



Sruti Notes

A Publication of SRUTI - The India Music & Dance Society

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From the President's Desk

Dear Sruti Supporter,

I hope that all of you are having a relaxing summer and a great year. 2015 is more than half over. I would like to take a moment to let you know what we have been up to since my last letter back in spring. Here are a few highlights of our activities:

- ◆ Launch of Sruti Bala Bhavam Series with vocal concerts by Sanjana Narayanan, Shreya Adiraju, Sashank Sridhar and Srinidhi Ramesh on Saturday May 30th. The event also featured live streaming of the concert, a Sruti first.
- ◆ Launch of Sruti Concert Patron sponsorship category, sponsoring individual concerts with a contribution of \$2,000. The Sruti board gratefully acknowledges the families of Usha and Bala Balasubramanian, Vatsala and Sripathy Holla, Bharati and Sumathi Sena and Jeya, Ravi and Sheila Sankaran for their support this year.
- ◆ Co-presented for the first time a concert with Crossroads Music, an organization that presents public performances by accomplished musicians with roots in cultures from around the world. The event featured a violin duo presentation by Nagai Muralidharan and Nagai Sriram.
- ◆ Two outreach events featuring music and dance presented at Friends Select School and Southwark School in Philadelphia. The events were led by Madhavi Ratnagiri and Pitchumani Sivakumar. Happy to share two quotes from the students who attended the outreach events.

"A very interactive and fun presentation - loved the dancing! There are so many more genres of Indian classical dance than I expected; the costumes and subtle meanings were very cool."
- **Lizzy A.** (Friends Select School)

"Gave us a lot of insight on the depth of Indian music and rhythm. There is a lot of math involved that I hadn't realized before this presentation."
- **Emma M.** (Friends Select School)

The Southwark school blogged the event with a write-up, pictures and video at the following link: <http://southwarkschoolk8.blogspot.com/2015/04/sruti-india-music-dance-society-visits.html>

- ◆ We are pleased to report that the accounting firm of O'Connell & Company, Jenkintown, PA completed a full audit of Sruti's financials as of December 31 2014. The firm opined that the financials present fairly, in all material respects, the financial positions of SRUTI as of December 31 2014, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended is in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of our treasurer Venkat Kilambi in working with the auditing firm and our accounting firm Sterling Services Inc, and completing the detailed audit. We are fortunate that the expenses for the audit were reimbursed fully by a grant from the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage.
- ◆ On Wednesday April 29th, Guru Sadanam Balakrishnan presented a very informative and educational Kathakali workshop. This was hosted by Nardhana Academy

(Continued from page 1)

of Dance.

- ◆ Dr. T.S. Satyavathi presented a week long workshop and training on Sri Purandaradasa's Navaratna Malika kritis that was attended by fourteen participants. She also presented a lecdem and concert on Sri Thyagaraja and his kritis.
- ◆ The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage awarded a grant of \$60,000 towards presenting Saayujya (The Merging), featuring Carnatic vocalist T.M. Krishna (TMK) and Bharatanatyam dancer Priyadarsini Govind. The event and associated outreach activities will be presented during the last week of April 2016.

In addition to the above highlights, we successfully presented Thyagaraja Aradhana, concerts by Malladi Brothers, Nagai Muralidharan and Nagai Sriram, a spectacular Kathakali dance drama "Nalacharitham" by Guru Sadanam Balakrishnan and Group, and a brilliant dance recital by Rama and Dakshina Vaidyanathan with a live orchestra.

The board is busy planning the various activities for the fall season that includes two Bala Bhavam Vocal concerts by Veena Kanumalla and Priyanka and Mallika Dinakar respectively. A highlight among the events this fall is the day long Purandara Dasa Aradhana on Saturday September 12. Featured on that days' events include a concert by young and renowned Tiruchur Brothers. As announced earlier we will be co-presenting with Montgomery County Community College a vocal concert by Ramakrishnan Murthy on Saturday October 3, co-presenting with the Annenberg Center a Chitravina recital by Ravikiran, a vocal concert by Sriranjani Santhanagopalan on Sunday October 25th, a Pew Center for Arts and Heritage funded event by Kiranavali and group on Saturday November 7 and finally Sruti Day and Annual General Body Meeting on Saturday December 12th.

We have finalized the criteria for the Bala Bhavam Dance series and we encourage the community to send in the requests to perform. The details are presented in a different section in this newsletter. The Fall events schedule is also presented elsewhere in this newsletter and we look forward to seeing you all at the different events. 2015 has been a successful year with respect to sale of sponsorship passes and we appreciate very much the community for its support.

If you haven't already signed up to be a sponsor, we have special sponsorship packages created just for Fall that gives you access to all our events and recordings at no additional cost.

Best Regards
Santi Kanumalla, President

From the Resources & Development Committee

As we looked forward to the Fall programs this summer, we received the good news that the Pew Center has awarded a project grant for the 2016 season.. This grant of \$60,000 towards the project and additional \$12,000 towards Sruti's general operating budget will enable us to present Ms. Priyadarsini Govind and Mr. T. M. Krishna in a world premiere special performance of Saayujya (The Merging) on April 30th, 2016. Ms. Govind and Mr. Krishna will present an innovative performance piece interpreting classical South Indian music and dance inspired by themes of liberty and freedom drawn from Philadelphia's history. Various activities surrounding the performance include a pre-performance podcast moderated by WNYC's John Schaefer, as well as three workshops conducted by TMK and Govind for local students and artists presented in partnership with the Curtis Institute of Music, and a post-concert panel discussion moderated by dance ethnologist Toni Shapiro-Phim. Mr. Matthew Levy will curate the outreach events. Sruti's resource committee members, Ms. Raji Venkatesan, Mr. Venkat Kilambi (Treasurer), Mr. Ramana Kanumalla, Ms. Renuka Adiraju and Ms. Rajee Padmanabhan worked tirelessly to meet countless proposal requirements and successfully qualify through its numerous evaluation stages. The resource committee expresses its gratitude to Pew Center for its support of our programming and for bringing Indian arts and culture to the Philadelphia area.

