



# SRUTI NOTES

**SRUTI**

The India Music & Dance Society

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## FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Friends:

We are happy to present the current issue of Sruti Notes to our readers. We had a good start this year with a well-attended Thyagaraja Aradhana function, in a new venue. We had two exciting concerts in the last two months. Sruti president arranged for a question-answer dialogue between the artist and the audience in the first concert. We are delighted at the response. With the willingness on the part of the visiting artists, we may set apart some time at the end of future concerts for such "Face to Face with the Artists". We hope to publish excerpts from these in the Sruti Notes, if space permits.

We hope there would be sufficient interest on the part of parents to encourage young members to come to the concerts, interview the artists and write short reviews. Their viewpoints would be valuable to the organization.

The current issue has some comments on our Aradhana celebration and a review of the 2002 season concerts in Madras from the knowledgeable *Rasikan*. There are reviews of the two spring concerts of Aruna Sairam and Ranjani-Gayatri sisters. We have included short opinions that are more like exit interview comments from the general audience for Aruna Sairam's concert and also an interview of Aparna Balaji, the main artist at the Thyagaraja Aradhana. We encourage you to send us your comments after you have attended a Sruti concert.

The issue has one article in the continuing series of *Fact or Fiction*. As always, we welcome your comments. Contributions of articles that would be of general interest to the Sruti members are always welcome.



Thank you.  
T. Sarada  
For the Library Committee



## Upcoming Events

A grand Kuchipudi dance drama with live music

### Raja & Radha Reddy

(May 18, 2003, See attached flyer for details)

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### Ganesh & Kumaresh (violin duet)

(June 8, 2003, See attached flyer for details)

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### Shree, An Odissi ballet

by the

### Nritygram Dance Ensemble

(July 12, 2003, venue to be announced)

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### Carnatic Saxophone Concert

### Kadri Gopalnath

(September 27, 2003, venue to be announced)

## *From the President's Desk*

Dear Friends

We started the year with a very enjoyable Thyagaraja Aradhana with a record number of participants. The two recent concerts (Aruna Sairam and Ranjani & Gayathri) were a refreshing change from the traditional format Carnatic music lovers have grown accustomed to. Ranjani and Gayathri's concert was an example of how an artist can enliven and refresh a concert with a repertoire including compositions in other styles, while satisfying the palate of the traditional Carnatic music lover.

The upcoming events in 2003 will feature programs in varied styles of music and dance. We will present a full-length Kuchipudi performance for the first time at Sruti by the famous dancing couple Raja and Radha Reddy on May 18. The event, co-sponsored by the Telugu Association, promises to be an exciting event. A Carnatic violin concert by Ganesh and Kumaresh is scheduled for June 8. On July 12 is an Odissi performance by the Nrityagram Dance Ensemble, a dance troupe from the famous school of Protima Bedi in Bangalore. The international dance company, which has received rave reviews and is regarded by critics as one of the foremost Indian dance ensembles in the world, layers classical Indian dance styles with ever-changing modern dance ideals to develop, preserve and continue to popularize Indian dance and martial dance arts. The Ensemble will perform the two-part work *SRI, In Search of the Goddess*. Since this will be the only performance in the tri-state area, please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

The exciting Fall schedule includes a Carnatic saxophone concert by Kadri Gopalnath (Sept 27), Carnatic music and percussion appreciation workshops by Geetha Bennett and Trichy Sankaran (October 11), a Hindusthani Sarod concert and workshop by Ali Akbar Khan (Nov 1, 2) and Carnatic vocal concert by O.S. Thiagarajan (Nov 15). Please visit our website to get the updates.

We are happy that Sruti has received a major grant from the Philadelphia Music Project for programming in the Fall. The grant will go a long way in enabling Sruti to continue to bring highly acclaimed artists and quality programs to the Philadelphia area.

Support from our members is very important for the growth of Sruti. We are very happy that the response to patron membership (introduced late last year) has been good and we request all our Life members to consider joining the exclusive pool of patrons to give your support.

Sruti will be launching a new website (designed by V.V. Raman, a member of the Library Committee) in the very near future. Your comments and suggestions will be most welcome.

We look forward to seeing you all at the next performance. Please spread the word and support the organization.

