percussion to match the very tone of the song he was playing to. Harsha gave a commendable performance during Anil's concert, and it was truly a pleasure to once again notice such young talent in the Sruti community.

These three youngsters have incredible stage interaction with each other. Surely, this must have come from years of performing together in various concerts. Hopefully they will continue to play in concerts in the area and demonstrate their aptitudes in music.

Anil, Siddharth and Harsha are doing a fabulous job of keeping Carnatic music alive among the youth of this area. They have definitely inspired children to be dedicated in their respective art forms.

(Veena Kanumalla is an 11th grader at Wissahickon High School in Ambler, PA. She has been learning music for 9 years and is currently a disciple of Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar.

Rumya Venkateswaran is a 12th grader at Garnet Valley High School in Glen Mills, PA. She has been learning music for 12 years and is currently a disciple of Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar.

Priyanka Dinakar is a 9th grader at The Agnes Irwin School in Rosemont, PA. She is very interested in Carnatic Music and is a student of Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar.)

Dance performance by Shoba Narayanan
by Vasanthi Nagaraj

The dance recital by Shoba Narayanan was very beautiful. It was a pleasure to watch the energy and enthusiasm of this young and attractive dancer. Shoba began the recital with a Thodayamangalam, "Jaya Janaki Ramana" which was a ragamalika and thalamalika. With SRUTI celebrating Thyagaraja Aradhana, this invocatory piece merged well with the theme. Shoba rendered this composition by Shantha Dhanajayan gracefully.

The second item was the famous Swathi Thirunal kriti Bhavayami Raghuramam. Apart from being an apt item for the day, this choreography by the Dhananjayans really stood out. Shoba's sincerity and dedication to this art form was demonstrated well in her execution of this complicated song. Although it was not a pure nriitta piece, Shoba's footwork, aramandi and theermanams were precise. Her abhinaya was poised and elegant. Although abhinaya develops with age and maturity, Shobha expressed herself with confidence. The devotion of Hanuman and Rama's affection for his devotee was portrayed well.

Thillana, in ragam Shanmugapriya was a brisk conclusion to the recital. Shoba effortlessly covered the stage, held the sculptural poses, and conveyed the exuberant spirit of the Thillana. I really appreciate this fine young dancer who juggles with so many commitments to stay connected to this traditional art form. Our best wishes to this promising, upcoming Bharatanatyam dancer.

(Vasanthi Nagaraj, a senior student of Smt. Nalini Raghu, learned Bharatanatyam for nearly 20 years. She is the artistic director of Vasanthi Dance Academy. Apart from teaching dance, Vasanthi is a Chinmaya mission sevak, an elementary school teacher, and president of the local Chapter of Gifted Education.)

Vocal concert by Revathi Subramony

Review by Prekshaka

As part of Sruti's composer day event, Ms.Revati Subramony gave a thematic concert on "Karnataka Composers". The Karnataka region has produced an unbroken succession of composers and exponents of Karnatic music beginning with the Dasakuta movements in the state. The region and in particular the princely state of Mysore was also fortunate to have a royal lineage who promoted the fine arts. Rulers such as Mummadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar, Chamaraja Wodeyar, Nalvadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar and Jayachamaraja Wodeyar were also musicians. They fostered a dynamic tradition that nurtured the talents of many composers and musicians.

Revati Subramony, is a student of Smt.Neela Ramgopal who is a recipient of the Music Academy's Sangita Kala Acharya award this year. One could find the same thoroughness in her approach to concert planning and selection of compositions. She was accompanied by Sandhya Anand on the violin and Keerthi Venkataramani on the Mrdangam. The concert began with Shri Jalandhara in Gambhiranatta, Aditala - a composition of Shri Jayachamaraja Wodeyar. It was rendered in a brisk pace with the sprightly cittasvaras embellishing the gait of the composition. This was followed by Sharade Varade in Rupaka Tala of Veene Seshanna which also featured a short sketch of the raga. Sakala Grahabala Neene in Athana of Purandaradasa extolling the Sarvottamatva of Hari was the next composition. This was followed up with an alapana of Kambhoji raga and Sandhya Anand's accompaniment was articulate and supportive. While Purandaradasa, Jayachamaraja Wodeyar represents the best of what Karnataka had to offer, composers such as Mysore Sadashiva Rao and Mysore Vasudevachar represented the Tyagaraja Shishya Parampara who imparted additional dimensions to the music of the region. While Sadashiva Rao was not represented in this concert, this aspect was covered by the Kambhoji composition of Mysore Vasudevachar - Mari Mari vaccuna in Adi tala. This composition is reminiscent of Tyagaraja's Mari Mari ninne in the same raga and yet has a unique musical value to it. (A similar inspiration in the Pallavi can also be observed in Vasudevachar's Rshabhapriya composition a take off of Tyagaraja's Rshabhapriya Composition). The Kambhoji kriti was presented very well with the neraval at "ramuni mahimane" along with some short and crisp kalpanaswaras. Young Keerthi Venkataramani played a short thani. She concluded her concert with Shiva Shiva Shiva bho in Nadanamakriya of the Mysore Maharaja which is one of those compositions which features a raga mudra in addition to the composer's mudra (Shrividyā).