The committee is currently working on obtaining support from PECO and Mr. Balaji Raghothaman (President-elect) is spearheading an audio equipment grant to the McLean Contributionship with a request to modernize our audio hardware.

Kishore Pochraju
On behalf of the Resources & Development Committee



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.

From the Publications & Outreach Committee

Dear valued SRUTI family member!

The Publications and Outreach committee (POC) is once again very happy to bring you this Fall edition of Sruti Notes! Many thanks to the writers of this issue, especially that of the spring/summer concerts and dance reviews, their thoughtful and detailed notes captured the wonder of the moment, enabling us to relive the performances and the cherished memories!

I am sure many of you will agree with me, we had some great concerts and dances this Spring! Personally, I think the Kathakali dance deserves a special note! To be honest, previously, from my limited, somewhat biased exposure to this ancient art, I was a little apprehensive that the show may turn out to be slow and monotonous, especially for Western audiences, who are constantly under a deluge of exceedingly fast paced music and dances!! The Sadanam troupe proved to me I could never have been more wrong!! The dance turned out to be surprisingly engaging, entertaining. I am sure it was a heart warming treat, especially to those who have the ability to notice and observe intricate and artistic facial and hand movements, all set in perfect harmony to the mood of the ragam and in sync with the drum beats!! Read on the reviews written by professionals to see what I mean!

Special mention and kudos must go to some of our long time Sruti core members, Madhavi Ratnagiri and Pitchumani Sivakumar for giving some of our Philadelphia area school students an opportunity to experience and to appreciate the complexities and highly developed traditional art forms such as the Indian classical music and dance !! Madhavi Ratnagiri deserves special mention for her willingness to drive over to the two separate school campuses, on busy weekdays, to spend time introducing and demonstrating concepts of Indian dance, to the students, one batch were teenager high school girls and boys and the other a group of 5-7 year olds! Personally, I think each age group comes with its distinct challenges, that only a passionate professional can handle appropriately!

The Sruti Youth Group has continued to interview the Sruti concert artists after each of their concerts, find these recordings on the Sruti website! And also on YouTube. Please also don't miss out on the SRUTI blog, SRUTI Smrti written by our president-elect Balaji Raghothaman!

Wish you an enjoyable Autumn,
Shashikala Tanjore, On behalf of the POC Committee

How you can help Sruti

- ♦ Become a Sruti sponsor
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- ♦ Volunteer for Sruti marketing activities to help publicize Sruti in your local area
- ♦ Make tax deductible donations to Sruti
- ♦ Become a fan of Sruti's Facebook and invite your friends to join
- ♦ Follow Sruti on Twitter
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- ♦ Contribute articles for Sruti Publications
- ♦ Read the Sruti blogs and join the discussion and post comments
- ♦ Purchase music from Sruti Amazon Classical Music Store or Amazon Carnatic Music



Carnatic Tradition – An Evolving Continuum

Concept, Composition and Direction - Kiranavali Vidyasankar

Noted Carnatic musician, Kiranavali Vidyasankar recently became the first musician to receive a project grant from The Pew Center of Arts and Heritage (www.pcah.us). Her project, Tradition - An Evolving Continuum, is a pioneering effort to bring together Carnatic musicians residing in the United States. Musicians from traditional lineages as well as the second generation of Indians come together in a unique Vocal-instrumental ensemble. The instruments featured include the age-old Chitravina, Vina, Mridangam, Ghatam and Kanjira, besides those adapted from the west, such as Violin, Saxophone and Electronic Keyboard.

This project, presented by Sruti (www.sruti.org), will result in a two-part performance with the first part featuring a Vocal concert of Kiranavali accompanied by V V S Murari (Violin), Vinod Seetharaman (Mridangam), Ravi Balasubramaniam (Ghatam) and Akshay Anantapadmanabhan (Kanjira). The second part of the performance will feature the newly-formed ensemble.

Besides conceptualizing this project and composing music for the new ensemble, Kiranavali will lead it as the Vocalist and Chitravina artist. Accomplished Mridangam player Vinod Seetharaman will collaborate with Kiranavali in arranging the percussion section of the new compositions. Six guest artists from different parts of the United States complete the ensemble: V V S Murari (Violin), Nirmala Rajasekar (Vina), N Muralikrishnan (Electronic keyboard), Prasant Radhakrishnan (Saxophone), Ravi Balasubramaniam (Ghatam) and Akshay Anantapadmanabhan (Rhythmic solfage and Kanjira).

The event is at 6:30 PM on November 7, 2015 at The Painted Bride Art Center.

Tickets are available at <https://paintedbride.org/events/tradition/>.



Malladi Brother's concert
Review by P. Swaminathan, Ph.D.

SRUTI's spring music season started with a grand music concert by none other than Malladi Sri Ramaprasad and Malladi Sri Ravikumar ("The Malladi Brothers"). This is not the first time they performed for Sruti and I am sure, given their pandithyam and repertoire we will hear many more of their concerts in the future. After a good introduction by Mr. Ragotthaman, the brothers started their concert with a brisk rendering of the popular varnam *Eviri Bodana* in *Abhogi*, by *Pattnam Subramanya Iyer*. Following this they rendered in *Bilahari* (*Dikshitar's "Ekadantam Bhajeham"*) where they skillfully performed the subtle nuances around the *dhaivatha* and *kaishiki nishadha* to elicit the beauty of *Bilahari*. From what I can recall this is the first time this *krithi* is rendered for the SRUTI audience. After rendering a brisk "*Janaki Ramana*" in *Sudda-simantini*, Malladi Brothers rendered another classical composition of *Thyagaraja* "bhakti biccamiyave" in *San-karabharanam* wherein *Tyagaraja* powerfully elaborates the power of true devotion and shuns hypocritical scholars who have no compassion and devotion. This is another song which I am hearing for the first time in SRUTI concerts. "*Kamakshi Kamakoti*", the brilliant composition of *Dikshitar* in the *raga* *Sumadyuthi* was rendered following this. This is a *Melakarta(57)* *raga* popularly known as "*Simhendramadyamam*". This *raga* is made up of *Sadja, Chatusruti Rishabha, Sadharana Gandhara, Prati Madhyama, Pancama, Sudhha Dhaivata, and Kakali Nishada* (has all seven notes in ascending and descending scale).