Sincerely,  
Viji Swaminathan, President  
For the Board of Directors

## **'Music Season' in Chennai- Some impressions**

*Rasikan*

A good winter to spend in a warm place: so my wife and I packed our suitcases on December 5, '02 and left for a 10 weeks holiday in India. Well, honestly, when we made reservations in August 2002, we were not clairvoyant enough to know that the winter would be this harsh. We were more interested in taking in the 'season' in Chennai and spending time with our relatives and friends.

The mad, mad, mad Madras season is how the Sruti magazine from Madras characterizes the bonanza of music and dance offered in Chennai from the middle of December to the first week of January. I may be showing my age, but I remember when there were only a handful of sabhas organizing music/dance programs during the season: The Madras Music Academy (Academy for short), The Tamil Isai Sangham, The Indian Fine Arts Society, Krishna Gana Sabha with the Kalakshetra conducting primarily dance drama programs. The vidwans and vidushis used to vie with each other trying to give off their best during the 'season'. The title of *Sangita Kalanidhi* awarded by the Academy used to be the most sought after prize and only the most accomplished musicians used to perform at the '5:30 p.m.' slots of the Academy.

During the last three decades or so, a plethora of sabhas has sprung up each offering its own title/award and artists of varying caliber perform at different time slots. Many of the programs, especially the morning and afternoon programs had 'all are welcome' signs. One wonders where do the organizers get the money needed for paying the performers and other expenses? However, most of the evening performances were ticketed and industrial houses, whose banners hung prominently on the walls and the dais, also sponsored them.

Gone are the days when it was possible to see the likes of Musiri, Semmangudi, MSS, DKP, and Chowdiah attending the performances of their peers in the Academy. These days the major crowd pullers, T.N. Seshagopalan (TNS), Sanjay Subramanyan, Sudha Raghunathan, T.M. Krishna (TMK), S. Sowmya et al perform at so many sabhas that they hardly have time to attend each other's programs. Also perhaps because of so many engagements the vocalists' voices become considerably constricted towards the end of the 'season'. So if you want to hear these stars at their best, catch them early in the season.

The programs that I attended clearly demonstrated where my prejudices lay. I heard two concerts each of TNS, Sanjay and TMK. TNS gave a four-hour concert in **one** raga, that is right, a single raga only: Todi. After an elaborate, nearly one-hour alapana, he sang *Kaddanuvavari*, which was followed by raga tanam pallavi (RTP) in a complicated talam. He interspersed the alapana with brilliant sruthi bhedams and concluded with tukkadas including *Thaye Yasoda*. Before the RTP he gave an interesting short talk on how the gamakams of Todi make it the preeminent Carnatic music raga.

Both the concerts of Sanjay were grand. One of the review-

*Continued on page 3*

*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.*

ers of Hindu opined that his concert in the Academy (which I attended) was arguably the best concert of the 'season.' I have no arguments with that assessment. In fact, for me that evening was easily the most enjoyable of all since Sanjay's concert was preceded by a delectable concert by Sudha.

I attended a few dance programs including that of Delaware Valley's own Anita, a student of Shoba Sharma (two others, both students of Shoba, also gave performances which I could not attend). Easily the best dance program was 'Kutrala Kuravanji' by the Kalakeshtra group, a real visual/aural treat.

We in SRUTI have been spoilt in terms of ambience of the halls, the sound systems as well as the duration of the concerts. Only a few venues like the TTK hall of the Academy and the Narada Gana Sabha hall were enclosed and air-conditioned. All the other programs that I went to were conducted in pandals in open spaces for mosquitoes to freely feed on you. Not only did we have to contend with the street noise of cars but also the audio level at the concerts were set too high. In fact I walked out of O. S. Thiagarajan concert at Mylapore Fine Arts unable to stand the din, although he was singing very well indeed.

Except those that were specially advertised as 4-hour concerts, almost all the others lasted only two to two and half hours, if that. The musicians usually included an elaborate ragam/kriti/swara prastaram/thani suite in a major ragam. That gave hardly any time for RTP, which was given short shrift often in a (very) minor ragam. For instance Sowmya sang one in Huseni while TNS in Desh! TMK and Hyderabad brothers didn't even bother to include an RTP. Indeed the latter included only one ragam (Lathangi at that!) for alapana. They just reeled off kriti after kriti and concluded with a number of tukkadas. Hyderabad brothers and a few others also have the habit of reading out of books or notes in front of them. I wonder if they realize that the audiences do not crave to hear songs that they have not mastered.