Ranjani Prabhakar Vocal Concert -March 20, 2011

Review by Anil Chitrapu

A local performer with a strong foundation in Carnatic music, Ranjani Prabhakar performed for Sruti's Thyagaraja Aradhana on March 20th, 2011 at the Hindu Temple of Delaware. As a part of Sruti's 25th Anniversary Celebrations, the Aradhana hosted several mini-concerts by talented youth-one of whom was Ranjani.

Ranjani gave a well-appreciated and traditional concert; it was also evident that she had carefully made her song selection. The number of kritis and those which she decided to perform with an alapana or kalpita-swarams gave her ample opportunity to show off her vocal expertise while containing herself within the allotted time.

It is also worth noting that her concert was admirably sung, despite having a severe throat infection a few days prior. She not only managed, but took control of the songs she sung despite untimely physical drawbacks she was experiencing.

Ranjani began her mini-concert with the song *Raga ratna maalikache* in raga Reethi Gowla. The melancholic tone at its onset was moving, and set the tone of the song perfectly. She continued her performance with an upbeat *Neepadamu*. She was fully aware of her accompanists during this song, interacting with both mridangist and violinist naturally.

The mridangam and violin artists were also extremely capable accompanists, and the audio levels ensured that the performance wasn't dominated by one performer. The concert sounded more like a blend of the three instruments, rather than a jarring combination.

Ranjani's main song was *Mitri baghy mee* in raga Kharaharapriya. Her alapana for the piece was emotional, and brought out the iconic elements of the raga. From the very beginning, I could tell that it was Kharaharapriya that she was singing. During the song, she had command over the song and kept her talam in check despite some tricky sangathis.

Overall, Ranjani Prabhakar showed her versatility and strengths as a Carnatic vocalist. Her range and deftness in the ragas she sang allowed the audience to see her skill and talent in the genre.

Ranjani studies under the guidance of Sri O. S. Thyagarajan. She is a recent graduate of Emory University, and is currently working towards publishing her research on Carnatic vocal pedagogy.

(Anil will be a Freshman this year in the Schreyer's Honors Program at Penn State University. He is keenly interested in classical Indian and western music. He has been learning Carnatic music for over 12 years and had his arangetram in 2008. He is the student of D. Seshachary of the Hyderabad Brothers.)

(Continued overleaf)

Bharatanatyam Presentation by Viji Rao

by P. Swaminathan

On April 9, 2011, SRUTI, The India Music and Dance Society, presented a scintillating Bharatanatyam dance performance by Viji Rao as part of the 25th anniversary celebration. After the Thyagaraja aradhana celebration, this was the first concert for this year. The performance took place in the Bharatiya Vidyalaya auditorium. Viji Rao performed with accompaniment of pre-recorded music.

Viji started the program with a natyanjali (*nritta*) in the raga *nat-tai*. For this she chose a melancholic piece from Krishna Karnamrithm. Her excellent foot work accompanied by equally good abhinaya set the stage for a good start.

Following this, Viji performed an invocatory piece beginning 'Ikshudandadhara' in praise of Lord Ganesa in the raga *vitapi*. During this Viji demonstrated her excellent skills in *nritya* (artistic combination of elegant *natya* and rhythmic *nritta*). On a slight digression on the music, the notes of the rare raga *vitapi* (not commonly performed in the music concerts) can be viewed as the good mixture of the majestic *suddha saveri* and the melancholic *karnataka suddha saveri* of Dikshitar.

vitapi - S R1 M1 P D2 S-S D2 P M1 R1 S

karnataka suddhasaveri - S R1 M1 P D1 S-S D1 P M1 R1 S

suddhasaveri - S R2 M1 P D2 S-S D2 P M1 R2 S

It is reported that quite a few krithis of Annamacharya, Purandaradasa and some verses of Tulsi Das's Ramacharithmanas have been rendered in *vitapi*.

Following this, Viji enacted the dasavatharams (ten incarnations) assumed by Lord Vishnu, in a ragamalika. Her artistic portrayal of different incarnations was excellent especially the depiction of sleeping Lord Vishnu in the milky way was noteworthy. Having praised Lord Vishnu, Viji went on to perform dance (*tandava*) in honor of Lord Siva. For this she chose the song Bho Sambho composed by Swami Dayananda Saraswathi in the raga *revathy*. During this piece Viji demonstrated her ability in demonstrating the different *karanas* performed in *tandava nirtya*. Viji beautifully portrayed the wonderful sentiments of human love towards the Supreme (*nayika-nayaka-bhava*) expressed in the classical Meera Bhajan "Giridhara Gopala .." where Meera pours her heart's content to catch the attention of Lord Krishna, through her beautiful abhinaya. The accompanying music was excellent. After performing a thillana in *shanmukhapriya*, Viji concluded her dance with a mangalam.