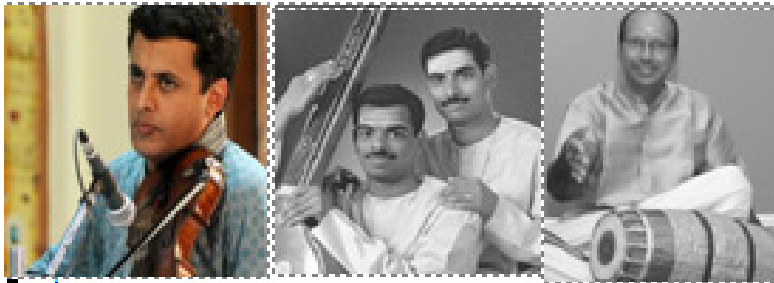
ārohaṇa: S R2 G2 M2 P D1 N3 S;

avarohaṇa: S N3 D1 P M2 G2 R2 S

It is the *pratimadhyamam* equivalent of *Keeravani*, which is the 21st *melakarta*. *Sumadyuthi* is complete in every way, and its notes lend themselves to *gamakas*, symmetric patterns and clever permutations while singing *alapana*s, *neraval* and *kalpanaswaras*. This particular *raga* is also prevalent in folk music from different parts of the world and music among the gypsies, proving its appeal to folks from different walks of life. After a brilliant rendering of the *alapana* by *Ravikumar Prasad*, the brothers rendered the *krithi* exceedingly well with a *neraval* on the phrase "*nadabindukalaswarupini*". Following this the brothers rendered a *Tyagaraja krithi* (*mitribhagyame*) in *Kharaharapriya*. Interestingly the brothers started the *krithi* with *anupallavi* (*chitraratnamayaseshstalpamandu*) and dovetailed into the *pallavi*. It is important to note that there are several *krithis* of *Tyagaraja* sung like this starting with *anupallavi* and ending with *pallavi* and *charanam* showing the different traditions among the performing musicians who took liberty in adopting the original compositions to different ways of rendering. The piece-de-resistance of the concert was the brilliant rendering of *Thyagaraja's* "*Sri Raghuvara*" in *Kambhoji*. *Alapana* of *Kambhoji*, with its inherent royal gait, started off first from *Srirama Prasad* and the second segment with higher trajectories, went to *Ravi Kumar*. This was followed with artistic rendering of the splendid *sahityam* followed with detailed *neraval* on '*Sithanatha Tyagarjanutha*' and creative *kalpanaswaras*. The duo performed an RTP in *Behag* where it was *Ravi Kumar* who expanded the *raga* with greater emphasis on melody. His upper region approaches were imaginative, eloquent and engaging. After rendering some short pieces, the brothers concluded the concert.

Embar Kannan on the violin proved his melodic intelligence while playing *ragas* and *swaras*, and in fact, his reply at one point in *Kambhoji* received a huge applause from the audience, well deserving.

Able accompaniments by *Embar Kannan* on violin and *Neyveli Narayanan* on the *mridangam*, raised the artistic and musical quality of the performance to a very high level. Overall, the symphony of the choice *ragas* and scholarly rendering of the classical *krithis* made the concert a memorable one.



Nagai Muralidharan – Nagai Sriram violin concert

Review by Rasikan

Sruti, in collaboration with Crossroads Music and South Asia center, presented a violin duo concert by Nagai Muralidharan and his nephew Nagai Sriram on April 25, 2015. The concert was held at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design's Meyerson Hall. Unlike in many Carnatic music concerts the percussion accompaniment was also a duo of mridangists, the veteran Mannargudi Easwaran and young Vijay Ganesh.

Nagai Muralidharan is no stranger to Sruti. His first introduction to a Sruti audience was in 1989 accompanying flutist N. Ramani. Since then he has visited the Philadelphia area many times with various musicians. This is the first time, however, that he has given a "solo" violin concert. The other musicians have also played for Sruti on various occasions.

The duo commenced the concert with the Sri raga varnam, Sami ninne, which they played in multiple speeds followed by Dikshitar's composition Swaminatha paripalaya in Nattai. Brief alapanas in Purvikalyani and Abheri preceded the kritis Gnanamosagaradha and Palukuthenela of Thyagaraja and Annamayya respectively. The next kriti was Ninnu vina namadhendhu, a Navarasa kannada masterpiece of Thyagaraja. The late flutist Mali (T.R. Mahalingam) had immortalized the kriti with mesmerizing sangatis jumping in different octaves. Muralidharan reproduced many of those sangatis on the violin, a fitting tribute to Mali.

After the pyrotechnics of Ninnu vina, Muralidharan chose a sedate kriti of Syama Sastri, Devi brova samayamidhe in Chintamani. There is a legend associated with how Syama Sastri happened to compose this kriti which goes as follows: Bobbili Kesavayya a redoubtable musician was known to travel around the country challenging musicians to contests and inevitably besting them. When he visited Tanjavoor, the court musicians were understandably reluctant to accept his challenge. The local Rajah, then requested Syama Sastri to help out. Normally Syama Sastri did not give public performances. However, the prestige of the court was at stake and so he agreed. The night before the contest, he prayed to his Ishta devatha – Kamakshi – to come to his rescue. In the process, he composed in a rare ragam – Chintamani, so rare indeed, that there is no other known kriti in this ragam. The constant jumps in the music are supposed to reflect his agitated mind. Be that as it may, the next day Syama Sastri not only met every one of Kesavayya's challenges, but also threw him a challenge of his own, a pallavi which the latter could not reproduce.