My overall impression of the season: You get to hear a lot of concerts in a few days, which is nice for those from this country who are strapped for time during their visits to the old country. But the quality is uneven and you have to put up with mosquitoes and unbearable noise levels.

#### OUR THANKS TO

The following people for generously contributing food for the Thyagaraja Aradhana:

Renuka Adiraju, Sundari Balakrishnan, Usha Balasubramanyam, Chitra Chandran, Vathsala Holla, Santhi Kanumalla, Radha Lakshminarayanan, Kamakshi Mallikarjun, Madhura Nadig, Poornima Narayan, Vasantha Narayanan, Latha Nataraj, Rajeshwari Natesh, Sreesudha Palepu, Meena Pennathur, Kalyani Prabhakar, Uma Prabhakar, Hema Ramamurthy, Gayathri Rao, Usha Reddy, Ramaa Rungun, Jeya Sankaran, T. Sarada, Bharathi Sena, Soumya Somasundaram, Praba Subramaniam, Viji Swaminathan, Vidya Swamy, Susheela Varadarajan, Vedamurthy and Raji Venkatesan. (We apologize for any inadvertent omissions)

**Padmini Venkataraman** for getting a matching grant of \$900 for Sruti from the Fannie Mae Foundation.

## Aruna Sairam's Vocal Concert

S. Sankaran

Aruna Sairam's concert (March 29, 2003 at Gwynedd Mercy College) began with a brisk rendering of a *padhavar-nam* by Puliur Doraiswamy Aiyar in the Raga Mayamalavagowla. This was followed by an *alapana* in Rithigowla, which showed the raga clearly and had an emotional appeal leading to the (only) Thyagaraja kriti of the evening *Nannuvidachi*. This kriti in Kalyani and Misrachapu thalam was rendered in a traditional way, full of feeling. Listeners familiar with Telugu language seemed to enjoy it even more. A very brief Thodi alapana starting at a relatively higher note within the octave was rendered. A Tamil vaishnavite poem composed by saint Thondar Adippodi Alvar was meaningfully rendered (this saint also composed the well-known poem *Pachchai Maa Malaipole Meni*). This was followed by the serene devotional composition *Sada Saranga Nayane* by Yoganarasimham in Ranjani. This was the first time this song was sung in a SRUTI concert and it was a pleasant surprise.

The best piece in the concert was the Tamil Devotional work *Thiruvadi Charanam Enru* by Gopalakrishna Bharati in the raga Kambodhi. The alapana showed the technical competence of the artiste in delineating the nuances of the chosen raga. However the alapana seemed chopped up into short phrases (reminiscent of Madhurai Mani Iyer's style), and the phrases sounded like *taans* in the Hindusthani style of elaboration of ragas. But the violinist's rendering of the alapana (in this and in other ragas) was pleasant and continuous. His contribution to the overall value of the concert was substantial. A devotional song by Purandaradasa followed this kriti.

What followed was a short *Ragam-Thanam-Pallavi* of 18 minutes. Given this short duration, one wonders why the Pallavi was in two ragas when there was hardly enough time to do justice to one. Instead of doing such an R\_T\_P just as a formality, it would have been better to render a major kriti of Dikshitar, who was conspicuously absent in this concert.

The last forty minutes were made up of devotional songs composed by Venkatakavi, Sant Thukaram and others. Somehow this entire recital of songs in different languages, in different thalas by a variety of composers failed to make an impression as a classical Carnatic Music Concert. It was a very good devotional music concert.

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#### Comments from some members

"I had watched a video of Aruna Sairam singing in Chennai. Based on that I would not have expected the performance in our area to be so different. But I enjoyed the concert for its freshness and uniqueness." **T. Parasaran**

"A different kind of concert; totally unexpected. Her enthusiasm was contagious." **T. Sarada**

".. It was unique and different. To be honest the concert was not to my liking. I was disappointed that day."

**Praba Subramanyam**

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

“..... perfect diction ... I enjoyed the concert very much.”

**Vathsala Holla**

“Mrs. Aruna Sairam's concert was excellent. ... She really sang to the audience ... Her pleasant nature appealed to me very much. ... She answered the questions very well and to the point in the Q & A session. The evening was very enjoyable and in spite of the rather non-traditional way of rendering, it was a very good concert.”