Music (*gitam*), dance (*nritta*) and drama (*natya*) are inseparable. One of the interpretations of the phrase *bharata natyam* (*bha* – for emotions *bhava*, *ra* for melody, *raga* and *ta* for rhythm *raga*) reinforces this unity of music, dance and drama. This is further emphasized by the following verse on *marga nirtya* –

यतो हस्तततो दृष्टिः यतो दृष्टिस्ततो मनः ।

यतो मनस्ततो भावः यतो भावस्ततो रसः ॥

Elegantly choreographed *karanas* (synchronized movement of the hand, feet and eyes) accentuated with the symphony of (recorded) music made Viji's dance a memorable performance. It gave a good start to the 25th anniversary celebration of SRUTI. It is often remarked among the connoisseurs of Bharata natyam that a live music is a must for grand appeal of the performance. After witnessing Viji's performance to a well recorded music I have to disagree with popular belief. Kudos to Viji.

(Dr. P. Swaminathan is connoisseur of music and dance. He has been a past President of Sruti and frequently contributes to Sruti publications.)

Priya Sisters- Vocal Concert Review

by Revathi Subramony

Sruti presented a vocal concert by Priya Sisters, Shanmukhapriya and Haripriya, on April 9, 2011. It was the first of a great line-up of concerts that Sruti had organized to celebrate its 25th anniversary. The concert was held at the Bharatiya Temple. Priya sisters were accompanied by B.V.Raghavendra Rao on the violin and Skanda Subramanian on the mridangam.

Priya Sisters started off with the melodious and enchanting *varnam* in Behag composed by their guru Prof. T.R.Subramaniam. This wonderful composition of T.R.S brings out the full essence of Behag and it was rendered well by the sisters. The invocation was Papanasam Sivan's Gajavadana Karuna Sadana in Sriranjani and was completed with a brisk round of *kalpana swarams*. Ranganayakam Bhavayeham, Dikshitar's masterpiece in Nayaki describes Lord Ranganatha in the Srirangam temple. This krithi was presented with the majesty it deserves.

Shanmukhapriya started her *alapana* in Kalyanavasantham. Halfway through the *alapana*, Haripriya took over incorporating many lilting phrases and fast paced *sancharams*. B.V. Raghavendra Rao's Kalyana Vasantham raga was very satisfying. Thyagaraja's famous Nadaloludai was presented with a good flow of *swarams* in Hariharathma Bhoosurapathi. Before embarking on the main raga Kambhoji, they sang Ka Vaa Vaa in Varali.

Haripriya's *alapana* of Kambhoji was expansive. Thyagaraja's O'Rangasayee was presented. This long krithi was embellished with *nereval* and sparkling *kalpana swarams* in the familiar line, "Bhooloka Vaikunta". The excellent support from Raghavendra Rao and Skanda Subramanian made it all the more enjoyable. The Kambhoji concluded with a wonderful Tani Avartanam from Skanda Subramanian. Muthaiah Bhagavata's Vanchathonu Naa in Karnarajani was a perfect choice before starting the RTP.

The highlight of the concert was the Ragam Thanam Pallavi in Hemavathi. The Pallavi, Namamyaham Hemavathi Haripriya Navayuvathi Gunavathi Sumathi Sathi, set to Kanda jathi Triputa talam in Kanda Nadai was a complicated one.

(Continued overleaf)

HariPriya announced that it was a composition of their guru, T.R.S, and clarified that “HariPriya” referred to Goddess Lakshmi and not to her! The words were intelligently set into sequences of seven and the sisters handled it very carefully with meaningful neraval and swaraprasthara in different ragas- Rupavathi, Revathi, Hindustani Kalavathi ,Carnatic Kalavathi and Madhuvanathi. Shanmukhapriya’s kalpanaswaram in Revathi was moving. Carnatic Kalavathi is a janyam of Chakravakam with the arohanam/avarohanam SRMPDS/SDPMGSRS (shuddha RI, shuddha M, chatusruthi D and Anthara G). Thyagaraja’s Ennadu Jutuno in Kalavathi comes to mind. HariPriya’s swaraprasthara in both Hindustani Kalavathi and Madhuvanti were impressive. Raghavendra Rao’s violin was equally good and Skanda Subramanian produced appropriate tabla like sounds on his mridangam!

Priya Sisters are well known for their lilting thukudas. They presented Annamacharya’s Nigama Nigama in Hindolam, Malai Meedhu in the lovely Sivaranjani and a devaranama in Durga. They concluded with the soothing Sai Bhajan, Dolaloogumu Sai in Yamuna Kalyani. Overall, it was a very enjoyable concert.

(Revathi Subramony is a Carnatic vocalist and music enthusiast and lives in Exton, PA.)

Sri Mangalampalli Balamurali Krishna: Our Personal Experience

by Srivalli, Ravi, Karthik and Krishna Pillutla

It was only fitting for SRUTI to invite two legends of Carnatic music: PadmaVibhushan Dr. Mangalampalli Balamurali Krishna and Sangeeta Samrat Sri Chitravina Ravikiran to perform a jugalbandi in celebration of its 25th Anniversary this year. The concert was part of the spring season organized in collaboration with the Delaware temple. The two legends along with Sri Nagai Muralidharan and Sri Mannargudi Easwaran attracted and enthralled an audience of over 500 rasikas from New York to Virginia. An audience of that magnitude is a SRUTI’s first for a Carnatic concert in its history. The atmosphere was electric and the concert brought back memories of BMK’s brilliant jugalbandi performances, and all of the artists did a magnificent job, but our experience wasn’t limited to the concert itself.