Back to the concert review. In keeping with the bhava of the kriti, Muralidharan played it in vilamba kalam and the percussionists accentuated the mood with soft strokes.

The main piece of the concert was Ethuta nilachte, a well known Thyagaraja kriti in Sankarabharanam. The presentation was straightforward with alapana, kriti, swaraprastharam at the pallavi including kuraippu.



This was followed by a delightful "thani" in which the mridangists exchanged brilliant rhythmic repartees.

Till about a few decades ago, Ragam, Thanam, Pallavi (RTP) used to occupy a pride of place in a Carnatic music concert giving scope for elaborate alapana and rhythmic complications. The modern trend is to give short shrift to this aspect even choosing minor ragams. In keeping with this trend, Muralidharan/Sriram rendered a short RTP in Brindavani. The pallavi in Khanda Tripura had an unusual eduppu at one aksharam after samam. Muralidharan announced that the pallavi was composed by the mridangam maestro Guruvayoor Dorai.

The concert ended with Madhura Madhura Meenakshi, a composition of Dayananda Saraswathi in Bageshri and a Tirupukazh (Erumayileri in Mohanam) of Arunagirinathar.

There was hardly a dull moment during the entire concert and the audience came out with the feeling of having experienced a very satisfying concert.

Remarkable endurance by dancers and musicians

Review by Ramaa Ramesh

Artistic Director, Nardhana Academy of Dance



'Kalivilakku', the ceremonial lamp, took the center of attention on stage until the first announcement broke the trance of expectation. It was truly a spectacular Kathakali performance as the drama '*Nalacharitham*' unfolded in front of an attentive audience, featuring Sadanam P.V. Balakrishnan and his troupe on May 2, 2015, co-presented by SRUTI and the Annenberg Center, Philadelphia. The curtain (hand held by two members of the troupe) literally unveiled, revealing the elaborately costumed solo dancer, accompanied by the incredible musicians accompanying him on the *chenda*, *idakka* and *shuddha madalam*. The two male singers provided outstanding vocal support for the two hour long performance without any breaks, except for the announcements, for three segmented dance drama. The rendering of the rich Kalyani ragam filled the auditorium as I tried to observe and absorb the grandeur of the detailed costuming. The ornate facial make-up with bright green, red, black and white colors, representing King Nala (played by Sri. Balakrishnan himself), was enhanced by the crown like head gear with flowing hair, gold laced fabric and a cascade of jewelry, as he established the majestic character, riding the horse.

The grand entry of the golden Swan was yet another impressive moment, endorsed by the kids' reaction in the audience with chuckles. The moving beak of the swan swept us all by surprise and left us wondering about the marvel of Kathakali make-up. Another aspect that teased my curiosity was the precision of the percussionists who could follow the dancers through subtle eye movements, cheek twitches or gestural nuances, though they stood behind the dancers for the whole presentation.

The endurance of these musicians who were on their feet for the entire length of the performance, as they sang and played the instruments, was simply amazing. The singers, Sadanam Shivdasan and Kalamandalam Rajesh Menon, whose voices blended beautifully, as they rendered multitude of verses in the Manipravalam language, without referring to any musical notes or lyrics, were commendable. Though I did not catch the exact meaning of many verses and was unable to connect the lyrics with the mime, I was totally immersed in an artistic experience beyond expression with words. The static nature of the movements for prolonged durations within the dance drama was very different from the performance approach of all the other Indian classical styles of Dance. Nevertheless, that very aspect seemed to preserve the originality of this dance form, highlighting the facet of drama with prominence and splendor.

The second segment of the three part dance drama, etched the encounter of King Nala with the golden swan. Poorvi Kalyani ragam was an apt choice to describe the swan's unique behavior, changing over to Sivaranjani ragam, when the disoriented swan was startled by the King's proximity. The singers then transcend to the classic Kaambhoji ragam, which lends to King Nala's conversations with the swan, as he paints a vivid picture of his love for the young maiden called Damayanthi. When the swan uttered Damayanthi's name close to his ear, the King's reaction with distinctive, yet delicate eyebrow movements created an everlasting impression in the hearts of the viewers. Followed by the commanding Thodi Ragam, the emotional King successfully convinces the swan to take his message of love to his beloved Damayanthi.

The roles of Damayanthi and her dear friend was performed exceptionally by two of the male dancers, who executed subtle feminine expressions with ease and flare. One could easily comprehend the depth of Damayanthi's feelings for King Nala, as she describes her disgust towards the beauty of nature. She feels apologetic that she is so caught up with thoughts about her lover that she is unable to appreciate the cheerful singing of the birds or the sweet fragrance of the flowers. The Punnagavarali Ragam beautifully intertwines with Damayanthi's sensitivities as she pets the golden swan and feeds him. The instant change of emotions to joy and ecstasy, when she hears from the swan, the message of love from her beloved King Nala, brings a happy ending to the story line.

The caliber of the dancers, Sadanam P.V. Balakrishnan, Sadanam Bhasi, Sadanam Srinathan and Sadanam Vijayan, accompanied by Sadanam Ramakrishnan on the Chenda and Sadanam Devadasan on the Maddalam spoke volumes of their professional experience and perfection of the art form. The make-up & costume artists, Sadanam Vivek and Sadanam Srinivasan added incredible authenticity to the performance that was presented in a dance style dating back to the mid-seventeenth century.

Hosting a workshop by Sri. Balakrishnan a few days prior to the performance, gave me and some of my senior students an opportunity to interact with 'Aasaan' (great teacher), as he is fondly called. On the day of the workshop we had a chance to admire the complicated use of facial muscles to depict various characters with amazing dexterity. However, on stage at the Annenberg center, 'Aasaan' took all of us on an unbelievable journey of dance and music, often letting us stumble upon unfamiliar terrains, anxious to encounter relatable landscape, and keeping the anticipation till the very end.