**Lalitha Krishnan**

“Aruna showed her technical prowess throughout the concert. I believe that growing up in Bombay and being exposed to accomplished performers at a young age has made her very cosmopolitan and open-minded .... I liked her diction, singing style and uninhibited presentation. ... good rapport with her accompanists and the audience. ... Her answers were articulate, crisp and pertinent. ... a very dynamic, gutsy performer, in complete control of the concert.”

**Poornima Narayan**

### Thyagaraja Aradhana

The Thyagaraja Aradhana conducted by Sruti on March 1, 2003 had some new and desirable features. First, the venue, St. Mary's Hall, Villanova University, PA (a deviation from the Berlin Temple in NJ where the Aradhana has been traditionally held every year since Sruti's inception, except for 1998) was a welcome change for the majority of attendees. While we missed a few families from NJ (not sure if it was due to the location), it was very gratifying to see a significant number of new faces from the Pennsylvania side. The facilities were excellent and ideally suited for the day-long program.

The day started with the traditional singing of Pancharatna kritis. A welcome change from previous years was the participation of a large number (24) of people in this group including very talented accompanists - two flutists, a violinist and a mridangist, in paying homage to the great composer. This was followed by a group of ten young students of Sri. T.N. Bala rendering the Uthsava Sampradaya keertanas of Thyagaraja. The group did a commendable job of presenting the kritis. As in the past year, there were a large number individual performers. A record number of participants - a total of 87 people, young and old, sang the kritis of the great composer.

The main artist of the day, Smt. Aparna Balaji (Boston, MA) gave a very enjoyable concert, ably assisted by Mrs. Radhika Mani on the violin and Vijay Ganesh Gopalakrishnan on the mridangam.

The only undesirable feature of the day was that a large percentage of the audience, most of them from the families of young participants, left soon after the participation by the respective family members. The audience shrank in size significantly as the day progressed. While more than 200 people stayed for lunch, about half of them left right after. A very small audience was left to listen to those who were scheduled to sing in the afternoon, an even smaller one for the main concert. When we provide opportunities for young people to showcase their talents at this event, it will be nice to have the families stay on to encourage other participants. We request all families to bear this in mind when they plan the day in the future.

Board of Directors, Sruti

### Carnatic Vocal Concert by Ranjani and Gayathri An Exposition in Melody and Rhythm Sumathi Sarangan

It was a beautiful spring day on April 13 and the crowd gathered to hear two young ladies who performed together at a concert for SRUTI. The concert commenced with a *varnam* in the majestic Darbar raga. The next couple of songs that followed were *Pranamaamyaham*, a traditional *Ganesha stuthi* in the raga Gowlai composed by Mysore Vasudevachar and *Sakalagrahabala*, a krithi in Atana by Purandaradasa krithi. The concert didn't quite warm up until *Kantajoodumi*, the krithi by Thyagaraja in Vachaspathi. The *neraval* at *Alanaadu Sowmithri* followed by swaram was demonstrated well. This was followed with *Sri Rangapuravihara* in Brindavana Saranga in a delicate Hindusthani flavor.

The selected main piece *Kalikiyoondai* in Keeravani sung by Gayithri was elaborately embellished and rendered. Her mastery and knowledge of technique was evident in her rendition of this piece. The next piece they sang was *Saravabhavaguhane*, a composition of Papanasam Sivan in Kannada. This set the tone for a magnificent *Ragam Tanam Pallavi* in Natakurunji. They selected *thisra-jaathi thripata taalam* in *kantanadai* for the pallavi. Here again Gayithri showed tremendous control and mastery over the raga. I especially liked the precision and ease with which she shifted from one raga to another when she did the *graha bedham* from Natakuranji to Neelambari. They made it a raaga-maalika and went into four other ragas in the end, Mohanam, Varali, Bahudari and Hindolam. The concert was going so well at that point that the audience was mesmerized. The sisters took it up one notch by singing everyone's favorite *Enna Solli Azhathal* in Kaanada. They selected a beautiful *virutham* in Shanmugapriya, Saveri, and Kaanada to precede this piece.