We had the honor of hosting Dr. Balamurali Krishna, and we wanted to share our personal experience with SRUTI members. Balamurali was a joy to host, and great company to have. Even though Dr. Balamurali Krishna is such a revered Carnatic legend, he was still a very warm and modest guest. He felt quite at home and it was such a pleasure to have Dr. Balamurali Krishna move around in our home joking around in his casual Indian clothes. He acted as though he was any other family member visiting and he was even patient enough to watch our little Krishna’s card tricks. God besides blessing him with ganamrutam, has bestowed him with excellent health. It is quite amazing to learn that Balamurali enjoys a perfect health at eighty years of age and doesn’t have to follow any special diet for preserving his health or his vocals. He enjoyed all of the food, especially Andhra pickles, vadas and pesarattu. It was such a pleasure for Valli to cook for him as he enjoyed every item that she made. He was always open to talking, and we enjoyed a few musical discussions. Karthik was quite fortunate to have learnt a kriti from Dr. BMK on Lord Vinayaka, a

Balamurali composition. We were also fortunate to have an autographed copy of his book of Mela Raga krithis which was scripted in six languages with BMK handwriting in Telugu. Balamurali talked about his philosophies and relationship with music as well, and explained that music is a part of everything around us, from the rhythm of our heartbeat to the tone and melody of our voices. We gained the most insight about him and music, when he said “I do not know music, but music knows me” saying that music uses him as an instrument of its own. We had the pleasure of driving him to the Delaware Temple and watching the wonderful felicitation of Dr. Balamurali. The reception was truly grand, and he sang a few songs in the temple hall. His rendition of Srivaralakshmi Namastubham in the temple was especially memorable because it is one of Valli’s favorite songs. We were quite amazed that he doesn’t have to practice any music or keerthanas prior to the concert and that his favorite food before a concert is bhajji. He can just get on to the stage and sing. He has incredible memory of his extensive repertoire of music and can pretty much sing anything without looking at a book.

As you all know, billions of neurons must be in perfect harmony for one to be able to sing. Furthermore, so many more things have to be right for one to sing like Balamurali. When he sings the diction, tonal balance, bhavam, child-like playfulness, and genius are all in perfect harmony. Understanding the nuances of the language and the way he brings out the bhavam in a song is like seeing the different hues of fall colors. Ravikiran’s wizardry on the strings of the chitraveena was a beautiful complement to Balamurali’s mastery in vocals. What a sight it was to see the four maestros on the stage and the electrifying dialogue among them. We enjoyed all of the songs in the concert, but we did have a few favorites, namely Amma Anandadayani, Emi Sethura Linga, and Pibare Ramarasam. Overall, it was a concert we will never forget.

Balamurali Krishna certainly lives up to his name by being a child at heart, bala, and producing such divine music, muralikrishna. The experience was one that will last a lifetime, but we would love to do it all over again. Murali gana lola nee leelalenna jaalara!

(Ravi and Valli Pillutla are Carnatic music enthusiasts and have been long time volunteers and supporters of SRUTI. Further, they are involved in promoting Annamayya kirtanas through Annamayya Rasa Tarangini. Valli and Karthik are Carnatic music students of Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar.)

T.M. Krishna: A memorable Concert

Review by Rasikan

About halfway through the concert, T.M. Krishna (TMK) announced that he would like to make things somewhat unusual. He then invited Arun Prakash (mridangam) to play a thani (solo) in a thalam of his choosing. Conventionally, the thani is in the same thalam as that of the main piece and is a matter of the main artist’s choice.

(Continued overleaf)

This was not the only unusual feature of the concert on May 28, 2011, at the Great Valley Middle School auditorium featuring TMK, R.K. Sreeramkumar (RKS) on the violin and Arun Prakash. The concert was the second part of a “double header” in the ongoing silver jubilee celebrations of SRUTI.

While being mostly a traditionalist, TMK has on occasion taken liberties with the concert format, some of which have been controversial. For instance, in few of his concerts, he is known to have rendered an alapana in the middle of a concert, followed by a varnam!

For the Sruti concert, TMK did not start with a varnam, which in itself is not that unusual. But instead of a medium-paced or even a brisk kriti, he started off with a slow and stretched out rendering of *Sri Nadadi* (Mayamalavagowla, Adi, Dikshitar). Also, he did neraval at “maya sava geetha” in the charanam but swaraprastatarm at “Mayamalavagowla!” Now that was a bit unusual. After the kriti, he took a few moments to explain some significant facts about the kriti, which the audience enthusiastically received. TMK noted that this was Dikshitar’s first composition. The ragam was apt, since Mayamalavagowla is usually the first ragam taught to beginners. Also the swaras for the first segment of the pallavi traverse the scale of the ragam in three speeds, very much as a beginner would be taught. TMK then went on to describe other beautiful phrases in the kriti including some sangatis in the charanam that are “palindromic” in swara structure.

The clear explanations were likely very useful for the many younger members of the audience. This writer wishes that other artists would follow his model and point out significant aspects of kritis as appropriate.