*By Ramaa Ramesh
Artistic Director, Nardhana Academy of Dance*





Kathakali Now

*Review by Lisa Kraus
All photos by Mark Garvin.*

If you're at a theater event that lasts all night, your expectations about being entertained change. You don't imagine that either story line or action will move along quickly. A different kind of watching happens. Settled. Appreciative of minute shifts. People come and go, get food, drift off in reverie. And the set-up is probably intimate, with people sitting close enough to see the sideways shifting of eyes and tiny flicks of fingers that make Kathakali, one of those theatrical forms traditionally performed in long durations, rich in what a friend termed "tiny virtuosity."

Until attending this performance, given as a two-hour presentation on the Annenberg Center's proscenium stage, I'd seen only photographs of Kathakali—its dancers in ornate costuming and highly stylized make-up. Through poufy skirt-ing and layered jewels and jackets, they seemed to be intentionally made to look heavy (with weight as a sign of power and wealth). Yes, that was the look here in the three sections of what was originally a much longer Kathakali spectacle, *Nalacharitham*, given by the troupe of Sadanam Balakrishnan and presented by Sruti, the Philadelphia-area organization dedicated to presenting the music and dance of India. The players' faces were colored in bright green and red (for the king), pale skin tones and rouge (for maidens) and oranges for the golden swan (skillfully convincing with a moving beak!). Apparently donning the make-up alone takes nearly the full day.

Kathakali historically began, like opera, with the main performers both singing and moving. Later those roles were separated, the sound of the voice and the gestures accompanying it no longer coming through one person. Here, the vocal-ists were two men accompanied by percussion. They continually spelled one another, each voice lapping over the other like waves, and sometimes sang in unison, with the sound flowing on nearly nonstop for two hours. The costumed per-formers represented the characters, in most cases acting out, with hand gestures, each sung phrase.

Reprinted with permission from thINKingDANCE.net. (thINKingDANCE homepage: <http://thinkingdance.net/>)

Lisa Kraus is a dance writer, presenter (through Bryn Mawr College) and restager (for the Trisha Brown Dance Company).

What gestures! An elegant sign language of mudras, traced like flutterings of rare birds. A conductor's hands deliver all manner of nuance: these actors' hands are equally eloquent. Their bodies too were subtle, projecting power or diminutiveness through stance, making the slightest weight shifts compelling.

As a nod to those who may not read or retain program notes, each section of the performance (as with bharatanatyam performances recently presented by Sruti) was preceded by a verbal account of the plot points to be represented. But for me, unfamiliar with the traditional story, the moment by moment experience was like watching people in conversation when you don't really know what they are talking about. Slightly befuddling. But I was magnetized.

The plot of this drama:

Part 1 - King is enamored of young maiden. (Alone he thinks about this.)

Part 2 - Swan comes to king and they talk it over.

Part 3 - Young maiden with her maid is visited by swan who intercedes for the king, bringing together the pair of lovers.

The drama unfolds with hardly any of the big traveling-through-space moves that Westerners are accustomed to. Here, only the swan flying on and offstage, arms lightly flapping and turning in circles, travels in that familiar way. Otherwise, this extremely refined dance is largely spatially static.

I was sitting relatively close up, although far on one side. This helped in picking up detail, although I knew there was a great deal I was missing. I wondered at the experience of those toward the back of the nearly 1000-seat hall.

When I went to Bali, thirty years ago now, the dance-watching experience stunned me with how sharply it contrasted to the downtown New York scene I was familiar with. People knew all the (mostly Ramayana-based) stories enacted, they were relaxed in the audience, chatting, going off to eat something, or perhaps sleeping a little. The Western convention of silent attention was absent. There was more ownership on the part of the audience, more sense of the ongoing interweaving of performance with their daily lives. After all, performances took place nearly every night, crucial parts of village rites in which all partook.



But reflecting on this now, as a result of encountering Kathakali for the first time, I experience an edge of unrealistic nostalgia. I seem to be more attached to the traditional forms of cultures not my own than to traditional forms of Western dance. Change is inevitable everywhere. Adapting long-duration forms to contemporary audience expectations is part of the vital evolution of dances. How can they live today? In light of all this, what of my first experience with Kathakali? I am glad to have seen it. Glad to know the extreme expressiveness possible with actions primarily of arms, hands, and facial features. Glad to hear the lovely tag-team singers whose voices ascended and fell in complex showers of sound. And glad that this tradition, one of the world's oldest forms of theater, continues to live on the contemporary stage.

Sadanam Balakrishnan and Troupe in *Nalacharitam*, presented by Sruti, Annenberg Center, May 2. <http://sruti.org/concerts/2015/Nalacharitam/Nalacharitam.asp>

By Lisa Kraus
June 7, 2015

Duality in Multiple Hues

Review by Dr. Pallabhi Chakravorty

Dwita – Duality of life, a Bharatnatyam dance piece conceived and choreographed by Rama Vaidyanathan and performed along with her daughter Dakshina Vaidyanathan was recently presented by Sruti, Indian Music and Dance Society in the suburbs of Philadelphia. In a world plagued by conflict and greed, Dwita (meaning duality) created a world full of melody, movement, and beauty. Here, duality was complementary and harmonious, not cacophonous and contradictory. In the performance, this particular Hindu philosophy of difference as complementary was expressed through verses from ancient Tamil poetry. We experienced duality in multiple hues, such as: in the form of male and female (Ardhanareeswara), in the concept of divine as finite (saguna) and infinite (nirguna), through desire as eroticism and devotion, the experience of love as protection and freedom, and our existence as seeking material (wealth) and knowledge. These concepts were articulated with astonishing virtuoso and eloquent dancing by the mother-daughter duo. During a time when highly skilled Bharatnatyam exponents are numerous, Rama Vaidyanathan remains one of the most sought after Bharatnatyam artists. This is perhaps because her dance is imbued with intangible qualities of humility, grace, and perfection. Her daughter, Dakshina, dances as eloquently but has yet to develop her mother's spiritual depth (if such a quality can be developed at all).