The last few songs Ranjani and Gayathri selected to conclude the concert showed how well trained they were in Hindustani and Carnatic music. The Swathi Thirunal composition in Hamsanandi, the Meera bhajan in Desh and the *abhang* in Chandrakauns were all classical examples of Hindusthani style. They also sang a short and brisk Anna-macharya krithi and *Thirupugazh* before the *mangalam*.

I've read somewhere that a good musician treats music like a painting with melody and rhythm furnishing the colors and the lines. After hearing the concert I thought the artist were pretty close in doing just that. With much of the present day audiences treating music as entertainment, and in the face of the challenge from other forms of entertainment like light and film music, western pop, rock music and television, the Carnatic musicians are forced to adopt methods to get favorable responses from the public. This has led to further commercialization which sometimes reduces the quality of music. When I listen to young, up and coming musicians like Ranjani, Gayathri and others I am filled with hope that the quality of the future of carnatic music will not be compromised.



## Summer Workshop in Bharatanatyam

SRUTI, in co-sponsorship with Nardhana Academy of Dance, will present a summer workshop in Bharatanatyam from June 18—July 11, 2003.

**Instructor - Padma Shri Smt. Chitra Visweswaran**

**Highlights of the Workshop include** Aesthetic refinement, rhythmic precision and artistic perfection, Creative skills in choreography and advanced training in abhinaya and Music and Indian painting included in the program

Admissions are limited. For information contact **Ramaa Ramesh**

TEL: (610) 725-9539 E-MAIL: [ramaa@bww.com](mailto:ramaa@bww.com)



### Welcome New Members

SRUTI is happy to welcome **Drs. Vathsala & K. Ramprasad, Dr. Srinivasa Reddy & Mrs. Suhasini Reddy, Dr. M.M. Subramaniam & Mrs. Praba Subramaniam** as patron members. Our hearty welcome to **Dance Advance, Philadelphia, Dr. Balu Balakrishnan & Sundari Balakrishnan** and **Mr. S. Venkat Raman** as new Life members.

### Interview with Aparna Balaji

Shoba Narayanan

On the day of the annual Thyagaraja Aradhana (March 1, 2003), I had the opportunity to interview the guest artist, Aparna Balaji. Aparna is the Daughter of Shri O.S. Thyagarajan. She has received numerous prizes and recognitions in India and is a graded artist of All India Radio, Chennai. She has performed extensively in music sessions in Chennai and given many concerts in India and the U.S. Here are some excerpts from the interview.

AB= Aparna Balaji, SN= Shoba Narayanan

SN: When did you start learning music?

AB: I started learning music when I was 7 years old. I'm now 24. I learned music from my grandfather, Sri. O. V. Subramanian, and an auntie, Lakshmi Shivaraman. After a while, I took a break from music for 3 or 4 years I started up again. I also learnt from listening a lot from the classes when my father (Sri. O.S. Thyagarajan) was teaching music at our home.

SN: How many hours a day did you practice when you were younger?

AB: I never really sat and practiced on a schedule when I was young. I just sang all the time. I would sing and practice my basic exercises and lessons: Saralivarisais and Jantavarisais.

SN: Did you want to become a musician when you grew up?

AB: I never thought I would become a vocal musician some day. Actually I switched to violin as my voice was still developing and learned that instrument for a little while.

SN: Did learning the violin help you in anyway?

AB: It helped me a lot. Learning an instrument is very beneficial to a vocalist. You get a lot of swaragyanam through it. I was able to do a lot of kalpana swaras after learning the violin. By eight grade I had started learning vocal music again under Sri. Neyveli Santhanagopalan.

SN: When did you give your first concert?

AB: I gave my first concert when I was in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. With

my younger sister, I sang at my cousin's wedding.

SN: How long have you lived in the U.S?

AB: I have been here for 3 years now.

SN: Has your musical career changed after you came here?

AB: It hasn't changed but there aren't as many opportunities to perform here, like in India. I used to give 3-4 concerts a month in Chennai (India).

SN: Do you teach music to anyone?

AB: Yes, I give classes at home.

SN: Do you have any suggestions for students who are learning music here?

AB: Practice your basic lessons and your vowel pronunciations: a, e, o, eh, num. This is the akarasadhakam. This will bring clarity to your swaras. You should also practice your varnams. Varnams give you the beauty, picture, and essence of the ragam. It will help you understand the ragam and teach you how to "beautify" it. It's the most important part of learning music. You should practice every day.