After a sedate *O Jagadamba* (Ananda Bairavi, Adi, Syama sастry), TMK had a short conversation with RKS, apparently to persuade him to start playing the alapana for the next piece - another first. A friend who attended TMK’s concert in D.C. on the following day told me that TMK did the same thing there as well. If other artists follow this approach, it would be quite a change to the concert format. This change would be quite welcome to this writer, and I suspect to many others. After all, many present-day violinists are at least on a par with the “main” artists in vidwat.

RKS played Sri ragam, followed by Arabhi. When TMK joined in with Gowri, it was obvious to many that they were going to render *Sri Viswanatham*, the monumental chaturdasa (fourteen) ragamalikai of Dikshitar. The piece is in three segments: the pallavi in two ragams - Sri and Arabhi; the anupallavi in four - Gowri, Nattai, Gowla, Mohanam; and the charanam in eight - Sama, Lalitha, Bhairavam, Saranga, Sankarabharanam, Kambhodi, Devakriya and Bhupalam. For each of the ragams, there is a swara sahityam. At the end of each segment the ragams are rendered in the reverse order with half avartha sahityams for each ragam.

RKS and TMK alternated in the alapana for each ragam, even reversing at the end. The kriti rendering itself was a grand climax!

After a brisk *Amba Paradevathe* (Rudrapriya, K. Chapu, Krishnaswamy iyer), TMK took Begada for an elaborate alapana/kriti. Begada takes both the kaisiki and kakali nishadams, and both are used extensively in the ragam. Musicologists differ in their views as to which is the anya swaram. TMK’s extensive use of the kakali nishadam seemed to imply that for him, kaisiki nishadam is the anya swaram.

The kriti that TMK chose, *Sankari neevani* (Rupakam, Subbaraya sастri), is one of the most beautiful kritis in Begada, with a lilting swara sahityam.

It was at the end of this kriti that TMK made the unusual request alluded to earlier for Arun Prakash to play thani in a thalam of his choice. Arun in turn solicited suggestions from the audience, one of whom called out “chapu.” So Arun played a delectable thani in chapu thalam.

TMK took up Karaharapriya for RTP. The tanam was vintage Semmangudi (one of TMK’s gurus), full of verve and raga bhavam.

For the ragamalikai swarams for the pallavi, once again TMK asked RKS to take the lead for each ragam.

The post pallavi period consisted of a Bharathiyar song (Aaduvome), Purandara Dasa keertana (Jagado darana), a javali (Saki prana), a tillana in Kanada and the traditional mangalam (Nee nama rupamuku). Incidentally, the mangalam was the only Thyagaraja kriti in the entire concert!

In this concert, TMK proved once again why he is among the topmost vocalists of the day, one who appeals equally to the connoisseur and the novice. RKS is a sought-after veteran violinist. Arun is known for both his soft touch when needed and powerful strokes when appropriate. This trio has performed frequently as a team, and their team spirit was again displayed during this concert.

SRUTI is in its 25th year of existence, and the Board of Directors has invited many top ranking artists to perform under its auspices to mark the anniversary. TMK’s concert will certainly rank among the most memorable concerts of the year.

(An ardent admirer and lover of Carnatic music, Rasikan has been a regular contributor to Sruti Notes and other publications of Sruti.)

**Review of Kiranavali Vidyasankar concert:
2011 Memorial Day weekend**
by Uma Natarajan

Kiranavali Vidyashankar needs no introduction. She is a well-known carnatic music vocalist, chitravina player, writer and blogger. Hailing from a family of musical geniuses, she is a very popular teacher in the Philadelphia area. SRUTI’s 25th anniversary celebrations program aptly featured her during the

(Continued overleaf)

Memorial Day weekend. Being a local and active member of SRUTI, Kiranavali had several song requests and she announced at the beginning that she tried her best to select as many as she could from her two-hour afternoon performance.

The concert began with “Ranganathudey” in Sourashtram. This was followed by Saint Thygaraja’s Suddha Danyasi composition “Entha nerchina”. Kiranavali’s rendition of Thanjavur Sankara Iyer’s Sahana piece “Saravanabhava Shanmugha” ensued and this was special to me since it also happened to be one of my requests.

A short raga alapana of Kaanada set the stage for Swati Tirunal’s “Mamava Sada Janani”. Violin accompanist Jayshankar Balan had the floor for him too. He showed signs of just beginning to warm up and did a neat job of supporting Kiranavali from here on.

The afternoon’s best was Muthuswamy Dikshitar’s “Ambaneelayathakshi” in Neelambari. This leisurely rendition shifted the concert to a different gear. Kiranavali was immersed in the serene neelambari kriti was well-executed and well-received by the audience. After a brief and brisk “Nadupai Palikeru” in Madhyamavathi by Saint Thygaraja, the artist embarked on the main kriti of the day in Kalyani. A neat detailed alapana of the raga Kalyani preceded Syama Sastri’s “Tallininnu vera”. She embellished it with just enough sangatis and kalpanaswarams followed in both high and low notes. Vinod Seetharaman performed a brisk thani avarthanam to end the piece which was well-greeted by the audience. Both the accompanists offered able support throughout the concert.