I saw Rama Vaidyanathan's performance in Chennai in the conference "Mad and Divine" in 2011. Among the array of delectable Bharatnatyam performances that were presented in the conference, Rama's stood out for me. I was mesmerized by her conceptualization, choreography, and performance of the female saint Janabai.

In Dwita, each of the five segments had its own moments of transcendence. The geometric lines of the body that sculpted goddess Saraswati and Lakshmi in white and red were aligned with hand gestures in the shape of lotus blossoms. The slight head tilts and four pairs of eyes darting in unison completed the picture. The salutations to Shiva and Parvati embodied through rhythm and melody seamlessly syncopated with the orchestral Carnatic music of mridangam, flute, and songs. The solo piece performed by Rama unfolded a gorgeous gestural language along with a purity of line that expressed the depth of a devotee's enchantment with Shiva. The fluid jumps and statuesque postures created beautiful arches, shapes, and patterns that spoke to me powerfully yet with easy restraint.

The mother and daughter performance about protection and freedom was the highlight of the evening for me. It created a wonderful sense of intimacy and joy that shifted the tone from the divine realm to human relationships. The everyday mundane activities like playing ball or braiding the daughter's hair were playful and engaging. These gestures and movements might seem hackneyed in some classical Indian dance renditions, but here it delighted the audience and connected to them in an immediate way. The elegant costumes in rich colors of resplendent silk saris accompanied by tasteful jewelry added to this self-contained and holistic world of movement and melody. Here duality performed as a duet was indeed in perfect equilibrium. At least for a few hours, the dialectical world of strife and contradiction was left outside as I sat immersed in this idyllic vision.

Pallabi Chakravorty
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Sruti Youth Group (SYG) - Call for participation

SRUTI is pleased to invite youngsters in the area to be a part of the Sruti Youth Group (SYG) with an aim to promote involvement of young and energetic kids in Indian performing arts and music.

Eligibility:

Kids of Sruti members, Grade 8 and above

Activities:

SYG members support Sruti by helping with various outreach activities, event management, artist interviews, presentations and audio/video recordings and also managing Sruti's YouTube presence. The SYG provides an excellent platform for kids to learn and grow and an opportunity to interact with like-minded peers and high caliber visiting artists. Kids can get a certificate and volunteer credits.

Interested members are encouraged to contact the SYG coordinator, Uma Sivakumar at sivakumaruma1@gmail.com

Sruti Bala Bhavam Series - Announcement and Guidelines—Music and Dance

The 2015 board of directors has resolved to create for the youth in the Sruti community an outlet for musical and dance expressions and growth. The proposal is to create mini concert opportunities for the children of life/patron members, members or their children who live in a 75 mile radius of Philadelphia City Hall. The mini concerts would be of 30 minutes duration each. The concerts will be scheduled to take place during the year, primarily during the Spring and Fall music calendar. Such concerts will take place either prior to select regularly scheduled Sruti concerts (same day) or on days specially designated to celebrate the musical and dance talents of Sruti's youth. Initially the project will start with music events and later on dance.

Eligibility:

Sruti Bala Bhavam concerts are primarily intended for students in schools and colleges, with a minimum age requirement of 11 years and maximum age of 25 years. Vocalists, Instrumentalists and Percussionists are welcome. The concert will be either a Vocal or an Instrumental solo/duo event. Youth desiring to present mini-concerts should be recommended by their respective teachers and have the following qualifications. Youth below 18 years of age must have their parents sign appropriate waiver/permission forms.

Vocal and Instrumental Solo/Duo/Instrumental accompanists:

- ◆ Applicant must be at least 11 years but not more than 25 years of age as of January 1st of the calendar year of performance. Children below 11 or adults above 25 as of 1/1 are not eligible.
- ◆ Ability to perform alapana, neraval and kalpanaswaram in 2 or more ragas.
- ◆ Ability to perform 2 or more adi tala varnams in 2 speeds.
- ◆ Ability to perform 1 or more thillanas
- ◆ Recommendation by current teacher.
A special online form will be created that students/parents will complete and submit. In addition they will request their respective teachers to send in a recommendation. Sruti may contact the student/teacher to verify the submitted information.
- ◆ Must be son/daughter of a Sruti Life/Life Patron member who (either child or parent) lives within a 75 mile radius from Philadelphia City Hall.
- ◆ Provide a 3 to 5 minute video link of a kriti rendered by student. (May be used for publicity purposes, with permission from parents)
- ◆ Provide a 200 word write-up on what Indian Classical Music/Dance means to the applicant(s).

Percussion Accompaniment (Mridangam, Ghatam, Kanjira, etc):

- ◆ Applicant must be between 11 and 25 years as of January 1st of the calendar year of performance. Children below 11 or adults above 25 as of 1/1 are not eligible.
- ◆ Should be able to play four main talams - Adi, Rupakam, Khanda Chapu and Misra Chapu
- ◆ Ability to play for varnams at two speeds.
- ◆ Ability to accompany for songs, neravals and kalpanaswarams.
- ◆ Ability to render thani avarthanams. Knowledge of nadais.
- ◆ Recommendation by current teacher.
A special online form will be created that students/parents will complete and submit. In addition they will request their respective teachers to send in a recommendation. Sruti may contact the student/teacher to verify the submitted information.
- ◆ Must be son/daughter of a Sruti Life/Life Patron member who (either child or parent) lives within a 75 mile radius from Philadelphia City Hall.
- ◆ Provide a 3 to 5 minute video link of a piece rendered by student. (May be used for publicity purposes, with permission from parents)
- ◆ Provide a 200 word write-up on what Indian Classical Music/Dance means to the applicant(s).