[Shoba Narayanan is a disciple of T.N. Bala for music and of Shoba Sharma for Bharathanatyam.]

### Shaping of Sri Syama Sastri's Destiny

T. Sarada

[Fourth installment in the fact or fiction series]

Sri Syama Sastri is the third great composer of the eighteenth century, to be born in Thiruvavur. While Muthuswami Dikshitar's ancestors had lived in Tamil Nadu for many generations, Thyagaraja and Syama Sastri coincidentally belonged to families that had moved from Cumbam in Kurnool district just a few generations earlier. Hence, both were referred to as "Kambattar" by the locals.<sup>1</sup> They all lived during late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and pursued similar goals in life. They were well versed in Sanskrit and Telugu, knew astrology and music as a science. They were great Bhaktas who used music as the vehicle for their ideals, thoughts and feelings. While most all of their compositions are in Telugu and Sanskrit they did try a few changes, once in a while. Syama Sastri is the only one of the Trinity who spoke fluently and wrote with equal scholarship in Tamil, his acquired language. Dikshitar wrote one or two songs in Manipravalam, mixing Sanskrit and Tamil but Thyagaraja only used some common Tamil expressions in his songs. All three were

(Continued on page 6)

## OBITUARY

**Mrs. Susila Bala**, a long time resident of Havertown, PA, passed away on March 13 after a brief illness. She is survived by her husband Sri T.N. Bala (musician/teacher/composer) and three sons Ganesh, Sekhar and Rama.



A native of Mayuram in Tamilnadu, India, Susila migrated to US with her husband more than forty years ago. She gave strong support to her husband in all his endeavors to serve the cause of Carnatic music. She also gave vocal and tambura support at her husband's concerts. With her very pleasant disposition, friendliness, hospitality and generosity, she had endeared herself to all.

Our heartfelt condolences to her family. We will miss her very much.

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**Gargi T. Iyer**, sister of Dr. T. Parasaran and Dr. T. Sarada passed away on March 16 after a prolonged illness and complications due to Cardio myopathy and Diabetes. Gargi had two Master's degrees, one in English Literature and the other in Library Sciences. She worked for eighteen years as the head of the Technical Services in the Mishawaka-Penn Public Library, Indiana. Not married, Gargi gave freely to many charitable organizations. She was a great lover of everything in Indian Culture and all performing arts.

*Shaping of Syama Sastri's Destiny (Continued from page 5)*

blessed with happy family lives with understanding wives. Syama Sastri had good relationship with both Thyagaraja and Dikshitar.

Although the *Trinity*, as they are referred to, were contemporaries, it is somewhat strange that there are, unlike about the other two, no myths about Syama Sastri. It could be that because Syama Sastri led a quiet life, was not the traditional poor and suffering Bhakta. It could be that since he did not have disciples, not many imaginative stories were in circulation. The very few stories about him appear more to be decently documented facts than fiction. There are still one or two incidences that give him the same semi mythological stature like the other two of the Trinities. Judge for yourself from the following story whether it is factual or not. These describe what decided and defined Sastri's mission in life.

Unlike Thyagaraja and Dikshitar, Sastri was not born in a musical family. His family members were *archakas* in Sri Kamakshi temple for generations. He was a significant exception, since his family did not even consider music as an appropriate profession for the family. He was born in April 1762, in Thiruvurur. Here is the semi mythical part. His birth is presumed to have occurred as per a forecast on an auspicious day. During a special puja for Lord Venkateswara, in a devotee's house this devotee had a vision which was meant for Sri Viswanatha Iyer, the father of Syama Sastri. It predicted that an illustrious son would be born to Viswanatha Iyer's wife the following year, in the month of April.<sup>1-3</sup> His birth star being

Krittika, he was named "ekata Subrahmanyam" to reflect both his birth star and the blessing of Lord Venkateswara.