Kiranavali’s two-hour concert concluded with “Venkatachala Nilayam”, the ever popular Sindhu Bhairavi favorite. Overall, the concert was very well-planned, timed and engaged the audience. It was short, crisp and professional. It was indeed my great pleasure to have been able to review her concert.

(Dr Uma Natarajan is a carnatic music listener and lives in center city Philadelphia.)

Ramaa Ramesh - a spectacular Bharatnatyam recital

Dance review by Anwesha Dutta

Sruti - 25 years celebration

May 29th 2011-07-18

Ramaa Ramesh (disciple of famous Guru Chitra Visweswaran), a well know senior dance teacher and choreographer in the Philadelphia area, presented a majestic Bharatnatyam performance on May 29th at Great Valley High School in Malvern, PA. This was a part of the Memorial Day Weekend celebrations to commemorate Sruti's 25th year Music and Dance Festival. Ramaa was accompanied by well known musicians: Bama Visweswaran & Lata Suresh (Vocal), Mayuram J. Shankar (Mridangam), P. Venkatramana (Flute), Mudikondan Ramesh (Veena) & Lata Suresh's talented daughter and Ramaa's disciple Ratipriya Suresh (Nattuvangam). Ramaa's beautiful daughter Lavanya Rathi Ramesh was the Master of Ceremonies, who provided arty narration to guide the audience throughout the

repertoire. All the dances presented were specially choreographed by Ramaa for Sruti's 25th year celebrations.

A vibrant beginning, the performance was marked by a melodious Anjali, composed by Madurai R. Muralidharan, in Raga Vijaya Vasantham. The intricate yet joyous footwork gave a warm welcome to the audience. Ramaa transitioned beautifully into Sri Ganeshaya Dheemahi, a true treat to the eyes as the utmost devotion to Goddess Gauri's son, Lord Ganesha was depicted through graceful movements.

Next Ramaa portrayed the famous Anjaneya, Lord Hanumana set to Raga Charukesi. Alive came the enveloping Bhakti and Veera rasas (dedication and bravery) of Anjaneya, an ardent devotee of Lord Rama and the epic rescue of his wife, Goddess Sita.

Followed by this was the central piece of the repertoire, the Devi Varnam dedicated to Goddess Rajeshwari the reincarnation of the diving feminine power: Shakti, another beautiful composition by Madurai R. Muralidharan. The complex trikala jathi was delightfully executed with utmost precision and synchronization between Ramaa and the musicians. Elegant karanas brought out the best of "Simhavahini" Devi - the Goddess who proudly rides the lion to destroy the demon with radiant valour. All the jathis had tremendous specificity and intricate rhythmic variations with crisp Nattuvangam by Ratipriya. The depiction of "Janani" the ultimate maternal power was truly moving.

The next presentation Lalitha Lavanga brought the softness of the Shringara rasa and season of Spring, as Radha is told that Krishna is playing Raas with other gopis. The natural grace with which Ramaa showed the Raas and Radha's ambiguity entertained the audience. My personal favourite piece was the Panchali Shabdham. The depth in the Abhinaya was remarkable. Many dancers have presented the humiliation of Draupadi in various styles, but to be able to depict the evilness of Duryodhana and Dusshasana, the cowardice of Yudhishtira and Draupadi's pain with equal intensity, is truly commendable. A bit more dramatic lighting and stage art at the auditorium would have accentuated the rasas and principal themes; nonetheless a spectacular depiction.

The melodious Thillana set to Brindavani Sarang showcased fancy pirouettes and precise footwork. Next came the finale with strong Shiva poses - a delightful Ananda Tandava; a festive ending to a splendid presentation. Indeed, the Philadelphia audience continues to be mesmerized by Ramaa's art and legacy. As she mentioned in her closing speech, Gurus like herself know that their dedication to their art form will always remain alive through the generations of dedicated disciples such as Ratipriya Suresh and her own draughters Lavanya Rathi Ramesh and Saranya Rasya Ramesh.

(Anwesha Dutta is the Artistic Director of Nava Nritya Dance Academy)

(Continued overleaf)

bhulOka vaikuNtam in Malvern?

by Dinakar Subramanian

Sangita Kalanidhi Madurai TN Seshagopalan - Vocal
Jayashankar Balan - Violin
Vinod Seetharaman - Mridangam

Shri TNS performed for the 25th anniversary of Sruti, the India music and dance society at the Great Valley High School, Malvern, Pa on May 29, 2011. The song list is provided at the end.

The Great Valley High School lobby was buzzing after a few other performances earlier in the day. Fans were eagerly awaiting the performance of the legendary Madurai Shri T.N.Seshagopalan. The concert started promptly at the designated time with minimal introductions. TNS started with the kalyANi ata tALa varnam for which he sang kalpanaswarams, a practice that we do not hear often these days. Jayashankar Balan gave excellent support right from this piece. The malahari composition was TNS's own that I gather was a tribute to PurandarAsA. This was a very beautiful composition that had references to gAnabhyAsam or the practice of music – likely relating to PurandarAsA's contribution to early learning. He generously sprinkled swara sancharas from the malahari gItams that gave the audience a feeling of familiarity.