Sruti Bharatanaatyam / Kuchipudi Bala Bhavam Application and Guidelines

- ◆ Applicant must have completed Arangetram/Rangapravesam and not more than 21 years of age as of January 1st of the calendar year of performance. Children who did not complete Arangetram/Rangapravesam or above 21 as of 1/1 are not eligible.
- ◆ Ability to perform Varnam, Shabdham, Padam, Tarangams and Thillana.
- ◆ Recommendation by current teacher.
A special online form will be created that students/parents will complete and submit. In addition they will request their respective teachers to send in a recommendation. Sruti may contact the student/teacher to verify the submitted information.
- ◆ Must be son/daughter of a Sruti Life/Life Patron member who (either child or parent) lives within a 75 mile radius from Philadelphia City Hall.
- ◆ Provide a 3 to 5 minute video link of a dance piece rendered by student. (May be used for publicity purposes, with permission from parents)
- ◆ Provide a 200 word write-up on what Indian Classical Dance means to the applicant.

Scheduling

Sruti BOD will do its best to schedule such concerts working with the schedules of the student and his/her respective teacher(s). The BOD decision will be final in all cases.

In some cases Sruti will request the students to present thematic concerts to fit a particular event theme. All applications received that meet the above eligibility criteria would be given an opportunity to present at least one concert in the current or following years as long as the schedule allows. Other things being equal, senior students (in age) will be given first priority in the schedule.

Sruti will work with the performer and arrange mridangam and violin accompaniments as necessary. In case of a solo/duo instrumentalist(s), appropriate accompaniments will be provided. Individual/dual presenters are welcome to bring their own accompanists. It is not required that the accompanists be under 25 years of age. There is no cost to perform and no compensation will be provided to the performer(s). Individual or dual performers are acceptable. Sruti BOD reserves the right to change the eligibility criteria and such changes will be communicated via Sruti's website.

Sruti Bala Bhavam Scheduling contd..

Respective youth or their parents should complete and submit an online form that will be automatically submitted to Sruti. Please include all details as specified in the eligibility section and make arrangements to have the teacher send in the recommendation. Please also indicate preferred time frame – months and year that the kid would be available to perform.

No phone calls will be entertained and questions should be sent to the Co-ordinator, Sruti Bala Bhavam Series at srutiphila@gmail.com.

Apply at the following link: <https://goo.gl/forms/oLUVBpMnfZ>

You can view a PDF version of the entire application here: <https://goo.gl/JLsE1n>

Sruti Bala Bhavam Series Launch - Saturday May 30 2015 *A Report*

Another new initiative of the Board of Directors, is the launch of “Bala Bhavam”, an outlet for musical and dance expressions and growth for the youth in the Sruti community. Detailed vocal/instrumental guidelines were announced at the beginning of the year. Based on the applications received in response, we decided to present the first edition of Bala Bhavam on May 30th, with four vocal concerts by Sanjana Narayanan, Shreya Adiraju, Sashank Sridhar and Srinidhi Narayanan respectively. Accompanying the individual concerts were Siddharth Ashok Kumar on the Violin and Raj Lavadi and Harsha Kanumalla on the mridangam. Each concert was about one hour in duration. Another first for Sruti, was the successful live streaming of the event.

Santi Kanumalla, President welcomed the well-attended gathering, with a special welcome for the chief guest of the day Dr. Venkat Swaminathan, Scientist and Senior Disciple of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Following a bhava laden invocation of Thyagaraja’s “Balakanakamaya” in Atana, presented by young Rasika Sivakumar, the chief guest lit the traditional lamp to inaugurate the Bala Bhavam Series. He shared with the audience a few of his thoughts about tradition or sampradaaya. In fact he said that “evolving continuum” is an apt description, giving credit to Kiranavali Vidyasankar for coming up with the phrase. According to Dr. Swaminathan, maintaining the fidelity in the sangatis, while innovating in the alapana and swara rendition, is the essence of maintaining tradition or sampradaaya. He exhorted the young musicians in the audience to pay attention to the lyrics, encouraging them to learn the compositions and meanings correctly. In a note he sent to the board after the event Dr. Swaminathan wrote:

“We would like to congratulate you for the way the program was organized and executed. There were no unnecessary interruptions and delays. We wish you and Sruti organization well and may the Lord give you the energy to continue the great work you are all doing”

Sanjana Narayanan was the first Bala Bhavam artist. She picked a great selection of gana ragas for her performance. She started with the Dikshitar kriti *ganarajenarakshitoham* in *arabhi*, and followed it up with a Tyagaraja kriti *ambabrovave* in a soulful *dharmavati*. The main piece was a kriti in *saveri* - *kAmakshigowri* by *papanasamsiva*. Sanjana impressed everyone with her grasp of the subtleties of each raga, and her skillful display of manodharama.

Shreya Adiraju came next, and gave a captivating and mature performance, the highlights of which were *rajuve-dalejutamurare* in *todi* and a *ragam tanam pallavi* in *mohanam*. It was clear that she has imbibed a tremendous amount of musical knowledge and wisdom from her gurus, including Smt. Suguna Purushottaman, who passed away last year, and to whom she paid a touching tribute during her performance.

Sashank Sridhar, the youngest performer of the day, undertook a couple of challenging pieces, including *kaligiyunte* in *kiravani*, and the *gowlipantu* padam *kuvalayakshiro*. He handled them with the ease and grace of a seasoned artist. He also presented a tongue-twisting tiruppugazh viruttam towards the end with flawless pronunciation.

Srinidhi Ramesh’s crisp concert was a fine bookender for the first edition of Bala Bhavam. She started with a brisk *anupamagunambudhi* in *atana*, and followed it up with a meandering *varali* (*kaavaavaa*). The next item was an RTP that was primarily in *abhogi*, but detoured into *valachi*. This was a tricky piece that required concentration and skill, and Srinidhi displayed both in good measure.