The child was fondly called, "Syama Krishnan" and it is this name Syama Sastri used as his *mudra* as we all know. He had a melodious voice but no one in his family thought of sending him for music lessons. Instead he learnt Sanskrit and Telugu and became very well versed in these languages. When he was about fifteen or sixteen he recited spontaneously the thousand names of the deity in the local temple. The archaka was touched by the music, which transported him to a state of bliss and when the singing stopped, presented his own shawl to the young Sastri, blessing him and thanking him profusely. Sastri was happy and on returning home told his uncle who had some knowledge of music, about this, hoping for compliments. But the petty minded uncle just ridiculed him.<sup>2</sup> Recounting this incidence to his father he was told that music in any case was not a great choice of occupation for his family background. In future, too, his uncle would try to thwart the young Sastri from his musical pursuits. These incidences would have been the end of his musical career; but his destiny was different.<sup>1</sup>

Just as the stories about Sri Narada in Sri Thyagaraja's life and Swami Chidambaranatha Swami in Dikshitar's life, it was a sanyasi who entered Sastri's life at the right time to shape his future. He was known as, 'Sangeetha Swami' from the North. He was invited by Sastri's parents to stay in their house since he was a well-known Bhakta of Kasi Viswanatha Swami. It was he who undertook to teach Sastri everything about music, tala, and raga. Being well versed in dance, he also taught the young Sastri Bharata Sastra. This would explain Sastri's interest in composing *swarajatis* etc. The guru also gave him some rare music granthas. These, it would appear, contained a "mine of information on the mysteries of Gandharva vidya."<sup>3</sup> The final parting advice he gave Sastri was to listen to good music especially from Pachimiriyam Adiyappayya, the court musician of Tanjore Samathanam. He further specifically told him only to listen carefully but not try to learn from this musician. (It appears that Adiyappayya was a great musician but a very poor teacher. Sri Adiyappayya developed a very great respect for Sastri in his later years.) Thus started the musical training for a very short time, by music training standards and development of Sastri's musical talent.

So the fact is that another inspirational teacher comes from nowhere without planning or previous arrangement, trains the young novice, gives him valuable scripts, defines his mission in life and vanishes from the scene. And a son born after a prediction from a non musical, totally indifferent to music family becomes a great exponent of the most difficult aspect of the Carnatic music, the Tala and composes lyrics full of emotions of Bhakti and gives importance to the words and their meaning. With his Vatsalya Bhava compositions he appeals to the mother in Sri Kamakshi and touches the hearts of all listeners, every single time.

### References.

1. *Syama Sastri's compositions*. Vidya Sankar. Published by "Parampara". Association for preservation of Classical Carnatic Music. Chennai. Third edition. 1989.
2. *Vaggeyakaraka Charitram*. Vidwan Sundharam Iyer. Music book Publishers. Chennai. Fourth Edition. 1977.
3. *Great Composers*. Book I. Professor sambamurthy. The India Music Publishing House. Chennai. Third edition. 1978.



# SRUTI

## The India Music and Dance Society

Presents  
Carnatic Vocal Concert  
by

## R. Ganesh & R. Kumaresh

Accompanied by  
Neyveli Venkatesh (Violin), Giridhar Uduppa (Ghatam)



Sunday, June 8, 2003

4:00 PM

St. Mary's Hall  
Villanova University, Villanova,

**Tickets: Members: \$13, Non-members: \$16, Students with ID: \$10, Under 16: free.**

**For Tickets and Information, please call**

Viji Swaminathan (215-643-2145) Balu Balakrishnan (610-358-1673)

### *About The Artists*

**Sri Ganesh and Sri Kumaresh** were born in a musical family and had their musical tutelage under their father, Sri. Rajagopalan, an excellent artiste in his own right. In their career already spanning three decades, these brilliant musicians have created a distinct niche for themselves and are very popular for their entertaining and ascetic performances. Endowed with rich imagination and virtuosity, they reached the forefront in rapid strides. They have won several awards and honors including *Kalaimamani* (a govt. of Tamilnadu award) and *Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu Award*. They have accompanied great stalwarts like Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Dr. Balamurali Krishna, Sheshagopalan and Maharajapuram Santhanam.. They have toured all over the world performing for different audiences and winning their appreciation. They have performed along side the great Zakir Hussain, TH Vinayakaram, John McLaughlin, Steve Thornton, and the likes.