The classic telisirAmA was rendered in his usual inimitable speed. His neraval and kalpanaswarams were reminiscent of his early renderings and Vinod shone wonderfully in this piece with excellent anticipation where he tracked the chittaswaram for this piece just beautifully.

A beautiful AlApanA in gamakakriyA with a focus on the tAra sthAyI led to a shloka and the Muttuswami DIkshitar kriti - mInAkshi mE mudam dEhI. After the sAhAna and Ahiri, TNS rendered a melodious nAyaki.

Since you cannot have a TNS concert without a graha bEdham AlApanA, a grand tOdi AlApanA followed with graha bedham that included mOhanam. ThyAgarAja's enduku dayarAdurA was delivered with a niraval at tArakacaritra and an elaborate kalapanaswaram session that showed TNS's class. Vinod also excelled both during the kalpanaswarams and also in the tani that followed.

After Muthiah Bhavagavata's lively giripriyam in kadanakutU-halam, TNS embarked on an RTP in brindAvanasAranga (by popular request). The AlApanA was absolutely fabulous where TNS's mastery shone where he easily traversed to the tArast-hAyI Sa. A graha bedham with hindOLam also featured in this absolutely classic AlApanA and tAnAm that lasted about 30 minutes.

TNS then sang his signature pallavi - brindAvana sArangan, bhulOka vaikuNtan, srIrajan in khanda triputa after 1.5 beats. The pallavi was followed by a rain of ragamalika swarams after which TNS performed the speed variations of the pallavi. The RTP started at 9:22 pm and ended at 10:15 pm. I was thinking to myself - sitting in a high school auditorium at 10 pm on a Sunday night of a Memorial Day weekend listening to TNS in great form rendering brindAvanasAranga - could it be any closer to

heaven (vaikuNtam)?

Ariyakkudi's bilaharI thillAnA and a beautiful srI concluded the concert and the delight in the audience at having experienced a heavenly performance was quite perceptible. It was a fitting end to the Memorial Day festivities. TNS dispelled any apprehensions about his voice through a scintillating performance reaffirming the ingenuity and the consummate artiste in him. What many people took away including me were the memories that Shri TNS brought back matching the innumerable recordings that we have listened to over the years.

The Sruti Board deserves credit for the excellent program planning of the Memorial Day weekend that culminated by the performance of Sangita Kalanidhi Madurai T.N. Seshagopalan. It is indeed an honor for the region to have hosted this memorable concert.

Song List:

(Legend: A – AlapanA, N – neraval, KS – kalpanaswaram)

1. ata tALa varNam - kalyANi with kalpanaswarams
2. dasa shreshta dayAnidhim vandEham - malahari - rUpakam-A, N at Shristidagana, KS with phrases from the gItam
3. telisirAma cintanatO - purnacandriKA - Adi – N at rAmAy- eni capala
4. mInAkSi mE mudam dEhi- gamakakriyA - Adi - with shloka to start, KS at madhumadamOdita with tisram – M. DIkshitar
5. abhayAmbAyAM bhaktiM karOmi - sahAnA - misra cApu – M. DIkshitar
6. mAyamma yani nE- Ahiri - Adi - Shyama Sastri
7. pAlaya mAma srI - nAyaki - rUpakam - Swati Tirunal
8. enduku dayarAdurA - tOdi - misra capu, ThyagarAja, niraval at tArakacaritra, tani
9. giripriyam - kadanakuthahalam - Adi - Muthiah Bhagavathar
10. RTP - brindAvana sAranga - khanda triputa - 2 kalai - after 1 1/2 beats - brindavana sArangan, bhUIOka vaikuntan, srIrajan with Ragam and Thanam lasting for a half hour. rAgamAlika ragams - kEdaram, nAttai, gowLai, Arabhi, varALI, hamsanAdam, dEsh, hindOLam, darbAr, sAmA, rIti-gowLai, AbhOgi, bAgeSri, bindumAlinI, kalyANavasantham, Anandabhairavi, usEni, kuntalavarALI, bEhAg, candrakauns, nIlAmbarI, bauLi, kApI, then did the anulOma, pratilOma and other variations.
11. thillAnA - bilaharI - ariyakkudi rAmAnuja iyengar
12. sriya kAnthAya - mangalam in srI

(Dinakar Subramanian is an avid listener, teacher and fan of Carnatic music. He also enjoys other forms of music including Hindustani, film and classic rock. He lives in Audobon, PA.)