Every one of the young musicians performed admirably well, and they showed the potential for a bright future in the field. The large Sruti audience attending the event congratulated them and the board for a well-organized event. A post-event survey produced a lot of positive responses and support from the membership. Here are a few quotes:

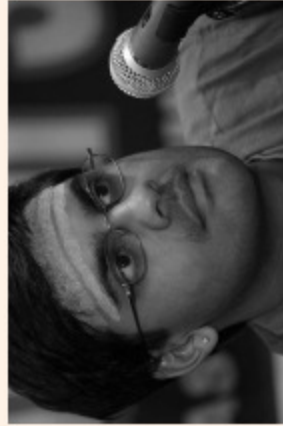
- *I enjoyed all of the performances.*
- *Young Musicians with so much talent.*
- *Overall, it was a great program and well executed. We enjoyed the day immensely. Congrats to the Sruti Board for pulling this off!*
- *It had a very festive air. Good quality young talent, well-executed day, friendly Sruti faces.*
- *What a talent!!*
- *Very appreciative of the Sruti board who worked hard to put up the day-long event.*
- *God bless Sruti.*
- *This was an excellent initiative by Sruti. Thoroughly enjoyed the concerts.*
- *It is very good that Sruti has initiated this program. We hope it will continue in the years to come and showcase local budding talent in our area and provide a forum for our youngsters to perform and master the arts. It is especially gratifying to see how much efforts both students and teachers commit to keep our classical arts going. A big applause to all of them. For the future, Sruti may even consider having a similar program to highlight the classical dance art form. Showcasing talent from all parts of America - this will need much effort and coordination & will need resources & budget so may be a longer time goal.*
- *Very good concept. As was apparent today, the area has a bunch of budding talent and Sruti has done the right thing in launching this series. Hopefully it can be sustained. It was the right amount of time allocated for each singer - although it felt like some exceeded their allotted time significantly causing a delay in the morning and hence lunch. It was good to have launched it as a day-long event - makes an impression and gives energy. Nice idea to have the chief guest, who also spoke very well and appropriately for the event. Perhaps next year's day long event can focus on local dancers. The performance by the vocalists and accompanists was very good.*
- *Great encouragement to the youth. Good job. Congratulations.*
- *Great Idea !!*
- *It all sounded very good. The program itself is very amazing.*





Sruti Fall 2015 Events

Purandaradasa day Trichur Brothers	Sep 12 9:30 AM	Upper Merion Middle School
Ramakrishnan Murthy	Oct 03 7:00 PM	Montgomery County Community College
Chitravina Ravikaran	Oct 10 7:00 PM	Annenberg Center, University of Pennsylvania
Sriranjani Santhanagopalan	Oct 25 4:00 PM	Bharatiya Temple
Kiranavali Vidyasankar and 8 instrumentalists	Nov 07 6:30 PM	Painted Bride Arts Center
Sruti Day	Dec 12 10:00 AM	Bharatiya Temple



Tickets: Sruti.Tix.Com Event information: www.Sruti.Org
Email SrutiPhila@gmail.com to join mailing list and for further details



www.sruti.org

Sruti

The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia

Saturday - Sept 12, 2015
Purandaradasa Aradhana and
Concert by Trichur Brothers

Presents

PURANDARADASA ARADHANA

at

Upper Merion Middle School
450 Keebler Rd,
King of Prussia PA 19406

Saturday September 12, 2015



Main Carnatic Concert
Trichur Brothers

PROGRAM

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| 09:30 AM - 12:30 PM | - | Group Renditions and Dance by Rathi Ramesh |
| 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM | - | Lunch (Included in Ticket) |
| 1:30 PM - 2:15 PM | - | Dance by 12 dancers from Three Aksha |
| 2:15 PM - 3:15 PM | - | Bala Bhavam Vocal Concert by Veena Kanumalla |
| 4:00 PM - 6:30 PM | - | Carnatic Vocal Concert by Trichur Brothers |
| | | Violin by Rajeev Mukundan |
| | | Mridangam by Trichur R. Mohan |

Tickets: \$5 to \$25 are available at Sruti.Tix.Com (Includes Lunch)

For more information please visit www.sruti.org
or call 267-797-7006 or e-mail srutiphila@gmail.com

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Sruti

The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia



Saturday October 3, 2015
4:15 PM—Bala Bhavam
7:00 PM—Main Concert

Sruti proudly Co-presents a Double Header
Classical Carnatic Vocal Concerts with
Lively Arts Series of

Montgomery County Community College

4:15 PM—Bala Bhavam Concert

Priyanka Dinakar and Mallika Dinakar

Accompanied by

Siddharth Ashok Kumar on the Violin and

Sanjeev Bala on the Mridangam

7:00 PM—Main Concert

Ramakrishnan Murthy

Accompanied By

R.K. Sriramkumar on the Violin and

K. Anunprakash on the Mridangam

Saturday October 3, 2015

Montgomery County Community College

Science Center Auditorium

340 DeKalb Pike, Blue Bell, PA

General admission \$30, Senior \$26, Children \$10

Discounted tickets at \$22 are available by calling Montco Box Office
at 215-641-6518 and quoting discount code "Carnatic"

Call 267-797-7006 or E-Mail srutiphila@gmail.com for details

Tickets at Sruti.Tix.Com

Details at www.sruti.org



www.sruti.org

Sruti

The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia

Saturday Oct 10, 2015

7:00 PM

**Annenberg Center
Chitravina Ravikiran**

**Sruti proudly
co-presents with
Annenberg Center Live**

**An Indian Classical
Instrumental Concert
by
Chitravina Ravikiran**

Accompanied by

Violin: Hemmige V Srivatsan

Mridangam: Trichy Sankaran

Ghatam: Ravi Balasubramanian

Chitravina is one of the most exquisite of Indian musical instruments. Also referred to as the Gottuvadyam, it is a 21-stringed, fretless lute. Since his grand entrance at age two, Ravikiran has won acclaim from across the world and is the world's foremost exponent of Chitravina today.



Saturday Oct 10, 2015 at 7:00 PM

**Zellerbach theatre at the Annenberg Center,
3680 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104**

Phone: Sruti at 267-797-7006 or EMail srutipbila@gmail.com

www.sruti.org

'...Infinite capacity for micro-tonal shadings reminiscent of the human voice... ..teasing precision... dazzling effects...'

- The New York Times

**Tickets at www.annenbergcenter.org
Link at sruti.tix.com Promo code "Sruti" for 25% discount**



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