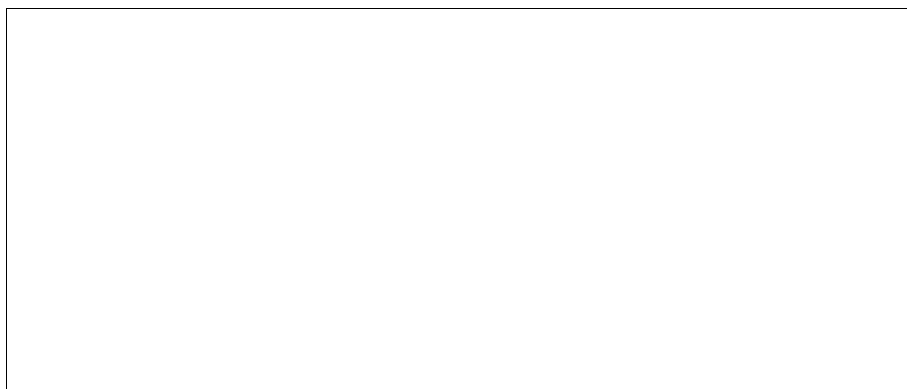
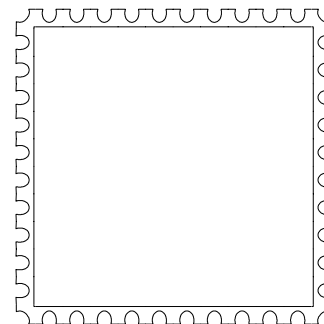
**Sri Neyveli Venkatesh** learnt the art of playing mridangum from the veteran mridangum artiste Shri. M.N. Kandaswamy. Venkatesh is a delight to the melodic players. He is a very solid performer and sticks to the basics and embellishes the musical phrases with his delightful drumbeats. He has performed in all the major music festivals in both Europe and the USA, for many a percussion ensemble. He has toured USA several times.

**Sri Giridhar Uduppa** the youngest member of the group is an unexplored wealth. Having learnt to play the Ghatam (an Indian percussion instrument), under Smt. Sukhanya Ramagopal and later Shri.V. Suresh, Giridhar Uduppa, is now a growing star in the ranks of the younger generation musicians in India. He ably supports the Mridangam players and is very sharp and quick with his contributions during the performances and comes to his own during his solo.



## SRUTI

The India Music & Dance Society  
1436 Joel Drive  
Ambler, PA 19002



### **Directions to St. Mary's Hall, Villanova University**

(Map and directions also available on [www.villanova.edu](http://www.villanova.edu))

St. Mary's Hall is located at the intersection of County Line Road and PA Rt. 320 (Spring Mill Rd).

**From the West:** Take the Pennsylvania Turnpike to Exit 24 (Valley Forge/Route 76). Take Route 76 East to the Gulph Mills Exit. At the bottom of the exit ramp, turn right onto Route 320. Follow Route 320 South. At the third traffic light, turn right onto Matsonford Road. At the intersection of Matsonford Road and County Line Roads (about 1.4 miles) turn left onto County Line Road. St. Mary's Hall is just before the first traffic light. Go past the traffic light and turn right into the parking lot. Park at the far end of this lot and St.Mary's is across the parking lot.

**From the South:** Take I-95 North to exit 7, the I-476 (the Blue Route) Interchange. Continue on I-476 North to exit 13 (old exit 5), St. David/Villanova (US Rt. 30). Follow Rt. 30 East. Turn left onto Rt. 320. St.Mary's Hall is on the left just before the first traffic light which is County line road. Turn right at the light to County line Road. On county line road turn right into the parking lot. Park at the far end of this lot and St.Mary's is across the parking lot.

**From the North and East:** Take the NJ Turnpike to exit 6, the PA Turnpike. Continue on the PA Turnpike to the I-476 (the Blue Route) Interchange. Follow I-476 South to exit 13 (old exit 5), St. David/Villanova (US Rt. 30). Follow Rt. 30 East. Turn left onto Rt. 320. St.Mary's Hall is on the left just before the first traffic light which is County line road. Turn right at the light to County line Road. On county line road turn right into the parking lot. Park at the far end of this lot and St.Mary's is across the parking lot.

#### **By Train:**

From Philadelphia's AMTRAK 30th Street Station: Board SEPTA Regional Rail Line (#R5). The R5 line also makes connections at Suburban Station (16th & JFK Blvd.) and Market East Station (11<sup>th</sup> & Market), both in Center City Philadelphia. This train makes stops approx. every 60 minutes at the Villanova Campus.

From Philadelphia's 69th Street Terminal: The Market Street Subway Elevated Line connects with the SEPTA - Norristown High Speed Rail Line (R-100), which has a Villanova Campus stop.