Fall 2011 Calendar of Events

Event Date and Start Time	Event For details visit www.sruti.org
Friday, September 2 6 PM	Free workshop on “Music Appreciation” by Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Gundecha Brothers and Malladi Brothers Moderators: KiranaVali Vidyasankar and Amanda Weidman SHERATON PHILADELPHIA UNIVERSITY CITY HOTEL Ben Franklin Room 4 and 5, 3549 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.
Saturday, September 3 7 PM	Hindustani Indian Classical Sarod Recital: Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Master of the Sarod with Amaan Ali Khan and Ayaan Ali Khan accompanied by Salar Nader and Abhijit Banerjee on tabla
Sunday, September 4 4 PM	Confluence of streams of music- Hindustani and Carnatic Indian Classical Vocal duo: Gundecha Brothers and Malladi Brothers accompanied by: H.N.Bhaskar (Violin), Neyveli Narayanan (Mridangam) and Akhilesh Gundecha (Pakhwaj)
Sunday, October 2 2 PM	Kuchipudi Indian Classical Dance: Sunanda Gandham Carnatic Indian Classical Vocal Concert: Abhishek Raghuram
Saturday, October 8 7 PM	'Heartbeat Ensemble' , a rhythmic – melodic extravaganza led by Vidwan Dr. Karthick – (Ghatam, Konnakol, Vocal); Embar Kannan (Violin) Poongulam S Subramaniam (Mridangam), SreeSundarkumar (Kanjira) B S Arunkumar (Rhythm Pad), Master K Sathyanarayanan (Keyboard) Co-Presented with Painted Bride Art Center
Sunday, October 9 5 PM	Bharatanatyam Indian Classical Dance Ballet: “Spanda” by Kalashetra Dance Company
Saturday, October 22 2 PM	Carnatic Indian Classical Saxophone Recital: Sumanth Swaminathan Carnatic Indian Classical Vocal Concert: O.S.Thiagarajan
Saturday, November 5 8 PM	Kuchipudi Indian Classical Dance: Shantala Shivalingappa Co-Presented with Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts
Monday, November 14 to Thursday, November 17 7 PM	Workshop on “Rare Master Pieces of Trinity and Oothukadu Venkata Kavi”, presented by Sangeetha Samrat Chitravina Ravikiran
Thursday, November 17 10:30 AM	Bharatanatyam and Painted traditions based Workshop: Ragamala Dance Company Co-presented with Office of Cultural Affairs, Montgomery County Community College, Blue Bell, PA
Friday, November 18 8 PM	Bharatanatyam and Painted traditions based Indian Classical Dance: Ragamala Dance Company Co-presented with Office of Cultural Affairs, Montgomery County Community College, Blue Bell, PA

*To order tickets or for more information
Please visit www.sruti.org or contact 267-797-7006*



South Indian (fusion) cuisine - Open 7 days

www.PhiladelphiaChutneyco.com

1628 Sansom Street Philadelphia, PA 19103

PHONE: 215.564.6446 FAX: 215.564.2412

Dosas and more Order
on line

CHINA

INDIA ORIENTALIS

Aman's
Authentic Indian Cuisine

The discovery of a new dish does more for human happiness
than the discovery of a new star.
-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

Specialist in Catering
Take-Out Service Available
All Major Credit Cards Accepted!
Sorry No Personal Checks.

2680 DeKalb Pike • E. Norriton, PA 19401
Junction of 202 & Germantown Pike
(Close to Blue Bell)

Phone: 610.277.5565
Fax: 610.277.5838

MARE

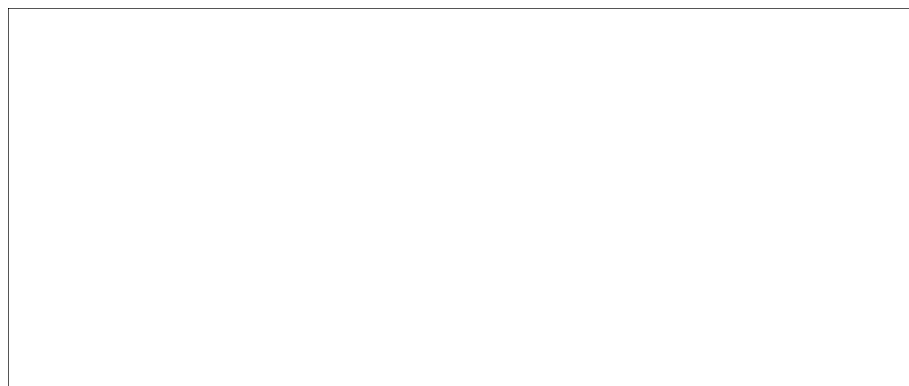
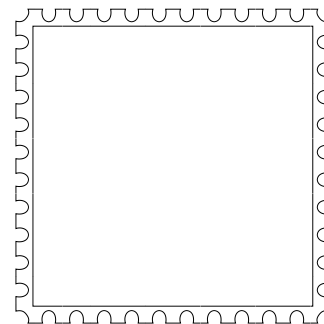
IN

ARCTIC



SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society
135 Brochant Drive
Blue Bell
PA 19422



LABOR DAY 25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Friday, September 2, 2011 6 PM	Free workshop on “Music Appreciation” by Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Gundecha Brothers and Malladi Brothers Moderators: KiranaVali Vidyasankar and Amanda Weidman Sheraton Philadelphia University City Hotel Ben Franklin Room 4 and 5, 3549 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.
Saturday, September 03, 2011 7 PM	Master of the Sarod- Hindustani Instrumental Concert by Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and his sons Amaan and Ayaan Independence Seaport Museum, Penns Landing, 211 Columbus Blvd, Philadelphia, PA
Saturday, September 04, 2011 4 PM	Confluence of streams of music- Carnatic and Hindustani Vocal Malladi Brothers and Gundecha Brothers Independence Seaport Museum, Penns Landing, 211 Columbus Blvd, Philadelphia, PA